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THE SUPRA-NATIONAL DIMENSION IN MAX WEBER'S VISION OF POLITICS

Kari Palonen

Abstract

Max Weber analysed politics from the perspective of *Chancen* for actors, and he never separated world politics from domestic politics. The 'Westphalian balance' between great European powers shaped Weber's views on the international polity. However, he also regarded Western individualism, human rights, and parliamentary democracy as necessary qualities to possess in order to be recognised as a great power. This vision provided the basis for his wartime critique of the expansionist tendencies of in German foreign policy and for his demand for the parliamentarisation of German politics. After the end of WWI, Weber used Woodrow Wilson's idea of the League of Nations as the basis for a proposal on new treaty legislation on war guilt. By doing so, he also identified chances for introducing supranational elements to world politics. The final part of the article applies a Weberian political imagination to the interpretation of the United Nations and the European Union as supranational institutions.

Keywords: world politics, international polity, Westphalian balance, Weber's wartime journalism, League of Nations, supranationalism, United Nations, European Union

A life-long *homo politicus,* Max Weber was from his youth on a keen follower of world events. In his academic as well as his journalistic writings, a certain vision of world politics can be detected, which is somewhat bound to the time period, but also in the nuances to his distinct way of thinking of politics.

Max Weber's discussion of world politics is shaped by his style of thinking about both politics and scholarship. He regards the human world as inherently contingent. Weber's key analytic concept is *Chance*, a horizon of possibilities in a situation, to which the ends, means and unintended consequences of human actions should be related. (Weber 1904, 149–150, discussed in Palonen 1998, 132–143; 2010, 77–85).

For Weber, *Chance* is a formal concept, including also the chance of catastrophe. The entire setting of the narrative of 'orders and powers' (*Ordnungen und Mächte*) in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* operates with chances. All constitutive concepts, such as *Macht, Herrschaft* or *Staat* are, indeed, formed on the basis of their specific profiles with respect to chance. When, for example, politics is conducted by the medium of 'the state', certain types of chances are excluded, others are possible, and others may even be advisable (see the student notes of Weber's 1920 lectures in Weber 2009, in which *Staat* refers to a *Durchsetzungschance*; see also Palonen 2011).

From this perspective he, furthermore, questioned the strong divide between international and domestic politics, and analysed their interplay in both directions. Like many of his contemporaries, Weber assumed that European politics was still shaped by a balance of powers, called the European concert or the Westphalian order. The latter term, which I shall use here, refers, of course, to the Treaty signed in Osnabrück and Münster in 1648, although as an analytical concept it was coined by scholars much later. Below the level of the allegedly sovereign states there existed an international polity and international law consisting of 'peace, security and justice as agreed between the members of the system', to quote Martti Koskenniemi (2011, 243). For Weber, the great powers (*Weltmächte*) were the main actors in the international polity. They cannot violate the rules and conventions of the polity without damaging themselves, and they must learn to use the polity in order to maintain or strengthen their status within it.

Nonetheless, President Woodrow Wilson's idea of a League of Nations challenged the Westphalian order during World War I. Max Weber took this idea seriously, in particular in his early-1919 essay 'Zum Thema Kriegsschuld' (Weber 1919d), although he interpreted it in his own way. The essay calls attention to chances to transcend the Westphalian type of international polity, which previously had been an inherent part of Weber's way of thinking politically, as I shall discuss in this chapter.

Wolfgang J. Mommsen's dissertation *Max Weber und die Deutsche Politik (1890–1920)* from 1959 has canonised the view of Weber as a German nationalist. Later scholars, in particular Wilhelm Hennis (1987, see also Colliot-Thélène 1990, Bruns 2015) have disputed or relativised this thesis, but Mommsen's view still seems to dominate, at least outside of Weberian scholarship. In accordance with a rhetorical view of conceptual change (see Palonen 2001, also 2017b, which has been in part reused in this chapter), I apply the Weberian principle of speculating with unrealised possibilities (see esp. Weber 1906a) to world politics beyond his lifetime. I want to think out what Weber could have said in relation to particularly the United Nations and the European Union.

Weber and *Weltpolitik* from the 1890s to WWI

In his Freiburg inaugural lecture, Max Weber included himself among the 'economic nationalists' ('uns ökonomische Nationalisten', Weber 1895, 565; translation in Weber 1994, 20). Already earlier he had discussed the situation of the East Elbian agricultural workers from the perspective of the reason of state ('unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Staatsraison', Weber 1893, 455, also Weber 1895, 561). In the 1890s *Weltpolitik* did not mean simply world politics, but the extension of the policy of the great European powers to the colonisation of countries and regions outside Europe. Weber also spoke of 'deutsche Weltmachtpolitik' (Weber 1895, 571; 1994, 26), situating German politics in the European and global context.

In his polemic against the Prussian Junkers' hiring of agricultural workers from Russian Poland, Weber claimed that the hiring of this cheap labour would lower the

cultural level of human beings (1893, 457) and weaken the position of the German culture (*Deutschtum*) in the eastern areas of the *Reich* (Weber 1895, 554; 1994, 10–11). In his biography, Dirk Käsler speaks of Weber's 'rassistischen Polenbeschimpfungen' during this period (2014, 408). Still, Weber denied that he practised *'Chauvinismus'* (1893, 457), and emphasised the 'level' of humanity (*Qualität der Menschen*, *Typus des Menschentums,* Weber 1895, 559, 564; 1994, 15, 20) as the main point. This implies for Weber a characteristic normative dimension to the international polity of great powers (on Weber and Poland in this period, see also Konno 2004, esp. 48–115).

In the inaugural address Weber speaks of Germany as a nation state ('dass unser Staatswesen ein *Nationalstaat* ist') (Weber 1895, 558; 1994, 13). He presents this as a fact, neither excluding the possibility of other types of states nor elevating the nation state as a model for all states. His appeal to *Staatsraison* similarly supports Germany's foreign political interests, not as of inherent value, but as a regular part of doing politics among the great powers. Weber blames Germans for its late and timid engagement in power politics overseas (*'überseeische Machtpolitik'* (1895, 21; 1994, 23). Without participating in the competition for colonies, Germany could not maintain its status as one of the great powers. In line with his principle, Weber also justified his support for creating a strong German navy (Weber 1898).

Revolutionary events shattered the Russian empire in 1905, obliging the Tsar to undertake reforms, including the creation of the State Duma. Although the new regime was far from parliamentary government, it inaugurated a new beginning for Russian politics. Max Weber followed the events, mediated by Russian academics in Heidelberg, with enthusiasm. Starting as a remark to S.J. Givago's book review on the constitutional project in *Archiv* (republished in 1996, 335–338), Weber himself wrote two extensive articles, 'Zur Lage der bürgerlichen Demokratie in Rußland' (1906b) and 'Rußlands Übergang zum Scheinkonstitutionalismus' (1906c), which he characterised as 'journalistic' (Weber 1906b, 1), indicating a shift away from his earlier, nationalistic tone.

Inspired by the ideas of Ukrainian scholar Mikhail Dragomanov, Weber now took a stand in favour of culture autonomy for Russian Poland and other Western parts of the empire (Weber 1906b, 24-33, see Konno 2004, 142-150). More importantly, he saw in the revolutionary events a chance for West European ideas of individualism, human rights, and parliamentary democracy to gain support in Russia. They were advocated in the zemstvos of local self-government and by the Constitutional Democratic Party (Weber 1906b, 11–21, 40–41), though Weber saw strong obstacles to such a programme, both in the ruling bureaucracy and in the collectivist ideas concerning the agrarian question on both the right and the left of Russian politics.

Against evolutionist ideologists, such as the Russian liberal Struwe, Weber argued that the contemporary advancement of capitalism provided no guarantee of the rise of freedom, democracy and individualism. On the contrary, everywhere the housing is ready for the new serfdom ('das Gehäuse für neue Hörigkeit') (Weber 1906b. 99; Weber 1994, 68). Against the emphasis on the material conditions, Weber declared himself an 'individualist and partisan of democratic institutions' (Weber 1906b, 99–100; 1994, 69).

In the *Scheinkonstitutionalismus* essay, Weber first discusses how the constitutional reforms of 1905–06 fall far short of the ideal types in matters of human rights, universal suffrage and parliamentary government. The ruling bureaucracy did its best to marginalise them, creating a semi-appointed second chamber and measures to bypass the Duma's budgetary powers (Weber 1906c, 119–188). In the Duma elections, however, the constitutional democrats and other regime-critical parties gained a majority, and Weber appreciated the legislative efforts of the Duma, though the Duma was dissolved by the Tsar in July 1906 (ibid. 291–327). Nevertheless, the electoral results and parliamentary practices gave Weber some hope for Russia.

Weber detected in the revolution of 1905 a chance that, by westernising its political institutions and values, Russia would become accepted as a full player in the European polity. Weber's expectation in this situation was that the German empire would take a clear stand in favour of a West European type of politics. However, he became disappointed by the interventions of the Kaiser in world politics, juxtaposing

to that the British parliamentary culture as a model for German foreign policy (see Weber 1908).

Weltpolitik versus expansionist policy

At the outbreak of the war, Weber volunteered to become head administrator of a military hospital in Heidelberg. He strongly opposed the counter-revolutionary 'ideas of 1914' of Rudolf Kjellén and Johann Plenge as well as other war apologists (see Bruhns 2017, 28–50). After resigning from the hospital, in autumn 1915, Weber wrote several journalistic articles in support of moderate war aims. The articles also contain sketches of his vision of world politics, including a discussion of various actions and what consequences they might have after the war.

The first of the articles, written in the late autumn of 1915, was published only posthumously by Marianne Weber in 1921, with the title 'Zur Frage des Friedensschließens' (see Mommsen 1988b, 373–375). It begins with a remarkable declaration of Weber's view on *Weltpolitik*:

> Der Friedensschluß einer europäischen Macht in unserer geographischen Lage, welche auch künftig 'Weltpolitik' zu treiben beabsichtigt, hat von der Tatsache auszugehen, daß außer uns noch sechs andere Mächte vorhanden sind, welche das gleiche zu tun willens sind und von denen einige der stärksten an unseren Grenzen auch die Macht dazu haben. Daraus folgt, daß trotz eines noch so vollständigen Sieges jene Absicht für uns unausführbar ist. Weltpolitik ist für uns nicht zu führen, wenn wir die Chance haben, bei jedem Schritt auch in Zukunft stets erneut auf die gleiche Koalition zu stoßen, wie sie diesmal gegen uns sich zusammengefunden hat. Es muß die Möglichkeit für uns offen gehalten werden, mit einer der stärksten von ihnen eine feste Verständigung auf lange Sicht hinaus zu erzielen. Dies muß keineswegs sofort geschehen, wohl aber dürfen die Friedensbedingungen nicht so gestaltet werden, daß sie jene Möglichkeiten dauernd ausschließen. (Weber 1915, 17)

In my translation

The peace agreement of a European power in our geographical position, with an intention to practise *Weltpolitik* also in the future, must take as its point of departure the fact that besides us there are also six other powers, which want to pursue their own *Weltpolitik* and of which some of the strongest, next to our borders, are able to do so. The consequence of this constellation is that such intentions are for us not realisable, even in the case of a nearly complete victory. It is impossible for us to conduct *Weltpolitik*, even if we otherwise had the chance have the chance, and also if in the future we are at every step always to be confronted with the same coalition as the one currently formed against us. The possibility must be kept open to reach a durable conciliation in the long perspective with at least one of the strongest among them. This will not happen immediately, but the conditions of peace shall not be such as would permanently

exclude that possibility.

In his journalism Weber speaks of Germany as a 'we', which is opposed to his nominalistic view in 'Soziologische Grundbegriffe', which explicitly denies the understanding of the state as an 'acting collective personality' (Weber 1922, 9; see also the lectures from spring 1920 in Weber 2009 and Palonen 2011). In his characteristic way of neutralising concepts, such as *Herrschaft* (see Koselleck 1979, 128-129) Weber now strips *Weltpolitik* of its imperialist connotations and makes it a formal concept, dealing with a world-wide polity consisting of a limited number of great powers (*Mächte*). None of the powers is fully allowed to realise its aims. Weber assumes that, whatever the outcome of the war, the 'winners' cannot alone dictate the conditions of peace but, on the contrary, they must keep open the possibility of forming an alliance with their former enemies.

To this extent, he accuses German expansionists of ignoring the basic realities at the time in European and world politics. A continuation of the coalition against Germany after the war would have permanently paralysed the possibility for a German *Weltpolitik* (Weber 1915, 23). For Weber, the alternative was either for Germany to practise a *Weltpolitik* in competition with the other great powers or to pursue an expansionist policy in Western Europe against the other world powers (*Weltmächte*).

An annexationist policy in Belgium would prove to be Germany's key failure in its relationships to Britain and France. (Weber 1915, 17–22).

This perspective on world politics also shaped Weber's next wartime articles, which were more focused on the actually existing political constellations in the world and in Europe. With 'Bismarck's Außenpolitik und die Gegenwart', Weber reminds readers of the triple alliance between Britain, Germany and Russia. Weber recognised that the alliance no longer had a chance, and blamed Germany's political leadership for causing this by its disregard for the country's international position. In colonial policy, the other powers had simply ignored Germany, but according to Weber, no great power can repeatedly put into a formal decision-making situation, only to be presented with a *fait accompli*, and then continue its politics-as-usual ('Keine Großmacht darf sich ungestraft immer wieder vor vollzogene Tatsachen stellen und über sich zur Tagesordnung übergehen' Weber 1916a, 30).

One of the lessons of the war for Weber was that the sheer number of armies does not alone decide the outcome of the battles ('die bloße Masse und Zahl … doch nicht entscheidet'). On the contrary, the performance of the armies had been superior over that of the 'barbarous' and 'illiterate' Russian army (Weber 1916a, 36).

With Bismarck, Weber maintained a detached view over judging what is possible and permanently desirable ('das Augenmaß für das Mögliche und politisch dauernd Wünschbare', Weber 1916a, 37), and contrasted this view to national vainglory (*Eitelkeitı*). Culture is bound to nationality, but states are not necessarily nation states, and even such states can serve the cultural interests of several nationalities (Weber 1916a, 38). Weber no longer classified Germany as a nation state, but as a great power that must play the game of *Weltpolitik*. The European polity is not just any balance-of-power system of great powers, but contains also the aspect of 'civilising' this polity. Therefore, Russia remained a threat for the *Weltpolitik* as such, as did the German expansionists.

The entry of the United States into the war against Germany, due to the latter's decision to use unlimited submarine warfare, would bring a different danger to

Germany as a world power. Weber predicted the consequences of this, before it actually happened, in 'Der verschärfte U-Bootskrieg' (1916c). He judged that a shift of the centre of financial power from the City of London to New York City would have grave consequences for the international polity. Germany would have played out its foreseeable future as world power ('Wir hätten unsere weltpolitische Zukunft für absehbare Zeit verspielt') (1916c, 43).

In 'Zwischen zwei Gesetzen' Weber detected a further danger for Germany in the pacifist tendencies to refuse to make a distinction between great powers and other states. Within the European polity, the great powers serve also as 'an obstacle in the path of other *Machstaaten'*, which also protect the civilisation, in particular against the Russian peasants, who lack *Kultur* (Weber 1916d, 40; 1994, 77). The great powers are for Weber major participants in the struggle between values, and he situates Germany – despite its military duties as a *Machtstaat* –amongst the West European powers in defending the higher cultural level of the polity (Weber 1919c, 41; 1994, 78–79).

Germany among the world powers

In 'Deutschland unter europäischen Weltmächten' (Weber 1916b), as in part in 'Zwischen zwei Gesetzen' as well (1916d), Weber moves from actual issues in wartime politics to the general situation of world powers during the 'Great War' (for background and publication information, see Mommsen 1988a, 383–384; Bruhns 2017, 18–20).

Being surrounded by three great land powers and one great sea power, Weber perceived Germany's situation as more precarious than that of any other country (Weber 1916b, 64). Therefore, it was particularly important for its political leaders to avoid vanity (*Eitelkeit*) and practise a sober-minded (*sachlich*) foreign policy in line with its position among the world powers (Weber 1916b, 64–65). Weber thus appeals to a political judgment that respects the basic realities of the European polity and, unlike the pan-Germanists (*Alldeutsche*), did not put the polity at risk. An anglophile, Weber was particularly disturbed by the pan-Germanists' dreams of destroying (*Vernichtung*) Britain as a sea power (Weber 1916b, 65).

In his analysis of the political constellation of WWI, Weber situates himself in part within the Bismarckian tradition, however militantly he criticised the Bismarckian heritage in domestic politics (see esp. Weber 1918b). Due to Bismarck's politics, an alliance with France was, however, politically impossible after 1871, and this shaped the entire German situation in world politics (Weber 1916b, 67). Weber's view on maintaining freedom of choice ('Erhaltung der Wahlfreiheit') in possible partnerships in world politics (Weber 1916b, 67) is opposed to having any archenemies. He does not share the view, later made famous by Carl Schmitt (1932), that the political should be marked by decisions based on perceived friends and enemies; instead, Weber believes that within the order of powers there should also be intermediate levels of agreement (*Verständigung*), which is something he strives for in relation to France and Russia (Weber 1916b, 67).

Weber supports freedom of choice in the politics of the great powers for the same reason as he supports parliamentary debate on alternative courses of action. Within the European polity, the situation of being a great power requires that no possible alliances with other great powers be excluded, which provocative declarations easily tend to do (Weber 1916b, 66–67).

The spoken and written word is the main medium of parliamentary, electoral and party politics (see e.g. Weber 1919c, 53). Politicians weigh the strengths and weaknesses of alternatives in an open and public debate with the number of votes as the *ultima ratio* (Weber 1917, 169–170). By contrast, diplomatic negotiations are oriented towards compromise between the great powers, similar to the old negotiations between estates (Weber 1917, 168). In foreign policy Weber, accordingly, supports 'silent' (*schweigend*) action (Weber 1916b, 65) that would improve the chances for compromise. Diplomacy is also a politics of words, but its aim is to avoid, as Weber quotes Bismarck, 'breaking the windows' towards other world powers (Weber 1916b, 64). Politics as a rhetorical activity should not be confused with the declarative style of the powerless Reichstag, in contrast to the *Arbeitsparlament* of Westminster, which debates items in detail and where the

members participate in committees that control the administration (Weber 1918, 234, 238, 245).

Great powers and small states have different types of chances in their domestic politics. A *Machtstaat* has different callings (*Aufgaben*) in culture and history than do the small states of 'the Swiss, the Danes, the Dutch and the Norwegians' (Weber 1916d, 39; 1994, 75). Weber gives small states better chances to realise matters of civic virtues and democracy than great powers with their 'duty and obligation to history' ('die verdammte Pflicht und Schuldigkeit vor der Geschichte'), which they should not abandon (Weber 1916d, 39-40; 1994, 75-76). Only in states such as Switzerland is a genuine democracy possible, as well as a genuine aristocracy based on personal trust and leadership (Weber 1916b, 76-77). In mass states the bureaucracy and the military are liable to extinguish both, Weber writes, referring to Jakob Burckhardt (Weber 1916b, 77). However, the freedom of small states is guaranteed only when several great powers are counterposed to each other.

This disjunction is also visible inside Russia. Weber enumerates a number of non-Russian peoples in Russia whose *Kultur* is older and in some respects superior to that of the empire (Weber 1916b, 76). Russian hegemony in the world would mean a threat to the chances of *Kultur* within both Russia and Western Europe. In his 'universal historical' perspective, the future struggles in the west are marginal (*Lappalien*) when compared to the events of worldwide significance (*Weltentscheidungen*) in Eastern Europe (Weber 1916b, 72).

Weber analyses the chances for political alliances and *modus vivendi* relationships in view of the prospects for a future peace. He is worried over the German wartime policy, which could preclude the very possibility of being able to pursue an advisable (*zweckmäßig*) policy after the war (Weber 1916b, 67) and squander the time still available for such a peace.

For Weber the polity of the great powers in 1916 still offers the most viable vision for a more peaceful co-existence in the future. He takes for granted that the Great War will end in a negotiated peace similar to the kind made between the great powers in

the wars of the Westphalian era. Instead of declaring normative principles or adapting his thought to the alleged exigencies of the current constellation, Weber analyses political actions as comprising different types of temporally limited chances and the relationships of the chances to each other. The chances to maintain the European polity still persisted for a time after the war, despite the threat of the annexationist policy of Germany to close them. His vision of the maintenance of the European order requires mutual recognition between the great powers, regular and active politicking between and within them, and consideration, as well, of the interests of the smaller states (see also Bruhns 2017, 183–197).

The European polity of the great powers was for Weber both a product of a past momentum and an alternative to the hegemonic aspirations of any great power by itself. It was based on an order that included the strengths and weaknesses of the greater and smaller powers, and the relationships therein included intermediate degrees between enmity and alliance. The polity as a whole also created counterweights to the bureaucratisation and militarisation of the greater powers, and domestic measures that could be taken against them in parliamentary and democratic terms were discussed during the war in Weber's pamphlets *Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland* (1917) and *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland* (1918b). In the latter Weber also strongly insists on the superiority of the Westminster-style parliamentary system over the rule of officialdom (*Beamtenherrsachaft)* of the German empire in the conduct of foreign policy (Weber 1918b, 248–258, see also 277).

A proposal for regulating warfare

Max Weber was pessimistic about the prospective outcome of the war, but, as Hinnerk Bruhns writes, the way the war ended in autumn 1918 was still worse than he expected (2017, 70). In the post-war months he, nonetheless, wrote a number of articles on the future of German politics, participated (at the invitation of Hugo Preuss) in the committee to draft a republican constitution, and was a candidate for the liberal Deutsche Demokratische Partei für die Weimar Nationalversammlung,

although did not have a chance of getting elected, due to the manoeuvrings of local politicians.

Two months after the end of the war, Max Weber took up the topic of the post-war international order. The new German government of Social Democratic chancellor Friedrich Ebert brought an initiative on war guilt to the international commission on 29 November 1918. Weber, seizing the momentum, wrote the article '*Zum Thema Kriegsschuld*', which was published in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, his 'house newspaper', on 17 January 1919 (Weber 1919d).

Already in the weeks following the end of the war, Weber predicted that French generals and not US president Wilson would dominate the peace negotiations (see Weber 1918a, 113–114), and his Versailles experiences in spring 1919 confirmed this pessimism (Mommsen 1991, 161–172; Bruhns 2017, 82–83). All this has left scholars uninterested in the constructive proposals Weber made for the planned League of Nations in January 1919.

Weber's initial point is to reject an *a priori* declaration of war guilt solely on the part of Germany that *allerhand Literaten* had declared — elsewhere he mentions pedagogy professor Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster as a prominent exponent of such an attitude (Weber 1919c, 80–81). For Weber, losing the war should not be confused with the legal question of guilt. He declares that on both political and cultural grounds he had always supported an agreement (*Verständigung*) with England that would have made the war impossible, and he had not changed this view point. (1919d, 60)

The point of the *Kriegsschuld* article is Weber's insistence that US president Woodrow Wilson would be ready to negotiate with representatives of Germany and not impose a 'forced peace' (*Gewaltfrieden*). Moreover, Weber sketched a 'statute for an international law on war for consideration by the future League of Nations' ('ein Kriegsvölkerrechtsstatut des zu schaffenden Völkerbundes'). (1919d, 61–62)

 In other words, Weber not only took seriously Wilson's proposal as a chance for a new momentum based on the League of Nations idea, but he also made his own

proposals for its statutes regarding the regulation of war. In accordance with the Westphalian order, Weber still regarded war as a part of international politics and he insisted on its regulation by international law within the framework of the new League. Equally obvious is that he thought of the great powers, including Germany, as forming the main pillars of the League (see also Bruhns 2017, 82–84). Weber draws from the experiences of the War the lesson that stronger legal instruments against war crimes are needed, obviously also in order to reduce the threat of future wars.

His statute proposal contains four articles. The first declares: 'A state that mobilises for war while negotiations to prevent the war are continuing shall fall into international disrepute' ('Ein Staat, der mobil macht, während noch verhandelt wird, verfällt dem internationalen Verruf'). Weber's claim behind this article is that Russia's mobilisation in 1914, and with it the entire tsarist system, bears the main responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War (Weber 1919d, 62).

Conceptually, the political and legal sanction lies in the 'international disrepute' of the state in question. The claim is intelligible only within the polity of great powers, for the threat then exists that a rule-breaking state may be removed from full 'membership' among the respected great powers and be denied a voice in multi-power diplomacy, the main form of political action within the international polity. In other words, the factual status of being a *Machtstaat* is not by itself sufficient to be a great power; a certain respect for international statutes is also necessary to be recognised as a full participant in the polity of great powers.

The second article reads: 'A state that at the outbreak of a war does not clearly declare whether it will remain neutral shall fall into international disrepute' ('Ein Staat, der bei Kriegsausbruch auf die Anfrage, ob er neutral bleiben werde, keine deutliche Erklärung abgibt, verfällt dem internationalen Verruf') (Weber 1919d, 62-63). Here the target of criticism is the French policy in 1914, as Bruhns (2017, 83) remarks. The threat is again merely disrepute. In this case, sanctioning might be more difficult to agree upon, as a declaration of neutrality leaves more room for interpretation than does mobilisation.

The third article is worded 'A permanently neutral state can appeal to its neutrality only if it is able to protect itself effectively and equally in every direction' ('Ein dauernd neutralisierter Staat kann sich auf seine Neutralität nur berufen, wenn er sich in den Stand gesetzt hat, sie nach allen Seiten hin gleichmäßig und möglichst wirksam zu schützen') (Weber 1919d, 63). Weber mentions Belgium as a small state that had 'neglected' its defence in 1914, which appears to be a tacit acceptance of the German attack in 1914. The more general point, common to this and the previous article, is that the international war statutes also concern the small states. The target of criticism here is the non-justified use of not shouldering responsibility for one's own defence, though what degree of defence is sufficient again leaves much room for conflicting interpretations, and it was uncertain how far the great powers would agree on this point.

The fourth article is one that Weber admitted to be a contested principle between the German and the US wartime interpretations, namely, concerning the duties of neutral states. Weber presented the interpretation that was supported by Germany during the war: 'A neutral state that tolerates one state's war crimes without recourse to its own armed defence cannot then use violence against the other side by appealing to the other side's illegal counter-measures, even if the neutral state's violence is later judged to be the only means to meet the consequences of the enemy's breach of law.' ('Ein Neutraler, der von einer kriegführenden Seite einen Rechtsbruch ohne gewaltsame Abwehr duldet, darf zur Gewaltsamkeit auch gegen die andere Seite nicht greifen wegen solcher rechtswidriger Gegenmaßregeln, welche das einzige Mittel sind, die Folgen des gegnerischen Rechtsbruchs wettzumachen'). Wilson's interpretation was that such a link of responsibility does not exist, but must be decided separately (*gesondert*). Weber admits thatWilson's legal interpretation prevailed after the outcome of the war, but that the matter remains controversial. Germany's policy towards the US was unwise, but not a war crime. (Weber 1919d, 64-65)

Max Weber's proposals for an international law on war can, of course, be seen as directed against those who assigned Germany the sole culpability for starting the war. In more general terms, however, they were an attempt to seize the momentum at a time when the chances of international law to limit arbitrary acts by great and even

small powers were recognised by the international polity. He admits, however, that due to the absence of any supranational enforcement apparatus, 'international law' was not directly comparable to state-internal law (Weber 1922, 25). The sanctions provided in his suggested articles do not, therefore, pose any absolute threats for a great power, but they do increase the political pressure on it.

In Weber's writings and comments from winter and spring 1919, there are a few remarks on the planned League (*Völkerbund*). In the brochure 'Deutschlands künftige Staatsform' Weber renounces anu imperialistic dreams and commits himself to the cultivation of German ideals 'within the framework of the League of Nations' ('im Kreise des Völkerbundes'). He mentions, however, that annexation of German areas in the east would deal a deathly blow to the League (Weber 1919a, 30). Similar interpretations, referring to *Völkerbund,* can be found in Weber, e.g. in one of his contributions to the Versailles conference (Weber 1919b, 99), and in his appeal to protect German interests in the Saar against the 'French militarists' (Weber 1919e, 83, also 81).

The partisan character of Weber's appeals or his seeing the League of Nations as a protector of the weak in world politics are less important than his recognition of the legitimacy of such a league. Insofar as the League of Nations transcends inter-governmentalism and approaches a supranational order, we can speak of a change in Max Weber's conceptualisation of the European polity and a global polity.

Supranational aspects of world politics

As we have seen above, Weber's discussion is consistently presented in a way in which the chances of the different participants to the actual situation are discussed and compared. Weber reinterprets the concept of *Weltpolitik* to include chances for a politics of different states within the Westphalian framework of the European polity, in times of both war and peace. He makes the West European type of *Kultur* a normative requirement for becoming a full-fledged world power, which also illustrates that he believed the polity should also contain a second historical reference to the West European politics of the preceding decades, i.e. one that, as a

requirement for domestic politics, includes an 'individualistic' view of human rights and a democratised form of parliamentary government. The politico-cultural order of the West European polity is a fragile one, and its fate depends for Weber largely on whether the foreign and domestic politics of Germany can be made to correspond to it.

The Westphalian order as the basis of the international polity implies an inter-governmental order. It is based on mutual recognition by members, exclusion of non-members, cooptation of new applicants or exclusion those who are no longer recognised as great powers. The criteria are by no means clear, and disputes among great powers over which parties are recognised as 'members of the club' may persist.

In Wilson's proposal for the League of Nations, Weber identifies a chance to transcend the Westphalian momentum in some respects. The international polity is not necessarily a polity of the states. Weber's distinctions between great powers and lesser powers as well as between nation states and other states already indicate a certain relativity in talking about 'states'. In his last lectures, Weber also analysed how the chances of being legitimately recognised as a 'state' contain degrees of difference, which he illustrates with the case of Bavaria in spring 1919, in which the *Räterepublik*, the Hoffmann government exiled to Bamberg and the German *Reich* competed with each other for a time over which could legitimately use the title of 'state' , each of which had their own power shares (*Machtanteile*) in the question (Weber 2009).

To this picture we may add the rise of a number of international organisations, from the Red Cross and the World Postal Union to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and international academic organisations since the latter nineteenth century (see Leinen and Brummer 2016; Kissling 2006). The Hague peace conferences of 1899 and 1907 had attempted to regularise not only multilateral diplomacy, but also a parliamentary element on an international level (see Roshchin 2017). Even if World War I interrupted much of their activities, a model of trans- or supranational political or proto-political institutions had been created. Considering these new agencies in the international polity, Wilson's proposal of the League and Weber's application of it

manifest the insight that the end of war provides specific occasions to create, activate and strengthen such institutions.

Without doubt, Weber would have recognised that such institutions can further limit the chances of single states to establish a monopoly of violence in their areas. The Westphalian-style international polity already does this indirectly, as we have seen, by making all states dependent on receiving recognition by the great powers. Even if the League of Nations was based on the voluntary membership of states and on the acceptance of other member states, it was more than an inter-governmental organisation. Nevertheless, it was still not a normative order of the kind that some pacifists and international law scholars had hoped it would be, as it did not replace single states or the order of the great powers, but rather contained certain *Chancen* to transcend them. The use of these chances depends on the political practices not only of governments, but also of parliaments and international organisations. Some of the latter, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), were soon included within the umbrella of the Leagues of Nations.

To sum up, Weber is in his views on world politics neither a *Realpolitik* thinker, operating within the framework of the balance of the great powers, nor a normativist calls for an international legal order to replace world political struggles. This is closely related to Weber's political style of thinking in terms of *Chancen*, as these allow him to discuss the possibilities and conditions of legitimising certain practices or institutions, while leaving their acceptance to the acting politicians in the situation.

Using a Weberian-style imagination in world politics

Applying Weber's counter-factual principle of historical interpretation to the present-day world, I now want to speculate how he would have assessed the political significance of two of the most important supranational political institutions today, the United Nations and the European Union.

Traditionally, foreign policy belongs in all countries to the *arcana imperii*, to the secrets of the realm, conducted originally by monarchs and their courts, around which a corps of professional diplomats was formed over time. Even in modern

states, foreign policy has been the part of government that has most effectively resisted all attempts of becoming subject to parliamentary control. Or to put it in 'neo-Roman' terms, in foreign policy the arbitrary rule of government and administration has held citizens and parliamentarians in a state of dependence (see Skinner 1998).

Max Weber set forth ambitious formal criteria for his definition of parliamentary government, namely, the selection of ministers among MPs the government depends on parliament's confidence, ministers has a duty to respond to members' questions in plenum and in committee, and the parliament exercises an efficient control of administration (see Weber 1918b, 227). Regarding the last point, Weber's favourite measures to counter the allegedly superior knowledge of officials over parliamentarians included the power by parliamentary committees to cross-examine ministry officials; the possibility for these committees to carry out on-the spot examinations of the sources of officials' knowledge and setting up parliamentary examination commissions (ibid. 234–236; see the discussion in Palonen 2010, 146–167 and 2017a).

The extension and intensification of parliamentary control of foreign policy implies one type of chance to politicise it from 'below'. From the Weberian point of view, foreign policy should be acknowledged as being as contingent and controversial as all politics, and therefore submittable to parliamentary oversight. To which degree and in which respects these chances of politicisation are then used, while at the same time allowing the government to maintain particularly the possibility to take urgent action when necessary, is a matter of expediency and of the level of political the competencies of MPs

Subjecting a country's foreign policy to the oversight by supranational institutions contains a different chance for politicisation, imposing limitations from 'above' on the arbitrary foreign policy powers of national governments and diplomacies. The Westphalian system contains, as we have seen, an indirect chance to recognise such limits, when not even the greatest powers can disregard the other powers. Weber's culture criterion gives an additional nuance to this chance. Multilateral inter-governmental organisations, such as the League of Nations, mark the next step,

whereas supra- or transnational institutions provide still more radical chances to politicise the international polity through denationalisation.

The two ways of politicisation in foreign policy, parliamentarisation and denationalisation, are independent of each other. Both parliamentarisation without denationalisation and denationalisation without parliamentarisation are possible and have actually been practised. Still, they do not exclude each other, and a double-check of the governmental-cum-administrative powers by supranational parliamentary institutions is also a realistic possibility, including, of course, a double risk that governments could be paralysed when they need to take urgent action.

The United Nations is not merely an inter-governmental organisation, but deals also with the politics of non-member states and can exclude members that violate its charter. The General Assembly conducts its debates in a largely parliamentary style, but the votes are determined by the government representatives of members. The Security Council is an inter-governmental institution with a weak parliamentary element in the election of non-permanent members, while the veto power for permanent members' governments marks a limit to denationalisation. The Secretary General is the main supranational office of the UN, but depends on the election and range of possible actions of the Security Council, especially of its permanent members. From the Weberian perspective, the veto of the permanent members is an obstructive measure that can prevent the initiatives of Security Council majorities and restrict the independence of the Secretary General.

In the European Union the power struggle between the four main representative institutions is much more open. The European Council and to a large extent also the Council of the European Union (consists of ministers of the member states) combine inter-governmental, parliamentary and presidential elements, whereas the European Commission is a supranational institution, combining the activities of a parliamentary cabinet, a super-bureaucracy and a think-tank. The European Parliament has gained power both through treaties since Maastricht (1993) and through the outcomes of its disputes on the election and the dismissal of the President and members of the Commission. It is still lacking the parliamentary initiative for individual members and

has little say in some policy fields. In matters of legislation the Parliament is obliged to make compromises with the Council/the European Council which acts as the second chamber, while member-state parliaments act as the third chamber. Alongside with the Commission, the European Court of Justice and the European Central Bank also act as supranational institutions based on non-elected advocatory representation.

Despite this complex and open-ended 'separation of powers' system, the EU is probably the first polity in which both supranational and parliamentary aspects are present to some extent in all main institutions. Historically, supranational institutions have been those with the weakest parliamentary control (the Commission, Court of Justice, and Central Bank), and the Councils the stronghold of inter-governmental power. Denationalisation initially took place largely at the expense of the member-state parliaments. Direct elections of the European Parliament since 1979, treaty revisions and the *de facto* change of the Commission in the direction of parliamentary government have contributed to a relative parliamentarisation of the EU. Leading in this direction as well has been the reduction in the requirements for unanimity in the Councils, causing their status to resemble more that of a second chamber where other members must be persuaded in order to achieve a majority.

Looked at from this perspective, denationalisation and parliamentarisation no longer appear as mutually exclusive alternatives in the EU. A politicisation in terms of supranational parliamentary politics (including the cooperation between member-state parliaments) now appears to have real chances in the European Union. There exists no other analogous institution that has similar chances for politicisation, for even the Inter-Parliamentary Union is still strongly based on the parliaments of its individual member states.

Andreas Anter claims that Weber would have regarded the EU as a 'super-bureaucracy' (2016, 185–187). In contrast, I would rather think that Max Weber would today be among those of us who would support the politicisation of the EU via the two channels of parliamentarisation and denationalisation. The two channels also provide a chance to make the EU a model for other supranational institutions.

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