

Exploring the Intersection of Democracy and Islam: Trends, Themes, and Emerging Research in Political Systems and Social Movements

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ABSTRACT

A bibliometric investigation of the relationship between Islam and democracy in scholarly works produced between 2019 and 2025 is the goal of this project. With an emphasis on Islamism, authoritarianism, and democratic government, the main goal is to uncover important themes, trends, and prominent writers. The theoretical framework examines how political Islam interacts with democratic institutions, particularly in nations with a majority of Muslims, and is centered on the conflict between Islamic beliefs and democratic norms. Bibliometric methods were used in a quantitative way. A Boolean search of the Scopus database was used to gather data, and after applying particular inclusion criteria, 149 documents were found. The analysis made use of Microsoft Excel, VOSViewer, and R/R-Studio for network visualization, document analysis, and citation analysis. The findings demonstrate that Islamism and democracy predominate in the field of study, with an increasing emphasis on authoritarianism and the difficulties in reconciling Islamic principles with democratic ones. Pakistan, Indonesia, and Turkey were noted as major contributors to this discipline. New subjects like social justice, identity politics, and polarization are becoming more and more prominent in the conversation. The study advances our knowledge of the relationship between Islam and democracy and offers scholars and decision-makers insightful information. It also provides a thorough overview of international studies on these subjects, highlighting new developments in political Islam and democracy. This study adds something special to the literature since it is among the first to integrate bibliometric analysis with thematic research on Islamism and democratic government.

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INTRODUCTION

The link between Islam and democracy has been the subject of much scholarly debate, especially in light of the political structures found in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and other places. These two concepts, which are occasionally perceived as being incompatible, have developed in today's political discourse, particularly in regions where Muslims predominate. Important questions concerning political legitimacy, governance, and the place of religion in statecraft are brought up by the relationship between democracy and Islamism, the political manifestation of Islam. It is becoming more and more important to comprehend how Islam and democracy are related as the political climate throughout the world shifts [1], [2], [3], [4].

However, the basic distinctions between Islam and democracy are frequently overlooked in current study. Few studies have examined the structural tensions involved in balancing popular sovereignty with divine sovereignty, religious law with secular legislation, and God-centered goals with pluralistic secular governance, despite the fact that many studies highlight thematic overlaps such as shared values like justice (adl), consultation (shura), and public morality. According to this False Convergence Hypothesis, the apparent compatibility between Islam and democracy masks more significant differences in their epistemic underpinnings, legal authority, and sources of legitimacy. Therefore, this study contends that the belief that

Islam and democracy are fundamentally compatible could result in the development of hybrid regimes that deviate from both Islamic and democratic normative norms and only mimic democratic forms [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13].

In order to map the intellectual discourse around these topics and identify significant research directions, trends, and the impacts of different publications in these disciplines, this study used bibliometric analysis. Many concerns remain regarding the interplay between Islam and democracy in many political and cultural situations, even with the increasing amount of scholarship on the subject. There is a dearth of empirical evidence concerning whether the general public and elites actually believe that Islam and democracy are normatively aligned, or whether they confuse procedural overlap with conceptual equivalency, despite the fact that many research have looked at the theoretical implications of Islamic democracy [14], [15], [16].

In order to bridge this gap, this study suggests an empirical extension using survey-based research, with the goal of investigating popular misconceptions regarding the compatibility of democratic values and Islamic government. We will determine if people in nations like Indonesia, Pakistan, and Turkey can tell the difference between divine law and popular legislation by using a cross-national survey and survey experiments. We will also examine the impact of framing policies as either "Islamic obligations" or "democratic consensus [17], [18], [19], [20], [21].

The study's bibliometric analysis will cover publications from 2019 to 2025, particularly focusing on Muslim-majority countries, and will explore how the themes of Islamism, authoritarianism, and democracy have evolved in scholarly works during this period. With an increasing focus on authoritarianism and the difficulty of reconciling Islamic principles with democratic governance, the study will analyze citation trends, author collaboration, and the impact of these works. Additionally, it will explore whether the perceived convergence between Islam and democracy has contributed to superficial democratization or long-term institutional erosion [24], [25], [26], [27].

This study is significant for several reasons. First, political theorists, policymakers, and international relations experts working in or with Muslim-majority countries need to understand the dynamics between Islam and democracy. Second, a comprehensive understanding of the impact of authoritarianism and Islamism on democratic governance is necessary in the context of the rising influence of these ideologies. Third, by offering a data-driven examination of the subject through bibliometric methods, this study will enhance the understanding of research trends, citation patterns, and collaborative networks. Lastly, the study's findings can inform future research and policymaking, especially in Muslim-majority countries where the relationship between Islam and democracy plays a critical role in political stability [26], [27], [28], [29].

Despite a growing corpus of literature on the topic, the relationship between Islam and democracy remains fragmented. Scholars have debated the rise of Islamism as a political movement, the challenges of implementing democratic reforms in Muslim-majority countries, and the feasibility of reconciling Islamic ideals with democratic principles. However, the literature still lacks a comprehensive, integrated approach. This study aims to bridge that gap by providing a thorough bibliometric analysis of scholarly articles published between 2019 and 2025. The study focuses on countries where Islam plays a significant role in governance, and investigates the multidisciplinary nature of the discourse, including works from the social sciences and the arts. The analysis will be limited to English-language publications and will exclude in-press studies.

METHODOLOGY

With an emphasis on document and network analysis, this study uses a quantitative methodology and thorough bibliometric analysis. A Boolean search of the Scopus database was used to gather data, which

included documents released between 2019 and 2025. At 11:04 AM on August 4, 2025, the search produced 1,687 documents at first. The Boolean operator TITLE-ABS-KEY(Islam) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY(democracy) was used in the search query. Filtering criteria were employed to concentrate on papers published in English, in the arts or social sciences, and between 2019 and 2025. Journal articles were the final document type. As a consequence, 149 documents made up the improved dataset.

For document analysis, citation tracking, and network visualization, the analysis made use of R/R-Studio, VOSViewer, and Microsoft Excel. In order to determine research streams and directions in the fields of democracy and Islamism, VOSViewer was specially utilized to examine the co-occurrence of keywords and citation networks. The annual number of documents based on journals, authors, affiliations, nations, and topics of study was then examined using bibliometric analysis. To evaluate the impact of the research, the study concentrated on bibliometric variables including citation counts, H-index, and citations per year [30], [31], [32]. The methodology is visually represented in Figure 1 (Research Flow).

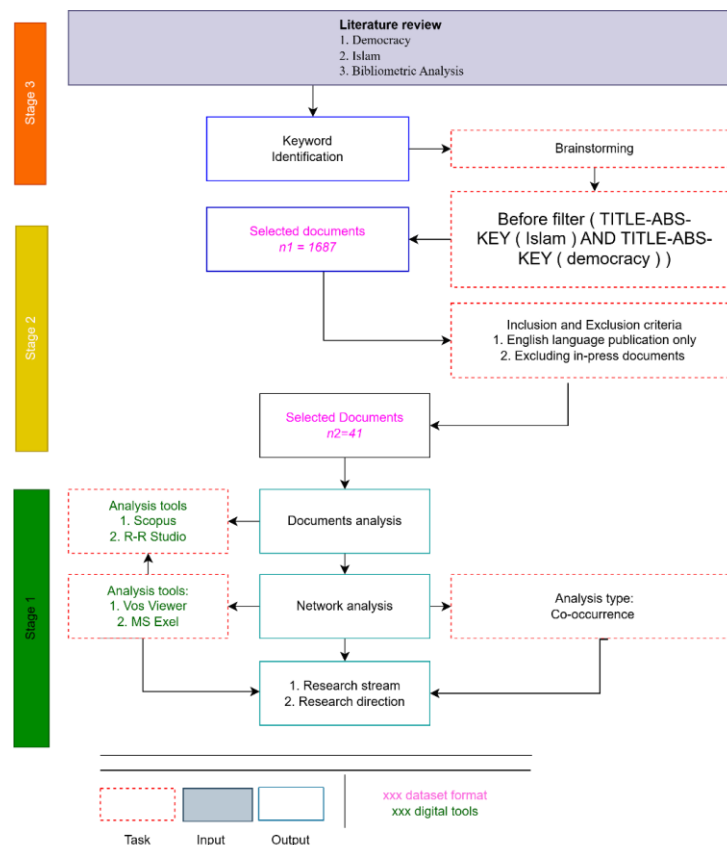


Figure 1. Research Flow

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Document Analysis

Table 1. Main Data Information

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	2019:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	114
Documents	149
Annual Growth Rate %	-10.91

Document Average Age	3.34
Average citations per doc	6.799
References	7700
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	170
Author's Keywords (DE)	482
AUTHORS	
Authors	231
Authors of single-authored docs	94
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	97
Co-Authors per Doc	1.65
International co-authorships %	15.44
DOCUMENT TYPES	
article	149

Important details regarding the current status of research in the specified field can be found in the bibliometric data covering 2019–2025. The number of publications has declined over time, with a negative annual growth rate of -10.91%, according to an analysis of 149 papers from 114 sources. The extremely young average document age of 3.34 years reflects the focus on recent research. The average number of citations received by each document is 6.8, indicating a moderate level of influence in the field. The dataset also contains 7,700 references, indicating a comprehensive reading of the corpus of recent literature. The paper text contains 170 Keywords Plus phrases and 482 author-specified keywords, showing a wide range of topics under investigation. The authorship, which includes 231 different individuals and 94 writers who contribute to single-authored works, demonstrates the existence of solo research in the field. However, the average of 1.65 co-authors per document and the 15.44% of publications with foreign co-authorships demonstrate a significant level of global collaboration. The fact that all 149 documents in the dataset are journal articles indicates that journal papers comprise the majority of research output in this field.

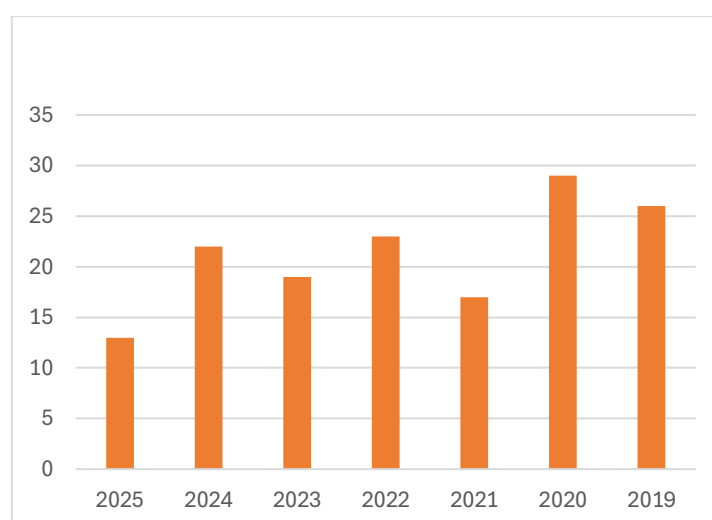


Figure 2. Documents by years

The number of papers published annually between 2019 and 2025 is displayed in a bar chart that reveals some notable shifts in the research output. A change in research goals or an urgent focus on pandemic-related themes during the global COVID-19 epidemic may have contributed to the notable peak in publications in 2020. However, there was a noticeable decline in 2021 after 2020, and between 2021 and 2024, the number of publications showed a generally

stable pattern with no discernible increases. In 2025, the number of documents also sharply decreases, continuing the downward trend that began in 2020. This could indicate a slower rate of growth or a longer-term decline in research output, which could be caused by field saturation, changes in funding or research goals, or external constraints. Overall, the graph shows a decline in publication volume over time, particularly after 2020, which necessitates further investigation into the underlying causes and broader implications for the subject.

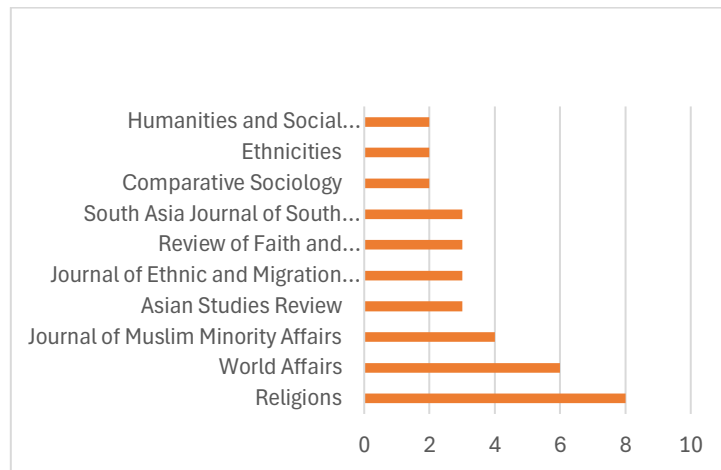


Figure 3. Documents by source

Figure 3 shows the distribution of research documents across various sources, highlighting key trends. "Religions" is the most prominent source with eight documents, reflecting a strong focus on religious topics. "World Affairs" and "Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs" follow with seven documents, emphasizing minority and global issues, particularly concerning Muslim communities. Other sources, such as "Asian Studies Review," "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies," and "Review of Faith and International Affairs," contribute five to six papers [33], [34], [35], [36].

This suggests a persistent interest in ethnic studies, migration, and the relationship between religion and global politics. More specialized or niche focuses are suggested by sources including "South Asia Journal of South Asia Studies," "Comparative Sociology," "Ethnicities," and "Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews," each of which has two to four publications. Overall, the data shows that while sociology and the humanities seem to be underrepresented, religious, global, and minority studies are prominent [37], [38], [39], [40].

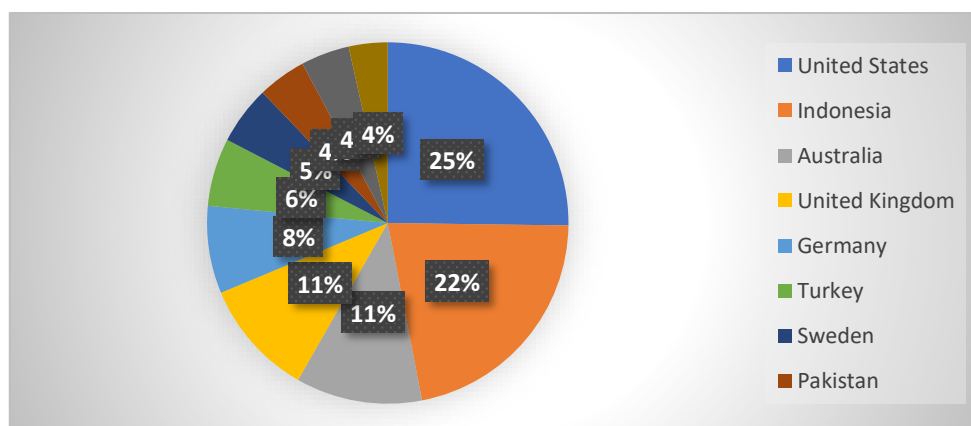


Figure 4. Documents by Country

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of research documents by country, with the United States leading in contributions, followed by Indonesia. Germany, Turkey, and the UK also make notable contributions, while Australia, Pakistan, Singapore, and France have smaller, yet still significant, shares. This chart highlights the United States and Indonesia as the primary contributors, with Germany and Turkey emerging as important players in global research on the topic.

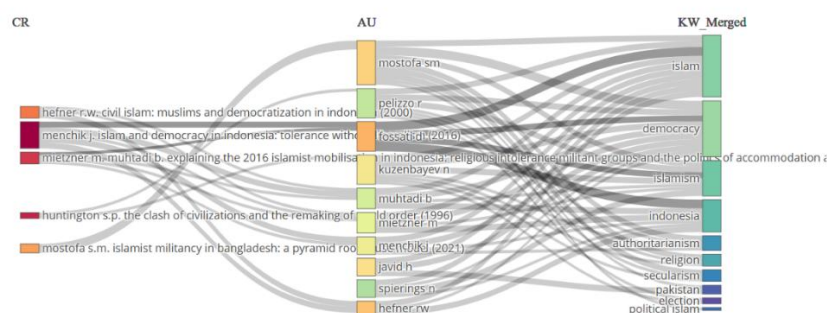


Figure 5. Documents by Corresponding Author

Figure 5 shows a network of connections between authors, their publications, and associated keywords. It highlights how researchers like Hefner, Menchik, Mietzner, and Mostofa focus on Islam, Democracy, and Indonesia, linking their works to key publications such as Menchik's "Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance with Islamist Movements" and Hefner's "Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia." The main themes of Islam, Democracy, Islamism, Indonesia, Religion, and Secularism are central, with additional keywords like Pakistan and Political Islam reflecting the scholarly focus on Islamic political movements. The diagram emphasizes the multidisciplinary nature of the research, showing the contributions of various authors to the discourse on political Islam, religious tolerance, and democratic governance, especially in Southeast Asia [41], [42], [43], [44], [45], [46], [47], [48], [49], [50].

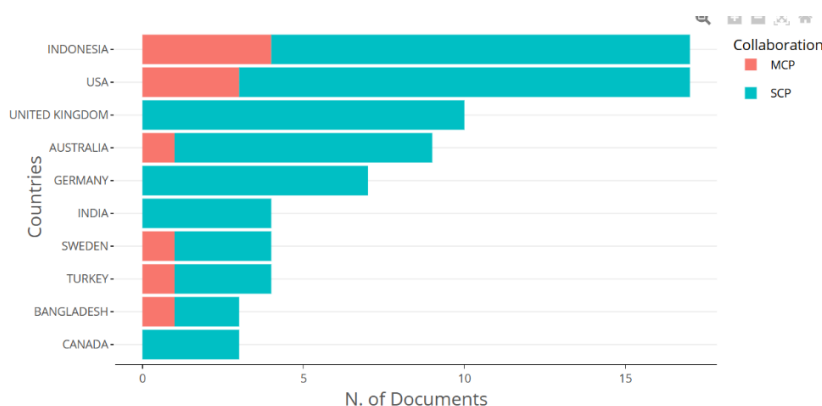


Figure 6. Documents by Corresponding Author

The distribution of publications by nation, divided into Single Country Publications (SCP) and Multinational Collaborative Publications (MCP), is depicted in Figure 6. The US leads in MCP, indicating substantial international cooperation, while Indonesia leads in SCP, indicating primarily local research. While Germany and India place more emphasis on international collaboration, other nations such as the UK, Australia, and India exhibit a combination of both. Higher MCP percentages for smaller contributors—such as Sweden, Turkey, and Canada—emphasize their participation in cooperative research. All things considered, the report highlights how transnational academic research is, with nations juggling both domestic and foreign endeavors.

Table 2. Globally cited documents

Paper	Total Citations	TC per Year	Normalized TC
Fossati D, 2019, J Curr Southeast Asian Aff	71	10.14	5.03
Hefner Rw, 2019, Asian Stud Rev	51	7.29	3.61
Fossati D, 2020, Elect Stud	49	8.17	3.98
Menchik J, 2019, Asian Stud Rev	49	7.00	3.47

Rød Eg, 2020, Public Choice	42	7.00	3.41
Schäfer S, 2019, Pac Aff	36	5.14	2.55
Mietzner M, 2020, Contemp Southeast Asia	36	6.00	2.92
Hasyim S, 2020, Trans: Trans-Reg -Natl Stud Southeast Asia	34	5.67	2.76
Barton G, 2021, Religions	33	6.60	4.67
Hefner Rw, 2020, Rev Faith Int Aff	31	5.17	2.52

Table 2, which highlights significant papers and provides data on their total citations, citations per year, and normalized total citations, provides an overview of internationally cited publications. The article by a researcher Fossati (2019) [51], published in J Curr Southeast Asian Aff, has the highest number of citations (71) and citations per year (10.14) in the dataset, with a normalized total citation (TC) of 5.03. It is evidently influential in the field.

Another researcher Nirwana (2024) [30], ranks second with 51 total citations and 7.29 citations per year, showing a strong and consistent impact on the field despite having a somewhat lower normalized TC of 3.61. Other notable articles, such as Fox (2023) [52], have moderate citation counts and reasonably high citations annually, indicating their continued relevance in contemporary scholarly discussions. Papers such as Barton (2021) [53] and Mietzner (2020) [29] also reveal significant normalized TC, demonstrating their continued significance in relation to other studies in the field. By showing a mix of widely cited works and others with moderate but steady academic impact, the table demonstrates the vast range of research that still shapes scholarly debates.

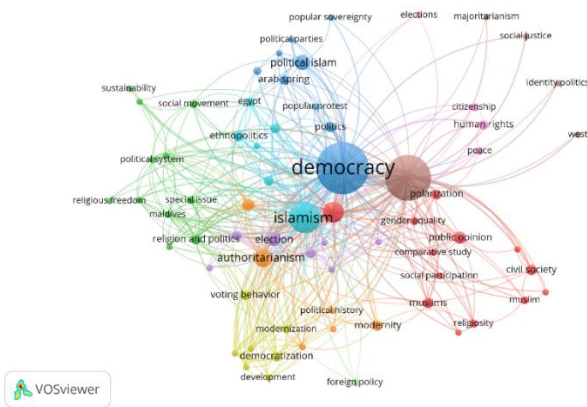


Figure 7. Network visualization

Network Analysis

Democracy and Islamism are highlighted as major topics in Figure 7's network visualization, which also demonstrates how they relate to political processes, election systems, and governance. Research focuses on the relationship between authoritarianism, elections, and political Islam and how Islamism interacts with political systems, particularly in democracies. Additionally prioritized is the study of voting behavior, public opinion, and polarization. In addition to secondary issues like gender equality, human rights, and citizenship, major areas of concern include social movements, religious freedom, and political upheavals like the Arab Spring. The graphic links democracy, Islamism, and authoritarianism and illustrates how social movements, religion, and polarization impact political discourse.

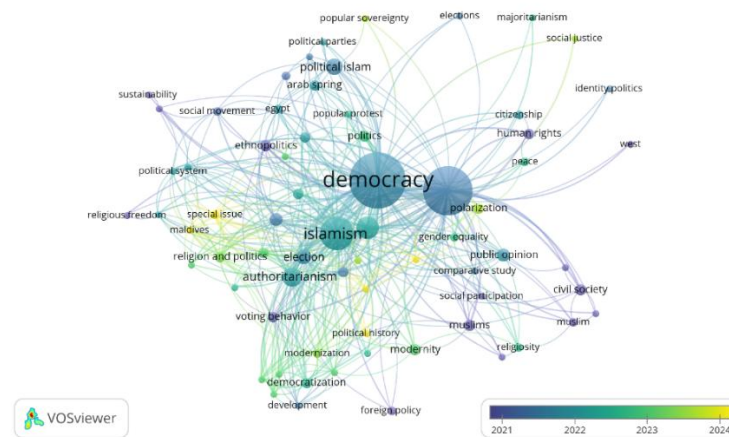


Figure 8. Overlay Visualization

Figure 8 illustrates the temporal progression of research topics from 2021 to 2024, with Islamism and democracy remaining central to the discourse, as indicated by the predominance of blue nodes. These themes have been consistently studied since 2021. Emerging topics, such as popular sovereignty, social justice, identity politics, citizenship, and human rights, gained significant attention starting in 2023 and continuing into 2024, marked by green and yellow nodes. This shift underscores the increasing importance of social and political issues in global discussions. While authoritarianism and polarization maintain their relevance through 2022–2024, social movements, religious freedom, and religion-politics interactions continue to capture attention, reflected in blue and purple tones. The focus gradually shifts toward modernity, voting patterns, and political history, highlighting the evolution of political institutions and cultural frameworks.

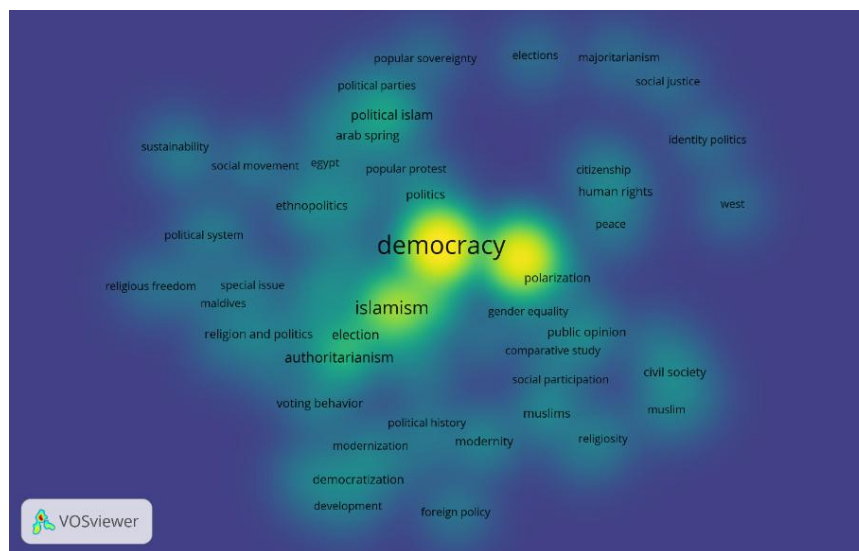


Figure 9. Density Visualization

Figure 9's density visualization emphasizes the main focus on Islamism and democracy, with a vivid yellow-green core signifying the close relationship between these two subjects. Clusters pertaining to political systems, Islamism, authoritarianism, and governance encircle this center. The sociocultural and behavioral aspects in both authoritarian and democratic environments are reflected in secondary clusters that focus on issues like polarization, voting behavior, social involvement, civil society, and public opinion. The marginalization of emerging topics like identity politics, social justice, human rights, and citizenship demonstrates their increasing importance in current study. The regional factors impacting the wider conversation on Islamism and democracy are also highlighted by regional studies that concentrate on the Middle East and North Africa, utilizing phrases like Egypt and the Arab Spring.

CONCLUSION

A thorough bibliometric examination of the changing link between Islam and democracy in scholarly literature from 2019 to 2025 has been offered by this study. The study found important themes, significant authors, and new research trends in the field by using quantitative methods and programs including R/R-Studio, VOSViewer, and Microsoft Excel. With an increasing emphasis on authoritarianism, identity politics, and social justice, the analysis emphasized the persistence of democracy and Islamism as major subjects. With important input from nations including Pakistan, Indonesia, and Turkey, this study validated the research premise by demonstrating that Islamism continues to have an impact on democratic government. Findings from the study highlight the conflict between Islamic administration and democratic ideals, highlighting the difficulties in reconciling political Islam with democratic ideals in countries where Muslims make up the majority. This study has wide-ranging implications, offering data to scholars, decision-makers, and foreign relations experts working in regions affected by Islam. By examining research networks, citation trends, and new subjects, this study adds to the current discussion about political Islam and democracy. The practical applications of these findings require more investigation, especially in order to comprehend the political dynamics in areas impacted by authoritarianism and Islamism. A more thorough examination of regional case studies may also yield a more complex picture of how Islam and democracy interact. It is imperative that academics keep researching these intricate linkages in order to promote more discussion and guide future political tactics.

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Author Contribution

Using the CRediT taxonomy, contributions are as follows: Conceptualization (Abdulrohim E-sor, Md. Ishaque); Methodology and search strategy (Abdulrohim E-sor, Md. Ishaque); Data curation and cleaning (Md. Ishaque); Software and analytical scripting—R/RStudio and VOSviewer (Md. Ishaque); Validation and results checking (Abdulrohim E-sor, Md. Ishaque); Formal analysis and interpretation (Abdulrohim E-sor, Md. Ishaque); Visualization (Md. Ishaque); Writing—original draft (Abdulrohim E-sor, Md. Ishaque); Writing—review & editing (Abdulrohim E-sor); Project administration and scholarly supervision (Abdulrohim E-sor). All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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