

Mapping methodological nationalism in Middle Eastern studies: Toward a transnational understanding of the 2011 Arab uprisings?

This article assesses the prevalence and implications of the research foci methodological nationalism, methodological globalism, and transnationalism in publications regarding the 2011 Arab uprisings. We propose a new typology that contrasts state-centered methodological nationalism with the cosmopolitan lens of methodological globalism as two opposite ends of a spectrum. Transnationalism is conceptualized in between these two, due to its sensitivity to multiple localities and cross-border variables. We compare the merits and limits of these three research foci through quantitative research and content analysis. Our systematic review of one decade of scholarship on the Arab uprisings suggests a consistent trend toward the dominance of methodologically nationalist research approaches in Middle Eastern studies. This is surprising because the multilocal nature of the Arab uprisings suggests that it can best be analyzed transnationally. This article, therefore, critically discusses the methodological nationalist bias to better understand and illustrate the trend. We conclude by highlighting some comparative advantages offered by transnational perspectives on actors and processes in the Arab uprisings and its aftermath.