The International Turn in Intellectual History

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Abstract
For most of the life-span of the historical profession, in most parts of the world, historians were committed to methodological nationalism. Like most other social scientists, they assumed that self-identifying nations, organized politically into states, were the primary objects of historical study. Their main tasks were accordingly to narrate how nation-states emerged, how they developed, and how they interacted with one another. Even those historians whose work deliberately crossed the borders of national histories worked along similar lines. For example, diplomatic historians used national archives to reconstruct relations among states. Historians of immigration tracked the arrival and assimilation of new peoples into existing states. And imperial historians studied empires as the extensions of national histories, even though they generally maintained a strict separation between the histories of metropolitan states (mostly in Europe) and their colonies (mostly outside Europe). In all these fields, the matter of history concerned stability not mobility, what was fixed but not what was mixed.

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