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Mapping power and strategy in the Indo-Pacific: a bibliometric analysis of geopolitics, policy, and regional development

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ABSTRACT

The Indo-Pacific is central to global geopolitics and regional development. The present study provides a bibliometric analysis of the research on the geopolitics, policy, and strategy of the Indo-Pacific. The studies were analyzed with the Scopus database (2005–2026) and tools such as Biblioshiny and VOSviewer. The total number of documents was 1,343 from 422 sources and 1,450 authors. Results indicate a high annual growth rate of 20.36% and the highest number of publications in 2024 (284 articles). India was the most productive country, and Australia was the most cited country. The main authors are Panda J., Scott D., and De Castro R.C. The keyword analysis shows that the most frequently used word is 'Indo-Pacific' followed by China, India, and the United States, indicating a strong geopolitical and strategic orientation. The study finds that the Indo-Pacific research body is expanding, especially in the domains of security, regional cooperation, and policy dynamics, and offers a foundation for future research in this emerging field.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of Indo-Pacific research, mapping the intellectual structure, publication trends, leading contributors, collaboration networks, and emerging research themes. By synthesizing developments in geopolitics, foreign policy, regional security, and regional development, the study offers valuable insights into the evolution of Indo-Pacific scholarship. The findings provide a useful evidence base for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to understand research priorities and identify future directions in one of the world's most strategically significant regions.

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1. Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region has become the main setting of contemporary global geopolitics, a space of strategic, economic, and political relevance. The Indo-Pacific has emerged as a significant geopolitical and strategic construct that links the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions through growing economic, security, and political interdependencies. In recent years, the region has become more important as a result of shifting global power dynamics, especially the rise of China and the strategic reactions of the United States and its allies. The Indo-Pacific region is now widely seen as a critical engine of global order, economic growth, and security cooperation, home to more than half the world's population and a significant proportion of the world's economic output (Cliff, 2020). The concept of the Indo-Pacific is not merely a geographical notion but also a profoundly political and strategic one. It is a framework states use to understand and respond to changing regional and global dynamics, and it has evolved. He and Li (2020) observed that the concept of the Asia-Pacific has gradually been replaced by the concept of the Indo-Pacific in policy discourses. This is a signal of a broader strategic vision that includes a number of different sub-regions and actors. Similarly, Heiduk and Wacker (2020) argue that the Indo-Pacific is a

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politically constructed concept informed by competing visions of regional order. They also show that the Indo-Pacific region is often associated with strategic competition between regional powers, specifically the United States and China. This transformation focuses on the importance of the Indo-Pacific region in international relations as a conceptual and operational space. The term of the 'Indo-Pacific' became prominent in strategic and policy discussions from 2016 to 2017 onwards, though its intellectual antecedents are closely intertwined with earlier discussions under the umbrella of the Asia-Pacific. In the present study, we aim to map scholarship explicitly associated with the Indo-Pacific framework, so the search strategy focused on publications that directly utilized Indo-Pacific terminology in their titles, abstracts or keywords. Studies that were framed solely within the Asia-Pacific discourse were therefore excluded, unless they explicitly engaged with the Indo-Pacific concept. This approach provides conceptual coherence while recognizing the historical development of regional strategic thinking.

One of the most significant geopolitical dynamics shaping the contemporary Indo-Pacific is the intensifying strategic competition between China and the United States. This competition has influenced regional security arrangements, economic initiatives, diplomatic alignments, and the strategic calculations of both regional and extra-regional actors. China's emergence as a major economic and military power has dramatically altered the regional balance of power, compelling other actors to reorient their strategic priorities. In response, the US of America has advanced programs like the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP) policy, which seeks to defend the stability of the region and an order based on pre-established rules. At the same time, China has been making progress on projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to improve economic integration and connectivity across the region (Saeed, 2017). These competing strategies illustrate the intricate choreography of cooperation and competition that is the very nature of Indo-Pacific geopolitics. In addition to great power competition, two other characteristics of the Indo-Pacific region are evolving: the nature of regional cooperation and the growth of institutions. The role of organizations like ASEAN in the development of regional norms and the encouragement of multilateral participation has been particularly significant. Acharya (2009) notes the major contribution of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to the creation of a regional security community based on the values of cooperation, noninterference, and peaceful resolution of disputes. One recent such effort is the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which has tried to strike a balance between competing geopolitical interests, while stressing inclusion, development, and cooperation (Feldman, 2024). These developments underscore the role of institutional frameworks in addressing the region's complexity and fostering stability.

At the same time, the Indo-Pacific is characterized by major geopolitical issues and fights for the region's order. Pan (2016) states that the concept of the Indo-Pacific area is strongly linked with the fear of China's development and the impact of this development on the region's balance and power relations. Hence, new strategic alliances and security arrangements have emerged. These include new security arrangements, such as minilateral efforts, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). Such minilateral arrangements, Tow (2020) argues, are a departure from more traditional alliance arrangements toward more flexible, issue-specific forms of cooperation. The move is designed to deal with the increasingly complex security issues that exist in the region.

Moreover, the Indo-Pacific is not only an arena for great power competition but also a vital space for regional development and economic integration. The region's sea lanes are vital for world commerce, energy transit and supply chain connectivity, making it a hotbed of economic potential and vulnerabilities. Kaplan (2011) has argued that the Indian Ocean and its bordering regions are likely to be the epicenter of global power and economic activity in the twenty-first century. This underscores the nature of the inter-connectedness of geopolitics, policy and development within the Indo-Pacific region.

Recent studies have paid more attention to the application of bibliometric methods in the study of developments in international relations, geopolitics and strategic studies. Song et al. (2017) argue that the focus of geopolitical research has changed from traditional state-centric views to more sophisticated approaches, which include geo-economics and critical geopolitics. Similarly, Wahid et al. (2023) show that IR research has expanded globally but is still dominated by Western scholars, exposing structural inequalities in knowledge production. Dahiya and Kumar (2025) further demonstrate that world order studies have increasingly been focusing on multipolarity and power transitions, especially in the context of the rise of emerging powers like China. Further, Aiswarya and Muthumeenakshi (2024) mention that research

on geopolitical risk is highly related to the financial and macroeconomic dynamics. Maritime security studies also matter because of their increasing significance in the context of global trade, security threats, and geopolitical tensions (Kismartini et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2025). Long (2025) also find rapid growth of research on Indo-Pacific strategy, focusing on great power competition and regional order. Most of these studies are qualitative. Despite these contributions, the literature is still fragmented and lacks a comprehensive bibliometric analysis that brings together geopolitics, diplomacy, foreign policy, and regional order in the context of the Indo-Pacific. The present study aims to fill this gap by providing an integrated bibliometric mapping of the Indo-Pacific strategic studies. This study aims to examine the publication trends, influential authors and countries, collaboration networks, and thematic structures of the Indo-Pacific research field. Accordingly, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How has Indo-Pacific research progressed over time?
2. Who are the main contributors?
3. What are the patterns of collaboration?
4. What are the leading and emerging themes in research?

2. Theoretical framework and sustainability perspectives

2.1. *Indo-Pacific as a sustainable geopolitical space*

The Indian and Pacific Oceans and the countries that border them together make up the Indo-Pacific: an integrated maritime and strategic region. But the geographical extent of the region is not fixed, as different governments define the region according to their strategic and policy interests. Although they differ, a common core region is often identified from the South China Sea to Southeast Asia to the eastern Indian Ocean (Haruko, 2020). This study uses an integrated theoretical framework that combines the theory of geopolitics, complex interdependence, and sustainability perspectives to conceptualize the Indo-Pacific as a connected strategic space. The term 'Asia-Pacific' was coined by economists. In fact, the rhetoric of (neo)liberal economics constructed the Asia-Pacific area. It showed the importance given to open regionalism and trade liberalism. Strategists coined the phrase 'Indo-Pacific'. The Indo-Pacific concept is underpinned by geopolitical language. There is currently a debate in official and unofficial security policy circles in the United States and its allies (Higgott, 2026). Geopolitically, Indo-Pacific is a play of power competition and strategic interests of great powers. This area used to be seen more from the economic and trade perspective. But it is not only a place of power now, here the security and policy issues of major countries have become much more important. So, the Indo-Pacific is a vibrant strategic space where everything is connected. The Indo-Pacific is a large and varied geopolitical space, with many regional and extra-regional powers. Trilateral contacts among the US, China and India define Indo-Pacific politics. The other powers in the region are either allies or partners or are heavily influenced by these three countries. This trilateral is one of the key determinants for the Asian security scenario and geopolitical trends in the region (Singh, 2016). This changing power game of major powers has put the Indo-Pacific region in a very important position in the present world politics. China has become more assertive in its foreign policy since 2013, and business as usual cannot continue (Pant & Rej, 2018). This means that competition among the major countries in the region is on the rise, especially with the growing influence of China. The East and South China Seas are facing growing security risks in safeguarding sea lines of communications (SLOCs) due to maritime disputes. Also, maritime security aims to protect SLOCs used for commercial shipping lines, extraction of natural marine resources, or other sea-based activities (Tertia & Perwita, 2018). Secure sea lanes are required for the maintenance of economic linkages and mutual dependence among states from the perspective of complex interdependence. In this situation, the security of sea routes becomes very important, because without safe sea routes the trade and energy supply cannot be continued properly. These waters carry around 50% of the world's container traffic and 70% of petroleum products. It is the world's global energy interstate, shipping oil and natural gas from the Arabian Peninsula and Iranian Plateau across the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Malacca, and the Lombok Strait to Asia's expanding middle classes in China, South Korea, and Japan (Kaplan, 2011). The Indo-Pacific region is of huge importance to the world in terms of trade, energy

security, and economic interdependence among the countries. The term 'Indo-Pacific' or 'Indo-Pacific region' has been gaining traction as a geographical and strategic concept in foreign and security policy discourse for over a decade. Geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations in the Indo-Pacific are thus closely interlinked (Heiduk & Wacker, 2020). From a sustainability point of view, the Indo-Pacific is an interconnected system of environmental, economic and political dimensions. So, the Indo-Pacific has to be thought of as a region where politics, economics and environment are all connected. Thus, the term 'Indo-Pacific' and its use are never a matter of pure description or neutrality. The Indo-Pacific Outlook is built on the pillars of security, ecology, resources, capacity building, disaster risk reduction, research, technology, maritime transport, academic collaboration and trade connectivity. These instrumentalities enable collaborative efforts to address shared challenges like economic development, security threats, and climate change, which can be achieved through greater convergence and sustained relationships between the states and regional actors (Vinh, 2023). These elements, taken together, demonstrate the character of sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific region, including the environmental dimension (marine environment and climate risks), the economic dimension (trade and the ocean-based economy), and the political dimension (cooperation and stability between countries). The ASEAN Indo-Pacific vision is the deep integration and connectivity of the region. The seas and oceans have allowed the free movement of people, goods, and ideas, and a greater regional convergence of interests. The Indo-Pacific area's key elements are transportation, connectivity, safety, and maritime security. The Indo-Pacific is thus a complex strategic, economic, and environmental system, requiring cooperative and sustainable governance rather than simply being a geographical or geopolitical construct.

2.2. Global governance and regional institutionalism

Global governance has moved to the Center of our understanding of contemporary international relations, as the boundaries of political authority have shifted beyond the nation-state. There is no world government. All these processes, institutions, and interactions make up the world. It has been loosely used to describe any political activity outside the state, whether in process or structure, and is marked by analytical elasticity and conceptual fuzziness (Dingwerth & Pattberg, 2006). This is generally a move away from a world politics of actors toward a more complex multi-actor world politics. A wide range of actors participate at a wide range of levels, which is one characteristic of global governance. The traditional state-led governance saw the non-state actors as complementary to the role of international organizations, civil society organizations, and private institutions. The governance of the global environment is no longer the exclusive preserve of national governments. The governance system becomes increasingly pluralistic with the emergence of new forms of agency (Biermann & Pattberg, 2008). More importantly, governance is not limited to formal treaty-based arrangements but includes transnational networks and hybrid institutional arrangements that cross the public and private spheres (Bulkeley et al., 2014). The change reflects a broader trend toward multi-level governance, the distribution of power across a variety of actors and institutional levels. Further, global governance is multilayered and tiered in nature. The presence of different types of institutions and issue areas leads to a more fractured governance with overlapping and competing frameworks (Biermann & Pattberg, 2008). That fragmentation is not a failure, but rather the outcome of the complexity of global challenges that require the coordination of a multiplicity of actors and governance structures. Global governance is a complex, multi-layered system, often driven by pragmatic and decentralized public and private processes (Schwöbel, 2012).

Global governance is also essentially about power relations. Power is a kind of social relationship that determines the ability and conduct of the actors, not only the ability to exercise power, as stated by Barnett and Duvall (2005). Power has two sides. Structural integrity. Institutional Authority. They invest their money in government systems that affect the world around us. This multi-dimensional view is particularly relevant in the context of global governance, where power is exercised not only through material capabilities but also through institutions, norms, and networks. Regional institutionalism is closely related to global governance and is an increasingly important part of world politics. Since the end of the Cold War, regionalism has increased significantly. Regionalism is a manifestation of the wider political change and globalization. Modern regionalism is made up of a range of actors and institutional arrangements, from formal organizations to informal networks, and thus a range of regional governance (De

Lombaerde et al., 2010). Regions have become the 'building blocks' of the global order that structures the world's economic, political, and security relations (Söderbaum, 2013). Especially, regional institutionalism has shed the Eurocentric moorings of old. The European Union is the paradigm of integration in the region. More recent scholarship highlights the diversity of regional experience and the need for context-specific approaches (Lenz & Söderbaum, 2025). A case in point is the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) with its principles of noninterference, consensus, and regional autonomy in separate regional governance (Acharya, 2009). Such norms suggest that regional institutionalism could create alternative and more context-sensitive forms of governance more appropriate for the local political and cultural milieu. The Indo-Pacific is a good place for the confluence of global governance and regional institutionalism. In recent years, the Indo-Pacific has become a theater of geopolitical contestation, a rebalancing of power and strategic competition among the great powers. In the meantime, as China has grown and the US and its allies have responded, new institutional arrangements and strategic partnerships have evolved. Countries have formed formal and informal alliances to respond to the new security challenges in a changed geopolitical environment (Rai, 2022). Likewise, He and Li (2020) argue that 'the concept of Indo-Pacific has become one of the key strategic concepts of contemporary international politics'. Expansion of Regional Cooperation and Geopolitical Competition Here, clues about the evolution of regional institutionalism in the Indo-Pacific, and about global governance more broadly, are provided. Regional organizations and alliances like ASEAN and QUAD are key players in dealing with challenges in the region and in influencing the processes of global governance. At the same time, global institutions and norms also matter for regional dynamics in a complex multilevel governance system. International institutions still matter for the order and stability of a changing world system (Ikenberry, 2011).

3. Methodology

3.1. Data sources for bibliometric analysis

It has a considerable number of publications that have undergone peer review and are of high quality. For this investigation, Scopus was selected as the primary data source. Moreover, Scopus provides a reliable and well-organized citation indexing, which is an essential part of bibliometric analysis. Scopus is widely recognized as a good database for comparing studies and doing bibliometric research. This is mostly because it covers a wide range of fields and has a metadata structure that is the same across the board. Even though there are other databases that can be used for bibliometric research, Scopus was chosen to be the only source of data for this study. The decision was made to ensure consistency, avoid duplication, and ensure methodological transparency. Moreover, Scopus provides access to a wide variety of important journals and very broad citation networks, which enable users to perform a more accurate and systematic investigation of the research trends around the world, when doing research. The dataset of authentic, standardized, and resilient data was validated using Scopus in this study. It is therefore an ideal source for mapping the international environment of strategic research in the Indo-Pacific area, a region in Asia.

3.2. Topic search, data capture, and mining methods

The retrieval of pertinent papers on Indo-Pacific strategic studies was conducted using Scopus on March 21, 2026. For the purpose of ensuring that all pertinent material was thoroughly covered, the search was conducted using the title, abstract, and keyword fields (TITLE-ABS-KEY). Our search was conducted using the following string:

(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Indo-Pacific" OR "Indo Pacific" OR "Indo-Pacific strategy" OR "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" OR "FOIP")) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("geopolitics" OR "international relations" OR diplomacy OR security OR "foreign policy" OR "regional order"))).

The search term was developed to cover the wide range of views on the Indo-Pacific region, including geopolitical, strategic, diplomatic, and policy perspectives, to generate the necessary outputs. But the goal was to avoid words that were too general or too ambiguous, because those kinds of sentences

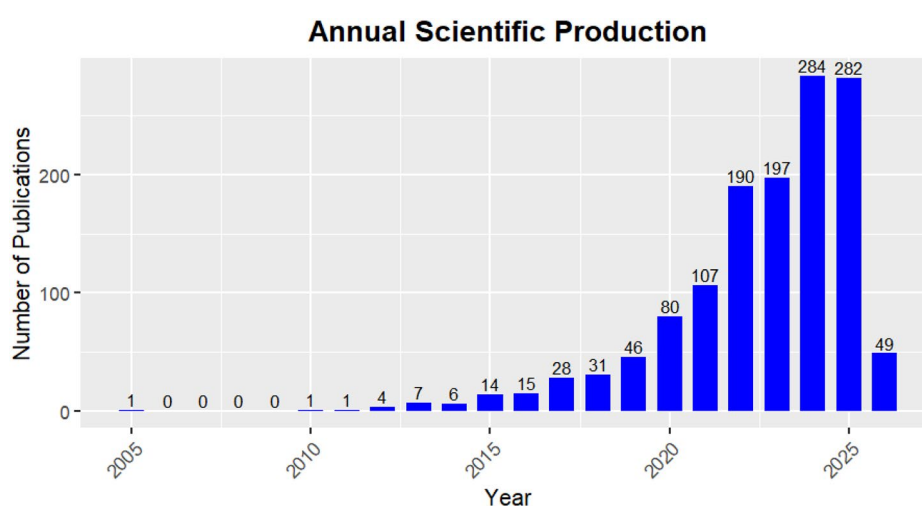
could pull up records that had no relation to the subject of conversation. To ensure conceptual consistency, the search strategy was restricted to publications that explicitly used Indo-Pacific terminology in their titles, abstracts, or keywords. Although the Indo-Pacific framework emerged from earlier Asia-Pacific debates, publications framed exclusively within the Asia-Pacific paradigm were not included unless they directly engaged with the Indo-Pacific concept. The objective of this study was not to trace the intellectual history of Asia-Pacific regionalism, but rather to map the evolution of Indo-Pacific scholarship as a distinct field of research. Consequently, the publication trends reported in this study should be interpreted as reflecting the growth of explicitly Indo-Pacific-oriented research rather than the broader Asia-Pacific literature. Iteratively, exploratory searches were used to balance relevance and recall, and the search method was refined. Synonyms were combined with Boolean operators OR and AND. Quote marks were also used to ensure the exact phrases were picked up. The records exported from Scopus had to be in a compatible format to perform the bibliometric analysis. A first search in databases retrieved 1343 records. The dataset was manually screened according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Non-Indo-Pacific strategic studies publications and publications without key bibliographic information (e.g. author names, abstracts, and full metadata) were filtered out. Additionally, no review was conducted for materials lacking the needed metadata. Data were carefully cleaned and double-checked before analysis to ensure data reliability and accuracy. This was to safeguard the quality of the data. The final database consisted of 1343 documents after screening and validation. All these documents were included in the bibliometric analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

The bibliometric analysis was carried out using the statistical computer environment R and the statistical software program VOSviewer. On the other hand, Biblioshiny software was used with the Bibliometrix package. The data were analyzed using descriptive and quantitative analysis using Biblioshiny. These investigations aimed to identify the most productive authors, countries, institutions, sources, and general trends of research. Biblioshiny allowed a systematic and reproducible analysis of the data set and could be performed in an easy-to-handle interface. Data cleaning was done to make sure that the dataset was reliable and consistent before the analysis was carried out. In this process, we merged phrases with the same meaning, removed duplicates, and deleted irrelevant or incomplete items. Keyword standardization was applied to reinforce the reliability of co-occurrence analysis and thematic mapping. We used VOSviewer to construct and visualize networks because it is efficient in dealing with large bibliometric datasets and generates high-quality visual maps. For descriptive statistics and thematic analysis, mostly Biblioshiny was used, and VOSviewer was used for building co-occurrence networks of keywords and co-citation networks of authors. Throughout the entire investigation, well-accepted bibliometric metrics were employed. In the co-occurrence network, a minimal keyword occurrence requirement was created to include only the most relevant terms to the current discussion. The full counting method means that every occurrence of a keyword or a co-authorship link is counted separately from the others. This was to make sure that the results were accurate. To ensure that link weights across the network are comparable with each other, the method of association strength was used in the process of normalizing. This was to make sure that the network is balanced. The frequency of keywords that were found to be connected was used as the basis for co-occurrence analysis, in order to identify the most important themes emerging from the research and the relationships that can be established between them. Thematic mapping was conducted to categorize topics into several categories, such as motor, basic, emergent, and specialty themes. This was done by using metrics of centrality and density. At the author and nation levels, collaboration networks were created based on co-authorship ties in order to better explore the social structure of the studied region. This was done to make the investigation easier. All the visualizations, namely keyword co-occurrence networks, theme maps, and collaboration networks, were created with the help of Biblioshiny and VOSviewer. These visualizations were constructed according to the usual procedures for the purpose of bibliometrics.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the Indo-Pacific strategic studies dataset.

Context	Information
Timespan	2005:2026
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	422
Documents	1343
Annual Growth Rate %	20.36
Document Average Age	3.43
Average citations per doc	4.146
References	71916
Keywords Plus (ID)	968
Author's Keywords (DE)	2249
Authors	1450
Authors of single-authored docs	710
Single-authored docs	909
Co-Authors per Doc	1.45
International co-authorships %	13.25
article	904
book chapter	437
conference paper	2

**Figure 1.** Annual scientific production in Indo-Pacific strategic studies (2005–2025).

4. Result

4.1. Descriptive overview

An overview of the publications that were studied during the research process on ‘Indo-Pacific, geopolitics, international relations, diplomacy, security, foreign policy, and regional order’ is provided in the material. Table 1 presents statistics summarizing the analysis of the data and provides a summary of the findings. Between 2005 and 2026 (up to March), the articles were published in a total of 422 different sources, and 1,450 different authors contributed to their creation. A total of 1343 articles that are associated with the Indo-Pacific region have been compiled for the purpose of conducting this inquiry. There is a substantial amount of academic interest in Indo-Pacific topics, as evidenced by the number of publications (904), the average number of citations per article (4.146), and the yearly growth rate in percentage (20.36). All of these factors indicate that there is a significant amount of interest.

4.2. Annual scientific production

The annual rise in scientific publications on Indo-Pacific strategic studies from 2005 to 2026 is depicted in Figure 1. The temporal trajectory shows a gradual shift from a developing field of study to a solidified, quickly growing area of scientific investigation. Overall, the output of publications shows a steady upward trend, showing the growing importance of Indo-Pacific studies in the agendas for geopolitical and

international relations studies. The relatively low number of publications during the early phase (2005–2010) reflects the limited use of explicit Indo-Pacific terminology in scholarly publications during that period. Because the present dataset was restricted to studies that directly employed Indo-Pacific-related terms, earlier Asia-Pacific scholarship was not systematically captured in the analysis. The first acknowledgement and consolidation of the Indo-Pacific as a pertinent study topic across strategic and policy-oriented disciplines appears to have occurred between 2011 and 2015. Publication activity increased dramatically after 2016, indicating a structural expansion in research output. The increasing institutionalization of the Indo-Pacific idea into international strategic and policy frameworks is reflected in this turning point. From 46 publications in 2019 to 80 in 2020, 107 in 2021, 190 in 2022, and 197 in 2023, the most notable expansion took place after 2019 and continued throughout the early 2020s. The trend peaked in 2024 with 284 articles, and it continued to be very high in 2025 with 282 publications. Key geopolitical and strategic events, such as the formalization of Indo-Pacific plans by key powers, the QUAD's growing prominence, the intensifying strategic rivalry between the US and China, and more focus on regional security frameworks, all coincide with this rapid rise. Research in the fields of international relations, security studies, and regional cooperation that is both strategy-oriented and policy-relevant is in high demand as a result of these trends. This pattern suggests a systemic intensification of scientific involvement with Indo-Pacific strategic dynamics rather than isolated fluctuations. Since the result for 2026 probably represents insufficient data coverage rather than a real drop in research productivity, it was not included in the interpretation. The pattern closely reflects exponential development when looking at the entire 2005–2025 period, underscoring the growing scientific importance of Indo-Pacific studies in modern geopolitical research.

4.3. Research life cycle

Figure 2 illustrates the life cycle of strategic research in the Indo-Pacific and the evolution of the field over time based on annual publications. The pattern of the time reflects the dynamic development of the academic work from the initial stage to the fast development to the final maturity. The research on the Indo-Pacific was still in its infancy and had not attracted much scholarly attention, which can be seen in the very small number of publications in the early period (2005–2014). In this period, there was little conceptual consolidation and little scholarship. The publication activity grew steadily from 2015 to 2019, indicating the first recognition of the Indo-Pacific as a research area. The theme is expanding, and the academic engagement is increasing. This phase is the transition from emergence to early growth. The main increase in publishing activity since 2020 characterizes the period of rapid growth of the research life cycle. The number of publications grew from around 100+ in 2020, 200 in 2021, and 300+ in 2023–2024. The steep upward trajectory is a sign of strong growth in research output and growing global interest in the strategic challenges of the Indo-Pacific. The vertical dashed line at around 2023 corresponds to the turning point or the peak development phase, where the field has the maximum rate of expansion. The fitted curve suggests that the output of publications will probably peak in 2025–2026, with expected values above 320 publications. This is where the field is at its most mature and where the output of research is at its highest intensity. After this peak, the publication output slowly declines. The

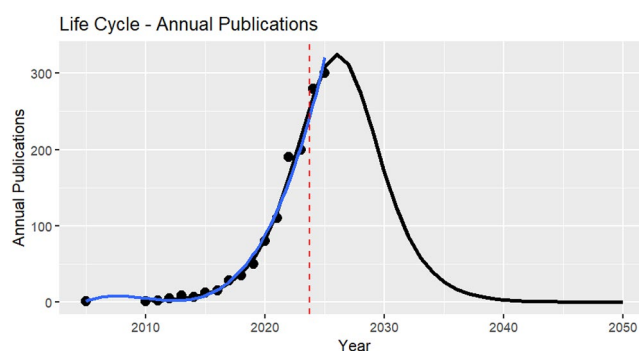


Figure 2. Life cycle of Indo-Pacific strategic studies based on annual publication trends.

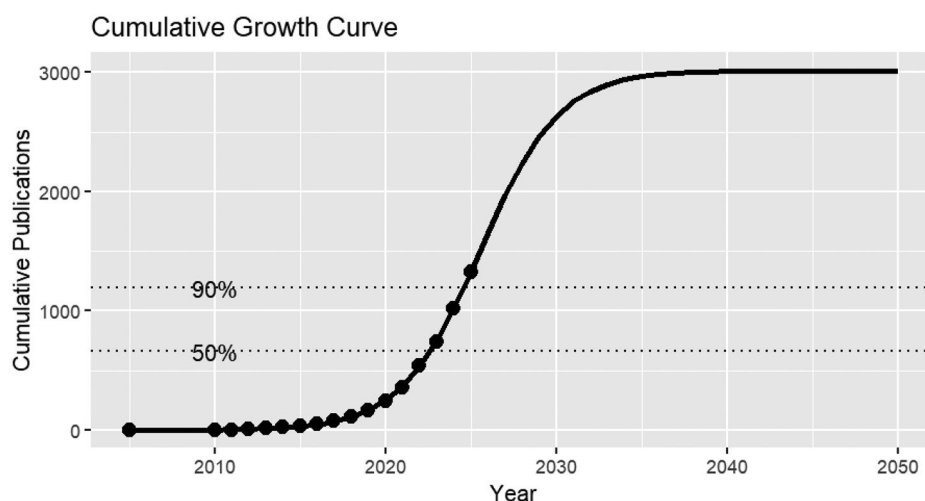


Figure 3. Cumulative growth curve of publications in Indo-Pacific strategic studies (2005–2025).

expected curve shows a tendency to saturation and stabilization. Not necessarily less importance, but strong core principles and moderate contributions. This drop indicates the area might be going into a consolidation phase. The developmental life cycle pattern of Indo-Pacific studies from an emerging to a mature and highly developed field tends to be a close approximation to a conventional S-shaped or logistic growth curve. The fast development at the beginning of the 2020s is an indicator of the rising geopolitical, political, and academic importance of the Indo-Pacific in the international discussion.

The cumulative growth curve of Indo-Pacific strategic research is shown in [Figure 3](#). The curve reflects the long-term path of development of the field and the increase in papers over time. The curve is of the characteristic S-shaped (sigmoidal) form, indicating a transition from slow early growth to rapid growth and then to saturation. The first period (2005–2015) was marked by a very low total number of publications, which evidenced that the research on the Indo-Pacific was very immature and the scholarly production was not very large. This early stage in the development of the field contributed only a handful of studies to the body of knowledge. The curve's gradual rise from 2016 to 2020 represents the early growth phase. In 2020, the total number of publications will have grown steadily to between 200 and 300. This period of time is indicative of the increasing significance of the Indo-Pacific as a field of interest in strategic studies and international relations. After 2020, the curve starts to go exponential. The total number of publications increases sharply, from about 300 publications in 2020 to over 1000 in 2023–2024. The research expansion phase is in the middle of the period, around 2022–2023, when the 50% mark is reached (around 700 articles). The curve crosses the 90% mark (around 1200–1300 articles) around 2024–2025, meaning the majority of research output has been generated in a short period of time. The climb is still steep. This suggests that a major focus of scholarly activity in the early 2020s was on this. The curve then flattens out, signaling the onset of maturity and saturation. On the basis of the predicted trajectory, the total number of publications will reach a maximum of around 3000 by 2035–2040, after which growth will plateau and increase only slightly. The overall growth trend confirms that the research on the Indo-Pacific has evolved from an emerging research area to a mature and highly developed research domain in a short span of time. The projected plateau points to a future stabilization and consolidation of the field. The steep rise in recent years suggests the increasing academic and policy relevance of Indo-Pacific studies.

4.4. Most relevant sources

Among the records that were published in 422 different sources, the total number of records that were related to 'Indo-Pacific, geopolitics, international relations, diplomacy, security, foreign policy, and regional order' was 1343. The ten journals that have the largest impact on the field are ranked in [Table 2](#) according to the total number of publications they have received. The top 10 journals were responsible for publishing

Table 2. Most relevant sources.

Journal	Publisher	Country	h-index	IF	Article
Pacific Review	Taylor and Francis Ltd	United Kingdom	60	2.2	52
Australian Journal of International Affairs	Taylor and Francis Ltd	United Kingdom	40	2.0	46
Asia Policy	The National Bureau of Asian Research	United States	15	0.9	31
Journal Of the Indian Ocean Region	Taylor and Francis Inc	United States	22	1.3	26
Maritime Affairs	Routledge	United Kingdom	10	–	23
Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs	Taylor and Francis Ltd	United Kingdom	16	1.96	19
East Asia	Springer Netherlands	Netherlands	24	1.1	19
Strategic Analysis	Taylor and Francis Ltd	United Kingdom	22	0.6	19
India Quarterly	Indian Council of World Affairs	India	14	0.7	18
The Routledge Handbook of US Foreign Policy in The Indo-Pacific	Taylor and Francis Ltd	–	–	–	18

Table 3. Most important authors, articles quantity, and article fractionalized.

Author	Articles	Articles fractionalized
PANDA J	12	9.33
SCOTT D	11	11.00
DE CASTRO RC	10	10.00
PARK JJ	9	6.00
KOGA K	8	7.10
WILKINS T	8	6.50
HE K	7	3.83
CANNON BJ	6	3.67
CHAN L-H	6	4.50
GRGIĆ G	6	4.83

a total of 271 of the articles that were found among the 1343 documents that were analyzed. A total of 52 articles were published by Pacific Review, making it the publication with the largest total number of articles. This was followed by the Australian Journal of International Affairs, Asia Policy, Journal of the Indian Ocean Region, and Marine Affairs, in that order; the numbers of their published pieces are 46, 31, 26, and 23, respectively. The total number of articles published by the Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs, East Asia, and Strategic Analysis was the lowest among these publications, coming in at 19. On the other hand, India Quarterly and The Routledge Handbook of US Foreign Policy in the Indo-Pacific have published the same numbers for 18 articles. The publisher is responsible for the production of the highest number of those journals; to be specific, the publisher has produced six of them, including Taylor and Francis Ltd. (Pacific Review, Australian Journal of International Affairs, Journal of The Indian Ocean Region, Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs, Strategic Analysis, and the Routledge Handbook of US Foreign Policy in the Indo-Pacific). For the perspective countries, the United Kingdom had the highest journal venue at 6, and the United States had two journals among the top 10 journals of Indo-Pacific issues. The Pacific Review had the highest h-index of 60 and an impact factor of 2.2, while Maritime Affairs had the lowest h-index of 10, and Strategic Analysis had the lowest impact factor of 0.6.

4.5. Leading authors and scholarly contribution

Among the 1450 authors, 909 of these documents were published as works that were written by a single author. The total number of articles that were measured was 1343, and the proportion of international co-authorship was 13.25%. This indicates that there is a significant amount of collaborative authorship in the documents that were retrieved. On the basis of the articles that were retrieved and then fractionalized, Table 3 presents the top 10 active writers from among those articles. The Indo-Pacific region, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union are the areas of expertise of Dr. PANDA J, who holds the top ranking with 12 articles and article fractionalized measurements consisting of 9.33 articles. There are three authors, CANNON BJ, CHAN L-H, and GRGIĆ G, who hold the position of having the lowest number of articles among the top ten articles on Indo-Pacific topics. They have each published six pieces on their own.

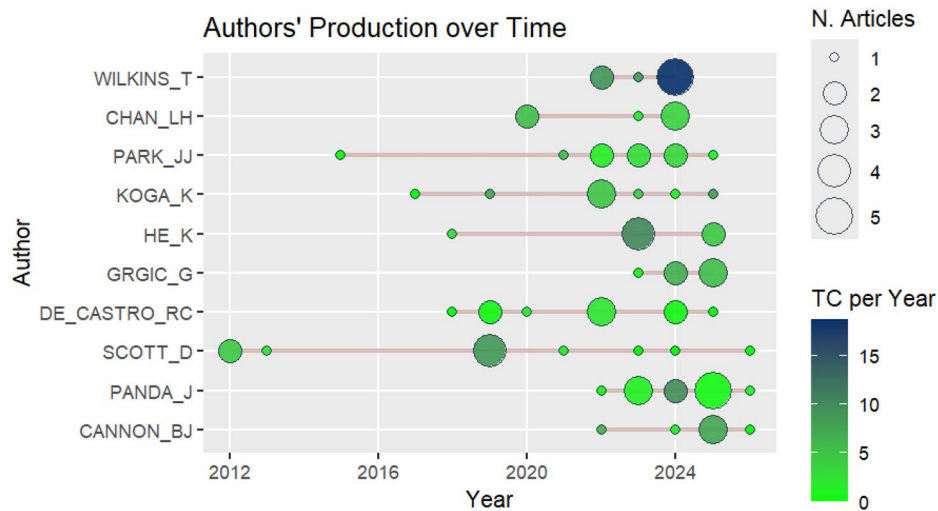


Figure 4. Authors' scientific production over time in Indo-Pacific strategic studies.

The annual scientific production of the ten most relevant researchers in the field is graphically shown in Figure 4. There seem to be many more papers in that time frame. Because the circles were bigger. The darker the circle, the more citations a published article has. This will be proportional to the number of citations obtained. One of them is Wilkins T. from Australia, who is very active in publishing constantly, especially in the last few years. Wilkins has a strong academic impact in 2022–2024, with peak productivity around 2024 (around 4–5 articles) and the highest TC per year (around 15+). Chan L.H. from Australia, another well-known scholar, has been making steady contributions over the years. Publications of Chan are from 2020 to 2024, with the peak in 2024 (around 3–4 papers) and moderate annual TC (around 6–10), indicating a consistent impact on the academic community. Another important contributor is Park J.J. (South Korea) with an earlier publication trajectory (around 2015) that persists in recent years. Park has some contributions from 2021 to 2024 (about 2–3 papers per year) with a relatively lower but stable annual TC (about 3–6), indicating continued involvement. 'Another big contributor is Koga K. from Singapore. He has been doing steady, continuous research from 2017 to 2024'. His productivity is highest in 2022–2023 (ca. 3–4 articles), and the annual TC is moderate (ca. 6–10), indicating stable scholarly impact. Another important contributor is Chan L.H. from Australia, who demonstrates a steady growth in academic contributions between 2018 and 2025. His publication output reaches its peak around 2023, with approximately three articles. In addition, his annual total citations (TC) remain relatively high, ranging from about 10 to 12, indicating a strong and consistent scholarly impact in the field. Another famous scientist is Grgic G. from Australia. You can see his contribution, especially in the 2023–2025 period. He publishes 2–3 papers per year with a moderate TC of 6–9, which shows his growing influence in the subject. R.C. De Castro (Philippines) is a regular contributor to the field, especially from 2019 to 2025. His productivity is highest in 2022–2024 (approx. 2–3 articles/year) with moderate TC/year (approx. 5–8), pointing to regular regional contributions. Scott D. from Canada is one of the earliest contributors and has been contributing since 2012 and will be doing so until 2025. He is most productive in 2019 (3–4 articles) and has a relatively high annual TC (10–12 articles), which shows the impact on the research of the Indo-Pacific. Another big contributor is Panda J from Poland, especially in the last few years (2022–2025). His TC per year is moderate (6–9), and his output is high (4–5 articles). It would be around 2024. and increasingly important in the academic world. Then there is the UAE's Cannon B.J. Big gun. From 2023 to 2025, he was publishing 2–3 papers a year. His annual TC is moderate (6–10), which shows that he is working at a steady pace.

4.6. Country-wise scientific production

Figure 5 lists the top five nations in terms of the quantity of research they have generated in the field of Indo-Pacific strategic studies between 2005 and March 21, 2026. The top five nations with the highest

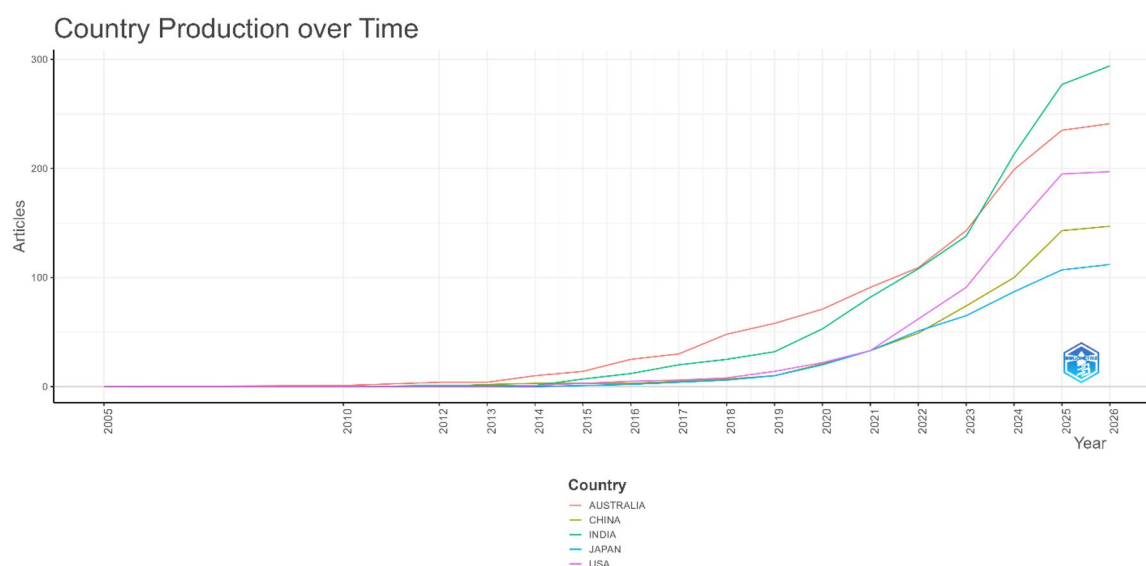


Figure 5. Country-wise scientific production in Indo-Pacific strategic studies over time (2005–2025).

production, Australia, China, India, Japan, and the USA, were listed in Figure 5. Among the top five nations, India produced the most articles, roughly 300 by 2026, while Japan produced the fewest, roughly 110 by 2026. India has the largest production rise from 2005 to 2026, followed by China and Australia, both of which have notable upward trends in publication output over time. Japan shows a relatively sluggish but consistent increase throughout the period, whereas the USA displays strong growth, especially after 2020, reaching almost 200 publications by 2025–2026. Australia continues to grow steadily, reaching about 240 articles by 2026, demonstrating its significant and ongoing contribution to Indo-Pacific research. The USA and Australia continue to play significant roles in shaping the research landscape. China produced a total that approaches 230–250 publications by 2026, India continues to be the top country in terms of total production, and Japan continues to make a relatively moderate but steady contribution. It is important to note that country productivity in this study was assessed primarily on the basis of publication counts derived from the Scopus database. No additional quality-based filtering criteria, such as journal quartile rankings, impact factors, or CiteScore thresholds, were applied during data collection. Therefore, publication output should be interpreted as an indicator of research productivity rather than a direct measure of scholarly quality or influence. India's leading position may reflect both its growing research community and the increasing number of Scopus-indexed journals publishing work related to Indo-Pacific affairs. Although India produced the highest number of publications, Australia emerged as the most cited country, suggesting that Australian scholarship has exerted a disproportionately strong intellectual influence on the field. This may be attributed to the early development of Indo-Pacific strategic thinking in Australian policy and academic circles and the presence of highly cited contributions by leading Australian scholars.

4.7. International collaboration patterns

The nations with the most matching author positions in the manuscript are also the ones that have earned the most articles, according to the results of the leading responsibilities of the manuscript as a team leader. The number of publications from a single country, denoted by the color green (SCP) in Figure 6, and the number of publications from multiple countries, denoted by the color red (MCP), were used to identify the countries of the writers who corresponded to each other. Based on SCP and MCP, we identified the top corresponding author country names at the corresponding authors' nations, totaling 85 countries with a total of 1698 articles. Table 4 shows the top 20 related author countries with a total article measurement of 743. SCP 133 and MCP 7 (MCP% 5) were among the 140 papers that India submitted as related author countries, with the highest article percentage of 10.4%. Australia had 110 articles (8.2%), SCP 95 and MCP 15 (13.6%), China had 81 articles (6%), SCP 71 and MCP 10 (12.3%), the

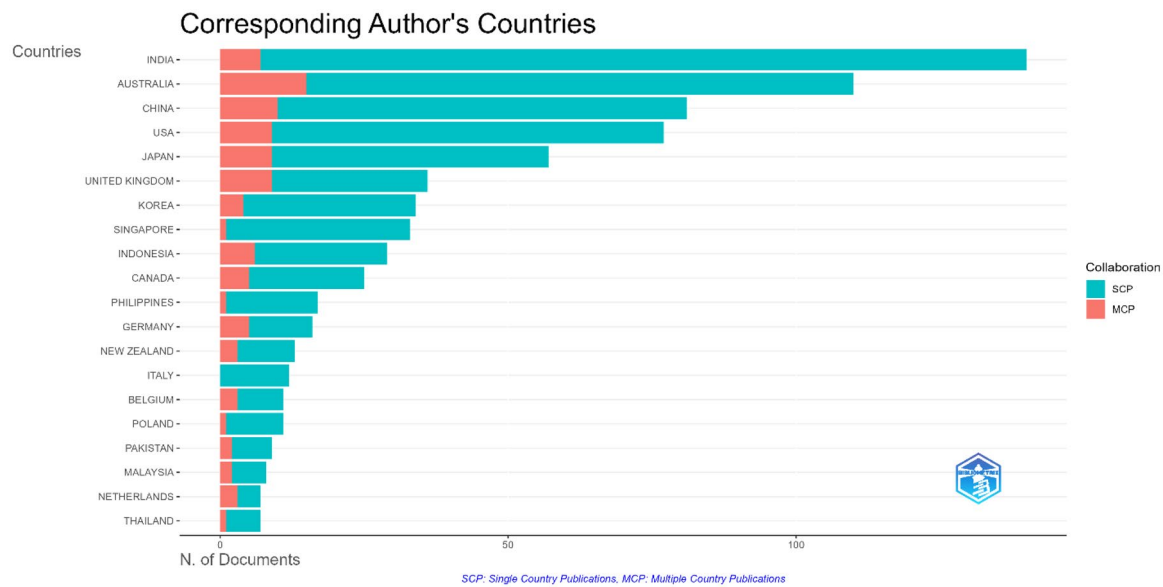


Figure 6. Distribution of corresponding authors by country with single-country and multi-country publications.

Table 4. Country-wise publication output and international collaboration in Indo-Pacific strategic studies (SCP and MCP analysis).

Country	Articles	Articles %	SCP	MCP	MCP %
India	140	10.4	133	7	5
Australia	110	8.2	95	15	13.6
China	81	6	71	10	12.3
USA	77	5.7	68	9	11.7
Japan	57	4.2	48	9	15.8
United Kingdom	36	2.7	27	9	25
Korea	34	2.5	30	4	11.8
Singapore	33	2.5	32	1	3
Indonesia	29	2.2	23	6	20.7
Canada	25	1.9	20	5	20
Philippines	17	1.3	16	1	5.9
Germany	16	1.2	11	5	31.3
New Zealand	13	1	10	3	23.1
Italy	12	0.9	12	0	0
Belgium	11	0.8	8	3	27.3
Poland	11	0.8	10	1	9.1
Pakistan	9	0.7	7	2	22.2
Malaysia	8	0.6	6	2	25
Netherlands	7	0.5	4	3	42.9
Thailand	7	0.5	6	1	14.3

USA had 77 articles (5.7%), SCP 68 and MCP 9 (11.7%), and Japan had 57 articles (4.2%), SCP 48 and MCP 9 (15.8%). Additionally, the UK supplied 36 articles (2.7%), SCP 27 and MCP 9 (25%), Korea 34 articles (2.5%), SCP 30 and MCP 4 (11.8%), Singapore 33 articles (2.5%), SCP 32 and MCP 1 (3%), and Indonesia 29 articles (2.2%), SCP 23 and MCP 6 (20.7%). In addition, Canada produced 25 articles (1.9%), SCP 20 and MCP 5 (20%), Philippines 17 articles (1.3%), SCP 16 and MCP 1 (5.9%), Germany 16 articles (1.2%), SCP 11 and MCP 5 (31.3%), New Zealand 13 articles (1%), SCP 10 and MCP 3 (23.1%), Italy 12 articles (0.9%), SCP 12 and MCP 0 (0%), Belgium 11 articles (0.8%), SCP 8 and MCP 3 (27.3%), Poland 11 articles (0.8%), SCP 10 and MCP 1 (9.1%), Pakistan 9 articles (0.7%), SCP 7 and MCP 2 (22.2%), Malaysia 8 articles (0.6%), SCP 6 and MCP 2 (25%), Netherlands 7 articles (0.5%), SCP 4 and MCP 3 (42.9%), and Thailand 7 articles (0.5%), SCP 6 and MCP 1 (14.3%). The Netherlands had the greatest MCP percentage (42.9%), followed by Germany (31.3%) and Belgium (27.3%), showing better international collaboration intensity in these nations, even though India had gained the top spot in both total publications and SCP.

The country collaboration map shows the various nations' attempts to cooperate on the topic of Indo-Pacific strategic research. A range of blue hues is used to symbolize the generation of documents;

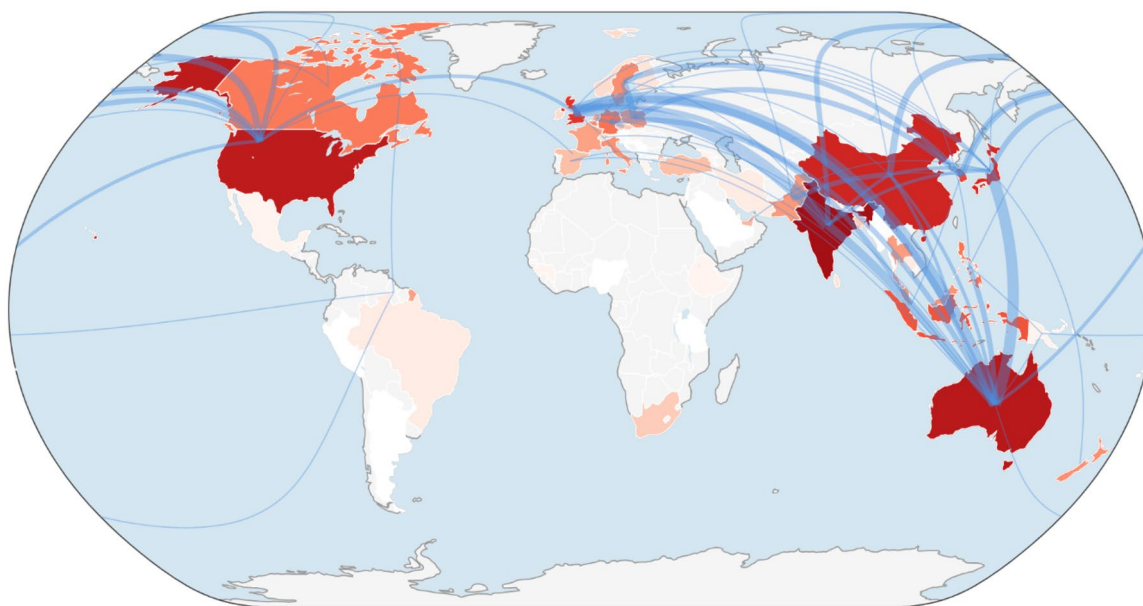


Figure 7. International collaboration patterns in Indo-Pacific research based on country-level co-authorship.

darkers hues indicate higher levels of productivity, while lighter hues signify lower levels. According to the results of the World Cooperation Network, the nations that collaborated the most in the field of Indo-Pacific strategic studies were Australia, China, India, and the United States of America. [Figure 7](#) shows that Australia and the UK collaborated the most, with a total score of 9, followed by Japan (8). As a result, Australia continued to have significant partnerships with Germany and the Philippines, each of which had four joint projects. With a total measurement of 9, India had the highest level of collaborative research with the United Kingdom, followed by Australia with 6 and the United States with 4. With a total score of 4, China's partnership with Pakistan was the strongest; Indonesia and Japan, with whom it had collaborated three times each, held the combined places. The United States of America had the highest level of collaborative research with both China and Korea, with a total score of 5. Japan had the next highest level of collaboration, with a score of 4, while the United Kingdom had a score of 3. With the highest measurement of 5, the United Kingdom has the most individual research collaboration with Indonesia, followed by Singapore with 4. With a total score of 3 and 5, respectively, Indonesia had the highest level of collaborative research with China and the UK, while Japan maintained strong collaborative ties with Australia (8) and several other nations, including Canada, Germany, and Sweden (each 2). With a total score of four, South Korea's collaborative research with Poland and Sweden was the highest. Sweden, which received a total score of 5, also showed excellent cooperation with Poland. Australia had the highest percentage of cooperative research with the UK, with a total score of 9, while India likewise had the highest percentage of cooperation with the UK (9). The United States of America's robust global collaboration network was demonstrated by the fact that it had the highest level of collaborative research with China and Korea (5 each), followed by Japan (4) and the United Kingdom (3).

4.8. Citation analysis/influential articles

One good starting point for further research is an understanding of the characteristics of strategic studies in the Indo-Pacific. They created [Table 5](#) to rank the articles with the most citations and important discoveries to allow scholars to compare the impact of publications irrespective of the year of publication. For example, Pan (2014) argues that the Indo-Pacific idea is a reflection of geopolitical concerns about China's rise and its impact on the Asian regional order. Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy has developed into a more comprehensive regional and strategic construct (Hosoya, 2019). Likewise, Choong (2019) analyzed the strategic value and return of the Indo-Pacific idea, while Medcalf (2014) emphasized the region as a strategic map to determine the orientation of Australia's foreign policy. The total citation score of this article is moderate after normalization (2.82). However, Pan (2014) has

Table 5. Most influential articles in Indo-Pacific strategic studies based on citation performance (GSC, TC, and normalized TC).

Journals	Title	In-text citations	GSC	TC	TC per year	Normalized TC
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs</i>	The 'Indo-Pacific' and geopolitical anxieties about China's rise in the Asian regional order.	Pan (2014)	217	101	7.77	2.82
<i>Asia-Pacific Review</i>	FOIP 2.0: The evolution of Japan's free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.	Hosoya (2019)	166	76	9.50	6.47
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs</i>	In defence of the Indo-Pacific: Australia's new strategic map.	Medcalf (2014)	160	67	5.15	1.87
<i>Australian Journal of International Affairs</i>	The return of the Indo-Pacific strategy: an assessment.	Choong (2019)	136	62	7.75	5.28
<i>Contemporary Southeast Asia</i>	Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' Strategy.	Koga (2018)	109	57	7.13	4.86
<i>Contested Multilateralism 2.0 and Asian Security Dynamics</i>	Minilateral security's relevance to US strategy in the Indo-Pacific: Challenges and prospects.	Tow (2020)	124	51	6.38	4.34
<i>Marine Policy</i>	Working up an appetite for lionfish: a market-based approach to manage the invasion of <i>Pterois volitans</i> in Belize.	Chapman et al. (2016)	81	50	4.55	3.68
<i>Higher education quarterly</i>	Beyond the 'normal' to the 'new possibles': Australian students' experiences in Asia and their roles in making connections with the region via the New Colombo Plan.	Tran and Vu (2018)	84	50	5.56	6.05
<i>Chinese Political Science Review</i>	Revisiting China threat: The US 'securitization of the 'belt and road initiative'.	Shah (2023)	83	45	11.25	9.19
<i>International Journal</i>	Australia's New Colombo Plan: Enhancing regional soft power through student mobility.	Byrne (2016)	93	45	4.09	3.31

the most citations (101; GSC 217) and has had a large impact in terms of citations per year (7.77). Shah (2023) had the highest normalized total citations (9.19) and highest per year citations (11.25) with 45 total citations (GSC 83), suggesting a rapidly expanding effect despite its recent publication. Hosoya (2019) has also a high academic impact with 76 total citations (GSC 166), 9.50 citations per year and a high normalized citation score of 6.47. Likewise, Choong (2019) (TC 62, TC/year 7.75, normalized TC 5.28) and Koga (2018) (TC 57, TC/year 7.13, normalized TC 4.86) focus on FOIP and regional policy as an important topic in the Indo-Pacific discourse. Tran and Vu (2018) have a strong normalized citation impact (6.05), moderate total citations (50) and citations/year (5.56) indicating the role of educational diplomacy in regional engagement. Tow (2020) contributes to the minilateral security frameworks discussion (TC 51, TC/year 6.38, normalized TC 4.34). Their impact of citation is relatively low, but they are influential in some thematic areas. Chapman et al. (2016) (TC 50, TC/year 4.55, normalized TC 3.68) Byrne (2016) (TC 45, TC/year 4.09, normalized TC 3.31) The least TC of the top ten most influential publications is for Byrne (2016) with 45TC (GSC 93), 4.09TC per year and 3.31 normalized TC score.

The performance study's results indicate that the nations with the highest number of citations are also the ones with the highest number of citations. Australia was the nation with the most citations in the field of Indo-Pacific strategic studies, as Table 6 illustrates. There were more than 1199 citations overall. The average number of article citations is highest in Hong Kong (15.30), followed by Singapore (12.70) and Australia (10.90). India became one of the most cited nations in Asia, with 359 citations in the field. According to Table 7, the United Kingdom (374), China (368), Japan (267), the United States (236), Korea (164), Indonesia (144), New Zealand (92), Pakistan (83), Malaysia (77), Canada (74), Germany (73), Italy (57), the United Arab Emirates (50), Belgium (47), and Hong Kong (46) are among the other nations that received the most citations. A comparison of publication output and citation performance reveals an important distinction between research productivity and scholarly influence. Although India emerged as the most productive country in terms of publication volume, Australia achieved the highest total citation count and one of the highest average citation rates per article. This finding suggests that publication quantity does not necessarily correspond to research impact. Australia's strong citation performance may be attributed to its long-standing engagement with Indo-Pacific strategic discourse, the international

Table 6. Most cited countries in Indo-Pacific strategic studies based on total citations and average article citations.

Country	TC	Average article citations
Australia	1199	10.90
Singapore	420	12.70
United Kingdom	374	10.40
China	368	4.50
India	359	2.60
Japan	267	4.70
Usa	236	3.10
Korea	164	4.80
Indonesia	144	5.00
New Zealand	92	7.10
Pakistan	83	9.20
Malaysia	77	9.60
Canada	74	3.00
Germany	73	4.60
Italy	57	4.80
United Arab Emirates	50	7.10
Belgium	47	4.30
Hong Kong	46	15.30

Table 7. Most important affiliation.

Serial	Affiliation	Country	Article
1	Jawaharlal Nehru University	India	20
2	University of Sydney	Australia	18
3	Deakin University	Australia	15
4	Nanyang Technological University	Singapore	15
5	National University of Singapore	Singapore	15
6	Griffith University	Australia	14
7	De La Salle University	Philippines	12
8	Fudan University	China	12
9	Macquarie University	Australia	12
10	Australian National University	Australia	11

visibility of its research institutions, and the publication of influential studies in widely recognized journals. The result indicates that Australia has played a particularly significant role in shaping the intellectual development of Indo-Pacific scholarship despite producing fewer publications than India.

4.9. Institutional contribution

Table 7 lists 10 scholarly organizations that have significantly advanced the field of Indo-Pacific strategic research. In particular, scientific publications were released between 2005 and March 21, 2026. Jawaharlal Nehru University in India has published twenty books. Deakin University in Australia, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, and the National University of Singapore in Singapore have each published fifteen publications, while the University of Sydney in Australia has published eighteen. Fudan University in China, Macquarie University in Australia, De La Salle University in the Philippines, and Griffith University in Australia have all published 14 works. Eleven books have been published by the Australian National University in Australia. Five of the top ten research institutions in this sector are affiliated with Australian universities, while Singapore's universities contribute two, and China, India, and the Philippines each contribute one.

4.10. Keyword analysis and research trends

The fifty terms that are most commonly used in a tree map in works pertaining to Indo-Pacific strategic studies are shown in Figure 8. We discovered tree map keywords in percentage classifications where the total number of keywords found falls between 6% and 1%. Only one of the tree map's terms is found in 6%; the other terms are found in 5%, 4%, 3%, 2%, and 1%. Although they are represented by the lowest value, the maximum number of terms, or the measurement of numerous keywords, is found in

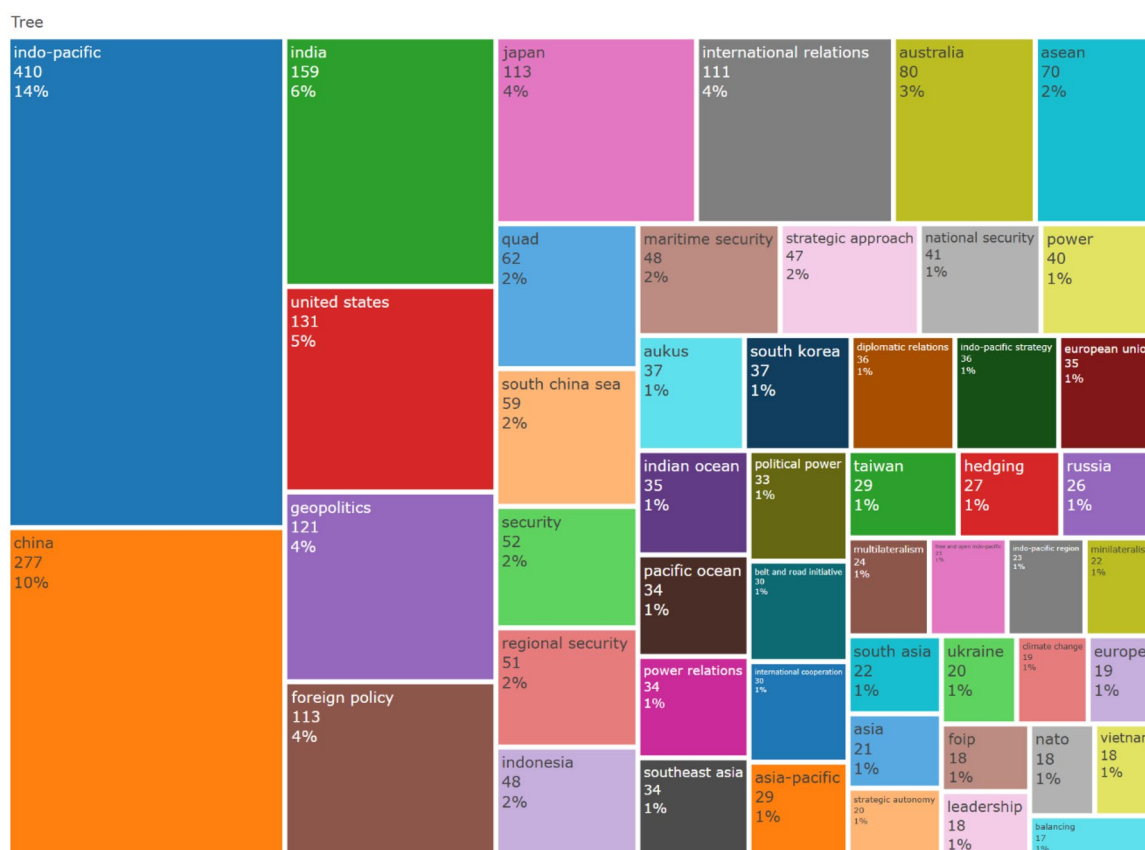


Figure 8. Distribution of major research themes in Indo-Pacific studies based on keyword frequency (treemap visualization).

1%. Using this graphical depiction, Indo-Pacific (410) is at the top, followed by China (277), India (159), the United States (131), geopolitics (121), foreign policy (113), Japan (113), and international relations (111). Australia (80), ASEAN (70), QUAD (62), South China Sea (59), security (52), regional security (51), Indonesia (48), maritime security (48), and strategic approach (47) are some noteworthy keywords that highlight the importance of both geopolitical and security-related concerns. The terms 'national security' (41), 'power' (40), 'AUKUS' (37), 'South Korea' (37), 'diplomatic relations' (36), 'Indo-Pacific strategy' (36), 'Indian Ocean' (35), 'political power' (33), and 'Taiwan' (29) are less common but still significant. Hedging (27), Russia (26), multilateralism (24), Indo-Pacific region (23), minilateralism (22), international cooperation (22), South Asia (20), Ukraine (20), Asia (21), climate change (19), Europe (19), FOIP (18), NATO (18), Vietnam (18), strategic autonomy (20), leadership (18), and balancing (17) are the remaining keywords that fall under the 1% category. The keyword structure further suggests a distinction between mature and emerging research themes within Indo-Pacific scholarship. Mature themes are represented by highly central and frequently occurring keywords such as 'Indo-Pacific', 'China', 'India', 'United States', 'geopolitics', 'foreign policy', 'ASEAN', and 'QUAD', which form the intellectual core of the field. These themes reflect the dominant focus on strategic competition, regional order, and security dynamics. In contrast, several less frequently connected themes appear to be emerging research fronts. Topics related to maritime governance, regional connectivity, economic resilience, sustainability, and nontraditional security issues remain comparatively less developed and offer significant opportunities for future research.

In the subject of Indo-Pacific strategic studies, Figure 9 shows the word frequency over time in terms of the quantity of research that has produced keywords throughout time. This figure covers the years 2005 through 2026, when it will be displayed. For this study, we found ten different keywords. Word frequency in the following sequences is shown in Figure 9: ASEAN, Australia, China, foreign policy, geopolitics, India, Indo-Pacific, international relations, Japan, and the United States. The majority of the keywords stayed at a very low frequency during the early period (about 2005–2012), showing little scholarly

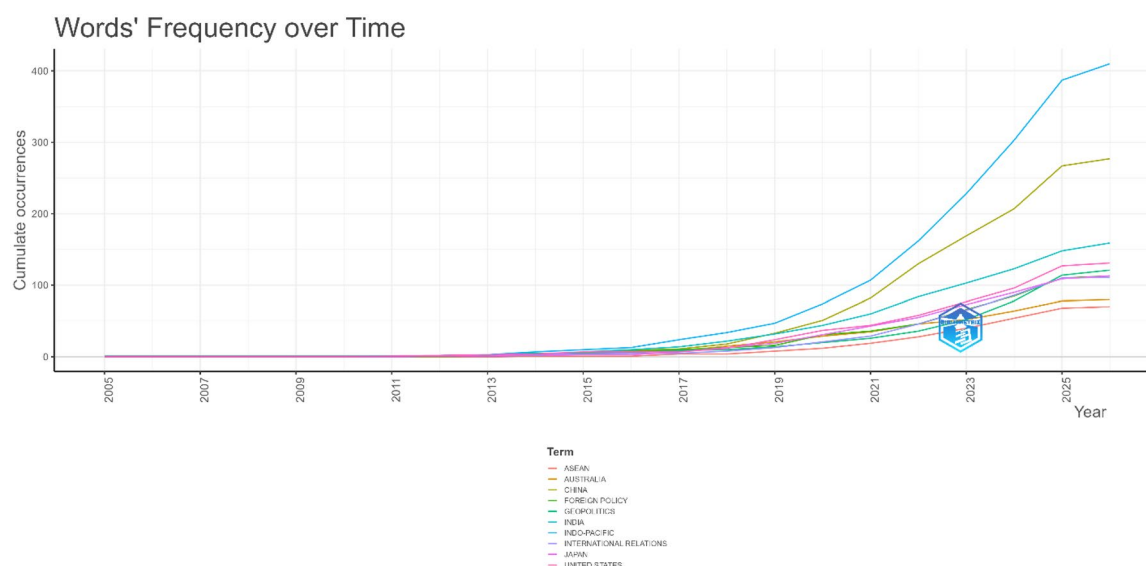


Figure 9. Cumulative growth of keyword frequency in Indo-Pacific strategic studies (2005–2025).

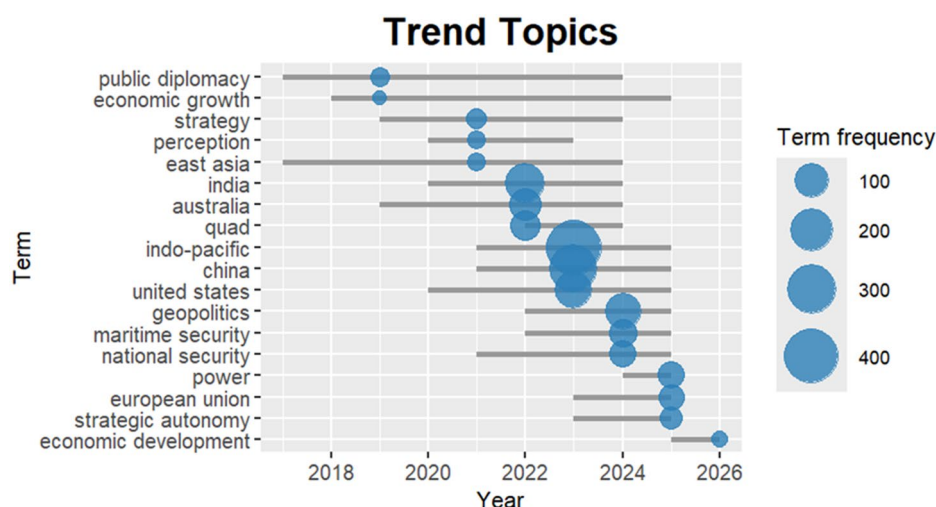


Figure 10. Temporal evolution of key research topics in Indo-Pacific strategic studies (2018–2025).

attention in the early stages of the area. As a keyword, Indo-Pacific has the largest cumulative frequency, with over 400 by 2026, followed by China (around 270), India (about 260–270), and the United States (about 150). Other important terms include foreign policy (around 120–130), geopolitics (about 130), Japan (about 120), and international relations (about 140). Australia and ASEAN have relatively lower but continuously rising frequencies, which are expected to reach between 80 and 100 by 2026. The United States and international relations continue to expand moderately but steadily, while Indo-Pacific has led the top-used position by surpassing 400 for word frequency over time in 2026, followed by China and India. The findings show that while regional and policy-oriented keywords progressively gain significance over time, basic geopolitical and strategic phrases predominate in the literature.

Figure 10 of Trend Topics gives a broad overview of the development of strategic research on the Indo-Pacific in the last ten years, depicting several major trends and shifts. One of the key findings is that some of the basic concepts, such as 'Indo-Pacific', 'China', 'United States', and 'geopolitics', which have been at the heart of academic debates from around 2020 to 2024, are still relevant. These simple ideas continue to guide research and prove their relevance for understanding regional power relations and strategic interaction in international politics. The chart also shows the appearance of new context-specific motifs that reflect the geopolitical and global changes taking place at the same time. Keywords such as

'QUAD', 'Australia', 'India', and 'strategic approach' point to the emergence of contemporary themes such as alliance formation, regional cooperation, and emerging security architectures, suggesting a broadening of the field. The concepts of 'national security' and 'maritime security' exemplify the growing importance of security-oriented approaches, especially against the background of increasing geopolitical tensions. This is a dynamic area, and the academic focus is changing progressively. The bibliometric statistics reveal that even though the newer topics like regional security, strategic autonomy, and the European Union have attracted more attention recently, the older strategic issues of geopolitics, power, and foreign policy still prevail. Perhaps the most important change in Indo-Pacific Scholarship has been the ascendancy of power and strategic competition. The rise of 'power' (2024–2025) and 'strategic autonomy' (2023–2025) indicates a move toward more critical and sophisticated perceptions of regional and global influence, especially in terms of independent strategic positioning and great power competition. This theme development has thrust Indo-Pacific studies to the forefront of policy and strategic discussions, reflecting the larger geopolitical trends. This data set is a reflection of local and global events happening at the same time. The fact that 'economic growth' (2019–2020) and 'public diplomacy' (2019–2020) are present indicates that the economic dimension of strategy and soft power has already been studied in academia. The emergence of 'economic development' (2025–2026) signifies the growing overlap between geopolitics and developmentalist discourse, and prompts inquiries about regional development and economic sustainability. Another major change to elaborate on is the topic scope of Indo-Pacific studies. The addition of 'European Union', 'strategic autonomy', and 'power relations' challenges the traditional association of the Indo-Pacific with great power politics and points to a broadening use of the concept in wider global and transregional ways. This indicates a greater awareness that Indo-Pacific research is conceptualized in terms of global governance, diplomacy, and strategic competition, not simply in terms of Asia-Pacific dynamics. The regional prevalence of 'India', 'Australia', and 'East Asia' points to the growing geopolitical significance of regional players in shaping the Indo-Pacific discourse. This signifies that the study of middle and regional powers has become very crucial, particularly in terms of alliance formation and the regional balance of power. The use of words like 'national security', 'maritime security', etc., shows that issues of security are still a priority in Indo-Pacific research.

4.11. Network and conceptual analysis

The network of keyword co-occurrence is shown in [Figure 11](#) to provide a panoramic view of the conceptual and thematic structure of Indo-Pacific strategic studies. The network is very dense and interconnected, reflecting the complexity and multi-disciplinary nature of the field. The most important and central node is 'Indo-Pacific', which is presented as the dominant keyword and the core of the whole research structure. Its centrality and strong link strength imply that it is the main conceptual hub connecting different thematic domains. In the proximity of this central node on geopolitics and strategy, we see important concepts like 'geopolitics', 'United States', 'China' and 'QUAD'. This is a tight cluster. This means a good deal of the literature is framed around great power competition, strategic alignment, and regional power dynamics. The prevalence of 'South China Sea', 'Taiwan' and 'bilateral agreement' also indicates the importance of territorial disputes, regional tensions and diplomacy in the formation of the Indo-Pacific discourse. One significant cluster contains phrases like 'diplomatic relations', 'political relations', 'leadership', and 'regional order', indicating a heavy focus on international relations and governance-oriented views. The keywords show that the scope of the field is not limited to security issues, but also includes broader discussions on diplomacy, institutional collaboration and policy frameworks. Still another cluster of keywords, including 'European Union', 'power', 'investments', and 'Ukraine', also indicates the increasing global and transregional nature of Indo-Pacific research. Thus, the Indo-Pacific is not only a regional concept but is also increasingly studied in the context of global geopolitics and international strategic competition. Security themes are also clearly present in the network, with keywords such as 'security threat', 'maritime transportation', and 'international law' forming important cross-cluster links. These terms underline the importance of maritime security, legal frameworks, and strategic infrastructure in the emerging Indo-Pacific narrative.

The thematic map of the strategic research field of Indo-Pacific is presented in [Figure 12](#), which classifies the themes into four quadrants (Q1 to Q4) based on their density and centrality. The upper right quadrant (Q1) shows that well-developed driving motifs (motor themes) are important for the area.

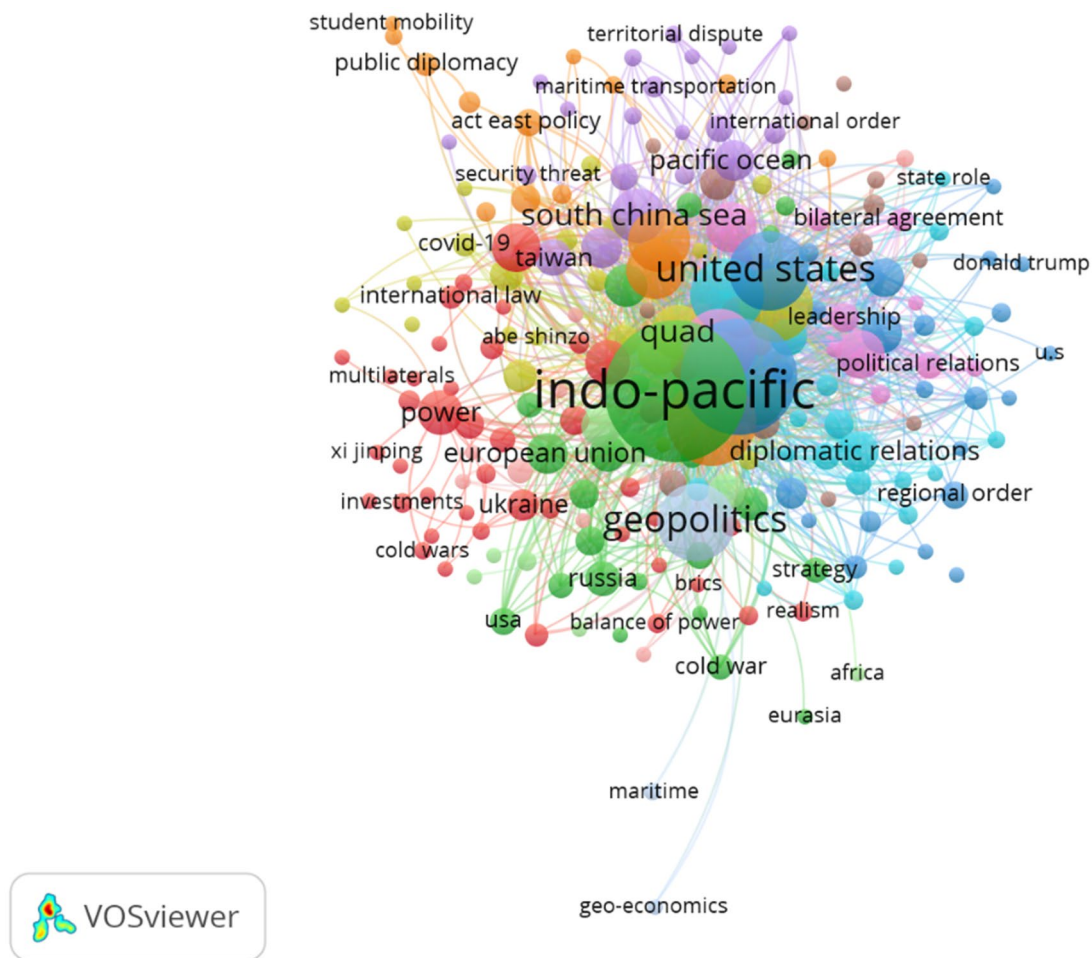


Figure 11. Keyword co-occurrence network of Indo-Pacific strategic studies.

Likewise, basic motifs, or underlying concepts, are also important but less developed in the lower-right quadrant (Q4). The upper left quadrant (Q2) is home to specialized themes, sometimes called niche themes, that are related to other topics of lesser importance but are less relevant to the main area of study. Finally, the lower left quadrant (Q3) contains themes of minor importance or in the process of changing, in an emerging or declining state. Some node texts are close enough to overlap. Results Key findings from the theme map are highlighted below. Q1 includes highly significant themes in the 'power-hedging-national security' node, such as regional security strategies and balancing behavior, and the 'China-united states-foreign policy' node, such as great power competition, diplomatic relations, and strategic influence. Power dynamics and strategic alignment are other key issues, which are at the heart of the Indo-Pacific debate. The 'Indo-Pacific-India-geopolitics' cluster, comprising concepts like regional order, strategic posture, and geopolitical competition, is shown in Q4 to be central to the field of study. These themes are quite pertinent, even if in terms of internal density, they are still in evolution. Similarly, nodes on India and Indo-Pacific policy point to important areas that lack theoretical clarification. Q2 also features niche themes like 'South China Sea-Indian Ocean-Pacific Ocean' which cover sea lanes, maritime domains and regional connectivity. They are well developed but are not as important to the larger framework of the study. For example, Q1 has discussed the maritime realm in relation to more general security concerns, especially power projection and national security. Themes that are either emerging or declining in Q3 include nodes such as 'multilateralism-bilateralism-governance approach' and 'Japan-free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)'. These themes indicate continuing popularity of policy approaches and evolving strategic frameworks in the literature. They are increasingly spoken about, but they have not reached strong centrality or density yet, as their placement shows. The results suggest that to extend the Indo-Pacific study area more comprehensively, subjects in Q2 and Q3, such as maritime security domains, FOIP, and multilateral governance approaches, could be further linked with prevailing themes

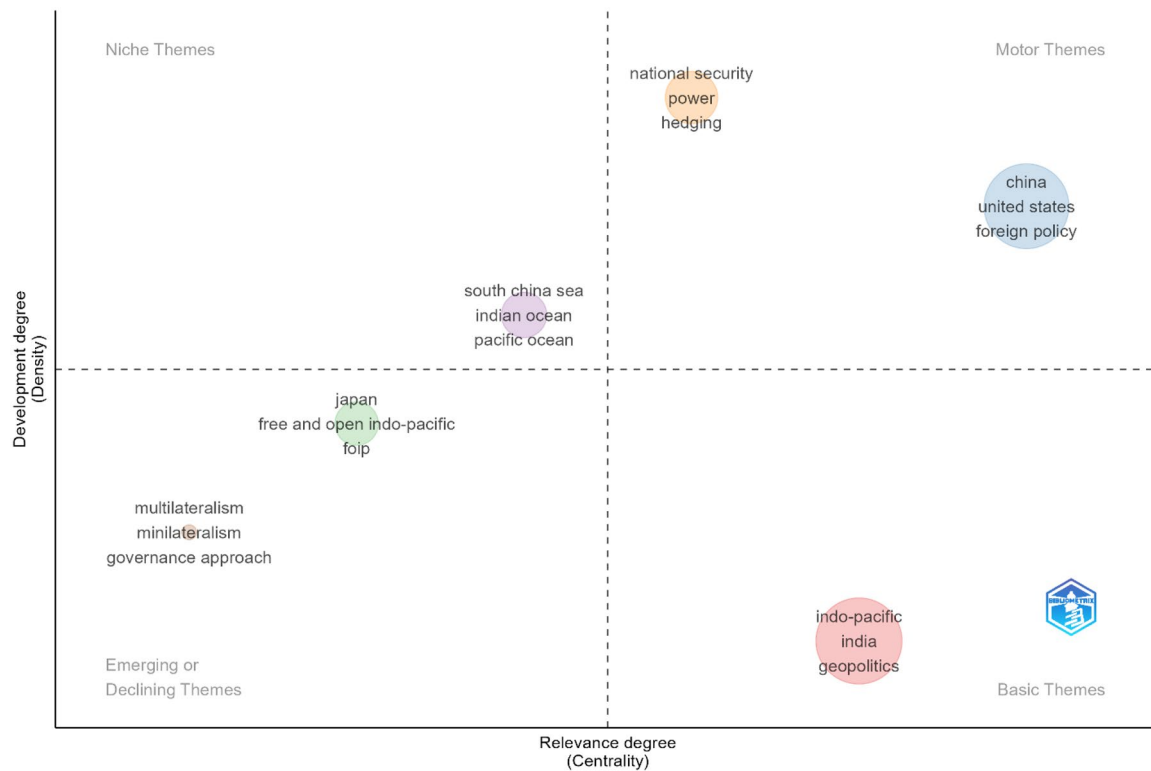


Figure 12. Thematic map of Indo-Pacific strategic studies based on centrality and density.

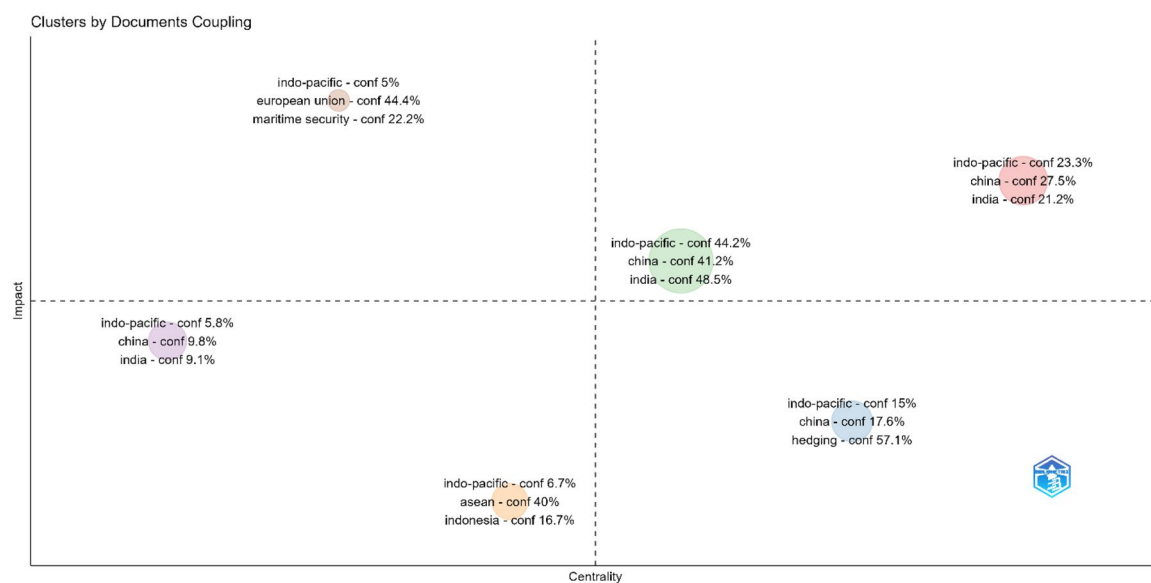


Figure 13. Document coupling clusters of Indo-Pacific strategic studies based on centrality and impact.

in Q1 and Q4. Such an integration may foster a more coherent and theoretically sound understanding of the evolving strategic dynamics of the field.

This is particularly useful when mapping current and future intellectual structures rather than historical rupture points of a field. A document coupling analysis was used to identify current study areas in the Indo-Pacific region. This analysis allows us to identify the thematic proximity between publications by means of common citation patterns. Document coupling produces clusters that are shown in Figure 13. The most important indicators are centrality, connectivity, and effect. The findings suggest a discipline characterized by significant discontinuities between central strategic and peripheral thematic

strands, organized around topics of geopolitics. In the upper right quadrant, we have China and India, with confidence levels of 23.3%, 27.5%, and 21.2%, respectively, centered around the Indo-Pacific. These terms have very high confidence scores, showing high internal consistency and broad cross-cluster linkage. The main framework of this design is Indo-Pacific geopolitics, meaning that regional strategic dynamics are a controlled domain for understanding power dynamics, influence, and alignment. This points to how contemporary scholarship envisions Indo-Pacific studies within the context of international relations and strategic governance, not on isolated countries or localized phenomena. This core is accompanied by a tightly linked cluster focused on China (41.2%), India (48.5%), and the Indo-Pacific region (44.2%). This second cluster, linking key and highly salient geopolitical discourses, has a significant impact and positioning power within the research organization. On the other hand, two high-impact but peripheral issues are the European Union (44.4%) and maritime security (22.2%), located in the upper left quadrant. These themes indicate that studies on EU-related and maritime security are structurally less integrated in the dominant Indo-Pacific discourse because they are weakly connected to the core ideas of the subject. Consequently, these themes are often seen as supporting rather than foundational elements of the main geopolitical structure. The lower right quadrant contains emerging and context-specific themes, such as hedging (57.1%), China (17.6%), and Indo-Pacific (15%). Although these clusters are highly central, their impact on the literature is smaller. This is because they are a bridge to integrate the field, but have not yet achieved substantial consolidation. But their stature can be read as an indicator of an increasing analytical focus on policy orientation and strategic behavior, with a relatively small and still-developing theoretical synthesis. In the lower left quadrant are clusters like ASEAN (40%) and Indonesia (16.7%), and a smaller cluster including China (9.8%) and India (9.1%). These clusters are low in impact and low in centrality; that is, they are still peripheral to the larger field of study.

Using bibliographic coupling and co-citation analysis, the researchers built a framework for intellectual structure. This process resulted in three major changes that were demonstrated by different thematic nodes. However, the researchers used a three-field plot method with an aim to observe the depictions of the triadic framework to justify future talks before drawing any additional interpretations on these nodes. The

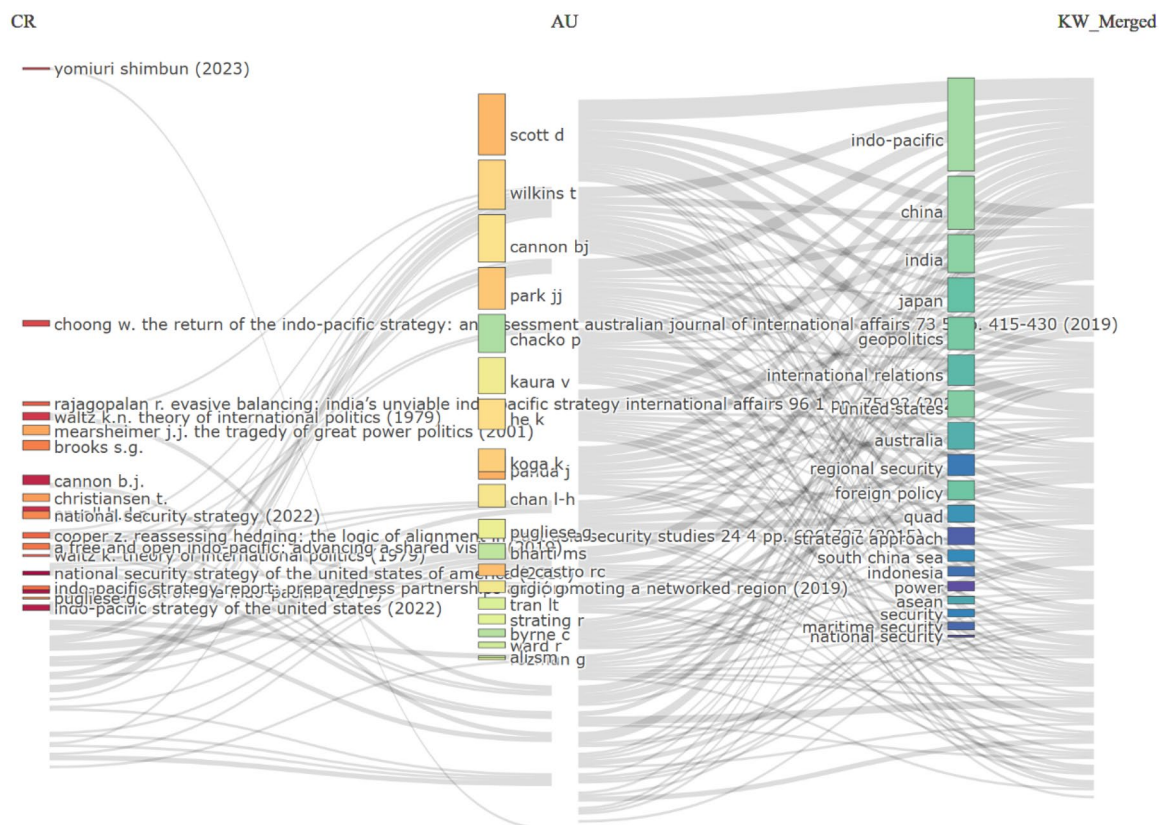


Figure 14. Three-field plot linking references, authors, and keywords in Indo-Pacific strategic studies.



Figure 15. Co-citation network of key references in Indo-Pacific strategic studies.

biblioshiny R package's 'intellectual structure' button only shows the co-citation network and historiography of the dataset, not the main framework that includes the essential intellectual underpinnings used by engaged researchers and translated into prevailing subject focuses. This sub-analysis is motivated by the reality and limitations of the descriptive nature of bibliometric work. Therefore, the researchers applied and combined the results of the three-field plot with the co-citation network analysis in order to break this surface-level analysis and produce a solid, rich, and valid interpretation in relation to the co-citation network analysis. Figure 14 shows a triadic architecture of references, authors, and abstract terms. The most cited works in the dataset are Mearsheimer (2001), Waltz (1979), Brooks (1997), Choong (2019), and Yomiuri Shimbun (2023) and are listed in the left column above. These pieces are the field's basic intellectual contributions. The knowledge producers are represented in the center column, Scott D., Wilkins T., Cannon B.J., Park J.J., and Chacko P., producing the current corpus of literature. These are the writers who are actively shaping the state of research today. The column on the right lists high-frequency terms from article abstracts. Knowledge outputs on the topical focus Indo-Pacific, China, India, Japan, Geopolitics, International Relations, United States, Australia, Regional security, foreign policy, QUAD, South China Sea, ASEAN, Maritime Security, National security. In short, the three-field analysis shows that Indo-Pacific strategic studies belong to a coherent intellectual tradition where foundational scholars create an integrated and policy-oriented thematic focus around regional power dynamics, geopolitics, and strategic alignment.

The conceptual clustering and the intellectual organization of the area can be visualized in the co-citation network of the most important references (Figure 15). The network comprises several disconnected but connected clusters. The three-field plot and the co-citation network analysis coincide in the possibility of the reconstruction, by researchers, of the knowledge in which the chosen theme or subject was validated, ordered, and connected through shared theoretical foundations and citation practices. The largest and most important cluster is made up of works like the National Security Strategy of the United States of America (2017), the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (2019), and the Indo-Pacific Strategy reports (2022), which point to a dominant intellectual core of Indo-Pacific strategy, national security, and regional order. The strong links of this cluster suggest a common conceptual base and a high co-citation rate, validating it as the primary source of knowledge for empirical and policy-oriented research. Foundational theoretical works include Waltz (1979), Mearsheimer (2001), Brooks (1997), and Choong (2019) that establish a realist and strategic studies tradition of power politics, balance of power, and great power competition. These works comprise a second distinct cluster. Yet the importance of this cluster seems less associated with the main policy-driven core, which indicates that there are theoretical views that run parallel to the dominant strategic policy framework, rather than fully integrated within it. A cluster with a regional and policy-analytical strand focused on Indo-Pacific conceptualization, Japan's strategic role, and changing regional architectures is represented by works of Envall (2019), Koga (2020).

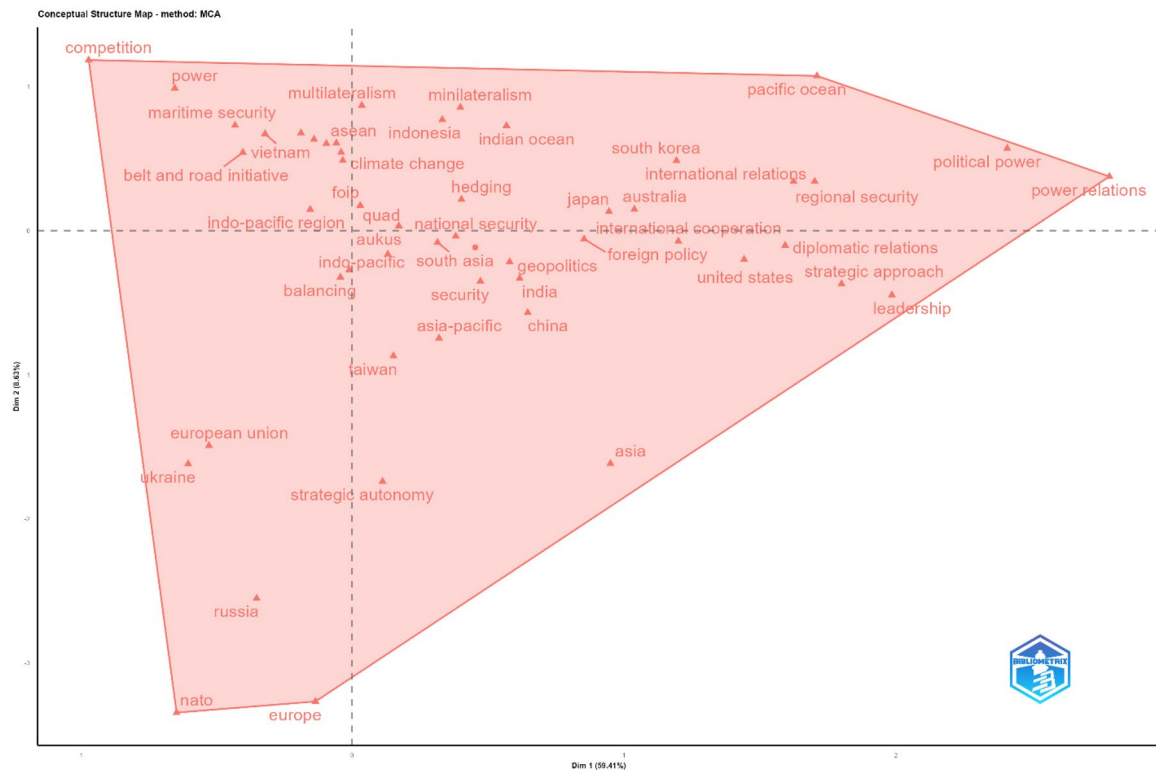


Figure 16. Conceptual structure map of Indo-Pacific strategic studies based on multiple correspondence analysis (MCA).

and Hosoya (2019). The limited connectedness of this cluster suggests a potential link between discussions of theory and policy. A small and marginal cluster of studies, such as Rajagopalan (2020), Cooper (2018), and Jaishankar (2020), points to India's strategic orientation and diplomatic narratives in particular. These are contextual and changing contributions, but less important to the prevailing Co-citation procedures. In conclusion, the network is characterized by a field of theoretical diversity, with a strong internal coherence within the clusters and relatively low connectivity between them.

Figure 16, the map of factorial analysis obtained by multiple correspondence analyses of keyword co-occurrence, shows the conceptual structure of Indo-Pacific strategic studies in two dimensions. This allows us to learn latent dimensions that structure scholarly discourse beyond superficial topic clustering. Dim 1 is the first dimension and accounts for the largest proportion of variance. It represents a division between perspectives that address cooperative governance and geopolitical power competition. Major terms on the right side of the axis are power relations, political power, international relations, regional security, diplomatic relations, and strategic approach. The common words on the left side of the axis are: competition, multilateralism, maritime security, ASEAN, Belt and Road Initiative, and Indo-Pacific region. The left literature conceptualizes the Indo-Pacific as a governance-oriented concept emphasizing regional cooperation, multilateral engagement, and institutional mechanisms; the right literature conceptualizes the Indo-Pacific as a region of power projection, strategic influence, and international political interaction. In fact, the conflicting viewpoints show that the subject is based on a fundamental tension between cooperative regionalism and power politics, and not on a coherent paradigm. But the second dimension (Dim 2) seems to differentiate the context/region-specific dynamics from the macro-level strategic structures. Higher-order words on this dimension are large-scale geopolitical regions, state actors, and formal strategic contacts. Pacific Ocean, Indian Ocean, South Korea, Japan, Australia, and international collaboration. Hence, regional order building and strategic alignment are structural and institutional. Dim 2 The lower-level concepts of Dim 2 are Russia, Ukraine, the European Union, strategic autonomy, and Europe. These ideas are based on the dynamics of the context and the external geopolitical pressures that interact with the Indo-Pacific discourse. Such a vertical divide parallels the development from regionally embedded and/or context-dependent geopolitical processes to global strategic structures. To conclude, the factorial map indicates that Indo-Pacific strategic studies are thematically diverse and theoretically structured around competing logics of power politics and cooperative

governance. But beyond competition, the Indo-Pacific also becomes a strategic space to exercise influence through alliances, regional organizations, and policy frameworks, balancing tactics and shifting geopolitical tensions. Concepts such as hedging, multilateralism, and regional security discourses all see states as active agents in strategic behavior, bargaining with complex, shifting power dynamics.

5. Discussion

The results of the present study demonstrate that the volume of strategic research on the Indo-Pacific region has increased significantly and steadily. The expansion is a sign of the increasing geopolitical importance of the region in contemporary world politics. This aligns with the general trend of study in geopolitics and international relations, where there has been a surge in research output due to changing global power configurations and strategic realignments (Song et al., 2017; Wahid et al., 2023). Generally, the publications tend to increase at a fast pace. Especially after 2018, when the main countries institutionalized the Indo-Pacific strategy, and the competition in the region intensified, especially between the United States and China, such growth can be observed (Long, 2025). The keyword research shows that the conflict of the great powers in the Indo-Pacific area is heavily researched. This is reflected in the use of terms such as 'China', 'India', 'United States', and 'regional order'. The data suggest that the Indo-Pacific is primarily seen as a geopolitical space defined by strategic rivalries and the balance of power. Similar patterns have been observed in the studies of world order and geopolitical dangers (Aiswarya & Muthumeenakshi, 2024; Dahiya & Kumar, 2025). Studies have shown that academic debates have been primarily shaped by the emergence of new powers and the reshuffling of global hierarchies. The fact that keywords like 'QUAD', 'ASEAN', and 'maritime security' appear only adds insult to injury, suggesting that the field of research is departing from traditional geopolitics and moving toward institutional cooperation and security governance, especially in the maritime domain. Recent studies (Kismartini et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2025) have found that maritime areas are the main arena of geopolitical struggles, economic exchanges, and security threats. Previous studies are in line with the focus on maritime security as the core research topic. These studies indicate that maritime security is not only a matter of traditional military concerns, but also of nontraditional threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, and environmental degradation. This, in turn, points to the complex nature of security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region. This is consistent with the notion of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic and functional space where economic, environmental, and security interests intersect. The analysis reveals that there is a large imbalance at the country level in the production of global knowledge, with countries like India, Australia, China, and the United States of America dominating the market. As is often the case in international relations research (Wahid et al., 2023), the production of research in international relations is often biased toward certain regions and organizations. Indeed, some studies on regional organizations have noted such epistemic asymmetries. Even when the subject is relevant to the region, scholarly discourse is still dominated by institutions from the Global North (Bitleuov et al., 2025). Such differences give rise to important questions of representation, knowledge production, and inclusion of multiple perspectives by researchers in the making of Indo-Pacific research.

Furthermore, the development of the subject matter indicates a move away from the traditional state-centric geopolitical analysis to more complex and interdisciplinary approaches. As stated by Simangan (2025), modern research seems to be in favor of issues like global governance, human security and environmental security. This is part of wider changes in the philosophy of international relations. This means that the study of the Indo-Pacific region is becoming a multidisciplinary issue with political, economic, environmental and strategic aspects. The general aim of the research is to contribute to the literature by developing a comprehensive and integrative bibliometric mapping of the Indo-Pacific region. This mapping connects the distinct terrains of geopolitics, maritime security and international relations. Previous studies have concentrated on specific topics or fields of study, but this study provides a comprehensive view of the intellectual structure, thematic development, and global research trends in the discipline. The study was limited by the use of the Scopus database and publications in the English language. This may have led to a lack of coverage of relevant regional research. Future research will have to utilize multiple databases and mixed methods approaches to achieve the goals of fostering inclusivity and depth of research on the Indo-Pacific region.

6. Conclusion

Today, the Indo-Pacific is one of the most dynamic and consequential regions in international relations. It has a profound effect on global geopolitics, policy directions, and regional development. There has, of course, been a growth in academic literature over the last 20 years on the strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific and the complexity of the geopolitical interactions. In this sense, bibliometric analysis is a powerful tool for systematic analysis of a large volume of scientific data, research trends, and mapping the intellectual structure of the field. The bibliometric methods help in the systematic organization and analysis of scattered and unstructured academic data to provide a holistic picture of the evolving research themes, gaps in knowledge, and new areas of inquiry. The total number of articles produced from the Scopus database is 1343 articles from 1450 authors from 422 sources from 2005 to 2026. This shows that Indo-Pacific research is growing rapidly. The results show an increasing annual growth rate and a significant increase in the number of publications, especially after 2019, which reflects the growing global interest in the study of Indo-Pacific geopolitics and strategic affairs. The analysis also points out the most important contributors, the most influential countries, and the key institutions that contribute to the intellectual landscape of the field. Research output and international collaboration have been directed toward countries such as India, Australia, China, and the United States, reflecting the global and interconnected nature of Indo-Pacific studies. Thematic and keyword analyses also suggest the centrality of certain concepts in the research landscape, such as 'Indo-Pacific', 'geopolitics', 'China', 'India', and 'United States'. The issues such as maritime security, regional cooperation, QUAD, and ASEAN mentioned above indicate the multidimensional character of Indo-Pacific studies from security, policy, economic, and institutional perspectives. The results show that the field has moved from an emerging research area to a well-established and rapidly growing area of scientific inquiry. But at the same time, this growth shows the importance of more international cooperation and interdisciplinary research to fill in the gaps in knowledge. In the future, more collaboration between researchers, institutions, and countries could lead to better quality and impact of research. More cooperation between developed and developing countries in the Indo-Pacific region, in particular, can contribute to a more inclusive and context-specific analysis of the challenges in the region.

The findings further indicate that the intellectual structure of Indo-Pacific scholarship has been shaped largely by major geopolitical developments, including the rise of China, the growing strategic engagement of the United States and its allies, the emergence of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) framework, and the increasing prominence of minilateral arrangements such as the QUAD. These developments have contributed to the dominance of themes related to strategic competition, regional order, security cooperation, and foreign policy, thereby helping to explain the current intellectual structure of Indo-Pacific scholarship revealed by the bibliometric analysis. At the same time, keyword patterns suggest that several topics remain comparatively underexplored. Areas such as climate security, sustainability, blue economy initiatives, digital governance, supply-chain resilience, and the role of middle powers appear to occupy a less central position within the existing literature and therefore represent promising directions for future research. Distinguishing between these mature and emerging themes provides a more nuanced understanding of the evolution of Indo-Pacific studies and highlights opportunities for expanding the field beyond its current geopolitical focus.

Authors contribution

CRedit: **Md Ashraful Amin**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing; **Md Amirul Islam**: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Project administration, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability

Upon reasonable request, the corresponding author (Md Amirul Islam) can provide the data that substantiates the findings of this study.

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