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**Book review: Kaiser, Michael, and Harold Rosenbach, editors. *Max Weber in der Welt. Rezeption und Wirkung*. Mohr Siebeck, 2014. XII + 243 pp. €39 (hardcover).**

**Article (Accepted version)  
(Refereed)**

**Original citation:** Breuilly, John (2018) *Book review: Kaiser, Michael, and Harold Rosenbach, editors. Max Weber in der Welt. Rezeption und Wirkung. Mohr Siebeck, 2014. XII + 243 pp. €39 (hardcover).* [The German Quarterly](#), 9 (3). ISSN 0016-8831

DOI: [10.1111/gegu.12079](https://doi.org/10.1111/gegu.12079)

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Available in LSE Research Online: October 2018

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*Max Weber in der Welt: Rezeption und Wirkung*, Bearbeitet von Michael Kaiser und Harold Rosenbach, Hrsg. von der Max Weber Stiftung, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2014. ISBN: 978-3-16-152469-1. €39,00.

The title of book covers much. To be “in the world” is the human condition. The subtitle hardly narrows the focus. Reception means Weber’s reception of the “world” and the “world’s” reception of Weber. “Wirkung” (effect, impact, influence) can be approached from both perspectives. This can extend to the present.

I divide the review by classifying different approaches to the Weber/world relationship. The “maximal” approach covers the following: Weber is interested in a specific locale, he visits there (past times through reading, present times also through travel), that locale shapes his ideas, their written expression enjoys a distinct reception in that locale. The “minimal” approach focuses on Weber’s responses to some locale which does not “receive” him or his reception in a locale in which he had no interest. (Given Weber’s “universal historical” interests it is difficult to such a locale, so I define “interest” as “significant experience and knowledge”.)

The essays by Whimster, Hersche and Ghia are minimal. Whimster’s title ‘Weber in the World of Empire’ is misleading. He only looks at the young Weber and the German Second Empire. “Empire” does not have the modern meaning of European overseas imperialism but refers to a monarchical state where “emperor” is ranked above kings, princes and dukes, as in the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman “empires”. Hersche’s chapter on Weber’s stay in Rome (1901-3) while recovering from his mental breakdown is inhibited by lack of primary sources. Weber began writing on the Protestant ethic after his return to northern Europe and Hersche suggests that Weber’s “reception” of Catholicism had an influence. But with the evidence to hand this is little more than speculation. Most minimal is Ghia’s essay on the influence of Taine’s work on philosophy of art on Weber. This is an example of a history of ideas in which the “world” figures only in the vestigial sense that everything belongs to it.

Less minimal are chapters concerned with the reception of Weber in different locales, mainly after his death. Edith Hanke provides a useful overview of when and where Weber texts became accessible. English translations matter most because it is the global *lingua franca* and many translations are from English, not the original German texts. Hanke shows how institutions, networks and key individuals help spread knowledge of Weber. She suggests that reception was concentrated into times of crisis (*Umbruch*). She links these to different aspects of Weber. Intellectual crisis stimulates interest in methodology; socio-economic crisis in capitalism; political crisis in political sociology and legitimation. The argument is sketched for communist and post-communist Europe, China and Islam.

More detail is provided in chapters on places Weber did not visit and whose languages he did not know: the Arab world (Leder), Turkey (Toumarkine), Egypt (Ali) and Japan (Schwenkter). The first Weber text in Arabic was the Protestant Ethic in 1980. Not until 2011 (fitting Hanke’s *Umbruch* argument) are there translations from the German, now accessible in the critical edition of Weber’s complete works.

Ali confirms this limited and late reception, explaining it in language (English and French more accessible) and intellectual terms (writings by and on Marx more influential). Initial interest is in religion, secularisation and modernity. Later a more critical appraisal engages with Weber's alleged "orientalism", whether treating Islam as antithetical to rationalism and capitalism or his concept of "sultanism".

In Turkey there were stronger historical links with Germany extending to the late Ottoman Empire. German émigré intellectuals such as Alexander Rüstow and Gerhard Kessler taught in Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s. After 1945 "Americanised Weberianism" had a big influence, connected to modernisation theory, the Cold War and the presentation of Weber as a liberal alternative to Marx. Dankwart Rüstow, son of Alexander, wrote books on political modernisation focusing on Turkey and Japan. The floodgates open in the 1990s. Partly this is one aspect of intellectual globalisation; the same industry of translation exists for Durkheim and Nietzsche, Habermas and Foucault. Partly there is a discovery of a Weber who can be criticised (orientalism, sultanism, Islam as irrational and anti-capitalist) or drawn upon (charismatic domination, against positivism).

The chapter by Schwenkter draw on his extensive research on Weber and Japan. Weber reception has a longer and more complex history compared to the Middle East. Schwenkter identifies four phases. In Weber's lifetime there were Japanese scholars in Germany, initially interested in debates about *Industriestaat* against *Agrarstaat*. A second phase between 1920 and 1945 focused on the origins of capitalism in Asia. After 1945 political sociology focused on the prospects for liberal democracy and its relationship to capitalist growth. There was a fashion for finding Japanese equivalents to Protestantism. Finally, recent hard times stimulated an interest in Weber as critic rather than apostle of modernity, for example his relationship to Nietzsche. In a shift from broad-brush to fine detail the problems of translation are considered in a brilliant section on two short passages featuring the phrases "moderner kapitalistischer Geist" and "Berufsidee". I am wary of providing English translations because Schwenkter's analysis includes problems with English as well as German texts.

The chapters on Poland and Russia are more maximal as there is something of a two-way relationship. Weber experienced the "Polish" world through military service in Polish speaking and his work on east Elbian agrarian problems. He learnt Russian following the 1905 revolution and published on this and the 1917 revolutions. However, there was no significant reception by Polish or Russian scholars. The communist period froze out "bourgeois" intellectuals. So the reception of Weber is, like the Middle East, largely a post-1990 affair.

Bucholc outlines Weber's depiction of Polish agrarian labourers as inferior to their German counterparts and a threat to Germanism, and also his wartime advocacy of a Polish state. In both cases it is the German national interest that animates Weber. Bucholc argues that the post-1990 reception of Weber ignored in favour of "big" issues such as sociology of religion and modernisation. Bucholc concludes that paying attention to Weber's writings on Poles is intellectually worthwhile because it raises issues about cultural sociology (do Polish agrarian labourers respond to market conditions differently from Germans and, if so, why?) and how conflict in modern times is based on conflicting world views as much as material interests.

There were few Weber translations into Russian before the Stalinist shutters came down. Weber's own pessimistic views on the prospects for liberal democracy and

economic modernity in the wake of revolutions are well known and need no further consideration. They are taken up again after 1990. Dahlmann does not consider recent western work on Putin who can be seen experimenting with each of Weber's modes of legitimation: traditional (a new Tsar), legal-rational (elected parliament, constitution), charismatic (Russian alpha male). I do not know if Russian scholars have explored this. (See Steve Hanson, *Post-Imperial Democracies : Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, 2010).

Scaff's chapter is at the maximal end of the spectrum. Weber was fascinated by Protestant and capitalist exuberance before 1904. His visit then intensified and enriched this fascination. Much of his subsequent work – on Protestant sects, voluntary associations, mass democracy, the impact of dynamic capitalism on the non-capitalist world, racial and ethnic inequality and the sheer scale of capitalist production: all left a deep impression on Weber.

Scaff suggests this helps explain why US scholars were amongst the first to translate Weber. By the 1930s there was a nucleus of Weber scholars at the University of Chicago, reinforced by German emigres. During the Cold War modernisation theory with its argument that “inner-directed” personalities could transform the world, especially if guided by values oriented to the market economy and liberal democracy, found in Weber, especially the Weber of Talcott Parsons, an “answer” to marxism and Soviet communism.

The last two chapters return us from the world's reception of Weber to Weber's reception of the world. Bruhns looks at how Weber's experience of the first world war changed his ideas; Hübinger with how Weber understood “the world” through the lens of a problem-oriented “universal history”. Hübinger's arguments are novel and important as he treats Weber as a significant example of the modern intellectual who is acutely self-observant and aware of history as the key to understanding modernity but also constantly changing with modernity itself, with its plurality of perspectives. What I found especially striking is how Weber's own ideas and moods become ever-more intense, the overlap between the biographical and the theoretical more overt, and his already complex writing increasingly “knotty” as earlier concerns are overlaid with new layers of meaning. Thus to his pre-1900 anxiety about a politically immature German middle class is added explorations of emergent mass society and politics which is overlaid by critiques of the wartime government, and completed with his exploration of alternative political and economic scenarios following Germany's defeat. This culminates in his unpublished lectures on “Staatsoziologie” delivered in the final months of his life as well as his last published writings on sociology of religion and basic sociological concepts.

The intensity and the biographical and intellectual overlap of these last years is also in Bruhns. He quotes near identical phrases from Weber's wartime correspondence and his journalism or academic writing from the same time. To take one example, *Zwischenbetrachtung*, a reflection inserted into sociology of religion distinguishes between the comradeship of soldiers and the brotherhood of religious communities. This recurs in his letters of condolence on the deaths of young soldiers whose families he knew and in journalism where he asks what are these men dying for and why.

As Weber's life reached its intense climax the passion he invested in his politics and his science, the complex overlaps of experience of the world and efforts

to understand those experience and that world, made it virtually impossible to maintain the tense distinctions for which he so powerfully argued. It is these unresolved contradictions which account for the continuing and ever-changing reception of Weber by “the world”.

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September 2016.