



# Analysis of Democracy and Islam Research: Evidence from Scopus-indexed Journals

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Islam and democracy have always been the content of debate among Muslim political thinkers over time. While others argued that Islam and democracy are compatible due to the invaluable nature of both in upholding the virtues of individual consultation – shura, others firmly hold that Islam is against democracy for its popular support of the idea that sovereignty belongs to the people undermining the sovereignty of Allah. This study investigated the new discussion trends about Islam and democracy. Using bibliometric analysis, it empirically analysed the annual scientific production of research topics about Islam and democracy, leading country, most influential authors, most frequently used keywords, trending topics over time, and a thematic map showing the future direction of Islam and democracy research.

**Keywords:** *Islam and democracy; bibliometrics; Islamic democracy; Islamic studies*

## Introduction

The popularity of democracy in the West has led some Muslim political thinkers to propose compatibility between Islamic principles and democracy. This stems from their interpretation of Islam as promoting consultation, similar to the spirit championed by democracy through elections and public participation. For example, Surah 3:159 states: “...and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah...”. (Similarly, surah 42:38 emphasizes shared decision-making: “And those who conduct their affairs by consultation.”)

However, opposing thinkers argue for the incompatibility of Islam and democracy. They maintained that the key disagreement is in the concept of sovereignty. This is because, while democracy advocates for sovereignty residing with the people, Islamic teachings traditionally maintain that sovereignty belongs solely to Allah (S.A.W).



The complex discussion about whether Islam is compatible with democracy require thorough understanding of both Islamic tradition and democratic norms. While acknowledging the complex theological and philosophical interpretations as well as lived experiences within both domains that later produced fruitful discourse about Islamic democracy, this study looks at the data in different ways. Using the latest development in data-driven analysis, this study offers a unique lens to examine the landscape of research on Islam and democracy. By analysing publication trends, author scientific contribution, and thematic map and frequency count of keywords used, bibliometrics can unveil hidden patterns and identify emerging research foci within this multifaceted field.

### **Review of Related Literature**

One of the published works about bibliometric analysis regarding Islam and democracy is the study of Cansun (2021), titled: "A Bibliometric Study on the Publications Investigating Democracy in Turkey" where a total of 691 publications from 1980 to 2019 indexed in the Web of Science were analyzed. Using annual scientific publication analysis, it found that there was a particular increase in publication in the late 2000s, Turkey Studies journal was found leading source of publication about the subject matter and most frequently used phrases within the abstract were Justice and Development Party, the European Union, the Middle East, and Democracy in Turkey (Cansun, 2021). This article provides sound preliminary study of country-based study regarding bibliometric study of Islam and democracy in the scientific literature.

Using the same methodology, a study about political Islam was conducted by Abdullah (2022). This research looked at the settings in which the academic literature discusses the idea of "political Islam." 1,209 papers were retrieved for this bibliometric study by searching the Web of Science database. The primary findings were: Georgetown University was the institution with the highest number of publications, and the United States had the most publications overall. Insight Turkey was the journal with the most number of publications, with Emmanuel Karagiannis having the most. Furthermore, ideas like Islamism, democracy, and the Arab Spring emerged with political Islam in the keyword analysis (ÖZÇELİK, 2022).

One of the detailed empirical studies about Islam and democracy was conducted by Khodaverdian (2022), titled: Islam and democracy. Using data set from 1950 to 2015 it employed cross country comparisons and found negative correlation between the Islam and democracy when Islam was proxied by Muslim population but such negative link was not found when the same was proxied by length of fasting per day (Khodaverdian, 2022). The study concluded that that Islam and democracy may coexist and that the existence of one is not detrimental to the other.

The works of Voll (2007) looked into modernization if it were a barrier in investing the



relationship between Islam and democracy. Using qualitative approach to explore the multifaced meaning of Islam and democracy in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it concluded that modern interpretations of Islam and democracy are mutually supportive (Voll, 2007).

Islam and democracy as a research topic have gone to many directions. At some point, it united Muslim political thinkers to agree that democracy is compatible with Islam, but in some point, many disagree. This investigation offered a new insight that aims to neither to confirm the uniting factors nor further widen the division. Using bibliometric analysis, it fills in the research gap about Islam and democracy with the findings new to the subject matter.

## **Methodology**

This study employs a bibliometric approach, adapted from the methodology developed by Garza-Reyes (2015). This approach emphasizes systematic and well-defined procedures, enhancing the reproducibility and validation of research findings. A key strength of this methodology, as highlighted by Ifdil et al. (2023), lies in its ability to visually represent complex data through various plots, facilitating a more intuitive understanding of research trends. Utilizing the bibliometrix package within the RStudio statistical programming environment, this study comprehensively analyzed all available research articles within the scientific literature where both the terms "Islam" and "democracy" were concurrently discussed. Figure 1 shows the main information about the data. Specifically, it analyzed data coming from a total of 223 documents found in the Scopus-indexed journals. Authored by 223 scholars from various countries which were published from 156 scientific journals which collectively cited at least 9,150 references, 11.2 average document age, a total of 337 author's keywords, figure no. 1 showed that the first appearance of the research theme Islam and democracy was in 1992 and continually grow up until today. For purposes of fair quantification of published article by year, this study excluded the year 2024 since this paper was conducted in the first quarter of 2024 only.



Figure 1. Frequency Count of Published Articles in Islam and Democracy in Scopus-indexed Journals

## Results and Discussion

### *Annual Scientific Analysis*

Figure 2 shows the rise and fall of annual scientific production of published articles in Scopus-indexed journals about Islam and democracy as research topic. It indicated that the first appearance of such topic in scientific literature was in 1992 with only 2 article publications. It gradually increased starting year 2000 and peaked in 2013 with 16 documents published. Furthermore, table 1 showed that in the last 10 years, there was evidence to suggest that such research topic has been fluctuating with only 5 article publications in 2015 and it rose to 16 in the following year in 2016 also in 2020 while showing another downward trend in the last 3 years. With a fair fluctuation from 2006 onwards as observed in figure 1, it means that Islam and democracy as a research topic have showed indication of seasonality. This suggests that the annual scientific production of Islam and democracy research is not on a continuous growth rate but rather dependent on the issues arising at a given time.

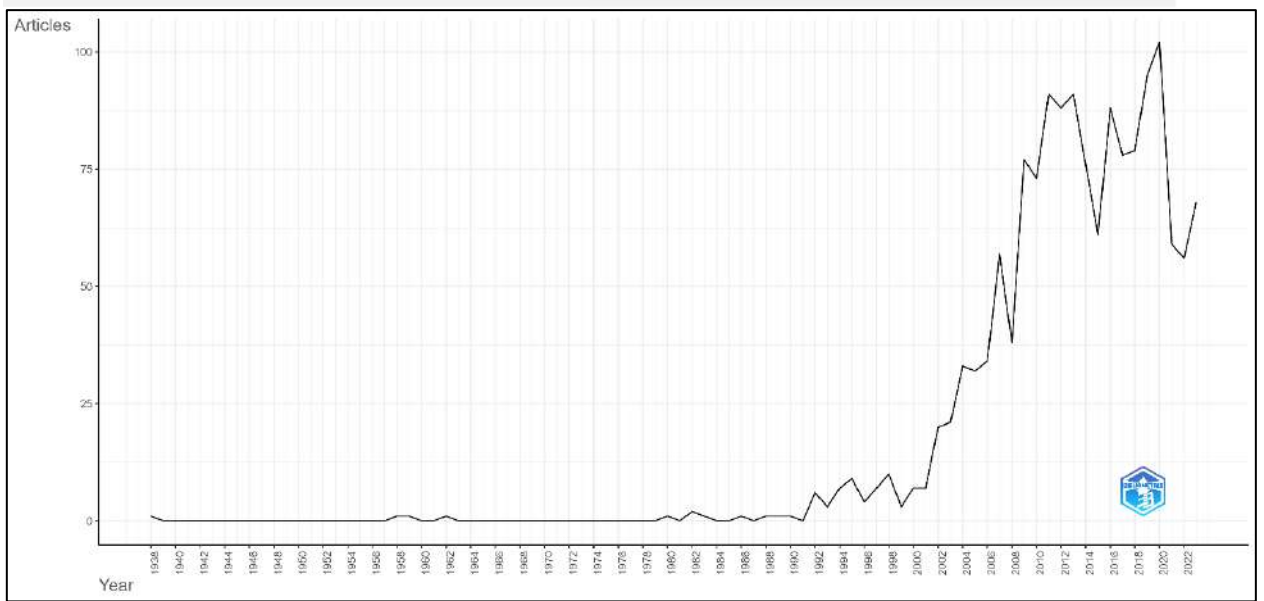


Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production

Table 1 Annual Scientific Production

Year	No. of Articles	Year	No. of Articles
2023	7	2018	6
2022	7	2017	13
2021	7	2016	16
2020	16	2015	5
2019	8	2014	8

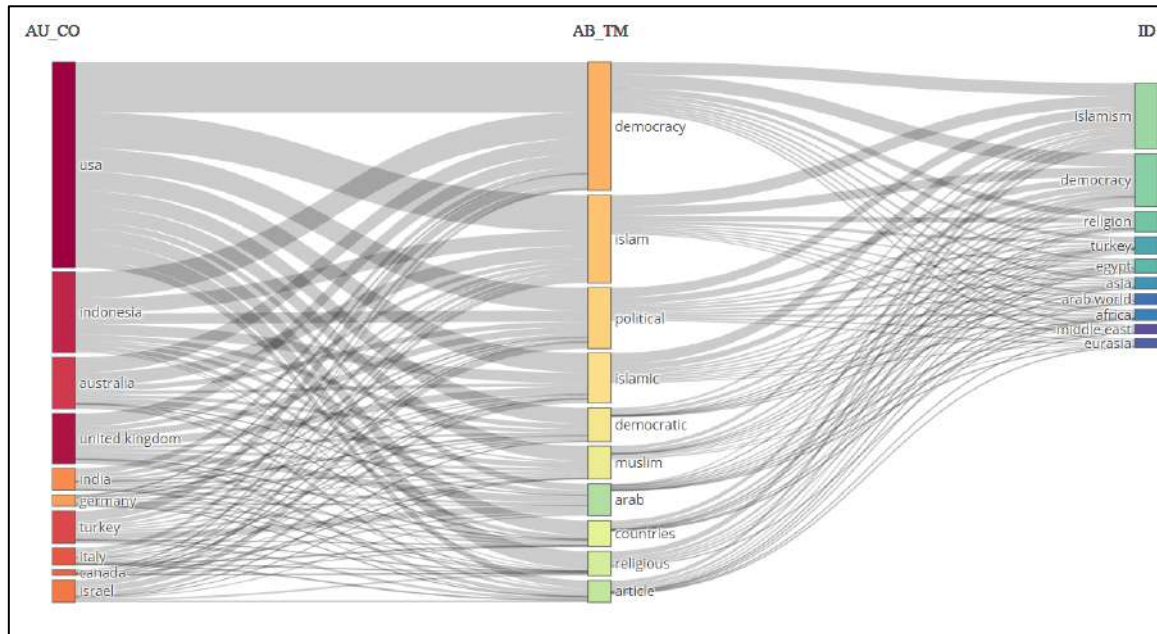


Figure 3. Three-Field Plot (Sankey Diagram): Country + Abstract + Keywords

### *Tree-field plot analysis*

A Three-Field Plot (Sankey Diagram) of country, abstract and keywords was plotted to depict the proportion of country of origin, abstract and keywords used in the published articles about Islam and democracy in Scopus-indexed journals. Figure 3 reveals that the USA leads the most diversified topic about Islam and democracy, most of the abstracts coming from USA on the topic was about democracy followed by Islam and then political. Using keyword analysis of the abstracts about democracy in USA, it revealed that the topmost keywords used was Islamism, democracy and religion. Indonesia on the other hand, also showed great number of publications about democracy, Islam and political appeared second to the USA while Australia ranked 3 that talks about democracy, Islam and political altogether. Figure 3 also showed that on articles published that talked about democracy from the aforementioned countries, it revealed that top 5 keywords used were Islamism, democracy, religion, Turkey and Egypt.

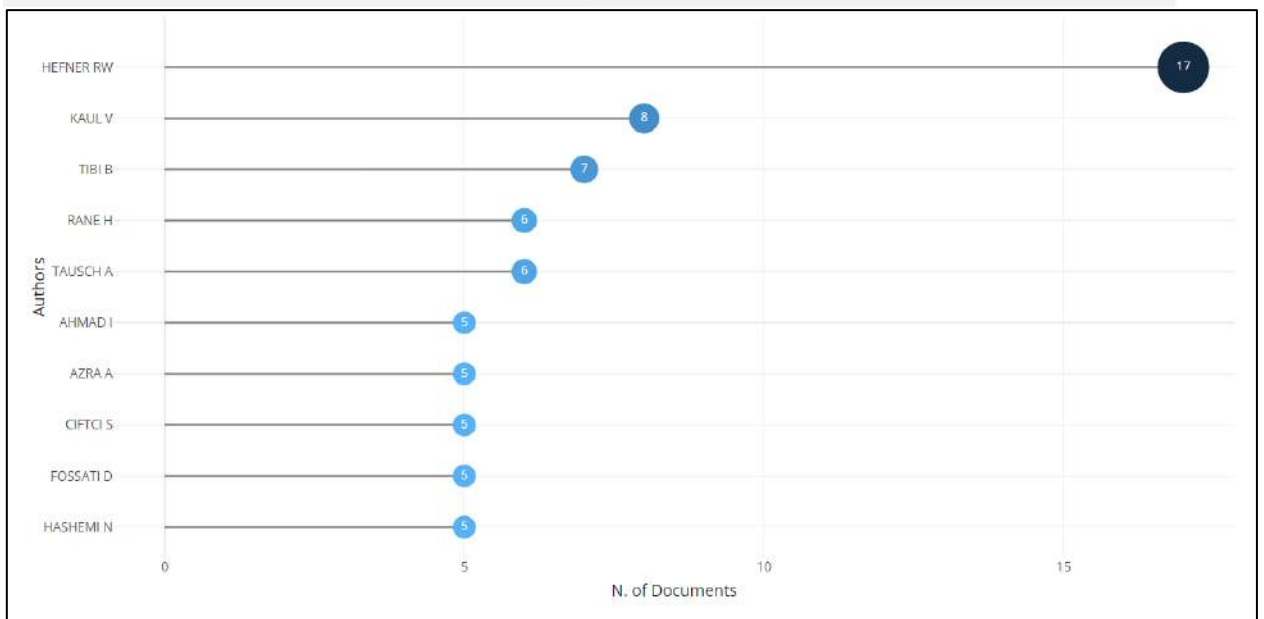


Figure 4. Most Relevant Authors

#### ***Most relevant authors analysis***

Most relevant authors analysis shows the authors with the greatest number of publications about Islam and democracy in the scientific literature. Figure 4 shows that Hefner RW ranked 1<sup>st</sup> for being the most relevant author who published 17 documents about Islam and democracy. He is followed by Kaul V who ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> for publishing 8 articles in Scopus-indexed journals, while Tibi B published 7 and thus ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the list, Rane H and Tausch A tied at the 4<sup>th</sup> rank for having published 6 journal articles that talked about Islam and democracy published in the same database.

Robert W. Hefner is a leading scholar specializing in Muslim politics, modern public ethics, and democracy across different countries. He is the author of several impactful books about Islam and democracy, including "Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia" and "Rethinking Islam and Democracy." He works deals with investigating the possible compatibility of Islamic principles and democratic ideologies by exploring various interpretation of Islam and democracy within specific contexts.

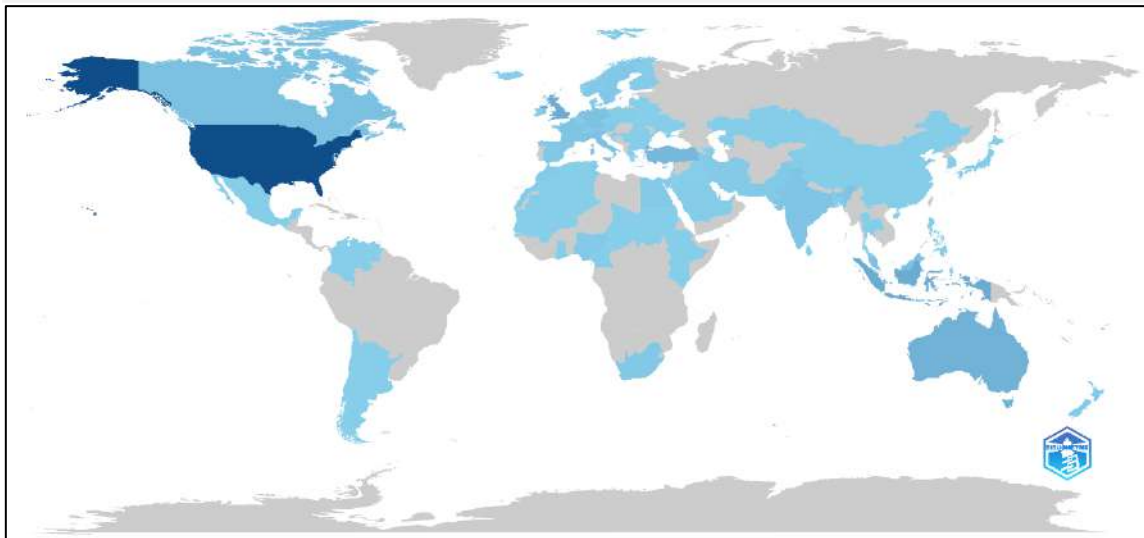


Figure no. 5. Visualization of Country Scientific Production

### ***Country scientific production***

Country scientific production shows the country that leads in scientific production of journal articles about Islam and democracy. Countries depicted in darker blue in color are those that leads in scientific production of Islam and democracy research.(Folharini et al., 2023) Figure 5 shows that the United States of America (USA) leads in the production of aforementioned-research topic. Table 2 indicated that USA published a total of 547 documents. The data showed that 2<sup>nd</sup> in rank was Indonesia which published a total number of 142 papers while the United Kingdom ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> for publishing 141, with Australia followed suite at tank 4<sup>th</sup> for publishing 112 and Turkey at the 5<sup>th</sup> rank for having a total number of 87 journal article publications about Islam and democracy in the database.

Table 2 also revealed that while the USA ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the number of publications, she also ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of total number of citations because, articles about Islam and democracy coming from the USA were cited at least 2533 times as compared with other countries in the list. The data also showed that even though Australia ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the total number of publications she ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in terms of citations for being cited 500 times by authors publishing in Scopus-indexed journals who discussed about Islam and democracy. The United Kingdom maintained her rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in number of publication and also rank 3<sup>rd</sup> in terms of total number of citations.

The dominance of the USA in terms of number of publications and even total number of citations about Islam and democracy may be attributed to many factors. From among the reasons, some of them could be it being viewed as the champion of democracy, strong research infrastructure in the university and research institutions,(Higher Education Act of 1965 as [Amended Through P.L 118-31, Enacted December 22, 2023], 1965) culture



of collaboration, (*Opportunities for Collaborative Research at the Clinical Center*, n.d.) large research funds (Pece, 2014) and, English language dominance. (Hamel, 2007)

Table 2. Country Scientific Production

Number of Publications			Number of Citations		
Country	Freq	Rank	Country	Total Citation	Rank
USA	547	1 <sup>st</sup>	USA	2533	1 <sup>st</sup>
INDONESIA	142	2 <sup>nd</sup>	AUSTRALIA	500	2 <sup>nd</sup>
UK	141	3 <sup>rd</sup>	UNITED KINGDOM	494	3 <sup>rd</sup>
AUSTRALIA	112	4 <sup>th</sup>	TURKEY	442	4 <sup>th</sup>
TURKEY	87	5 <sup>th</sup>	GERMANY	294	5 <sup>th</sup>
CANADA	53	6 <sup>th</sup>	ISRAEL	282	6 <sup>th</sup>
MALAYSIA	52	7 <sup>th</sup>	INDONESIA	249	7 <sup>th</sup>
ITALY	51	8 <sup>th</sup>	CANADA	213	8 <sup>th</sup>
GERMANY	50	9 <sup>th</sup>	NETHERLANDS	205	9 <sup>th</sup>
NETHERLANDS	46	10 <sup>th</sup>	FRANCE	186	10 <sup>th</sup>

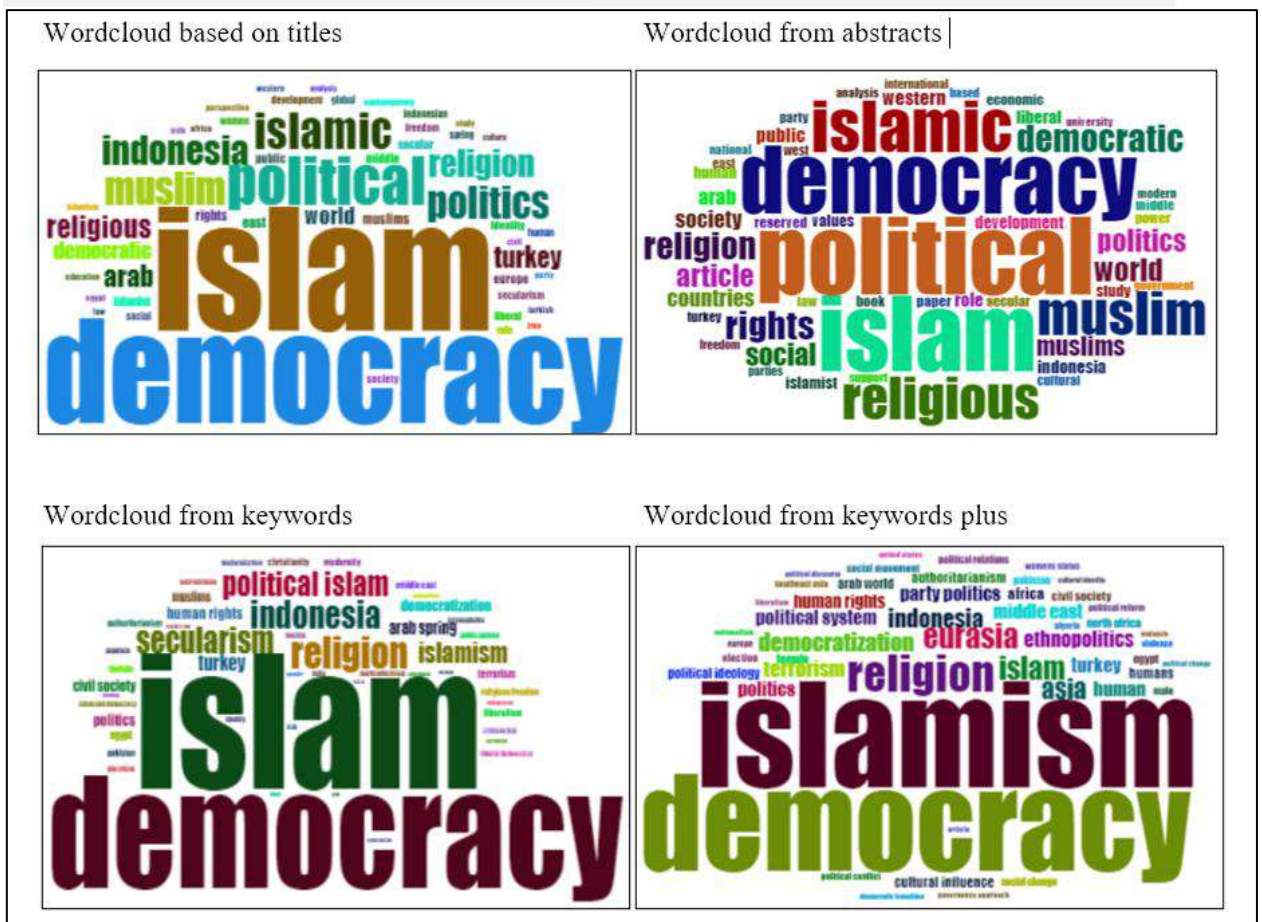


Figure 6. wordcloud plot of the most frequently used words appeared in the article titles, abstracts, keywords and keywords plus

### WordCloud Analysis

Wordcloud plot of most frequently used keywords in the Islam and democracy research visualizes keywords that are comparably frequently used keywords by the authors in the scientific journals (Mustofa & Mustofa, 2022). The larger and more centered the word is in the plot, the more it was frequently used in the paper. Figure 6 showed that the word "Islam" was used 502 times used in titles, 2,154 times in abstract, 346 in author's keywords, 34 times in keyword plus as reflected in table 3, while the word "political" was used 197 times in the titles, 2,234 in the abstracts, "democracy" was used 425 in the titles, 1,953 times in the abstract, 286 in keywords and 149 times used in keyword plus, were the most frequent terms across all sections, this suggests that these were the main focus of the analyzed articles. In the "Title" section, it featured more general terms like "Islam", "politics", "democracy", while "Abstract" and "Keywords" delve deeper with terms like "political Islam", "Islamism", "religious", "religion", etc. Further, the high frequency of "political" and "religious" suggests exploration of the intersection of these domains in the context of Islam and democracy. Terms like "Indonesia", "Muslim", "Arab Spring" point to specific geographical and historical contexts analyzed in the articles.



Words like "rights", "democratization", "secularism" highlight potential debates and discussions within the topic Islam and democracy.

Table 3. wordcloude frquency count of the most regularly used words appeared in the article titles, abstracts, keywords and keywords plus

<i>Title</i>		Abstract		Keyword		Keyword plus	
Terms	Freq	Terms	Freq	Terms	Freq	Terms	Freq
Islam	502	Political	2234	Islam	346	Islamism	164
Democrac y	425	Islam	2154	Democracy	286	Democracy	149
Political	197	Democrac y	1953	Religion	83	Religion	57
Islamic	153	Islamic	1494	Indonesia	73	Eurasia	38
Muslim	133	Muslim	1251	Secularism	68	Islam	36
Politics	133	Religious	1205	Political Islam	65	Asia	32
Indonesia	121	Rights	830	Islamism	54	Democratizat ion	29
Religion	111	Democrati c	800	Turkey	41	Indonesia	29
Religious	96	Religion	790	Arab Spring	33	Terrorism	26
Arab	90	World	673	Human Rights	32	Ethnopolitics	25

### ***Trend Topic Analysis***

Trend topic analysis shows the increase and decrease of the use of term within a research topic over time, (Dagli et al., 2023). Figure 8 suggests the development of Islam and democracy as research topic today has emanated from the discussions about Islamic politics from 1994 to 1996. This is followed by gender relations topic which also became persistent subject for almost a decade beginning year 2002 since both Islam and democracy have their own distinct views relating to women as leaders, (Rahman & Sali, 2020). One of the fascinating discussions that lasted for a decade – 1996 to 2006, as reflected in figure 8, was about Jordan. Interestingly during this times, Jordan’s King Hussein (1952 to 1999) initiated the reign of balanced secularism and Islamic traditions and also during this term the signing of the Jordan’s Peace Treaty with Israel in 1994. This among other reasons, must have paved the way for discussions of how Islam and democracy may coexist. Nowadays, some of the top emerging topics are elections and Tunisia. Further investigation indicated that the latter issue could have been on the rise since 2015 considering events unfolded following the self-immolation of Muhammad

Bouazizi in 2010 that led to the political unrest in Tunisia which inspired many Muslim countries in the region to rethink about democracy that gave birth to the Arab Spring. Consequently, on the top of the list of the trend topic is about elections. This shows that there must have been an ongoing intellectual discussion about elections in Islam and democracy search keywords. This is because when filtering process was applied in the dataset used in this study it showed that at least 101 articles talked about elections.

Notable examples are: “The de-existence of Islamic political parties in general elections: A case study of Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country”, (Fernando et al., 2023); “Strategies of electoral participation by Islamic movements: The Muslim Brotherhood and parliamentary elections in Egypt and Jordan, November 2010”, (Ghanem & Mustafa, 2011)”; “The 2007 parliamentary elections in Turkey: Between securitisation and desecuritisation”, (Polat, 2009); and, “The Meaning of Saudi Elections”, (Al-Khuthaila, 2005).

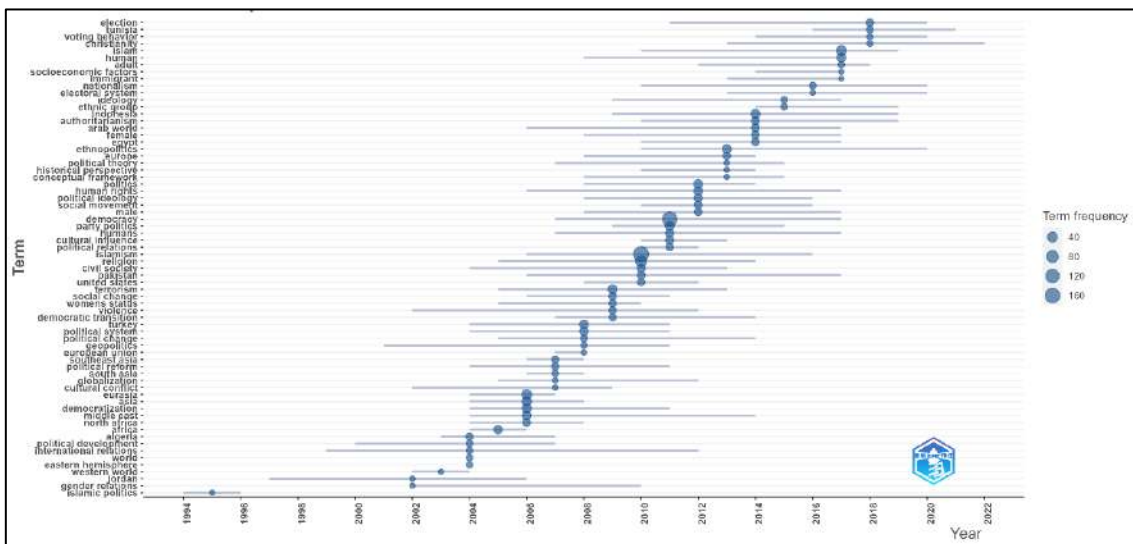


Figure 8. Topic Trend plot

### ***Thematic Map analysis***

In Jannah et al., (2022) thematic map analysis is composed of four different quadrants. Each quadrant is analyzed based on the centralization and density of the nodes: *First*, the upper right quadrant in this type of analysis is considered as the most centralized and dense than other quadrants. As the quadrant changes, the level of centralization and density degrades. As such those that appeared in the upper right quadrant are interpreted as relevant and widely researched topic for being in the center of discussion and popular among authors of a given field of specialization. The theme appearing on this side of the quadrant must have been thoroughly studied and the topic is already developed. *Second*, those appearing on the lower right quadrant remains in the centrality theme but with lower

density but not too many authors are commonly talking about them. In this case, future researchers are suggested to publish more about the topic as it is central theme at the moment but remains few authors discussing about them. *Third*, themes appearing on the upper left quadrant are highly specialized topic making it rare and not so centralized. This shows where many author separately talking about separate issues. *Lastly*, themes appearing on the lower left quadrant are not centralized and not dense as well. This could mean that the theme may either be diminishing or emerging. If the theme is emerging, it could be a good idea to for authors to raise them. The method of knowing whether the theme is emerging theme is diminishing or emerging is by reviewing the content of the article.

Figure 9 shows that theme relating to Islam, democracy and political is found in the upper right quadrant of the map suggests that the aforementioned topic under thoroughly discussed and developed topic already as compared to the rest. Interestingly, the theme religious rights and religion are both found in boundaries between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quadrant. This indicates that the theme may be on a rising trajectory and gaining centrality at the same time. On the other hand, the theme power, Arab and east is a declining theme and shares boundary with the 3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant. This indicates that while it is declining, the theme are highly specialized and rare scholars may be talking about it theme now adays.

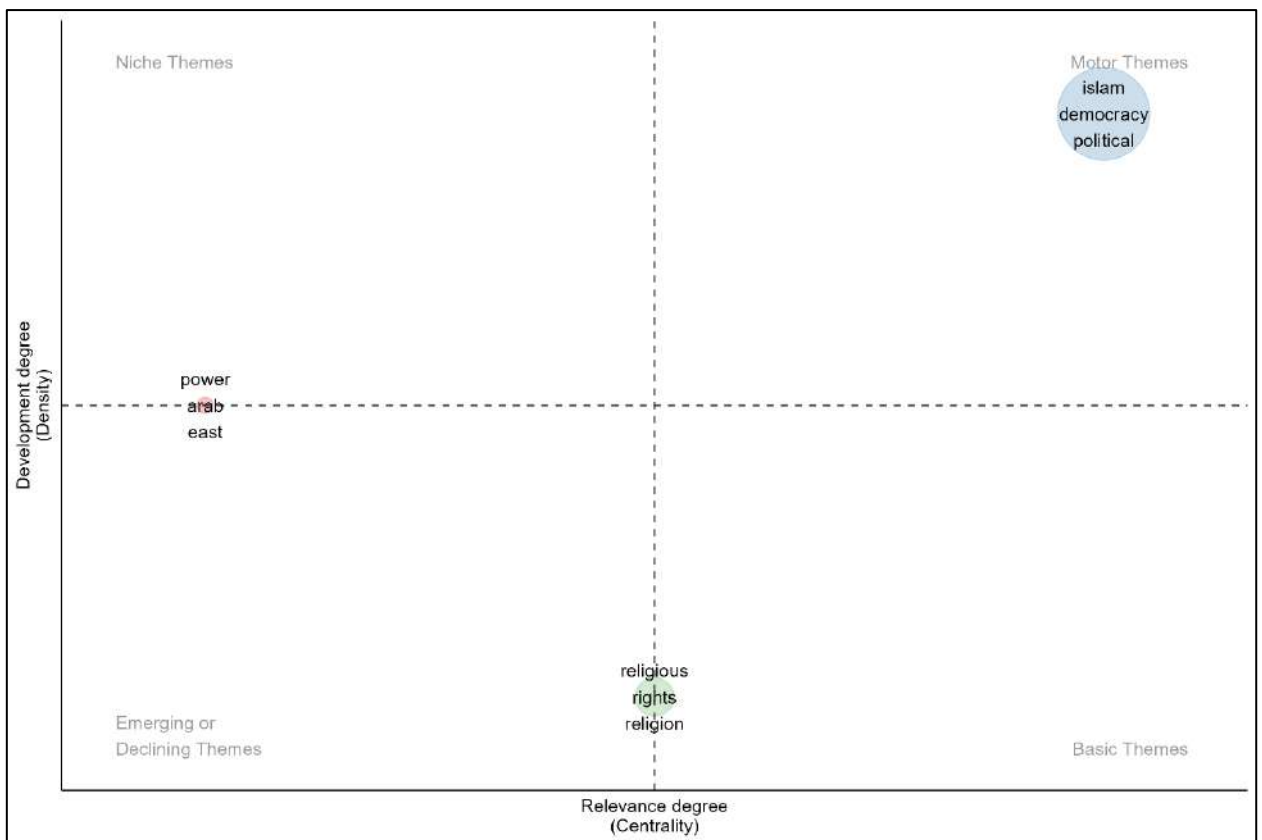


Figure 8. Thematic Map



## Concussion

With the ongoing discussions about compatibility of Islam with democracy, to many scholars, it remains complex with no easy answer. This study delved into a different research direction that offered distinct findings about the same topic. Using bibliometric analysis of published works in Scopus-indexed journals, it found that the United States of America leads the greatest number of publication and in terms of total number of citations, Hefner W.R leads the relevant author analysis. While the embryonic phases of Islam and democracy research started from Islamic politics, it developed into more complex topic that talked about how incompatible or incompatible both are. To date, the most trending topic nowadays is election (one of many forms of *shura* in Islam), - potentially the bridge between Islam and democracy.

### Authors Contribution:

**Najeeb Razul A. Sali:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Software. **Halima Sahim-Sali:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, and Data curation. **Aisa U. Bud:** Writing – revving & editing, conceptualizing; funding acquisition. **Abubakr A. Murray:** conceptualizing; funding acquisition, Validation, Resources. **Nasurudin M. Datucali:** Conceptualization, funding acquisition, Writing – review & editing.

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