

International Relations Theory and the Muslim World: A Bibliometrics Analysis

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Abstract

In the 21st-century era of globalization, massive military conflicts, disasters, terrorist attacks, and economic complexity that can be seen in the international financial crisis, the Muslim world should reconsider how it interacts with the rest of the world to be more consistent with changes in the global arena while remaining loyal to Islam as a religion and a way of life. Based on that, we agree this task will be challenging because international relations have been a Western-centric field since the Second World War. However, the issue's complexity is not a reason to refuse to develop a comprehensive viewpoint based on explanations and analyses of the literature on international relations, leading the Muslim world to promote a separate international relations (IR) theory in the future. In doing so, we need to review the literature in the field to introduce a comprehensive understanding of the Muslim World in international relations. In this study, the researchers will collect and refer to the major references and sources that introduce and explain the Muslim World in IR, mainly focusing on the Web of Science database. After that, the method can be figured out

and explained using a few conditions that can be taken when choosing to review literature: 1) Identify articles related to the Muslim World in the IR field. 2) Highlighting the Muslim world's scholars' and experts' understanding of international relations by referring to major issues. 3) Analysing literature evidence supporting the IR and the Muslim World using bibliometrics analysis. and 4) Reflect on the limitations of the IR theory in explaining the Muslim World, as it is mainly based on Western perspectives and thoughts. In conclusion, thinking about the limitations of theories of international relations leads us to talk about moving beyond Western Dominance in (IR) and the Islamic perspective, and how it might affect the Muslim world when dealing with international relations. The researchers believe Islamic characteristics can be a powerful alternative to current international relations theories and thoughts.

Keywords: International Relations (IR), Islamic thought, Muslim World, Islamic perspective, Western perspective.

JEL- Classification: F50, F54, F59.

Introduction

International Relations (IR) as an academic field is relatively new, and Western literature and thought are by far the most prominent in this field (Bakir, 2022). The extent of its bias affects how well it understands, explains, and predicts events in non-Western regions (Rashed & Lailufar, 2022). International relations are notoriously challenging to explain with ideas like realism and liberalism, which fail to capture their complexities. Not simply as a reflection of the East-West divide or non-Western vs Western discourse, but also in its own right, Islam has become a major focus of attention in this context, but also as an approach with its own principles, concepts, and views on international relations theory (IRT) (Zandi, 2018). Moreover, there has been a growing body of literature in recent years reflecting the new effort to understand and analyse the role and status of the Muslim world in international relations (Acharya & Buzan, 2010; Vicente, 2012; Bakir, 2022). Nevertheless, there is still a gap in the literature, suggesting that further elaboration is required.

International relations theories are significant because they provide frameworks for understanding and interpreting the complex and dynamic character of global politics (De Buck & Hosli, 2020). They provide instruments for analysing and forecasting the behaviour of states and other players, as well as alternative viewpoints on the origins and implications of international relations (Padilla, 2021). Theories are also seen as helping to organise the field of international relations and providing a foundation for future research and analysis, according to Chidiebere and Onwutuebe (2022). Scholars can develop new knowledge and understanding of international relations by elaborating and/or testing existing theories.

Theories can also inform policymaking and government decisions and actions in the international arena. By understanding the meaning behind various theories, policymakers can make better-informed decisions on how to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the world (Teschke, 2002). Furthermore, theories are important in the realm of international relations, as they help explain and understand international politics, structure the field, and guide policymaking (De Buck & Hosli, 2020). Several theories have been proposed within the Muslim world, or theories that specifically focus on Muslim-majority countries (Buğra, 2023). The theories present different

viewpoints on both the causes and effects of international relations and offer different instruments to analyse and explain state and others' behavior.

However, this is not the case with theories of international relations, which have been mostly developed in the Western world and have underrepresented the Muslim world (Makhura & Kgothatso, 2023). As a result, there may be a perception that the Muslim world lacks a theory of international relations, but this is not the case (Ihor, 2022).

According to Olga & Yurii (2022), Manan (2022), and Adis (2022), the Muslim world is a complex and diverse region with numerous major problems in international relations. 1) Political instability and conflict: Many Muslim-majority countries have had political instability and conflict, such as civil wars, coups, foreign intervention, etc. Instability has had a detrimental effect on the development of these countries, causing human suffering and economic turmoil. 2) Terrorism has posed a problem in some Muslim-majority countries, either as the source or the target. The security and stability of these countries have been affected by the terror campaign, and relations with other countries have been affected as well. 3) Muslim countries have been confronted with many accusations in the field of human rights, particularly in women's rights and minority rights. This can cause dismay and criticism from other countries and organizations and has damaged relations with the other side of the world. 4) Muslim majority countries are characterised by poverty, unequal economic development, and underdevelopment. This has posed difficulties in delivering basic services and in raising the standard of living and reducing the capacity of these countries to fully engage with the world economy. The political, economic, and cultural differences between the Muslim majority countries and the West, especially the United States, have soured relations between the two. This has caused conflicts and misunderstandings, affecting cooperation and collaboration on some issues.

However, it is important to note that Muslim academics have contributed to knowledge and perspectives in the field and, as a result, have produced substantial scholarship and writing on international relations from a Muslim perspective. Meanwhile, there is no single "Muslim theory" of international relations accepted as fact. For many reasons, the Muslim world might have had less impact on the evolution of international relations theory than the West. The marginalisation and exclusion of the Muslim world from international politics is one of the reasons (Leonid, 2019).

Methodology

Data Sources

Web of Science (WoS) is an authoritative, widely used research database of publications and citations. It is considered important due to its long history, comprehensive coverage, and the Science Citation Index it is based on (Martijn, Visser, Jan, van, Ludo, 2020). While the Web of Science has evolved into a research and education discipline, it is important to consider its impact and relevance in the changing digital world. We must emphasise the need to combine extensive coverage with adjustable filters to narrow the literature, given the advantages and disadvantages of various data sources (Caroline et al., 2020). However, we have limited our bibliometric analysis to WoS for time and methodological reasons.

Relevant publications were retrieved from the Web of Science (WOS) database using the search terms “Muslim World Politics”, “Islamic Theory of IR”, “International Relations and the Muslim World”, and “Islam and IR” with publication dates from January 2000 to August 2023. The rationale for limiting the publication to these periods is to trace contemporary literature on IR and the Muslim World since the beginning of the 21st century. The examination includes various materials, including original articles, reviews, and proceedings. Articles were selected and filtered for further analysis. The metadata was downloaded and stored in CSV format.

Data Analysis

Bibliometric analysis is important in the human sciences because it allows researchers to examine trends, patterns, and impact on research within a particular field. It provides quantitative and qualitative insights into the publication outputs, author contributions, and conceptual structure of a research area (Qiang, Kenny, Xuanfang, 2022; Huang, Duan, He, Wang, & Hu, 2021; Maria, Verônica, & Suzanne, 2022). Biblioshiny, a software tool built on RStudio, is particularly useful for conducting bibliometric analysis, as it enables researchers to map scientific production, identify influential authors, countries, journals, and articles, and highlight research opportunities and gaps in a specific field (Aam, 2021). It helps researchers comprehensively understand the current state

and trends in a research area, thereby informing future research directions and decision-making (Agustín, 2010).

By utilising bibliometric methods and tools such as Biblioshiny, researchers in the humanities can effectively analyse and evaluate scholarly output, identify research trends, and advance knowledge in their respective fields. Counting publications and conducting citation analysis can be challenging, but these methods provide valuable insights into the organisation of sciences (Ivan, 2011). Bibliometric allows us to capture talent, success, and place in the history of science and humanity, making it a powerful tool for understanding and evaluating research (Ivan, 2011). However, using bibliometric studies in human sciences research is often critical and challenging for exploring underlying issues, especially in a developing field such as the current research (see, for example, Ton 2010). There is a need for more curiosity about the context within which information is produced and used, as well as a better understanding of the purpose and application of bibliometrics (Ian, 2011).

Bibliometrix (<http://www.bibliometrix.org>) is an R-based bibliometric analysis programme (Mohamed, 2023). This package includes Biblioshiny, the web application for Bibliometrix, which is used in combination with it. RStudio Version 2023.06.1-524 was used to install and load the Bibliometrix package. Consequently, the Biblioshiny package was loaded in the R console by the digitized “biblioshiny()” command. The detailed methods and algorithms for both packages were explained elsewhere (Ullah & Griffiths, 2022). The metadata was transferred to the Biblioshiny interface for further examination. The outputs (publication patterns and collaborations), publications, and authors' keywords were analysed. Keywords with similar meanings were combined into a single term before the analysis. The analysis's visual results were downloaded and stored as .png files.

Results And Discussion

Analysis of Publication Outputs and Scientific Collaborations

Table 1 summarizes the results of the analysis, which found 137 articles published between 2000 and 2023 that discussed the intersection of international relations theory and Muslim world studies. It should be noted that only 65 of the total 137 articles are written in English. The Web of Science, however, also provides access to abstracts, keywords, and other details about these articles written in English. There were 56 distinct publications, mostly journals, that featured these articles. The publication growth rate over the past two decades was -2.97, with the peak years being 2018 and 2022.

Table 1. The leading information of the selected articles gathered by Biblioshiny

MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	2000:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	56
Documents	137
Annual Growth Rate %	-2.97
Average citations per doc	5.088
Author's Keywords (DE)	238
Single-authored docs	116
Co-Authors per Doc	1.18

Many experts from various nations, including the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Russia, China, India, Singapore, Turkey, Qatar, Iran, and most European countries, contributed to this field of study, with an average of 1.2 co-authors per document. Figure 1 illustrates a map of the country's scientific productivity.

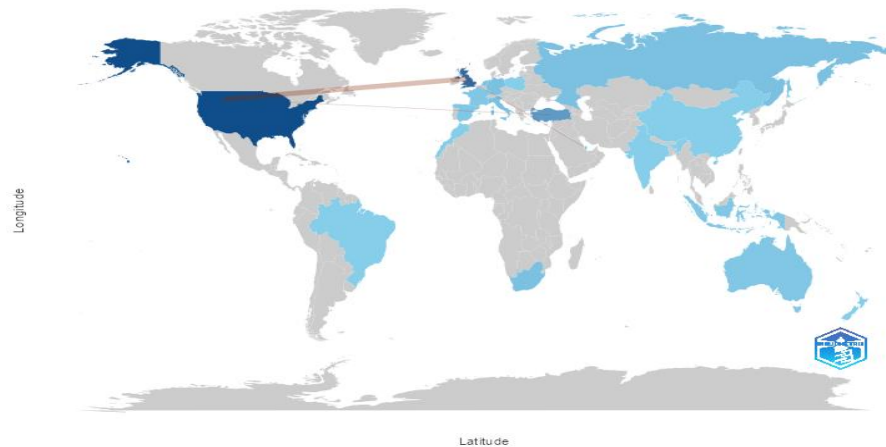


Figure 1. Scientific collaboration world map.

Countries with a deeper blue tone have more publications. The red line connects the two countries that collaborate the most frequently.

The politics of top journals in WoS tend to prioritise authors from the Global North, resulting in a lopsided representation of mostly US and UK authors. Also, as a means of publication, the English language has been an obstacle for many scholars and researchers from the global South, particularly from Muslim countries, to publish in top journals that require extensive editing. This is evident in the dominance of authors from these countries in the top-tier journals, while authors from Muslim countries often publish in non-WoS sources. The hierarchical nature of the discipline and the rankings of journals create additional dilemmas and stress for researchers from lower-ranked countries, who must make significant sacrifices to publish (Linders, 2016).

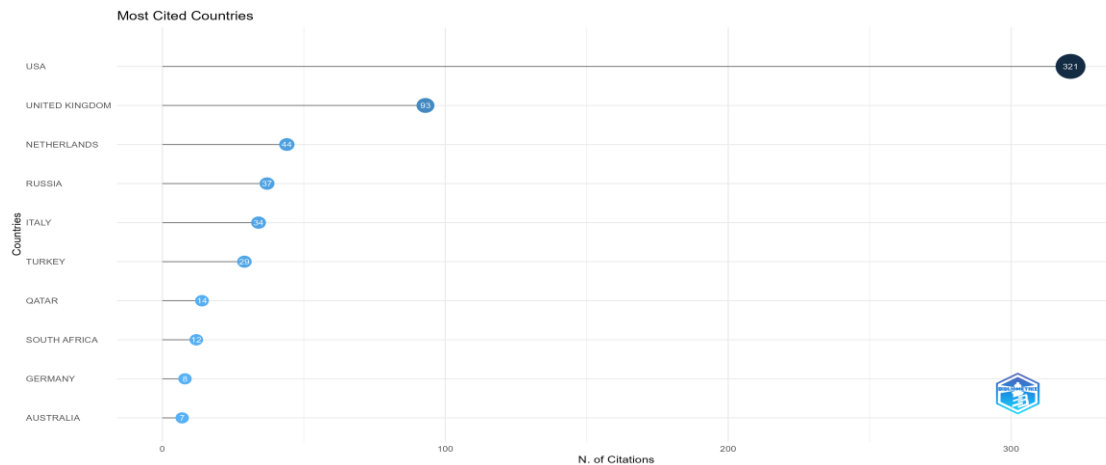


Figure. 2. Most Cited Countries.

The Bibliometrics analysis also shows that the most cited countries are the United States with almost 321 citations, the United Kingdom with 93, the Netherlands with 44, Russia with 37, Italy with 34, Turkey with 29, Qatar with 14, South Africa with 12, and finally, Germany and Australia with 8 and 7 citations, respectively. Figure 3 shows the most cited countries.

The Analysis of Sources

Research is the foundation of a strong argument, theory, or analysis. When constructing a bibliometrics analysis, including the most reliable and relevant sources in the study is essential. Without these sources, researchers may question the argument's validity, and the study may not achieve its purpose. Journal research papers are typically based on scholarly sources, including various documents. In our case, we used WoS. This section will present Bradford's law.

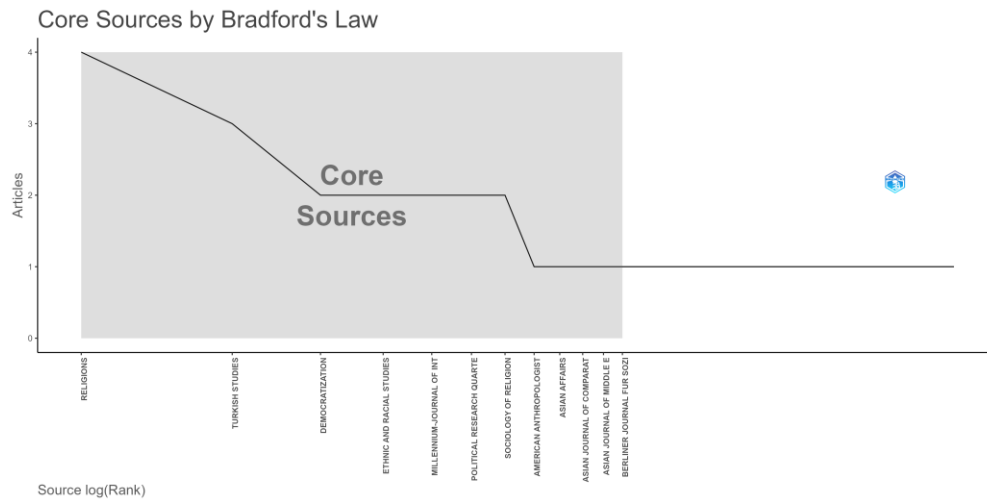


Figure 3. The Core Sources by Bradford's Law.

Bradford's law predicts that the number of journals will be higher in the second and third zones than in the first. As a result, if the number of journals in the core and intermediate zones is known, the overall number of journals with articles on a subject should be predictable. Once the total number of articles is known, an incomplete search can estimate how much helpful material is missing.

Table. 2. The Core Sources Zone 1

Source	Zone N
Religions	1
Turkish Studies	1
Democratization	1
Ethnic And Racial Studies	1
Millennium-Journal Of International Studies	1
Political Research Quarterly	1
Sociology Of Religion	1
American Anthropologist	1
Asian Affairs	1
Asian Journal Of Comparative Politics	1
Asian Journal Of Middle Eastern And Islamic Studies	1
Berliner Journal Fur Soziologie	1

The bibliometrics analysis shows that zone one, the core sources, includes 12 journals. This category includes almost 23 articles focusing on international relations and the Muslim world across topics such as religion, democracy, Islam, and the state's role. Zones 2 and 3 came with

more sources and journal titles; however, almost every journal contributed to the topic interest, with only one document. It is also remarkable that, because of the nature of our topic, which includes several interdisciplinary disciplines, the same thing can be found in the relevance and nature of sources, which vary across different fields.

The Analysis of Keywords Output and Co-Occurrences

Keyword analysis is important for gaining insight into the topic and optimizing search results. It involves analysing relevant words and phrases to understand the most used terms and concepts in international relations theory and the Muslim World. The process of keyword categorization is time-consuming, but using bibliometric analysis makes it more effective for identifying keywords used in the research. By quantifying and comparing keywords, researchers can improve the analysis and provide more objective reference opinions for researchers and scholars in the field. Keyword-based analysis, such as the most used concepts in articles, keyword clouds, keyword co-occurrences, and key clusters, can be useful. Selecting keywords is crucial for literature search and publication activities, as they act as "keys" to unlock relevant scientific papers.



Figure 4. Tree Keywords. The more space a term occupies, the more evidence it has of its frequent use in articles.

Based on the keywords tree, the word politics is the most frequently used concept across 137 articles, with 10%. The second word is Islam with 6%, religion with 5%, democracy with 4%,

attitude, state, civil society, education, identity, and the Middle East with 3% for each. Most of the remaining keywords and concepts are used between 1% and 2% in the targeted articles for this study. The focus keywords show that the authors and researchers are more aware of finding the relationship between politics, Islam, and religion. The following keyword, co-occurrence, explains this relation more.

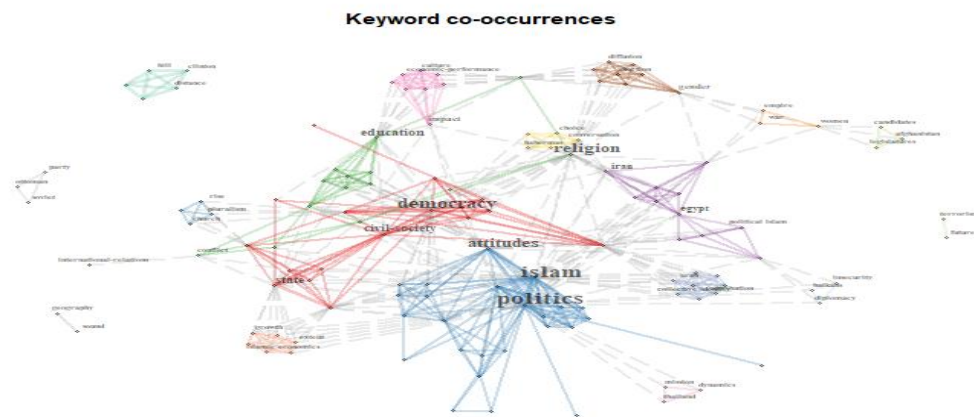


Figure 5. Keyword Co-occurrences.

In KCC, each keyword is represented as a node, and a link represents each co-occurrence of a pair of words. The significance of the connection between the pair is determined by the number of times a pair of words co-occurs in numerous articles. The network built in this manner represents accumulated domain knowledge that helps determine essential components and insights from the patterns and strengths of relationships among keywords in literature.

In this KCC, the main co-occurring words are politics and Islam, and attitude, with the most important relation shown in blue. It is followed by the red colour, which co-occurs with democracy, civil society, and the state, as there is a strong link among these concepts. Other words co-occur in some articles, highlighting the concept of religion, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and political Islam. It is to show that articles also focus on case studies to explain and determine the Muslim World theory of IR by examining the politics of the leading parties in the countries and regions mentioned.

A Word Cloud is a graphical representation of data in the form of tags, which are often single words with significance indicated by size and colour. As unstructured text data continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, there is a surge in interdisciplinary research in the social sciences, particularly in political science and international relations. Therefore, there is a growing need to analyse the vast amounts of data generated by various database systems.



Figure 7. Keyword Cloud.

Word Cloud is an excellent method for visualizing data and obtaining insight into the most significant themes in each dataset by visualizing the word frequency in the text as a ranked list. Based on our data, the most visually prominent words are politics, Islam, religion, and democracy, followed by civil society, state, identity, and the Middle East. The result shows that the discussion among the researchers on international relations and the Muslim world is limited to these words.

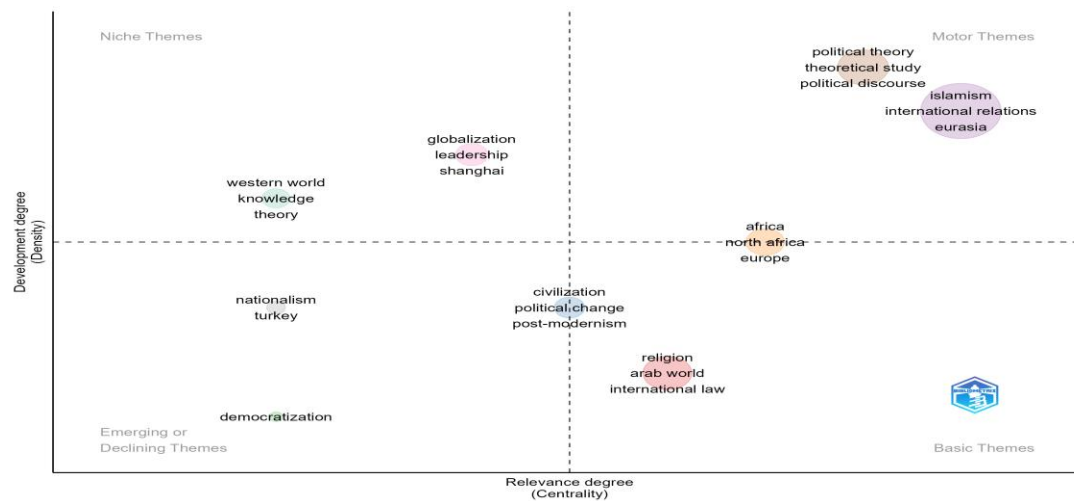


Figure. 8. Thematic Map

The X-axis indicates centrality (the degree of interaction between a network cluster and other clusters) and provides information about a subject's relevance. The Y-axis reflects density (i.e., the internal strength of a cluster network) and is considered to indicate the progression of the subject. As a result, the first zone identifies motor themes (that is, well-developed and essential themes for the structuring of a research field); the second zone identifies highly developed and isolated or niche themes (that is, themes of limited importance to the field); and the third zone identifies emerging or declining themes (that is, weakly developed and marginal themes). The third zone comprises rising or declining themes (i.e., poorly developed and marginal themes). In contrast, the fourth zone contains fundamental themes (i.e., generic subjects that cross over into other field study areas) (Di Cosmo, Pinelli, Scandurra, Aria, & D'Aniello, 2021).

Table 3. Thematic Map Themes and Keyword Examples

Themes	Examples of Keywords
Motor themes	Political theory, theoretical study, Islamism, and international relations.
Niche	Examples: Western world, globalisation, leadership, and theory.
Emerging or declining themes	Nationalism, Turkey, Democratization, and Civilization.
Basic themes	Religion, the Arab world, and international law.

Some assumptions make it possible to combine and integrate Western and non-Western approaches in IR. For instance, the central constructivist tenets of collective identity, common interest, shared knowledge, and practice, according to Magued (2018), are crucial for comprehending international relations reality from an Islamic viewpoint. He does this by highlighting how Emmanuel Adler and Alexander Wendt's theoretical underpinnings meticulously constructed an Islamic episteme in global politics. It is because Islam also promotes collective identity, such as the concept of *Ummah*, as well as social interest, *al-maslaha*, *maqasid*, and the importance of ethics and norms.

According to Magued (2018), Islamic scholars and researchers such as Qutb and Davutoglu have developed an Islamic IR theory that engages with Western constructivist theories, offering a distinct understanding of Muslims' worldview and its application to international affairs. However,

despite some commonalities between the two approaches, their foundations and origins differ. As a result, for instance, when constructivism relies on society and the norms it produces, Islam refers to its divine sources, which are not subject to social norms.

Conclusion

There is a lack of modern Islamic *International Relations* theories, which can be attributed to various factors, including the reality of the nation-state, Western hegemony, and the nature of the current system. IR is a multi-disciplinary field that seeks to explain the mainspring of global politics. It encompasses various aspects such as politics, economics, political economy, diplomacy, and international history. The field of IR has experienced theoretical proliferation driven by interdisciplinary relations, leading to distinct directions for IR scholarship. IR is a transdisciplinary domain of knowledge that studies the world system, including the international one. Despite claims of diversity, IR has not been open to dialogue and has been criticised for being a hegemonic and colonial discipline with very little opportunity for penetration from an Islamic perspective to be taken seriously.

The field features a wide range of theories, concepts, debates, and schools of thought, providing an essential intellectual foundation for understanding global politics. In recent years, there has been a growing discussion of the role of non-Western approaches in international relations. Scholars have examined how Western approaches and theories can shape global political phenomena, including war, diplomacy, and development. To develop more satisfying explanations of global politics, it is necessary to interweave existing IR theories with other approaches and perspectives from around the world, such as the Islamic perspective, and to adapt the theories to fit regional realities. With all the differences and complexities, it is not logical to have a few theories like realism, liberalism, and constructivism to explain and understand all the world's regions.

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