Sinop Üniversitesi
Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi
Araştırma Makalesi
ISSN 2547-989X

Sinop Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 9 (1), 726-774
Geliş Tarihi:26.01.2025 Kabul Tarihi:28.05.2025
Yayın: 2025 Yayın Tarihi:31.05.2025
https://doi.org/10.30561/sinopusd.1627431
https://dergipark.org.tr/sinopusd

A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: INSIGHTS ACROSS ECONOMICS, BUSINESS FINANCE AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Abstract

This study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to understand the interdisciplinary structure and thematic trends in the international relations literature. Articles published in the Web of Science (WoS) database between 1994 and January 2025 with "international relations" in their titles were analyzed. Findings reveal deep connections between the international relations literature and economic, political, and social processes. Notably, concepts like "foreign direct investment" and "global governance" occupy a central place in the literature. While Western dominance persists, contributions from actors like China and India are increasingly significant. The thematic diversity in the literature highlights the necessity of addressing international relations within an interdisciplinary framework. This study evaluates the current state of the literature and aims to offer a new perspective on the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches within the discipline

Keywords: International Relations, Bibliometric Analysis, Foreign Direct Investment, Economic Globalization, Global Governance

Uluslararası İlişkilerde Bibliyometrik Bir Analiz: Ekonomi, İşletme Finansmanı ve Sosyal Bilimler Üzerine Çıkarımlar

Öz

Bu çalışma, uluslararası ilişkiler literatürünün disiplinler arası yapısını ve tematik eğilimlerini anlamak amacıyla kapsamlı bir bibliyometrik analiz gerçekleştirmiştir. Web of Science (WoS) veri tabanında 1994 - Ocak 2025 yılları arasında yayımlanmış ve "international relations" ifadesini içeren makaleler incelenmiştir. Bulgular, uluslararası ilişkiler literatürünün ekonomik, politik ve sosyal süreçlerle derin bağlarını ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle "doğrudan yabancı yatırımlar" ve "küresel yönetişim" gibi kavramların literatürde merkezi bir yere sahip olduğu, Batı merkezli akademik baskınlığın yanı sıra Çin ve Hindistan gibi aktörlerin artan katkılarının dikkat çekici olduğu

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belirlenmiştir. Literatürdeki tematik çeşitlilik, uluslararası ilişkilerin disiplinler arası bir bağlamda ele alınmasının gerekliliğini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, literatürün mevcut durumunu değerlendirerek, disiplinin teorik çerçevelerine ve metodolojik yaklaşımlarına dair yeni bir perspektif sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası İlişkiler, Bibliyometrik Analiz, Doğrudan Yabancı Yatırımlar, Ekonomik Küreselleşme, Küresel Yönetişim

Introduction

The discipline of international relations increasingly adopts an interdisciplinary approach to comprehend the complexity of global dynamics and analyze their multifaceted dimensions. The intricate interconnectedness of political, economic, and social processes has expanded the scope of both theoretical and applied research in the field of international relations. Phenomena such as globalization, financial integration, foreign direct investments, and economic growth highlight that international relations is not merely confined to political boundaries but is also deeply intertwined with economic and social systems. However, this complex structure has necessitated an in-depth analysis of the existing thematic trends and research orientations within the literature.

In this context, the breadth and diversity of the literature necessitate systematic mapping in international relations studies and a deeper understanding of the discipline's interactions with economic, financial, and social dimensions. Contemporary research in international relations extends beyond state-centric analyses, focusing on issues such as economic growth, financial globalization, and social inequality, thereby enriching the scope of the discipline. However, this thematic diversity underscores the need for a systematic analysis of trends, interdisciplinary connections, and the fundamental orientations within the field of international relations. In light of these gaps, previous bibliometric meta-analyses offer valuable points of departure.

Bibliometric studies specifically targeting the evolution of the international relations discipline, such as those by Kristensen (2015) and Maliniak et al. (2007),

have provided valuable insights into the thematic shifts, methodological preferences, and regional disparities within the field. Incorporating such meta-analyses into the current study framework strengthens the evaluation of how economic and social dimensions are progressively integrated into international relations research.

The primary objective of this research is to understand the thematic trends, interdisciplinary interactions, and future directions within the international relations literature. Specifically, themes such as economic globalization, capital mobility, and social inequality are evaluated for their central role in international relations studies. In this context, the study aims not only to analyze the existing literature but also to offer new perspectives on the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches of the discipline.

This need is derived from the necessity of further investigation of the relationship between the discipline and its economic and social dimensions, while better understanding how these dimensions feed into the theories of international relations. The objective of the paper is to develop the scope of thematic diversity in the international relations literature and define the dynamic structure of the discipline more clearly. In this respect, the research aims to provide a roadmap for the academic future of the discipline by offering theoretical and practical contributions through an assessment of the current state of the literature.

This study is designed to analyze the interdisciplinary structure and thematic diversity of the international relations literature. Conducted through the Web of Science (WoS) database, the research examines works in which the term "international relations" appears in article titles, focusing on the primary areas of this discipline. The scope of the literature has been narrowed to the categories of "Economics," "Business Finance," "Management," and "Social Sciences Interdisciplinary" to investigate the intersection of international relations with economic and social dimensions. This methodological approach not only maps existing trends in the discipline but also provides a robust foundation for

understanding how international relations integrate with economic and financial processes.

This approach aligns with Robert Cox's (1987) assertion that transformations in production structures fundamentally reshape world orders, highlighting the necessity of integrating economic and political analyses in understanding international relations. Similarly, Robert Gilpin's (1987) work on international political economy underscores how economic forces, particularly globalization and capital flows, are central to shifts in state power and systemic change. These theoretical perspectives frame the study's exploration of interdisciplinary connections within the field.

1. Theoritical Framework: Interdisciplinary Approachs in International Relations

Scholarship in international relations (IR) became more interdisciplinary with a special focus more recently as a reaction to complexity brought about by globalization, economic integration, and sociopolitical interdependence. Hitherto dominated by political theories of state action, IR has been compelled to broaden its scholarly scope to consider economic, societal, and cultural concerns with its demand for an enlarged theoretical framework. Among them were Keohane & Nye (2012), who were among the earliest scholars to conceptualize this with their vision of complex interdependence theory, citing that power relations in an international system globalized could now no longer be explained by military capability but must be addressed through an understanding of economic relations, transnational actors, and institutional networks.

Parallel to this trend, constructivist theorists, led by Wendt (1999), emphasized the centrality of social structures, collective identities, and shared norms for understanding state behavior. Wendt's statement "anarchy is what states make of it" emphasized the socially constructed international system, deconstructing materialist impulses of conventional theories. This reinforced the necessity of

understanding IR through economic as well as political perspectives but also through sociocultural approaches as a priority for interdisciplinary research.

Extending the theoretical range even wider, feminist and critical perspectives provided new interpretations of international processes. Tickner (2001) maintained that conventional theories of IR excluded important social variables such as gender, identity, and power imbalances. Feminist interpretation refocused discussions of security, democratization, and globalization by stressing relational ontologies as a means of promoting more inclusive methodological frameworks. Such perspectives highlighted that global political frameworks could never be adequately comprehended independently of their imbrication within wider social relations.

The deep changes wrought by globalization have only strengthened the need for interdisciplinarity. Held & McGrew (2007a) argued that processes of globalization move beyond state-focused analysis, establishing complex webs of economic, political, and social relations that reconstitute governance mechanisms at various levels. Their work depicted how IR scholarship requires interdisciplinarity with theories from sociology, economics, and critical studies to decipher the new realities of a "shrinking world."

Bibliometric evaluations of the IR discipline similarly reveal a trend toward interdisciplinary engagement. Breuning et. al., (2005) demonstrated that while core IR journals still display methodological conservatism, there is a growing, albeit uneven, incorporation of diverse thematic and theoretical approaches. This evidences a gradual shift toward recognizing that IR's most pressing challenges—such as global inequality, climate change, and transnational governance—require multifaceted analytical lenses.

Overall, the theoretical development of IR demonstrates a growing recognition of its interdisciplinarity. The introduction of perspectives from economics, sociology, as well as from critical theory, not only expands IR's scope of

inquiry but also improves its ability to deal with the interdependent complexities of global issues.

2. Method

The aim of this study is not to evaluate or test theoretical models directly, but to map the interdisciplinary scope of international relations research across economics, finance, and social sciences by analyzing articles categorized accordingly in the WoS database. This paper applies a bibliometric method to analyze international relations literature within an interdisciplinary context. Bibliometric analysis is a method that, through quantitative data, sets out to examine the thematic structure, key trends, and theoretical connections of the literature under consideration. The objective of the study is to analyze the interaction of international relations literature with its economic, financial, and social dimensions. Interest indicators were the analysis of the development of publications by years, relations of keywords, citation bursts, and collaboration networks of authors. R-Studio software was employed in data analysis since it is among the most efficient tools in which the processing and visualization of data could be effectively made in a systematized way using bibliometrics.

2.1. Sample

The sample is composed of those articles published between 1994 and January 27, 2025, indexed by the WoS database, and whose title clearly states the word expression "international relations". In the case of this study, only the journal peer-review category has been selected to be part of the sample. Document types like books, reviews, and conference proceedings were excluded from the sample. A second refinement was carried out by selecting only those items listed in the WoS categories "Economics", "Business Finance", "Management", and "Social Sciences Interdisciplinary". An interdisciplinary approach with regard to the literature on international relations thus requires that precedence should be given to its economic, financial, and social dimensions. The final dataset is made up of 218 articles in total,

hence giving the thematic diversity of the literature a strong basis for comprehensive analysis in accordance with the set objectives of the study.

The selection of 1994 as the starting year is based on the regular availability of the "International Relations" category indexing in the Web of Science Core Collection from that year onward. Data collection was finalized on January 27, 2025. Articles categorized as "early access" were included to ensure that the most recent contributions to the field were comprehensively captured.

2.2. Data Collection

Data for this research were collected from the Core Collection database available in the Web of Science, WoS, by adding the phrase "international relations" while setting the intelligence to focus on the title in the documents found. The filtering process resulted in a total record of 8,216 articles published. In a bid to give effect to said focus, only papers classified as article-type publications meant that the papers trimmed down their dataset to only 3,638 documents: Further refinement, this time using the WoS categories, reduced it to "Economics" 77, "Business Finance" 8, "Management" 13, and "Social Sciences Interdisciplinary" 125, providing a final dataset of 218 articles. This provided the opportunity for a more fine-grained analysis of the interdisciplinary dimensions in the international relations literature.

2.3. Data Processing and Analytical Techniques

Prior to analysis, the dataset underwent a data cleaning process, including duplicate removal, document type filtering (excluding reviews, conference proceedings, and books), and thesaurus editing to harmonize keywords. Bibliometric techniques were applied systematically to map the thematic and conceptual structures of the field. Co-word analysis was employed to identify the main thematic clusters based on keyword co-occurrences (Callon et al., 1983). Burst detection analysis uncovered emerging tendencies by highlighting keywords that saw an abrupt growth in frequency over time (Kleinberg, 2003). Strategic diagrams were utilized to map thematic centrality and impact within the research domain (Cobo et al., 2011). Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) generated a conceptual

structure map by grouping thematically interrelated keywords (Greenacre, 1984). All analyses were carried out in RStudio using the Bibliometrix package and were in line with current practice in bibliometric studies (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were downloaded as Bib-Text from WoS database and imported into R-Studio software. Furthermore, the R-Studio platform was initialized through setting up necessary software infrastructures for analyzing the bibliometrics. For easy installation of applications based on GitHub, an initial "remotes" package was installed using install.packages("remotes"). The widely used "Bibliometrix" package was installed using the given command: remotes::install_github("massimoaria/bibliometrix"). For its user-friendly operation, all analyses were carried out using "biblioshiny()" module within Bibliometrix.

This process was initiated by uploading the .bib format file into the biblioshiny interface, where the citation data were studied along with author details, publication journals, keywords, and temporal distributions. Bibliometric analysis revealed a detailed basis for ascertaining thematic trends, interdisciplinary connections, and scientific collaboration networks within the literature.

Specific analytical techniques were associated with various visual representations throughout the study. Figure 1 visualizes the co-word network analysis, mapping key conceptual relationships. Figures 2 and 3 represent the thematic evolution analysis, illustrating the temporal shifts in major research themes. Figure 4 uses burst detection results to track emerging keywords over time. Figures 5 and 6 present thematic impact and centrality maps derived from strategic diagrams. Figure 7 displays a conceptual structure map based on multiple correspondence analysis.

3. Findings

The findings of the study are structured into two main parts. First, the descriptive characteristics of the dataset are explored, including publication trends, geographical distribution, and thematic profiles. Subsequently, a deeper analysis of

thematic structures and theoretical linkages within the field of international relations is provided.

3.1. Descriptive Findings from the Dataset

A review of the literature that was included in the study indicates that, out of 218 studies, the most cited research fell into five main areas of heading: International Business Strategies and Cooperation, Economic Security and Geopolitics, Financial Crises and Economic Stability, Global Trade and Economic Cooperation, and Global Financial Trends. These headings focus on the various subfields of business, economics, and international relations where their sheets overlap to provide a complete framework for understanding and tackling global economic dynamics. International business strategy focuses on how businesses position themselves through global value chains by what means with a view to developing competitive advantage; economic security and geopolitics would refer to state policies to implement sustainable economic growth and maintain strategic interests, while financial crisis and economic stability refer to the vulnerabilities of the global economy and global trade with economic cooperation emphasized in international business relations. Lastly, global financial trends review the impacts of digitalization and globalization in terms of business models and the transformation of economic structures. This broad perspective enables a deep analysis of the research within the literature.

The dynamics between international business strategies, businesses, economics, and finance are very complex. It is in this perspective that the studies within the literature set their focus on global value chains, economic security, financial crises, and new trends in global markets. Mendes (2020) analyzed the shift in multinational enterprises of the ICT industry during the era of digitalization and identified a few challenges for developing nations to engage themselves with such networks. Similarly, Ociepka & Arendarska, 2021 explained how the Cultural Diplomacy of the European Union influences economic growth by analyzing the influence of these networks on trade and investments in periods of crisis. Luo et al.,

2024 evaluated the impact of supply chain networks on financial performance from two angles - through the perspective of social capital theory and systemic risk perspective.

In this respect, economic security becomes a significant determinant in the stances of states on international relations. Drelich-Skulska & Domiter (2020) discussed methodological aspects of approaches to economic security in conditions of globalization and presented the traditional and set criteria of its contemporary paradigms. Motowidlak & Motowidlak (2024) examined to what degree Poland and Germany's economic dependence on Russia determined their different attitudes towards the relations with this country. In addition, this research by Xie in 2023 estimated the effect of geopolitical risks and international relations on tourism inflows to China, highlighting the contribution of inbound tourism to economic growth.

The literature also dwells on issues related to financial crises and global economic stability. Against this background, Kirshner (2014) evaluated the strategic relevance of international monetary diplomacy in light of the global financial crisis, with specific focus on the policies embraced and their actual performance in relation to achieving revival from the financial crisis. In this respect, Fuentes (2012) equally berated neoliberal economic models, although he argued that paradigms alternative to the latter must be actively pursued or embraced if sustainable development is to be supported. These studies detail the aftershock policies of financial crises on the sustainability of the world's economy.

Another important dimension of international relations refers to global trade and economic cooperation. Baena-Rojas & Herrero-Olarte (2020) researched the shift from PTA to FTA and indicated how the dependencies in trade determine economic policies. Woo & Verdier (2020) estimated the various impacts of the economic sanctions and incentives of different political regimes within the light of game theory, considering conditional influences on democracies and autocracies. It

is this type of inquiry that gives us valuable lessons regarding how to conceptualize the nature of international trade and cooperation.

Global financial trends are also prominently discussed in literature. Meyer & Li (2022) discussed disruptions due to digital transformation and anti-globalization in multinational business strategy and pointed out how business models designed to accommodate those transitions acquired significant relevance. Ashraf (2023) discussed American decline in world financial structures and assessed the impact of emerging financial technologies in relation to it. These works provide an insightful framework for comprehending the economic and business implications of global financial trends.

In general, the literature in this review is inclined towards highlighting the interrelated concepts that include international business strategy, economic security, financial crises, global trade, and financial trends that would determine some of the significant viewpoints towards the various dynamics of the world economy. By investigating the positioning of enterprises in global value chains, the interaction between economic security and geopolitical stability, and strategic responses to financial crises, the reviewed studies together contribute to a better understanding of sustainable economic development. Further, insights into the transformative effects of digitalization and globalization on financial trends provide a forward-looking perspective, enhancing the theoretical and practical framework for navigating complex global challenges. Put altogether, these works give a complete base for understanding and developing international economic and business relations.

3.2. Thematic and Theoretical Findings

The identification of 218 articles that were published between the years 1994 and January 2025 shows a decreasing trend in article production, with an annual growth rate of -2.21%, reflecting a declining interest or a possible saturation in the field. This might mean that the field reached a relative saturation, that the priorities in research within the discipline have changed, or that the interest of researchers has generally shifted to other areas.

Contributed by a total of 491 different authors, coupled with the existence of 100 single-authored contributions, this fact demonstrates that this literature is research done collaboratively within the sphere of this field. An average of 2.04 authors per article suggests a notable degree of collaborative research activity within the field. However, the presence of multiple authors does not necessarily imply interdisciplinary collaboration, as authors may originate from similar disciplinary backgrounds. Further, an international collaboration rate of 31.34% indicates the importance of this field at an international level and reflects the prevalence of cross-border interactions among researchers.

The fact that 738 different keywords were used in the studies underlines the thematic richness of the international relations literature and the multidimensionality of the themes that have been tackled within the framework of this field. That is indicative of the complexity of the discipline and its articulation with several subfields. Besides, the presence of 12,860 references underlines a great rapport with previously conducted research and attachment to the available literature.

The average number of 27.35 citations per article shows that works within the international relations literature have had a great impact within the scientific community and that topics in this field have remained relevant over time. Moreover, the fact that the average age of the articles is 10.1 years indicates that studies in this domain have a long-term influence and gain value over time. These findings underscore both the depth and the enduring relevance of the international relations literature.

Figure 1. *Network Analysis of Keywords in International Relations and Economic Globalization Research*

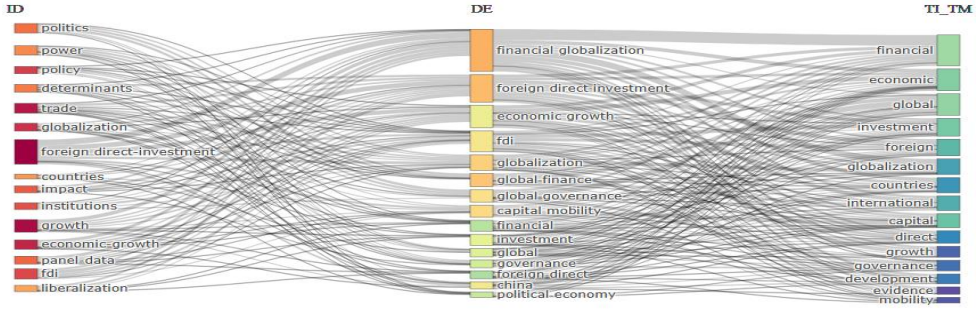


Figure 1 is visualizing thematic clusters derived from co-word analysis, which captures ideas that coappear in article keywords frequently (Callon et. al., 1983). Clustering was conducted using the Louvain algorithm, maximizing modularity to identify distinct thematic communities in the dataset. Keywords of high frequency like "globalization," "foreign direct investment," and "governance" constituted central nodes of these clusters.

The following map illustrates intricate relationships between major international relations themes, expressed both in article titles (TI_TM) and extensive descriptions (DE), using those themes' sizes and line densities to reveal valuable information about what is prioritized in the literature as well as these themes' degree of interaction.

The position of 'foreign direct investment' at the center of ID-, DE-, and TI_TM- categories reflects the idea's significance as an underlying theme in international relations studies. This result is in line with Dunning's (1988) Eclectic Paradigm, accepting that FDI is an important mechanism of global economic integration and multinational strategy-making. This is an interpretation based on current studies (Dunning, 1988) and not a direct result of the dataset.

On the one hand, Dunning emphasizes that not only is FDI of great significance to economic growth but it's also an indispensable instrument to enable a multinational enterprise to make global strategy. The interdependencies of FDI with economic growth and financial globalization are well established in the

literature, where FDI is reflected as both an outcome of globalization and as an impetus of globalization. Alfaro et al. (2004) contend that FDI drives long-term economic growth by means of knowledge spillovers and accumulations of capital, while Prasad et al. (2007) highlight its utility in integrating developing economies into international financial systems. In this context, capital flows form not just economic growth, but also international financial integration. For Stiglitz (2002), FDI is beneficial to the economy of advanced countries, yet it is also an instrument for sustainable development of developing countries in terms of SDGs. Following Stiglitz's (2002) thesis, the literature does not just measure FDI as an economic growth tool, but also as an important instrument to address global inequalities and achieve success in terms of sustainable development goals of emerging economies.

In the literature, FDI is often regarded as a vital instrument for regional development, particularly in developing countries, where it supports infrastructure, job creation, and technology transfer. As noted by Borensztein et al. (1998), FDI contributes more to growth in countries with higher human capital levels, thereby acting as a regional development lever. Similarly, UNCTAD (2020) highlights how FDI is integrated into national development strategies across the Global South. This again underlines the fact that FDI is a multi-dimensional phenomenon researched in literature not only for its economic consequences but also for its political and social repercussions.

If this is not the case, globalization will be more fully seen as one of the foundational frameworks in the ID, DE, and TI_TM categories of international relations literature. The works by theorists such as Robertson (2000) and Giddens (1990) develop the idea of globalization as far as making it clear that it is indeed an economic process but concurrently a profound socio-cultural and political transformation. Following Robertson's (2000) framework, the study acknowledges globalization as a multidimensional phenomenon that interweaves economic liberalization with cultural homogenization and political restructuring, thereby reinforcing the interdisciplinary nature of international relations research.

In this context, the various connections that globalization in the visual creates support the broad perspective of the literature. The multifaceted linkages associated with globalization observed in the dataset mirror the broader academic consensus that globalization must be analyzed through its economic, political, and sociocultural dimensions. Scholarly work by Giddens (1990) and Scholte (2005) underscores that globalization is not a unidirectional economic process but a multidimensional transformation affecting institutions, governance, and identities. The way "policy" and "trade" concepts are combined with "global-finance" and "global-governance" in the DE column underlines how global policy and trade are interwoven with financial governance in the literature. The prominence of the 'global governance' theme reflects the increasing role of institutional cooperation and regulatory mechanisms in shaping international relations. This parallels Held & McGrew's (2007b) assertion that globalization reorganized governance beyond the state and demands multilevel institutional arrangements that include state as well as non-state actors. The term 'global governance' as an overarching theme signifies an accentuation of institutional collaboration within international life in accordance with Held and McGrew's (2007b) definition of globalization as an activity demanding multactor governance beyond the state. On top of this perspective, Held & McGrew (2007b) have articulated that it provides an indispensable framework to comprehend sophisticated global governance systems and the role played by non-state entities within them.

The linkage of DE theme terms like 'investment' and 'capital mobility' to ID column theme terms such as 'foreign direct investment' and 'economic growth' directly illustrates the implications of capital mobility on economic growth and foreign investments. Capital mobility and economic growth are deeply intertwined with financial globalization processes. As Rodrik (2011) argues, although capital flows promote economic integration and growth, they also exacerbate systemic risks, such as financial crises and widening income disparities—especially in countries with weak institutional structures. Similarly, Reinhart and Rogoff (2009) document

how excessive capital mobility has historically contributed to financial instability in both emerging and developed economies. From Rodrik's (2011) analysis, capital mobility is perceived in a dual role: as a performing force for economic growth and as one of the risk factors which accelerates the pace of the spread of financial crises. Although the literature points out that one of the factors leading to the transmission of crises is capital mobility, capital mobility is an opportunity to be taken advantage of in attaining sustainable development. In addition to investment flows, capital mobility could be considered an important tool for studying the effects of global financial regulations on the international system.

The intersection of terms such as "political economy," "China," and "governance" reflects a growing scholarly interest in the expanding role of regional actors like China in shaping global governance frameworks. As Shambaugh (2015) and Callahan (2016) argue, China's rising influence—particularly through initiatives such as the Belt and Road—has prompted a rethinking of how non-Western actors contribute to and reshape international institutional dynamics. The same Shambaugh underlines the growth of Chinese influence as one of the growing powers within regional and global political economies[1]. The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the most concrete manifestations of this influence in changing international structures of governance. It is important to note that this association is made as a literature-based contextual interpretation (Shambaugh, 2015), and not as a direct keyword finding in the dataset.

Figure 1, therefore, helps bring out the thematic diversity in international relations literature and how such themes interlink. The international relations literature increasingly acknowledges the dynamic structure of global relations, shaped by intersecting economic, political, and social dimensions. This interdisciplinary approach is reaffirmed by scholars including Cox (1987) and Keohane & Nye (2012), who believe that global relations are now driven less by

[1] David Shambaugh, "China's Soft-Power Push: The Search for Respect", Foreign Affairs, 94(4), 2015, pp. 99–107.

state-based political factors but are strongly rooted in transnational economic interdependence and social structures. The increasing focus on norm-based approaches in international governance indicates the dynamic nature of international relations and is in agreement with Wendt's (1999) constructivist perception that international structures exist as socially constructed structures based on collective ideas, norms, and identities. Economic globalization is a major theme that is in close association with neoliberal theories based on liberalizing markets, deregulation, and international capital mobility. Scholars including Harvey (2005) and Steger (2017) believe that neoliberalism's global expansion has strongly impacted international economic policy structures in terms of advancing transnational economic integration over redistributive mechanisms. Marxist and critical approaches have issues surrounding global governance and political economy as core concerns and highlight persistent structural disparities and power concentration in world structures. As articulated by Cox (1987) and Gill (1995), these approaches challenge mainstream IR theories by foregrounding how global capitalism and institutional power reinforce uneven development and hierarchy in international relations. Furthermore, elements of constructivist thought emerge in the emphasis on the evolving normative frameworks within international governance. Studies by scholars such as Dunning (1988), Robertson (1992), and Held and McGrew (2007) provide foundational insights that help map how these interdisciplinary and theoretical intersections have shaped the development of international relations literature. These connections suggest that the literature does much more than just map existing themes but also provides a robust foundation for understanding how IR theories interact with interdisciplinary approaches and guide the evolution of the discipline.

Figure 2. *Interwoven Economic, Political, and Social Dimensions in International Relations Literature: A Word Cloud Analysis*



Figure 2 displays the thematic evolution derived from longitudinal co-word analysis (Callon et al., 1983). The analysis segmented the dataset into time periods to track changes in thematic focus over time. By observing the emergence, persistence, or decline of keyword clusters, the temporal dynamics of international relations research themes were mapped. This approach highlights how certain interdisciplinary topics have gained or diminished importance within the field.

Figure 2 highlights how some of the dimensions-economic, political, and social-overlap in the international relations literature. The frequencies of the words along with their contexts, as evident from this visualization, can present a route by which an analysis may be conducted to see what themes are emphasized in the literature and further conceptualize inter-linkages among those themes. The increasing interdisciplinarity of international relations research—particularly across economic and political dimensions—has been noted by several scholars. According to Keohane & Nye (2012), the evolution of complex interdependence necessitates analytical frameworks that go beyond traditional political boundaries, while Tickner (2001) emphasizes the integration of broader social and economic variables in IR theory.

This emphasis on the link between "foreign direct investment" and "financial globalization" is insistent, the relation between foreign direct investments and global financial processes being inseparable. It forms one of the bases of the contemporary global system that has been consolidated through neoliberal economic policies. Existing research indicates that increased FDI contributes significantly to financial

integration and stimulates global trade and regional partnerships. For example, Alfaro et al. (2004) demonstrate that FDI fosters economic development through capital mobility and spillover effects, while Baldwin (2016) highlights its role in reinforcing regional production networks and deep trade integration. The frequent emphasis, together with these themes, on concepts like "capital mobility" and "economic growth" places the impact of capital flows on economic growth as a central research area within the literature on international relations. In this context, one finds a growing interest in how capital mobility impacts not only economic growth but also foreign policy priorities of the state.

The linkage between "global governance," "political economy," and "global finance" gives proof of global governance processes' decisive influence on economic policy and financial regulations. This can be underlined by a substantial literature, most of which focused on the period since Bretton Woods to study how a form of global financial governance has been instituted through regulatory functions of states and international organizations within the financial system. This relationship underscores the regulatory role of states and international organizations in shaping the architecture of global finance. Underhill (2008) contends that global financial governance structures owe their legitimacy to the interplay among private power and public authority through a successive series of claims and counter-claims regarding their respective spheres and prohibitions; they draw attention to the leading role played by states and international organizations in constructing and consolidating structures for governance worldwide. Inclusion of the "China" and "European Union" in visual highlights their role and impact towards governance at regional as well as global level. Examples in here about economic initiative by China e.g., Belt and Road Initiative, and European Union’s policies for sustainable finance illustrate diverse dynamics that accompany global governance process and illustrate varying nature of complexity in global financial governance. These examples about regional concerns intermingling with global regulatory structures highlight changing nature of complexity in global financial governance. But allude to broader literature

(Shambaugh, 2015) and aren't extracted specifically from the analysed set of datasets. Regional initiatives like that of China's Belt and Road Initiative and European Union's regulatory on sustainable finance increasingly frame governance structures all over the world. According to Zürn (2018), global governance is being transformed by so-called "spokesperson epistemologies" through a process in which authority is reconstructed through dialogue among regional powers, international bodies and non-state actors. This is an international political economy broad transformation in nature through which power and norm production is not restricted to traditional Western framework anymore.

The occurrence in the word cloud of "inequality" and "tax competition" indicates that the literature discusses also side effects of economic globalization. Cross-border economic policy is influenced by tax competition and is associated with rising income inequality. Genschel & Schwarz (2011), as suggested, argue that competing tax regimes tend to lead to a "race to the bottom" in corporation taxes, denying states revenues for redistribution purposes. Cobham & Janský (2018), too, demonstrate that tax competition and avoidance disproportionately advantage transnational firms and increase global inequality. These concerns in international relations literature occur relatively often in contexts of anti-globalization movement and social justice policy. Economic inequalities are becoming more political and social determinants in international contexts. According to Oatley (2011), global financial asymmetries reinforce dependency structures between advanced and emerging economies. Similarly, Kentikelenis & Seabrooke (2017) show how financial governance institutions contribute to reproducing global inequalities through policy conditionalities and regulatory bias.

This emphasis on social inequality aligns with Cynthia Enloe's (1990) feminist critique of international relations, which stresses the necessity of uncovering the often-overlooked social structures and marginalized perspectives embedded in global processes. Bibliometric trends suggest a growing scholarly interest in the societal dimensions of international relations. Recent studies such as Bueger &

Gadinger (2015) emphasize how practice theory introduces everyday social practices and norms into IR, while Epstein (2013) highlights the growing inclusion of marginal voices and social critique within mainstream IR discourse.

In this overall word cloud, although the economic themes stand foregrounded within the international relations literature, the latter is highly interlinked with political and social dimensions. That means the discipline has to be analyzed through global processes and interrelations among actors from the state-centered approaches. The literature adopted an interdisciplinary approach through the analysis of the linkages between globalization processes, regional actors, and social outcomes. This context underlines the multidimensional structure of international relations, highlighting how economic analyses interlink with politico-structural and social justice issues, therefore underlining the breadth of both the theoretical and practical perspectives of this discipline.

Figure 3. *Temporal Evolution of Key Themes in International Relations Literature: Economics, Finance, and Social Sciences Perspective (1994-2025)*

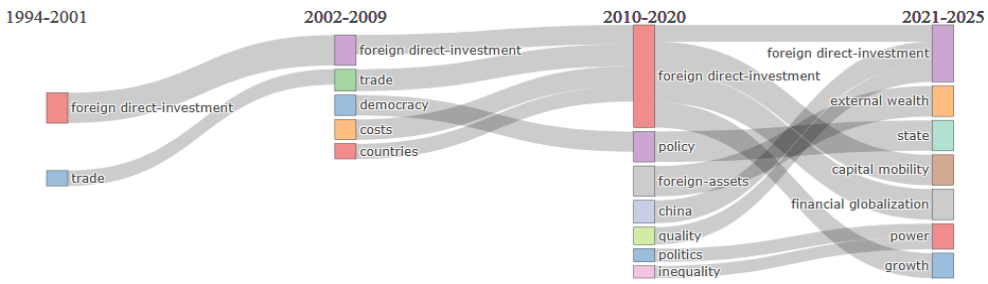


Figure 3 illustrates the thematic evolution of international relations literature based on longitudinal co-word analysis (Callon et al., 1983). This method divides the dataset into various time periods and follows up on the persistence, transformation, or erosion of major thematic clusters. This allows for thematic continuity and shifts to be visualized over time and gives an indication of how interdisciplinary priorities in the field evolved over time.

Figure 3 highlights how international relations literature themes evolve over the period 1994-2025 and how it also indicates how its evolution maps onto

structural changes in the international system. Thematic changes over time in international relations literature do more than reflect shifting research orientations; they also serve as disciplinary reactions to global political-economic changes. Biermann and Dingwerth aver (2004), for instance, that attention by scholars normally tracks shifting global governance concerns while Ruggie (2004) contends that times of systemic change necessitate theoretical creativity and widening thematic inquiry in IR scholarship. The thematic changes in international relations literature reflect widening intersections between normative and empirical approaches. Checkel (2001), for instance, points out that increasingly in IR studies empirical observation is being merged into normative theorizing, particularly in fields like global governance and constructivism. Acharya (2011), too, indicates how norm concerns such as fairness, identity, and legitimacy increasingly get treated with empirical methodologies rooted in regional contexts.

The decade 1994-2001 is an age of outright domination of literature by economic relations with "trade" and "foreign direct investment" emerging as theme words par excellence. The dominance of FDI in literature highlights the dominance of capital mobility and catalytic influence of free trade on economic progress. As Schneider & Frey (1985) argue, FDI contributes to growth through technology transfer, efficiency gains, and increased market competition, while Baldwin (2003) emphasizes that trade liberalization complements FDI by reinforcing transnational production networks and facilitating capital flows. During this period, the literature focused on the institutionalization of neoliberal economic policies at the international level and developed theoretical approaches to economic cooperation, mutual interdependence, and trade liberalization within this framework.

During the period 2002-2009, even though FDI kept its importance, the appearance of concepts such as "democracy," "costs," and "countries" reveals a growing interest of the literature with the impact of democratization processes on economic performance. This thematic turn aligns with a growing body of normative studies examining how political reforms—particularly democratization—interact

with economic performance in developing countries. Jensen (2003) finds that democratic institutions can reduce political risk and thus attract greater FDI inflows, while Li & Resnick (2003) show that democracy may both attract and constrain investment, depending on the institutional context and policy stability. The salience in words like "costs" and "countries" indicates more attention to micro-level studies to grasp how local contexts condition international processes. The literature of this era became more interdisciplinary and associated countries' economic interests more directly with local dynamics.

From 2010 to 2020, literature became more complex and nuanced in terms of thematic structure. As a top theme, while FDI still dominated the literature during this period, introduction of "policy," "foreign-assets," "China," and "inequality" signals more sensitivity to how policymaking and economic decisions influence international relations. The frequent mentioning of "China" throughout the decade is reflective of high-intensity research on its dominance in the global economy and its increasing political role in global affairs. The more prominent use of "inequality" in international relations literature signals more interest in economic globalization's consequences for distributive fairness and equality in international relations. Yoon (2009) argues that globalization eroded welfare provisions in developing countries more regularly than otherwise, promoting inequality and circumscribing states' ability to satisfy social risk. Bermeo & Leblang (2015), too, determine that economic globalization, and particularly foreign assistance flows and migration, can reproduce unequal power relations and raising normative issues about distributive fairness in the world system. The heterogeneity of ideas in this period is evidence of literature becoming more capable of addressing foundational concerns like power struggle in international relations, economic justice globally, and regional growth.

By the period of 2021-2025, the literature is more thematically diverse and often interdisciplinary in perspective. While FDI remains the central concept, the appearance of concepts such as "external wealth", "state", "capital mobility", and "financial globalization" suggests a growing preoccupation with the role of states in

the global financial system and the political economy implications of capital mobility. What immediately falls within sight is, first of all, the privileged place occupied by such themes as "external wealth" and "state." This corroborates the presence of an accelerated interest in abstract-theoretical research combined with certain concrete empirical observations that try to elucidate aspects like how different states use means at the economic level internationally. Secondly, distinct presence of subjects pertaining to "growth" and "power" represents a growing elaboration of such perspectives explaining tenuously changing links between levels of growth and power internationally.

Figure 3 emphasizes the large scope of thematic transformation in the international relations literature and its connection with global events. While initially the literature had focused on a narrow economic perspective, it evolved into a multi-dimensional structure, incorporating social, political, and regional dimensions. It reflects the ability of the international relations discipline to stretch its theoretical and methodological limits. Thematic richness, introduced into the visual, evokes how this literature is bound to foster deeper bonds between international relations, political economy, and social sciences in an interlinking and very dynamic way.

Figure 4. *Emerging Trends in International Relations Literature: Economic and Financial Dimensions (2000-2025)*

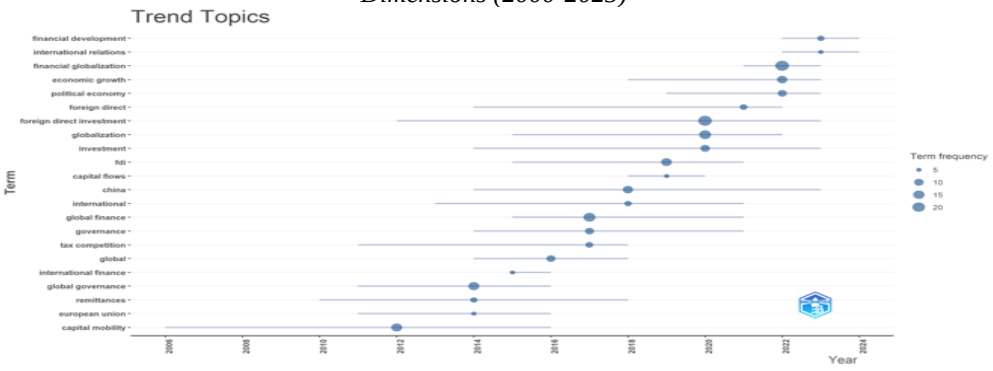


Figure 4 presents the results of burst detection analysis conducted on keywords (Kleinberg, 2003). This method identifies terms that experienced a sudden surge in usage within specific time windows. Burst detection highlights emerging research trends and

indicates moments of thematic shifts or academic attention surges, helping to capture the evolving priorities within the international relations literature.

Figure 4 pains to depict the trending topics in international relations literature since years gone by and their frequencies. The frequency and temporal shifts of these terms are substantially useful in analyzing dynamics, priorities of the literature, and reflection of global events in academic studies. These trends put the literature in a rich context to understand how it is intertwined with theoretical debates in the discipline of international relations and how it has been responsive to evolving global phenomena and scholarly discourse.

First, one notices an upsurge of some concepts since 2006 in the literature reviewed. The recurrence of the themes "foreign direct investment" and "globalization" through much of the time period reinforces the importance of such notions in describing economic integration and cooperation processes of the international system. This could also be linked to debates about neoliberal policies affecting economic integration. FDI and globalization, along with increasing economic interdependence among states, have called for new interpretations of the core assumptions of both realist and liberal theories. These themes have increasingly become focal points for discussion on how economic interconnectedness shapes state behavior and international cooperation.

The dramatic rise in mentions of "financial globalization" and "economic growth" in post-2010 studies attest to the huge influence of the 2008 global financial crisis that resulted in an upsurge of academic research into how financial systems become globalized and influence national economic outcomes as well as institutions' resilience (Moschella, 2011; Obstfeld, 2013; Helleiner, 2011). During this time, more attention began to be directed toward the relationship between financial globalization and economic growth and its implications as to what crises ultimately do to the international system. Particularly, implications of the world financial crisis in 2008 have fueled interest in studying the role of states within financial systems and their role in global governance. The paper also further brought critical political economy approaches to international relations studies, hence enabling more in-depth analysis of systemic weakness and financial power dynamics in global contexts.

The rising visibility of words such as "global finance," "global governance," and "capital mobility" in international relations analysis post-2012 highlights an increasing academic interest in the institutional systems and regulative systems of oversight that govern

the international financial regime. This development is an indication of an overall transition towards analyzing ways in which international organizations establish influence based on benchmarking practices and temporary systems of governance, especially following financial crises (Best, 2014; Broome, Homolar, & Kranke, 2018). Capital mobility and global financial governance have become central in studies which address the sustainability and regulation of the economic order. The emphasis of these themes put into light the evolution of the international system from a state-centric structure toward a multi-actor framework, thus underlining the great space that global governance theories are taking in literature. This change points to an awareness of a complex interrelation between states, international organizations, and non-state actors that shapes financial and regulatory dynamics at a global scale.

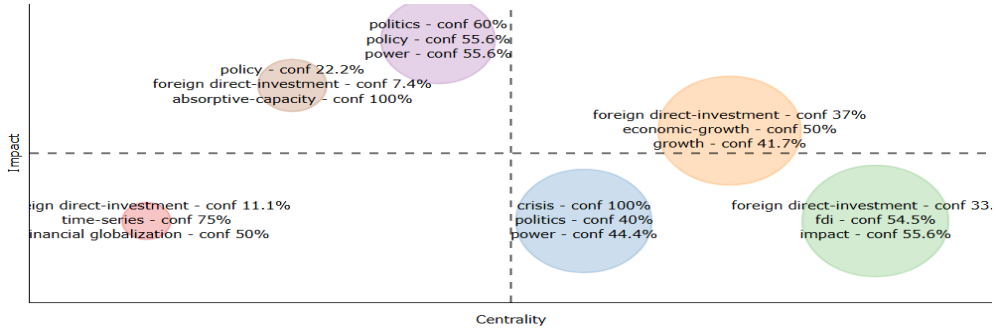
The increased visibility of territorial markers such as "China" and "European Union" in post-2010 scholarly discourse signals a heightened recognition of the strategic and normative influence regional powers exert in global politics. This shift aligns with growing academic attention to the role of rising powers in reshaping international norms and institutions, as well as the European Union's evolving identity as a regulatory and normative actor beyond its borders (Börzel & Risse, 2012; Wang, 2013; Zhang & Buzan, 2012). The economic rise of China and the contribution of the European Union to regional integration have been among the highly discussed issues in this literature throughout the current period. Indeed, these two actors shaped the direction of the literature, particularly within the contexts of regional development and hegemony theories. The rise of China has obliged the review of both the realist and liberal theories, whereas scholarship on European Union integration has considered that model structure under global governance. Both features denote that regional actors may be important either as sites for dynamic interplay with or key shapers of systemic trends in international relations.

The post-2020 surge in references to "governance," "global governance," and "state" across international relations literature reflects intensified scholarly attention to how states and multilateral institutions address complex global challenges, particularly under the strain of recent crises. As Béné et al. (2021) demonstrate, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the structural vulnerabilities of global systems and underscored the centrality of state capacity and coordinated governance in managing interdependent risks. Informed by the impact of world crises such as COVID-19, the literature in recent times is focused on discussions

around state capacities and the effectiveness of global governance mechanisms. In this period, the influence of crises on international cooperation has been assessed from both functional and normative standpoints, arising from changing challenges and opportunities for collaboration within an increasingly complex and interdependent global system.

Figure 4 provides actual insight into thematic variety over time and shifting priorities that exist within the IR literature. The longitudinal thematic shifts illustrated in Figure 4 underscore the adaptive and evolving nature of international relations as a discipline. As Acharya & Buzan (2017) discuss, IR theory has progressively broadened its conceptual boundaries in response to global transformations, incorporating interdisciplinary insights to remain pertinent amid shifting geopolitical, economic, and normative landscapes. This flexibility is a defining strength of the field, enabling it to engage with both enduring and emergent global challenges.

Figure 5. *Analysis of Impact and Centrality of Key Concepts in International Relations Literature: Economic, Political, and Social Dimensions*



Figures 5 and 6 depict strategic diagrams based on thematic mapping using centrality and density measures (Cobo et. al., 2011). The strategic diagrams classify themes into four quadrants based on their internal development (density) and importance within the overall research field (centrality). High-density, high-centrality themes represent well-developed and influential topics, whereas low-density, low-centrality themes indicate emerging or marginal themes. Strategic mapping through centrality and density metrics offers a structured lens for examining the intellectual architecture of international relations, facilitating a better grasp of its evolving thematic priorities and epistemic core. As Aria & Cuccurullo (2017) argue,

science mapping tools such as these help reveal the cognitive and conceptual development of academic disciplines.

Figure 5 is a representation of the positioning, in terms of dimensions of "impact" and "centrality" and interconnectivity of key themes emergent within international relations literature. The various concepts at different impact and centrality levels provide an important analytic framework through which to understand both their significance within the literature and relationships they have to other themes. This visualization is an important tool to understand how the international relations literature has diversified through various theoretical approaches; also, it shows how interdisciplinary links have been established-a glimpse at the complexity and evolution of the discipline.

Despite appearing as high-impact concepts, “absorptive capacity,” “policy,” and “foreign direct investment” exhibit relatively low centrality in the thematic map, indicating their limited integration into the broader theoretical discourse of international relations. This observation aligns with studies emphasizing that while such concepts are frequently employed in applied policy and development contexts, they often remain analytically underexplored within the core IR frameworks (Narula & Driffield, 2012; Sauvant & Sachs, 2009). The literature discusses "absorptive capacity," which generally refers to a country's or organization's ability to absorb new innovations and foreign investments, in narrower contexts. This limited centrality reflects the narrow application of concepts like absorptive capacity, often framed within development economics rather than mainstream IR. Alfaro et al. (2004) note that FDI and technological absorption in developing countries remain under-theorized in broader political frameworks despite their practical significance. However, its centrality is limited, thus showing that the topic has not been covered enough within the broader framework of international relations. Equally, the concepts of "policy" and "foreign direct investment" point to the role of economic decision-making processes and the policy dimensions of foreign direct investments. While these themes have been very influential, their limited diffusion in a broader

perspective would suggest that the integration of these themes within larger theoretical frameworks of the discipline has not been particularly strong. This suggests a noticeable gap in the integration of policy and investment dynamics into the overarching theoretical frameworks of international relations. As Büthe & Milner (2008) argue, despite the empirical significance of foreign investment and policy interventions, these areas have often been analyzed in isolation from mainstream IR theories, limiting their potential to contribute to broader debates on institutionalism, power, and governance.

Again, in the upper-left quadrant are concepts like "politics," "policy," and "power," that are both high centrality and high impact, which show their foundational status in the international relations literature as well as their high degree of connections with other themes. "Politics" and "power" feature centrally, above all in talking about balance of power and hegemony in various realist theories. The integration of concepts such as “power” and “politics” into liberal and critical theoretical frameworks has significantly enhanced the interdisciplinary richness of international relations scholarship. As indicated by Cox (1981) and Keohane (1984), such theoretical extensions have enabled IR to move beyond state-centrism, incorporating structural, normative, and institutional perspectives that deepen our understanding of global dynamics. "Policy" indicates the understanding of the empirical dimension of these themes; that is, the effects of policymaking processes in international relations. This quadrant therefore reflects that these concepts are at the core of the discipline, points of connection, acting as a connector between different aspects in theoretical and practical respects within the discipline of international relations. The central role of politics and power in the IR literature affirms their foundational importance in structuring disciplinary debates. As Ashraf (2023) underscores, contemporary discussions on hegemony and power relations are deeply rooted in how these concepts are positioned across theoretical traditions.

The upper-right quadrant of the graph emphasizes concepts like "foreign direct investment," "economic-growth," and "growth" with both high centrality and

high impact. It demonstrates the relevance of these issues to international relations writing and that it is highly interconnected to the other principal issues. The term "foreign direct investment" is positioned midway between international financial dynamics and regional development policy and is that way as it performs double roles in economic integration as far as promoting economic growth on one front and pursuing catch-up growth imbalances on another front. Similarly, "economic-growth" and "growth" also figure as core words that place them in the center of subjects addressed under policy, trade, and globalization. Having them together, these topics place on stage the interdependence of economic processes within international systems and their profound influence on determining theoretical and empirical discussion in international relations research. The co-occurrence of high salience and centrality of topics like economic growth and FDI highlights their importance to interdisciplinary IR analysis, particularly that of global financial governance. According to Buzan & Lawson (2015), it is crucial to comprehend economic interdependence to be able to understand structural changes in international politics.

The bottom-right quadrant contains terms such as "FDI," "foreign direct investment," and "impact," and they are relatively highly central but low-impact terms. The fact that they appear often in literature implies that considerable attention has been directed towards economic processes in foreign relations. The low level of their impact assumes their low level of theoretical novelty. For example, "impact" adds an important dimension to realize the influence of FDI upon the international economic order, and this theme appears to require greater incorporation into other disciplines. This, therefore, calls for a more holistic analysis of FDI and its implications, especially in social, environmental, and political contexts. A more integrative approach to FDI and its systemic consequences would enhance theoretical rigor and interdisciplinary applicability. Borensztein et al. (1998) emphasize that the effectiveness of FDI depends heavily on local absorptive capacities, which remain inconsistently theorized in IR.

The low centrality and low impact concepts fall into the lower-left quadrant. In this quadrant are "financial globalization," "time-series," and "foreign direct investment." This reflects that these concepts have a peripheral status in the literature and will make few connections with other themes. In particular, when it comes to "financial globalization, the literature mainly deals with the global integration of financial systems, whereas there is only a high level of deficiency that puts this topic into sociopolitical perspectives This gap suggests a need to reconceptualize financial globalization through lenses of global inequality and sustainability. Rodrik (2011) highlights that unchecked capital mobility can undermine national economic autonomy and exacerbate systemic vulnerabilities—issues still insufficiently addressed in IR theory.

Figure 5 highlights the thematic diversity and complexity of interrelations among concepts in the international relations literature. Concepts such as "politics" and "power" are central to the literature, while themes such as "absorptive capacity" and "policy" are more influential in particular contexts. The following analysis shows how the literature combines not only economic dynamics but also political and social dimensions. It also provides insight on how these ideas can be leveraged more efficaciously across disciplines.

In the strategic thematic maps (Figures 5 and 6), centrality indicates the importance of a theme in connecting different research clusters, reflecting its influence within the broader field. Themes with high centrality, such as "globalization" and "foreign direct investment," demonstrate their critical role in bridging various disciplinary perspectives and facilitating interdisciplinary dialogue, particularly aligning with neoliberal and international political economy theories. Density, on the other hand, measures the internal development of a theme. High-density themes indicate a strong internal conceptual structure, suggesting a mature and coherent subfield. For example, themes such as "global governance" not only show strong internal development but also high relevance across multiple theoretical frameworks like constructivism and critical theories. The mapping thus provides

insight into both the structural integration and conceptual maturity of key research themes within international relations.

These thematic findings are further supported and contextualized by key contributions from the international political economy literature. The prominence of foreign direct investment (FDI) and economic growth themes in the strategic thematic maps (Figures 5 and 6) supports Stiglitz's (2002) argument that, while FDI primarily benefits developed economies, it can serve as a crucial instrument for promoting sustainable development in emerging countries, aligning with the broader objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Similarly, the emergence of capital mobility and financial globalization as significant themes resonates with Rodrik's (2011) analysis, which emphasizes that although increased capital flows facilitate economic integration, they also heighten systemic vulnerabilities by accelerating the transmission of financial crises across borders.

Figure 6. *Thematic Evolution in International Relations Literature: Development, Relevance, and Centrality of Key Concepts*

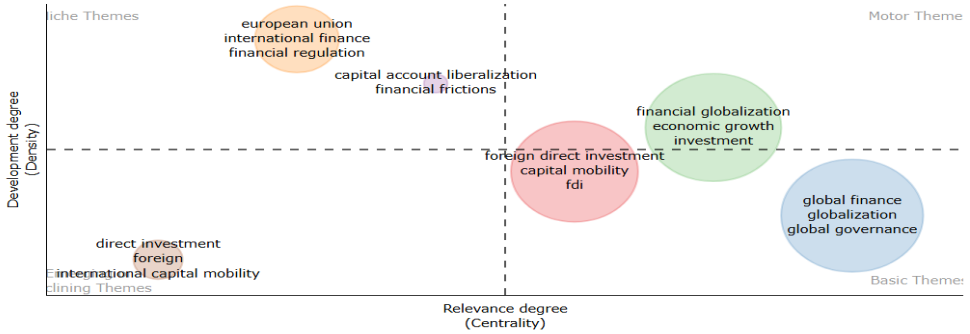


Figure 6 classifies the themes in the international relations literature according to their degree of centrality-that is, of relevance-and density, or development degree. The proposed classes make a further detailed analysis possible about the importance and role taken up by these themes within this literature. Thematic mapping offers a valuable framework for identifying structural patterns in scholarly literature, revealing shifting intellectual priorities across different periods.

This approach aligns with Aria & Cuccurullo (2017), who argue that science mapping techniques enable the reconstruction of conceptual, intellectual, and social structures within academic disciplines by capturing their thematic evolution over time. Furthermore, this graphic represents an important tool for the assessment of how the thematic development within the literature cuts across changes in the international system.

The upper-left quadrant contains "Niche Themes," consisting of themes that have high density with low centrality. Among them are such themes as "European Union," "international finance," and "financial regulation." These themes reflect areas of specialized expertise in the literature, and they are studied intensively within their own domains; yet, as noted, they play a more peripheral role within the overall framework of the literature due to their low centrality. For example, the "European Union" theme covers processes of regional integration and economic regulation within the EU but, in the global context, represents a more constrained integration. It also underlines the need to locate European integration studies within the greater contexts of global governance and multi-actor systems. These themes are important for specific academic communities or topics but are not well placed within interdisciplinary contexts.

High centrality represents the "Motor Themes" quadrant, in the upper-right quadrant, along with high density. Examples of themes in this quadrant include "financial globalization, "economic growth," and "investment." These themes are seen to represent the main drivers of the literature and are strongly connected with other themes. For example, "financial globalization" addresses the impact of international financial processes but also encompasses how those processes interact with other dimensions such as economic inequality, governance, and environmental sustainability. High centrality of a theme indicates that it establishes robust links with other concepts in the literature and plays an integrative role in structuring the discipline. This underscores the observation that the international relations literature increasingly centers on economic processes and their broader political and social

ramifications. As Gilpin (2001) and Oatley (2011) emphasize, the incorporation of international political economy perspectives has broadened the analytical focus of IR, situating economic variables at the core of global governance and power dynamics.

The lower-left quadrant, "Declining Themes," is both low in centrality and density. Examples of themes within this quadrant include "direct investment," "foreign," and "international capital mobility." These are low in both centrality and density; hence, these themes are already in decline in the literature and poorly connected to other themes. Perhaps this is to say that themes like "direct investment" are revisited in more general contexts of the literature of international relations through sustainable investment or environmental impact-a reframing that could reinforce their popularity. This would therefore, imply that structure-specific themes, which may have been prominent at any given point in time, do gradually lose their relevance in the passage of time.

The lower-right quadrant, labeled as "Basic Themes," is that with high centrality but low density. In this quadrant fall the concepts such as "global finance," "globalization," and "global governance." While those themes keep strong links with other ideas in the literature, they have been studied less intensely. For example, the theme of "global governance" underlines the role of governance mechanisms in the international system but invites further studies on specific ways through which such mechanisms reshape the role of states, international organizations, and civil society. Although themes such as "global finance," "globalization," and "global governance" form the conceptual foundation of international relations literature, they remain underdeveloped in terms of theoretical depth and empirical granularity. This underlines the need for further research to unpack the operational mechanisms and normative implications of these core constructs.

Figure 7. *Conceptual Structure Map of International Relations Literature: Interdisciplinary Connections and Thematic Clusters*

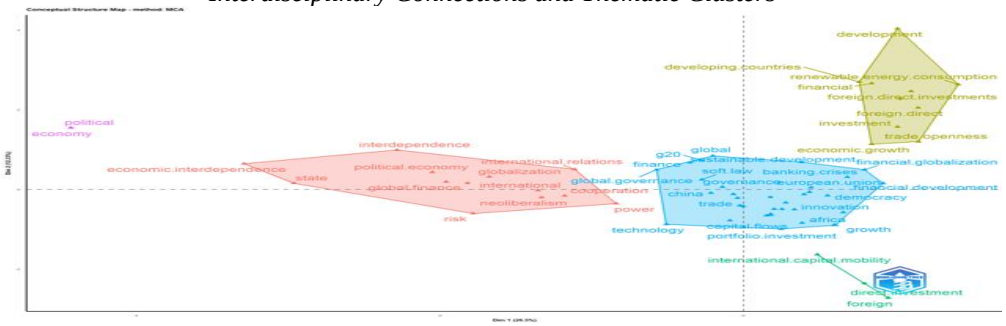


Figure 7 presents a conceptual structure map generated using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) (Greenacre, 1984). MCA reduces the dimensionality of the keyword dataset and clusters them into conceptually coherent groups. The conceptual map visually articulates the intellectual architecture of the international relations field, unveiling thematic proximities and latent conceptual relationships. As Aria & Cuccurullo (2017) highlight, such bibliometric tools systematically reveal the evolution of scholarly paradigms and the clustering of knowledge production across disciplines..

Figure 7 gives a visual representation of how themes within the international relations literature classify into conceptual clusters and the relationships among these themes. Each cluster represents a thematic focus, with the axes of the map placing these concepts within the standpoint of the literature and in interaction with other concepts. Conceptual mapping using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) serves as a foundational tool for identifying the latent structure of theoretical frameworks and revealing interdisciplinary linkages in academic fields. As Cobo et al. (2011) emphasize, such mapping techniques allow for the systematic identification of thematic clusters, enabling scholars to trace the intellectual architecture and knowledge evolution within a given discipline.

The cluster on the left of the map colored in red features concepts like "political economy," "state," "global finance," "economic interdependence," and "risk." This cluster identifies the analysis of global financial interactions and

economic interdependence set within the context of political economy. The close connection between "economic interdependence" and "state" underlines the roles of states in the global economy or, conversely, the influence of international economic interdependencies within policymaking. The observed association between economic interdependence and state agency reopens classical debates within realist and neoliberal IR theory. Acharya (2014) stresses the need to reinterpret such theoretical positions through the lens of Global IR, advocating for frameworks that incorporate regional context and pluralistic understandings of state-market relations. As Acharya (2014) argues, these theoretical frameworks must increasingly be recontextualized through a Global IR lens that accounts for regional diversity and the evolving nature of state-market relations. Inclusion of "risk" within this cluster demonstrates that uncertainties and risk factors associated with economic globalization are considerably addressed in the literature. This provides an understanding of how the literature gives grounding to the political consequences of financial crises.

It encompasses the blue cluster in the middle of the map, from "global governance," "global finance," "trade," to "democracy." This cluster-actor represents the function of global governance mechanisms and economic dynamics within the international relations literature. The concept of global governance also provides the general framework through which multi-actor systems operate at the international level. Furthermore, the occurrence of such concepts as "democracy" and "cooperation" in this cluster underlines the importance of democratic values for international collaboration. This association aligns with democratic peace theory, which posits that liberal democratic values foster peaceful and cooperative international relations. As Keohane and Nye (2012) emphasize, institutionalized interdependence and democratic norms are crucial drivers of international cooperation, especially in trade and governance contexts.

This is depicted by the yellow cluster in the top right area, which encompasses themes such as "development," "renewable energy consumption,"

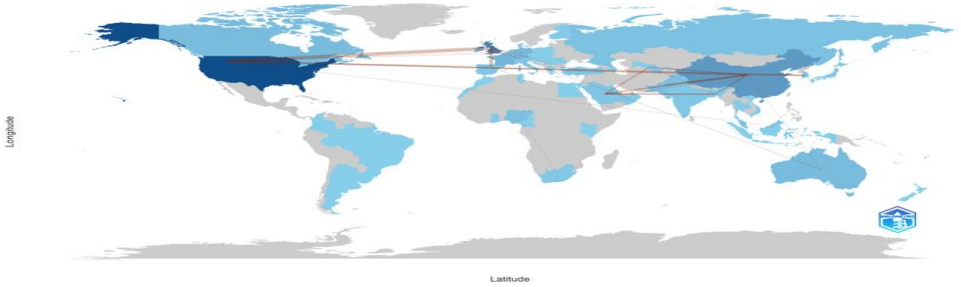
"foreign direct investment," and "trade openness." In fact, this cluster represents studies focused on sustainable development along with economic growth. The combining of "renewable energy consumption" and "development" evidences the analysis made on the impacts of renewable energy use on economic growth, put forward by the use of sustainable development goals. The integration of environmental sustainability and economic growth themes in this cluster mirrors an expanding scholarly focus on the SDGs. Béné et al. (2020) demonstrate that contemporary research increasingly explores the complex interactions between renewable energy, trade openness, and sustainable development across diverse contexts. As Béné et al. (2020) demonstrate, global academic discourse is increasingly attentive to how renewable energy use and trade openness contribute to environmentally sound economic growth. Ideas such as "foreign direct investment" and "trade openness" point to the heavy emphasis on open trade policies and how these affect development along with foreign direct investments.

The green cluster falls within the lower-right part of the map, and it contains concepts such as "direct investment," "international capital mobility," and "foreign." This cluster represents themes with an emphasis on international investments and the mobility of capital. The linking of "international capital mobility" and "direct investment" underlines the effects of this process on the international plane and points to the role of direct investments in the world economy. Concepts such as capital mobility and direct investment play a pivotal role in ongoing discussions around global inequality and asymmetrical capital distribution. Rodrik (2011) argues that while open capital flows can stimulate growth, they may also undermine stability and deepen systemic imbalances in the absence of adequate institutional safeguards.

Figure 7, the themes for the international relations literature are multidimensional in nature and their interconnectedness is quite complex. The red cluster develops an in-depth study on the relationship between states and systems in political economy and global finance. The blue cluster makes arguments for collaborative processes within global governance and democratic values. The yellow

cluster represents the novelty in approaches found in the literature, which links the sustainable development goals with environmental factors. The green cluster focuses on the aspects of capital mobility and international investments in the context of economic globalization and their role within the international system. The thematic distribution presented here underscores the inherently multidisciplinary nature of international relations, where intersections among political economy, sustainability, and global governance generate dynamic theoretical innovation. As Acharya & Buzan (2007) argue, capturing these multiple dimensions is crucial for constructing a more inclusive and globally relevant IR discipline. Moreover, the relationships that have been mapped out show the extent to which the literature is able to analyze the complexities of the international system and how these processes have catalyzed theoretical and methodological transformations within the discipline.

Figure 8. *Geographical Distribution of Academic Collaborations in International Relations: Economics, Finance, and Social Sciences Perspective*



This map provides a visualization of academic collaborations and interactions between countries of the international relations literature. The line connections represent academic links and networks of collaboration established among these different countries; the color intensity denotes the level of academic contributions to, and influence of, each country on the literature. Bibliometric mapping enables a deeper understanding of how epistemic hierarchies and global knowledge flows are embedded in structural asymmetries within IR scholarship. Kristensen (2015) underscores that such visualizations expose the spatial and institutional dominance of Western actors, which continues to marginalize

alternative or regional perspectives in theory building. As Kristensen (2015) argues, IR as a discipline reflects deep epistemic asymmetries shaped by power relations embedded in global academic networks, resulting in the marginalization of non-Western perspectives.

The dark blue color of the United States on this map is a good indicator of the country's immense academic contribution and influence within the international relations literature. The dense lines radiating from the U.S. depict intensive academic collaboration with large parts of the world, most especially Europe, Asia, and Australia. This central position of the U.S. is a product not only of its wide academic infrastructure and funding basis but also part of a structural setting in which the U.S. holds a norm-setting power in the discipline of international relations. The dominant academic role of the United States reflects its institutional capacity to shape both methodological trends and theoretical norms in international relations. As Acharya and Buzan (2007) argue, this centrality reinforces the persistence of Western dominance in IR theory, often at the expense of diverse epistemological contributions.

On this map, the European countries are strongly represented, and the region itself is important in academic collaboration. Most notably, the United Kingdom and Germany and France not only belong to the core in U.S. international collaboration but also function as regional hubs in the network of collaborations. These have laid a basis for academic contributions in the region with critical discourses on matters such as governance mechanisms of the European Union, processes of economic cooperation, and social policies. In addition, in the literature, Europe is prominent in hosting inter-disciplinary studies that integrate social sciences with such other fields as the environment, economics, and politics.

From this perspective, the Asian countries, headed by China and India, emerge as significant regions on the cognitive map. China’s contributions to the international relations literature include studies on economic growth, globalization, and foreign policy. Its output is indeed growing, reshaping theoretical debates in

international relations, especially in the contexts of economic globalization and regional integration. On the other hand, India has gained more and more recognition in the literature with its studies on regional dynamics, development policies, and security issues. The academic contributions of these two countries are rising, underlining the emergence of Asia not only as an economic powerhouse but also as an intellectual hub. This was a trend showing the positioning of Asia as a growing center of academic influence.

Lighter colors in the Middle East and Africa reflect, as it were, their meager contributions to international relations literature. In terms of linkages or co-author relationships represented by the lines leading out from their core are predominantly in conjunction with academia-leading regions of the world-the United States and Europe. The marginalization of the Middle East and Africa in IR literature can be traced to structural academic dependencies, where much of the research from these regions aligns with the epistemological and thematic priorities of the Global North. As Aydinli & Mathews (2000) note, publishing patterns and editorial gatekeeping in dominant journals often constrain the emergence of region-specific theoretical contributions. On the other hand, security and energy issues concerning the Middle East, together with those issues pertinent to the challenges of development facing Africa, have remained serious regional points of reference in the said literature. In response, enhancing this academic capacity of these two regions might contribute towards a scholarship that is not only inclusive but also genuinely diverse in this field of international relations.

This map indicates the inequality in the geographical distribution of the academic contributions that form part of the international relations literature, given that the field has been dominated by some regions: the United States, Europe, and East Asia. The leading position of the U.S. and the active role of Europe show that global academic networks are concentrated around these two regions. Yet, the rising contribution from Asia suggests that new centers emerge within the literature. This trend possibly suggests that there is a growing need for greater study of international

relations than has hitherto been conducted in an exclusively Western-centric perspective.

In conclusion, this map shows the strongly hierarchical structure of academic interactions within the international relations literature. The developed countries are the main contributors and pillars of the field, while the developing regions contribute less. The persistent geographical disparities in IR scholarship underscore the urgency of fostering greater theoretical and methodological diversity. Acharya (2014) contends that without broader inclusion of perspectives from the Global South, the discipline risks reproducing a narrow, Western-centric epistemology that limits its global relevance. That might be in supporting research from regions such as the Middle East and Africa to make the discipline more representative. Geographical gaps also underpin the urgent need for a more representative, fair approach toward international relations when it comes to understanding the global landscape. Such maps also serve, on the strategic level, to indicate where more academic cooperation is needed, or which topics hold greater research potential.

This pattern mirrors Immanuel Wallerstein's (2011) world-systems theory, which posits that core regions dominate global knowledge production while peripheral regions remain marginalized. The bibliometric distribution confirms that international relations scholarship continues to be shaped by structural inequalities inherent in the global academic system.

4. Conclusion

This study conducted a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to explore the interdisciplinary structure and thematic trends of the international relations literature. The findings illustrate that global dynamics—especially economic, political, and social processes—are closely embedded in international relations scholarship. This convergence has been noted in prior studies, including Gilpin (2001), who conceptualizes IR as inseparable from global political economy, and Buzan and Lawson (2015), who argue that historical transformations in global order are best

understood through interdisciplinary synthesis across economics, sociology, and politics. Phenomena such as globalization, financial integration, foreign direct investments, and economic growth occupy a central place in the literature.

The study highlights the dominant role of certain regions—particularly the United States, Europe, and Asia—in shaping the international relations literature, reflecting an ongoing geographical imbalance in academic production. The dominance of the United States, Europe, and parts of Asia in shaping international relations literature illustrates the enduring geographical imbalance in global academic production. As Tickner & Wæver (2009) observe, IR remains heavily structured by Western epistemologies and institutions, limiting the visibility of non-Western perspectives. Acharya & Buzan (2007) further argue that theoretical contributions from the Global South have been systematically underrepresented, despite increasing scholarly output from regions like Asia and Latin America. However, the increasing scholarly contributions from regions like China and India suggest an evolving diversification within the discipline. Although scholarly contributions from regions such as Africa and the Middle East remain underrepresented in IR literature, enhancing research infrastructure and academic collaboration in these areas is essential for fostering a more inclusive and representative discipline. Shilliam (2011) argues that mainstream IR continues to marginalize non-Western perspectives and calls for engaging with epistemologies from the Global South as a means of decolonizing the field. Similarly, Aydinli & Mathews (2000) emphasize the importance of investing in regional IR scholarship to rebalance theoretical contributions globally.

The analysis also demonstrates the thematic richness of the field. The prominence of topics such as foreign direct investment, financial globalization, and economic growth illustrates the continued centrality of political economy within international relations. At the same time, the growing focus on themes like capital mobility, sustainable development, and inequality reflects a shift toward greater interdisciplinarity. Kentikelenis & Seabrooke (2017) argue that the transnational

governance of finance increasingly draws on economic sociology and institutional theory. Likewise, Bäckstrand & Lövbrand (2016) show how global environmental governance and sustainable development debates have introduced critical, normative, and justice-oriented approaches into mainstream IR research. Thematic diversification in international relations scholarship reflects a growing recognition that economic and social structures are essential to understanding global political dynamics. Oatley (2011) shows how capital flows, trade imbalances, and domestic political institutions jointly shape state behavior and international outcomes. Likewise, Kentikelenis & Seabrooke (2017) emphasize that financial and social governance mechanisms, often overlooked in traditional IR, are increasingly central to explaining power and authority in the international system.

The study also shows that while international relations scholarship involves considerable levels of transnational collaboration, these networks remain largely centered in developed countries. Kristensen (2015) demonstrates that international co-authorship patterns disproportionately favor scholars from North America and Western Europe, reinforcing structural inequalities in knowledge production. Similarly, Maliniak et al. (2013) note that such concentration limits epistemic diversity and the visibility of alternative theoretical contributions from the Global South. Expanding international research networks to include underrepresented areas could enhance the global inclusivity of international relations scholarship.

By systematically mapping thematic evolutions and emphasizing interdisciplinary linkages, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving architecture of international relations scholarship. As Zürn (2018) underscores, reflexive approaches that situate IR within broader institutional and normative transformations are essential for comprehending the complexities of global governance systems.

Overall, this study provides a systematic mapping of key thematic trends and interdisciplinary linkages within the international relations literature. Rather than offering direct theoretical or methodological innovations, the study contributes by

clarifying the thematic evolution of the field and highlighting emerging interdisciplinary intersections. The bibliometric mapping provided in this study may serve as a foundation for future research that seeks to transcend disciplinary silos in international relations. As Lake (2011) argues, advancing the field requires overcoming rigid theoretical divides and embracing analytical pluralism. Similarly, Biermann & Dingwerth (2004) emphasize that IR must evolve to incorporate complex global interdependencies, which increasingly cut across economics, finance, and social governance domains.

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