

Research Trends in Economic Diplomacy: A bibliometric and Scientometric Analysis

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Abstract. *Economic diplomacy has become increasingly important over the years for achieving foreign policy objectives. While being traditionally rooted in political and economic theory, economic diplomacy has evolved to become a multidisciplinary field, intersecting with international relations, sustainability, digital transformation, and cultural diplomacy. This evolution has been accompanied by a steady increase in academic output and global research collaboration. The major research question focuses on tracing the evolution of economic diplomacy in scientific research. The results demonstrate a shift toward more diversified, interdisciplinary research agendas, reflecting changing global priorities and geopolitical dynamics. These insights provide a foundation for future research, emphasizing economic diplomacy's strategic importance in navigating global uncertainty and promoting collaboration between the nations.*

Keywords: economic diplomacy, international relations, bibliometric analysis, research trends.

Introduction

Diplomacy has for many decades been viewed by diplomats and others around the world as the formal art of negotiating on behalf of and representing sovereign states. With that said, the area of diplomatic activity has changed dramatically over the past two decades or so because of changes occurring globally. As such, the area of diplomacy today involves many different types of actors, and many different topics or themes; as well as a number of different ways of communicating with other countries. These are the result of increased interdependence among all national economies and increased use of technology related to digital communications, and increasing involvement of sub-national and non-governmental organizations in determining outcomes for the global community. Therefore, what was traditionally a state-centric, bilateral model based on protocol used to conduct diplomacy has become a much more dynamic and diverse model which includes governments, private sector interests and social issues at local, regional and/or global levels.

As a result, the field of economic diplomacy has now become an important subject in modern day International Relations theory. While promoting foreign direct investment and trade will remain at the core of economic diplomacy, it is increasingly likely that diplomatic efforts will be devoted toward negotiating financial assistance agreements, developing common regulations and standards and coordinating responses to cross-border issues. Also emerging are other types of diplomatic practice including digital diplomacy (the use of internet platforms), business diplomacy (practice between businesses), health diplomacy (practices involving health) and paradiplomacy (sub-national or non-state actors participating in multilateral processes).

The emergence of these new forms of diplomatic practice demands a fundamental reconsideration of what constitutes diplomacy within an environment characterized by increasing complexity and interdependence. Through a focused literature review using recent bibliometrics and thematic analysis, this study seeks to map out the changing diplomatic environment. By identifying where diplomacy intersects with disciplines such as economics, technology, public health and sub-regional governance, this study offers a detailed view into how diplomacy is evolving.

While economic diplomacy was analyzed through case studies, policy analyses and some meta-analyses (Moons & van Bergeijk, 2013), no full-length bibliometric and scientometric study of this field appears in major databases. Related studies in adjacent domains exist, but none map the field of economic diplomacy comprehensively using visual clustering, co-authorship analysis and thematic trends over time.

Literature review

The evolution of diplomacy is a topic being explored throughout the world's literatures regarding international relations. These studies have revealed an evolution in how states interact with one another; however, due to globalization the interactions among many entities beyond the confines of government (such as corporate, social media/digital platforms, public health organizations, and regional governments) are influencing the outcome of diplomacy in a manner heretofore unseen. In past years diplomacy was a governmental-only entity, but it has evolved into a broad array of economic and social engagement.

A key theme in current economic diplomacy literature is that the way governments conduct economic diplomacy has evolved. Economic diplomacy now includes more than just negotiating trade agreements with other countries and signing bilateral treaties. As Bayne and Woolcock (2016) point out, it represents an intricate relationship between national-level decision making by policymakers and the negotiation process with foreign partners. Moreover, economic diplomacy involves many different levels of engagement including government officials, business leaders and various civil society groups. The authors illustrate how economic diplomacy has also come to include the broader issue of global challenges like climate change and financial crises for which multilateral coordination is needed and reliance solely on diplomatic mechanisms would be ineffective.

The complexity of economic diplomacy has increased with the participation of international organizations, think-tanks, and multilateral forums. Organizations like the WTO, UNCTAD and regional development banks participate in economic diplomacy as both actors and negotiating platforms. These organizations have moved beyond setting agendas for economic cooperation to coordinating a global response to economic shocks, trade disputes and investor disputes. These organizations are now a more prominent part of the research on economic diplomacy; scholars are studying how they act as mediators of state/corporate interest and their ability to influence the actions of states and corporate entities. In terms of bibliometrics, these organizations are now being referenced not just as subjects of study but also as organizational affiliations for researchers contributing to the field of study. As their prominence increases, it indicates that institutional diplomatic practices are an important factor in determining both policy outcomes and areas of research inquiry (Bayne & Woolcock, 2016).

Moons and van Bergeijk's (2013) meta-analysis supports the idea that "diplomatic" institutions like embassies and trade missions can improve export flows and investments because they help to fill informational gaps and reduce friction due to institutional factors. Additionally, Moons and Van Bergeijk found that embassies have been particularly effective at improving export and investment performance over time, suggesting that embassies remain an important tool for building trust with foreign governments.

Although there are few studies focused solely on economic diplomacy through bibliography metrics, the surrounding areas have been studied. For instance, Mesa Bedoya, et al. (2023), conducted a bibliometric analysis of paradiplomacy; and Garakhanova (2023) utilized VOSviewer for an examination of digital diplomacy research. Additionally, Liu and Daud (2023) used similar methodologies to examine the overall research landscape for health diplomacy. The aforementioned studies provide foundational methodology for this type of research as well as further evidence of the growing utilization of scientific metrics in diplomatic areas. Nevertheless, to date, a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of the field of economic diplomacy has remained underdeveloped, which is why it was important to complete the current study.

In addition to these changes, there is growing interest in business diplomacy. Private businesses have been taking on some of the same responsibilities that previously were taken up by public diplomats. According to Berniak-Woźny and Wejsis-Golebiak (2023), corporations are now active players in their respective international marketplaces rather than simply being reactive participants. Additionally, they are creating and managing their own "policy" environments; and, according to Sant'Anna et al. (2021); they are using this type of diplomacy to intentionally manage and mitigate political, legal and reputational risk associated with conducting business outside of their domestic marketplace.

The development of digital diplomacy provides an additional example of the transition from traditional diplomatic models to a more flexible and adaptable model. As noted by Garakhanova (2023), digital diplomacy uses technology including social media, online platforms for communication and real time information

exchanges to provide direct connections to foreign publics for states. This type of engagement is faster, less centralized than its predecessor; therefore, state representatives have a greater opportunity to communicate their perspectives on issues related to national interest rather than relying solely upon traditionally established "gatekeepers." Bibliometric analysis conducted by her indicates that digital diplomacy is now among the most frequently referenced topics within recent studies examining international relations.

A number of researchers are examining the impact of global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic on public health diplomacy. Liu and Daud (2023) point out that since the onset of the pandemic there is an increasing reliance on diplomacy for addressing public health issues. According to Liu and Daud (2023) the expansion of health diplomacy has provided a means for developing cooperative relations with other countries; however, it is also being used to further strategic foreign policy goals. This development serves to illustrate the evolution of health diplomacy which supports both humanitarian objectives and foreign policy goals while providing an additional mechanism for establishing partnerships among states.

The increase in paradiplomacy represents another significant trend in contemporary international diplomacy. Paradiplomacy occurs when subnational governments engage in diplomatic activity independent of their respective central government. Zahidi and Othman (2025) suggest that paradiplomacy reflects a reevaluation of what constitutes "sovereignty" in today's world. Mesa Bedoya et al. (2023) and Zahidi and Othman (2025) emphasize that as more subnational governments become involved in activities associated with commerce, environmental protection and cultural exchange, there will be a greater degree of autonomy available to cities and regional governments in conducting their own foreign policies.

Together these trends demonstrate that the scope of international diplomacy has expanded to include multiple levels of government and actors within each country.

Although prior research has generated a large body of knowledge about economic diplomacy through ongoing research development, this knowledge is dispersed across numerous disciplines of study (e.g., digital diplomacy; trade policy; health cooperation; corporate engagement). Previous studies have provided mapping of the growth of paradiplomacy, the use of new technologies in diplomacy and the growing importance of health cooperation, however, few have developed comprehensive bibliometrics specifically focused upon the field of economic diplomacy. Many previous analyses were based upon a small number of regionally-based case studies or focused upon specific forms of diplomatic tools and mechanisms. Thus, no single analysis was able to capture the structure of all of the global research on economic diplomacy or its thematic changes over time.

Additionally, very little clarity exists with regard to how various research clusters are connected and identify the emergent voids that exist within them. The current study seeks to address these issues using a combined bibliometric and scientometric methodology. It will examine the production, structure and temporal evolution of research related to economic diplomacy. Through visualization of co-authorship networks; keyword clustering; and contribution of countries to research related to economic diplomacy, it will identify both established patterns of inquiry and previously unaddressed topics, providing a unified foundation for future theoretical and empirical studies.

This study intends to employ bibliometric and scientometric analyses to identify the optimal responses to the research questions behind the proposed hypothesis.

RQ1: What are the most relevant keywords that address the research field of economic diplomacy?

RQ2: What are the countries of origin of the selected documents?

RQ3: In which fields have authors published the most paper and which ones are the most cited?

RQ4: What are the future research trends of publications related to economic diplomacy?

The primary aim of this paper is to understand the complexity of the field of economic diplomacy and the significant role it plays in solving economic conflicts between states.

Methodology

A bibliometric analysis is an analytical examination of scientific literature to identify patterns, trends and influence in a particular area of research. The main phases of conducting a bibliometric analysis are collecting relevant data using specific databases, cleaning/processing/refining that collected data, and

applying multiple bibliometric methods to produce meaningful results. Bibliometric analysis has become an increasingly effective method of analyzing and evaluating large quantities of scientific data, and it continues to be used with increasing frequency by researchers. (Passas, 2024)

Bibliometrics have become increasingly important as they provide researchers with a way to track where the field has been over time and provide evidence of future trends. This can be useful when looking at interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary fields, like economic diplomacy. By using bibliometric tools researchers will get an idea of how knowledge is being created, grouped together, and referenced. According to Ellegaard et.al (2015),

bibliometrics allow researchers to quantitatively examine academic productivity and evaluate aspects of scholarly output such as visibility, thematic coherence and impact.

The tool VOSviewer was used as the primary visualization tool to analyze three different types of data; keyword co-occurrences, co-authorships and citations. Because VOSviewer is capable of creating "science maps" from large datasets that make it particularly well-suited for exploratory research in emerging fields (Garakhanova, 2023). The visual clustering capabilities of VOSviewer allow to determine how terms were related across publications providing evidence of both existing foundations of the field and areas that may potentially develop into future interests.

To further enhance the credibility of economic diplomacy's research area, researchers have turned to using bibliometric techniques to create structured frameworks for an empirical study of economic diplomacy. As well as reducing researcher subjectivity and enhancing replicability of the research results, bibliometric approaches are useful for providing a common reference point for evaluating the quality and relevance of existing research that supports economic diplomacy. The increased recognition of economic diplomacy as a significant component of foreign affairs on the part of scholars and practitioners alike has contributed to growing demand for bibliometric mapping to facilitate long-term strategic research planning.

A large number of academic articles were searched for through the use of the Clarivate-Web of Science online database to provide answers to the proposed research question. This decision to utilize Web of Science was made due to a variety of factors including its capability to cover time; offer an advanced search function that allows filtering the data obtained from searches using the key words (or terms), research area(s) (s), country(ies) or citation(s); be widely recognized throughout the world as one of the top most well-known and selected bibliographic databases; have a significant proportion of articles and study included within its database are those considered to be "high impact" articles and studies; and constantly updating this data base ensuring researchers can find current research being conducted.

The first stage consisted of selecting and extracting all those publications that were considered to be the most appropriate to include in this study, utilizing the "Web of Science Core Collection" at the time the searches were performed (May 2025), with the use of a single topical search term ("economic diplomacy"). A single topical search term ("economic diplomacy") was utilized for the search, without the application of Boolean operators; therefore, no attempts were made to broaden or narrow the terms in order to maximize the relevance of the results and minimize conceptual drift.

This search spanned a 25-year period; thus, it began in 2000 and concluded in 2025. Only records classified in the Web of Science's "Core Collection" were included in these searches to maximize the probability that each record would have been subjected to peer-review. The majority of the publications selected were based upon their type as either research article(s) or review article(s); as such, they are considered representative of the vast majority of the type of scholarly research output in this field. All research area categories included within these searches included international relations, political science, economics, area studies, and business.

Following the application of required filters to the paper selection process, 542 papers that met the requirements to be used within this study were found. All relevant documents were then saved into a "Marked List" prior to being exported as a plain txt file to enable VOSviewer to analyze the content of the file. Each article provides the full record and cites referenced sources. The selected articles offer a strong basis for conducting our planned exploratory study of research patterns regarding the topic of economic

diplomacy. Significant themes, emerging trends, and areas requiring additional research or focus through subsequent sections focusing on the ideas presented in each of these articles will be explored.

In order to provide an even clearer illustration of the temporal development of the research trends during different time frames than what was provided in the general bibliographic map; a timeline analysis was undertaken. Using the "Refine" feature for selecting publications based on publication date, the Web of Science data set was divided into three separate subsets (2000-2010, 2011-2020, 2021-2025) and then exported to VOSviewer with all records and citations. Each of these subgroups contained the following number of publications: 1st subgroup (2000-2010): 25 publications, 2nd subgroup (2011-2020): 241 publications and 3rd subgroup (2021-2025): 276 publications. Similar steps were followed for each of the above-described time frame groups: a co-occurrence analysis was completed of the author defined key words from full counting; and overlay visualization maps were created to determine which of the key words were the most prominent at specific times, and how the focal point of the area of study changed over time.

Scientometrics is defined by Leyderdorff (2001) as the study of the quantitative aspects of science research aimed at providing data about scientific research through citations and the like. The archivally recorded content of documents includes relational information, substantive message (the title words), and institutional address information; which provide the basis for identifying relationships and extracting characteristics of authors and collections of documents. Thus, by employing scientometric methods it is possible to link characteristics of institutions at group levels of research to developments in specializations within scientific disciplines. Authors can be retrieved from papers based upon citations; likewise, authors can use citations to find papers.

All publications were extracted including the authors, titles, years of publication, number of citations received, authors' locations, keywords and abstracts. Thematic analysis was done via keyword identification, and clustering by field. Also, the country of origin of the researchers who researched the field was identified and the top-cited references were found.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in researchers using bibliometrics to better understand trends in how different types of diplomatic efforts are developing in various areas of academia. A good example would be Juan Camilo Mesa Bedoya's (2023), mapping of the growth of "paradiplomacy", which shows that sub-national units, i.e., regional or municipal governments, have evolved to a greater extent than ever before into being part of global issues. His study showed that in addition to an increasing number of publications regarding paradiplomacy, he was able to demonstrate the development of research networks and clusters, indicating a maturation process of the subject area.

Meanwhile, studies in health diplomacy like (Liu Jiangwei, 2023), provide a wealth of evidence on how the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has linked both public health and diplomacy. These studies are useful but they illustrate an evident absence in the bibliometric mapping of economic diplomacy. The study also illustrates that while its real-world importance continues to grow through issues such as trade wars; investment flow, and changing geopolitical relationships, it has lacked the same degree of focus in bibliometric/Scientific mapping. It is with this need in mind; the aim of this study was to fill the existing knowledge gap by conducting a comprehensive review of how economic diplomacy has been researched; what geographical locations and disciplines the research is focused upon; and ultimately what key drivers are currently influencing the agenda for discussion in this area

Results and discussions

Academic papers related to the purpose of this study were identified, to map the historical development of research on trends in economic diplomacy, through the search results from Clarivate's Web of Science. Using the scientific mapping strategy, the studies were analyzed by applying systematic techniques. Of the 542 articles that were selected for keyword searches within the Web of Science Core Collection, were found primarily in these subject areas: International Relations; Political Science; Economics; Area Studies; Business, etc. The distribution of the number of articles across all the subject categories can be seen in Figure 1.

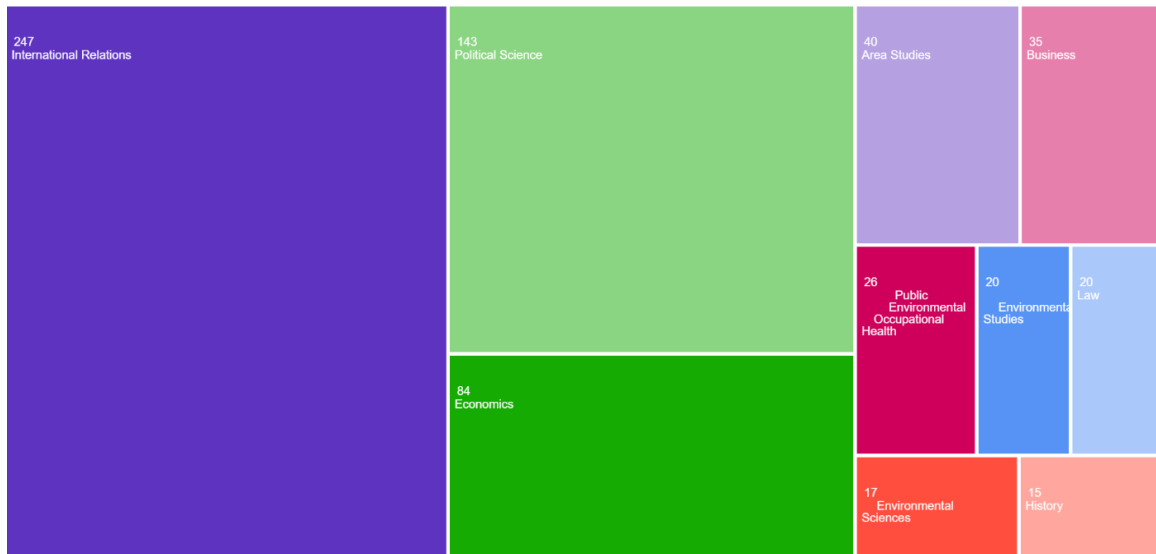


Figure 1. Tree Map diagram- Web of Science categories

Source: Web of Science “Analyze Results section” (<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/analyze-results/e3f8a839-82db-46bb-9742-6124f8bd58bd-015fe4e667>).

In order to examine all of the significant trends which have influenced the study of research and provide an overview of the entire progression of the area, articles published from 2000 through 2025 will be used as the primary source. The time period was deliberately selected in order to include the initial phases of the development of economic diplomacy and the recent upsurge in studies on this particular area. This is demonstrated by the rapid rise in the amount of publishing shown in Figure 2. Both publication numbers and citation rates for the development of academic interest in economic diplomacy are clearly displayed in the two-axis graph. The data show a growth pattern illustrating increasing maturity of the field. Both publication numbers and citation rates remained very low until about 2012, demonstrating that the field had been at an early stage of development (or on the periphery) of overall academia. A steady upward trend can be seen starting about 2013. Clearly, the growth of a large body of literature began during this time. Following 2017, publication and citation numbers rose together rapidly. Thus, it is apparent that there has been an increased level of scholarly productivity, along with a greater degree of scholarly attention being given to the topic.

Beginning with 2020, research production began to rise at an exponential rate, peaking in 2023 as both the number of publications and citation counts reached all-time highs (greater than 1100) reflecting the increasing relevance and visibility of the field. It is likely that these increases are directly tied to increasing international awareness and concern regarding trade disputes, emerging geopolitical alliances and shifting uses of economics in diplomatic relations. The slight decline in publications in 2024 and sharp decline in citations in 2025 may be indicative of some type of citation lag due to the time it takes for recent scholarship to garner citations; however, they could also represent evidence of a 'saturation' of themes or 'diffusion' from the field.

The development of this academic progress is directly related to several key events which have altered the global economy. For example, the BRI (China's Belt and Road Initiative) was launched in 2013 to increase economic cooperation and trade through increased levels of infrastructure investment. It has generated a lot of discussion concerning economic diplomacy in academia as well as policy circles. Similarly, the U.S.-China Trade War (2018-2020) with an emphasis on economic coercion; tariffs and separating strategies, created a surge in interest in the area of economic statecraft and trade diplomacy for both countries. Additionally, Brexit (the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union) has produced a highly complex diplomatic environment creating new trade agreements and forming new international economic partnerships. Since 2020, the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic has added a new level of urgency for governments to pursue health diplomacy; ensure their supply chain security; and reassess their trade priorities. Most recently, global debates

surrounding energy security, sanctions imposed upon Russia, and technological sovereignty have solidified the importance of economic diplomacy in the realm of foreign affairs.

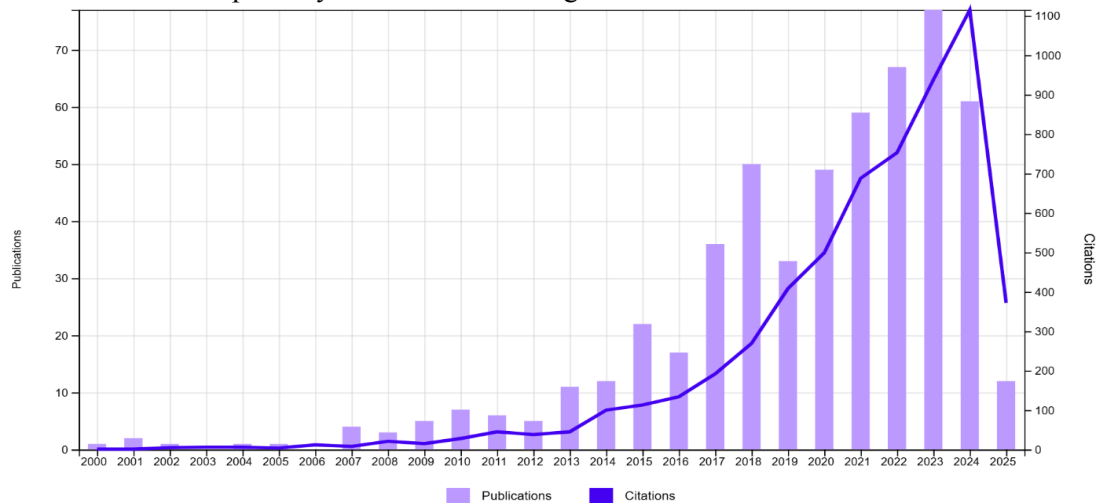


Figure 2. Citation Report-Times Cited and Publications Over Times

Source: Web of Science “Analyze Results section” (<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/citation-report/81fad407-d14c-46a0-b55e-9c5293f20540-015fe677b0>).

The software utilized for analyzing the bibliometrics for this study was VOSviewer. VOSviewer uses the visualization of keyword co-occurrence maps (to identify connections between citations) and country-of-origin visualizations (to provide an overview of geographic publication data). Keyword co-occurrence is a type of bibliometric analysis that determines how often two or more keywords occur at once in the same document within a given dataset. Through this type of analysis researchers have been able to identify thematic areas and determine research trends through the identification of combinations of key terms which are most frequently analyzed. It is assumed that keywords that frequently co-occur will likely share conceptual or thematic similarities. These shared themes then form the basis of cluster formation and also provide insight into the overall architecture of knowledge in specific domains.

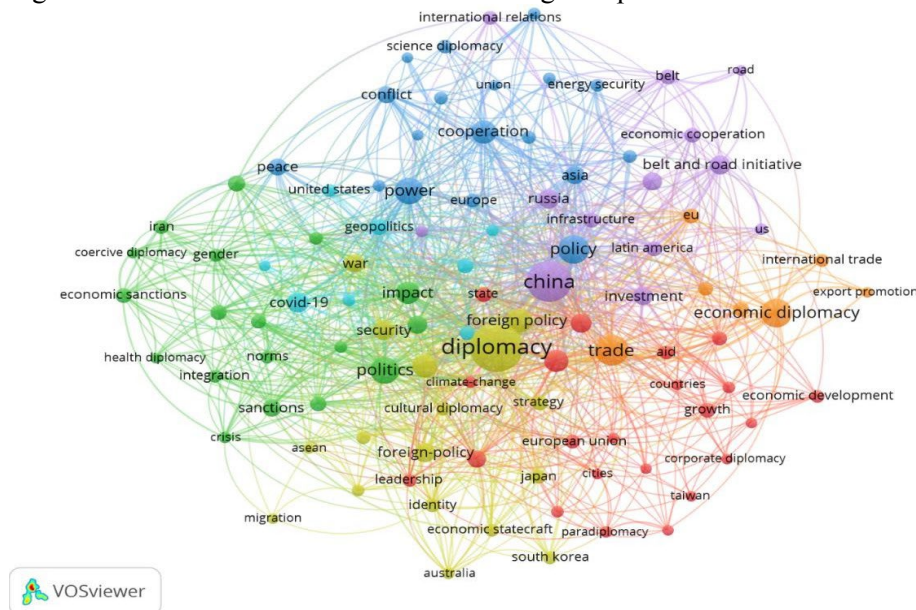


Figure 3. Network visualization-Bibliographic coupling 2000-2025

Source: Author's own computation using VosViewer\.

The key word occurrence network built using Vos Viewer displays how the themes of research for economic diplomacy are organized in an overall thematic structure (Figure 3). The words shown in Figure 3 and found in the highest frequency within this network include: "diplomacy", "trade", "economic diplomacy", "policy" and "China". These represent the key concepts driving the creation of research by scientists.

Using the bibliographical data collected during the period of 2000 through 2025, the economic diplomacy-related bibliometrics were categorized into four different clusters. This clustering allows to create a large-scale framework of connections among terms referenced in academic studies related to the specific area of study, highlight emerging areas of focus in the scientific community and identify who the stakeholders are in the world of international relations. The red cluster represents terms associated with the economic side of the field, including; international trade, development, aid and corporate diplomacy. It shows how tightly connected the economic aspects of diplomacy are to the global economy. Terms highlighted in the purple cluster show China's increasing role in international affairs, particularly with respect to its Belt & Road Initiative, infrastructure and economic co-operation. Terms included in the green cluster reflect new relevance of particular terms since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic including; sanctions, health diplomacy and gender. The yellow cluster emphasizes issues involving culture and regional dynamics that were emphasized through inclusion of keywords such as; migration leadership, identity and cultural diplomacy. Overall, the bibliometric map portrays economic diplomacy as an interdisciplinary field of study where economic, strategic/political, cultural and other factors converge.

To gain an insight into how economic diplomacy research has developed over time, the dataset was chronologically divided into three periods: 2000-2010; 2011-2020; and 2021-early 2025. The segmentation allowed to study the underlying mechanisms that are driving the development of the discipline of economic diplomacy at different points in time. Our original data set consisted of 25 documents from 2000 to 2010; 241 documents from 2011 to 2020; and 276 documents from 2021 to early 2025. It was observed that the number of publications in the field of economic diplomacy increased significantly during the past decade, which is consistent with both growing international interest in economic diplomacy and its heightened importance due to significant changes in global politics and economics.

The first period (2000-2010) represented a time when the primary concepts related to economic diplomacy were being established. These included "trade", "negotiations," "international relations" and "globalization". These terms represent the historical perspective on economic diplomacy where it was viewed primarily through a state-centric lens as a method of management of bilateral and multi-lateral trade relationships. As can be seen in Figure 4, this time frame had very low network density and few common frequency keywords, indicating that the area of economic diplomacy was in its formative stages and characterized by a limited range of conceptual approaches.

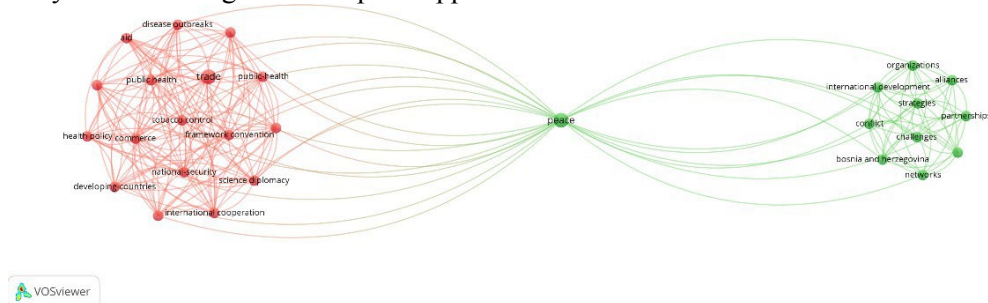


Figure 4. Overlay visualization-Keyword co-occurrence during the period 2000-2010

Source: Author's own computation using VosViewer.

Between 2011-20 (Figure 5) this area of study has undergone rapid growth. The introduction of new key words, "soft power," "policy," "emerging markets" and "regional integration," have created an increased number of connections with early core terms and indicate that the areas of research interest are becoming increasingly diverse; it is clear from these findings that there is increasing recognition that diplomacy will be used strategically for purposes other than trade negotiations. Clusters representing thematic areas were

developing more distinctly, demonstrating a movement towards the intellectual consolidation within what would eventually develop into identifiable sub-disciplines. Additionally, this time frame can be seen to reflect larger trends at the global level such as an increase in the formation of regional groups, and an increase in the utilization of economic statecraft by governments, in response to financial crisis, geopolitical uncertainty etc.

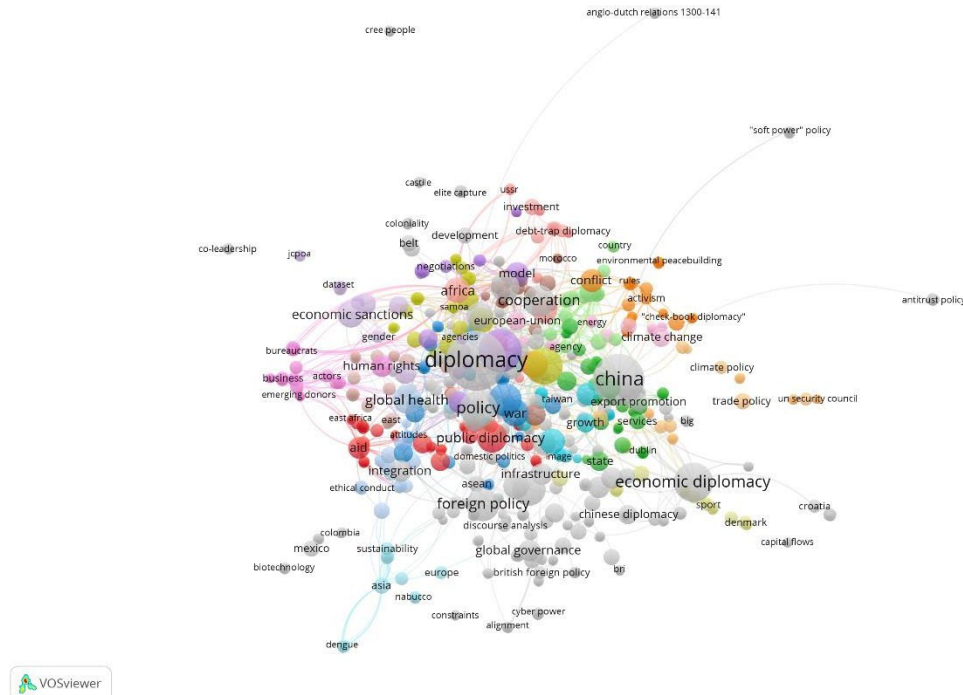


Figure 5. Overlay visualization--Keyword co-occurrence during the period 2011-2020

Source: Author's own computation using VosViewer.

In the last period (2021-2025), the trend has moved away from traditional, simple themes toward more modern and diverse topics, as illustrated by Figure 6. Words such as "digital diplomacy", "resilience," "COVID-19," "sustainable" and 'gender' reflect an increasing awareness of multidimensional problems and transversal issues. As indicated by the overlay visualization, these words have appeared not only recently but they appear at the center of the network; therefore, this suggests the discipline is evolving quickly in response to today's global environment. Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on terms such as "resilience" and "sustainability" is highly indicative of the connection between economic diplomacy and the larger sustainability/development debate. This transformation is illustrative of the discipline's response to the interrelated global crises of the early 2020s: COVID-19 and global supply chain disruptions.

The thematic evolution by time frame illustrates both the growth and diversity of economic diplomacy research. These two elements illustrate a movement toward a more comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to research in economic diplomacy in order to respond to the complexities of global governance.

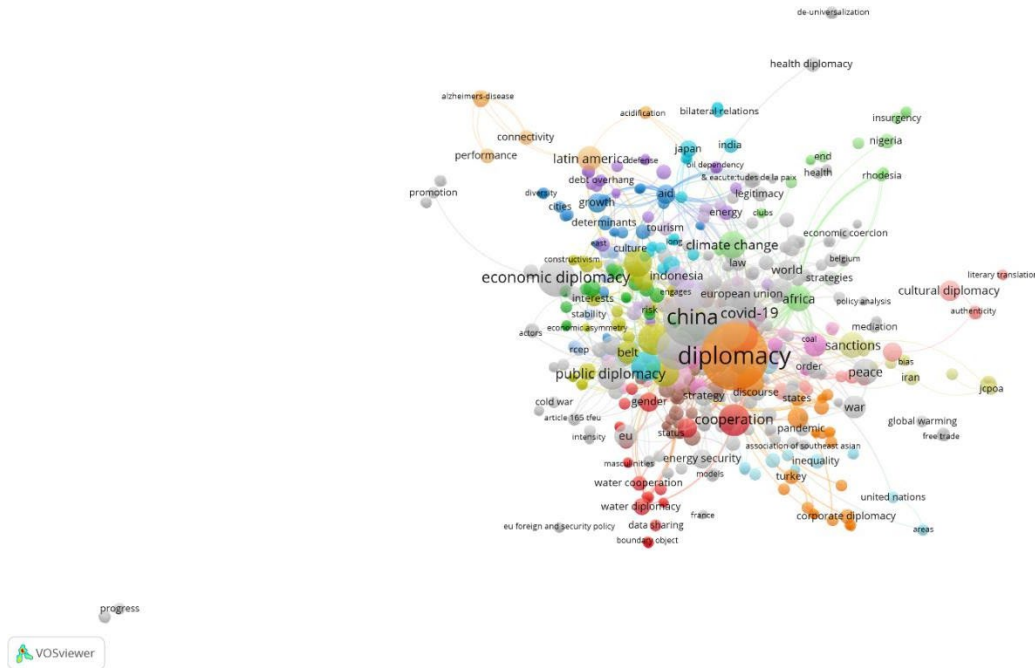


Figure 6. Overlay visualization--Keyword co-occurrence during the period 2011-2020

Source: Author's own computation using VosViewer.

The countries represented by the researchers who have made the greatest contributions to the field of Economic Diplomacy (as shown in Figure 7) is visible. Among those countries that have published the largest amount of literature on economic diplomacy from 2000-2025 are; England, USA and the Netherlands. England has a total of 78 publications which represents the largest body of work, followed closely by the USA at 75 and lastly but not least, the Netherlands at 33.

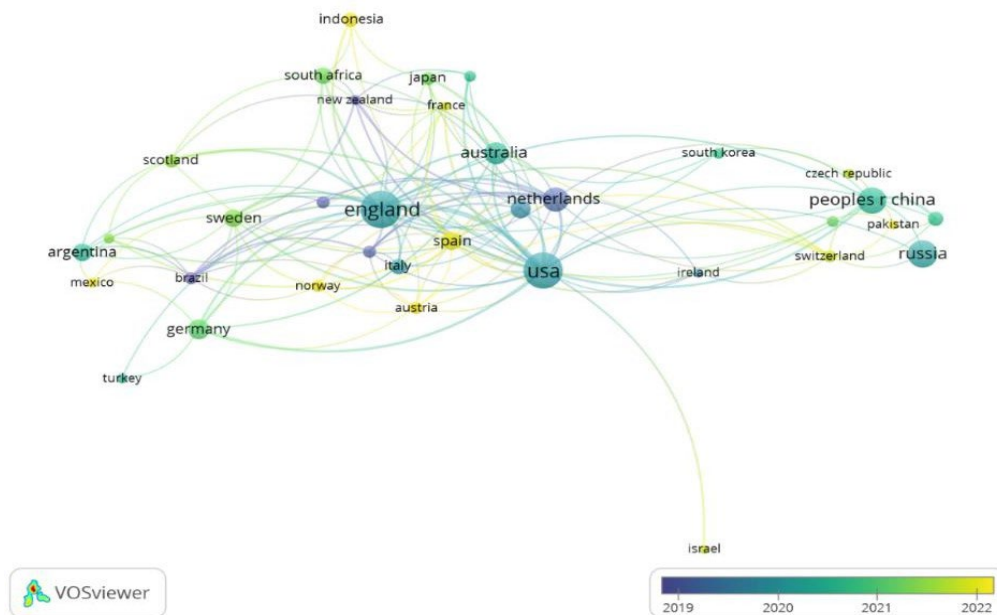


Figure 7. Overlay visualization-Co-authorship

Source: Author's own computation using VosViewer.

Conclusion

This study examined economic diplomacy research landscape by addressed four core research questions. A bibliometric analysis of high frequency key words provided the thematic core of the field with such terms as foreign policy, trade and global diplomacy. Business diplomacy was also found to be central to the field reflecting both new priorities and traditional concern. In addition, an analysis was performed on keyword occurrences over 3 time periods to provide comprehensive picture of trends in the research.

The countries from which most of the publications originate are those that have strong academic infrastructures and diplomatic traditions, such as united states, Great Britain and Canada. There is also growing contribution from emerging economies like China, Brazil and India. This shows wider engagement but dominance of Western research remains visible.

The study also showed that most articles are published in fields of political science international relations and economics. Journals and authors who have made influential contributions have shaped the conversation and produced widely cited work. Finally, several future research trends have been identified including the rise of non-state actors, digitalization of diplomacy and importance of sub national governments in international economic affairs.

Theoretical implications

The results suggest that there has been an increase in interdisciplinary approaches to understanding international relations. This trend is consistent with theoretical ideas about the nature of knowledge creation and the role of epistemological communities (Haas, 1992). The growth of multi-party diplomacy and overlap with other areas such as digital governance, trade law and global health are indicative of a transition towards "Mode 2" forms of knowledge production as described by Nowotny et al. (2001), i.e. knowledge produced through social distribution, and knowledge produced using trans-disciplinary approaches. The increasing number of business diplomats and sub-national actors participating in diplomatic processes indicate a movement away from traditional top-down models of diplomacy and toward decentralized networks of epistemic community.

The bibliographic mapping demonstrated how the area has developed into a clearly defined discipline for academia. These mappings show thematic groupings and emerging schools of thought within this discipline. This study calls for further integration of quantitative bibliographic techniques used in the study with qualitative methods including interviews, discourse analysis and case studies to better understand how economic diplomacy is practiced in different institutions, contexts and cultures.

In addition to making a conceptual distinction between economic diplomacy and related concepts such as economic statecraft and geoeconomic strategies; while all three concepts are based upon the strategic use of economic resources in foreign policy, economic diplomacy differs from both because it focuses primarily on dialogue, negotiations and cooperative relationships between governments or their representatives. Therefore, economic diplomacy can best be understood in conjunction with theories of soft power and global governance. Adding these conceptual distinctions to future bibliographic or discourse-oriented studies will improve the conceptual clarity of the field, thereby supporting efforts at theoretical synthesis across disciplines related to economic diplomacy.

Relevance for public policy

The research has significant potential for practical application by policy communities. Identifying the areas in which knowledge related to economic diplomacy is created will provide government agencies, international organizations, and think-tanks opportunities to identify the main centers of research activity and networking among policy actors. Policy actors in the Global South may benefit significantly from a more balanced research environment as they are currently represented at a very low level in the existing literature.

A new research environment with greater balance may allow for greater diversity in terms of perspectives regarding how diplomacy is used to manage trade disputes; investment flow; and global

economic instability. Policymakers can utilize the data driven analysis presented here to create national strategies that align more closely with the evolving nature of international economic diplomacy and build stronger intersectoral collaborations. As the discipline develops, it is expected that policy actors will support the development of multidisciplinary research and develop collaborative approaches to creating knowledge outside of the traditional diplomatic spheres.

Tools using scientometrics, such as co-authorship mapping and keyword clustering, may be useful in enabling real time monitoring of thematic changes; identifying emerging storylines; and measuring academic engagement in international discussions. Furthermore, encouraging participation by those who represent less than half of all regions globally, specifically those from the Global South, will enhance both the epistemological diversity of the field and the representation of plural world views and policies regarding global economic diplomacy.

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