

Mapping the Cross-Strait Studies as a Specific Research Field

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Abstract

Cross-strait relations encompass both political and security concerns and serve as a specialized research topic. Scholars approach the issue from various perspectives, and these analyses come not only from researchers in the core countries involved—China and Taiwan—and the United States (US), but also from experts worldwide. Research on cross-strait relations is rich in both analysis and prediction, extending beyond East Asia into broader international politics. What are the current research trends in cross-strait relations? Who studies them, and do scholars from certain countries bring unique topics or viewpoints? This study maps research on cross-strait relations using the Web of Science (WoS) database to identify and compare the dominant topics, scholars, and countries of affiliation. Through text, network, and sentiment analysis of bibliographic data, this study finds that cross-strait studies are not limited to the relations between Taiwan and China alone. Furthermore, the prevalence of Taiwanese scholars in this field suggests that much of the discourse reflects Taiwan's perspective on cross-strait issues.

Keywords: *cross-straits relations, cross-strait studies, research mapping*

1. Introduction

Cross-strait relations lie at the core of East Asia's security landscape, inheriting the legacies of both the Chinese Civil War and the Cold War. This relationship involves China, Taiwan, and the US and encompasses complex layers of identity, socio-cultural, and economic issues beyond high-level politics between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC). These complexities have led scholars from around the world—not just those from Taiwan, China, and the US—to examine cross-strait relations from diverse perspectives, making it both a case study and a unique field of research.

Three key facts distinguish cross-strait relations as a unique research field. *First*, on a practical level, both Beijing and Taipei have established government agencies dedicated to managing these relations. In Taiwan, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) was established in 1991, evolving from its predecessor, the Inter-Agency Mainland Affairs Committee, founded in 1987 (Mainland Affairs Council, 2017). Meanwhile, China has the Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council (TAOSC) (Taiwan Affairs Office, n.d.). The TAOSC was established in 1988, following the preceding agency, the People's Bureau of Unification (1955-1988). Both the MAC and the TAOSC have the function of researching cross-strait relations, particularly for policy recommendations. MAC's official function is "...responsible for comprehensive research, planning, review, and coordination of Mainland policies and affairs, as well as partial implementation of inter-ministerial programs." In comparison, the first duty of TAOSC is to "research and formulate the principles and policies for Taiwan work; implement the principles and policies for Taiwan work determined by the Party Central Committee and the State Council." Furthermore, the third duty is to "study situation in Taiwan and the development trends of cross-strait relations; coordinate relevant departments to study and draft Taiwan-related laws and regulations, and coordinate Taiwan-related legal affairs."

Second, numerous research institutions specialize in cross-strait relations and are not limited to Taiwan and China. Notable among these are the Centre of Cross-Straits Political and Economic Affairs at National Cheng Chi University, the

Research and Educational Centre for China Studies and Cross-Taiwan Strait Relations at National Taiwan University, the Cross-Strait Research Centre at Ming Chuan University in Taiwan, the Institute of Cross-Strait Development at Tsinghua University in China, and the Cross-Strait Relations program at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in the US. Many research institutions worldwide incorporate cross-strait studies within broader Taiwan Studies or East Asian Studies programs.

Third, scholars from diverse institutions and countries actively study cross-strait relations. According to the WoS database, there are 1,107 documents related to cross-strait relations, with the top categories being Area Studies (244 documents), International Relations (IR) (165 documents), and Political Science (145 documents). The Scopus database lists 1,206 documents on cross-strait issues, with 884 in Social Sciences, 126 in Economics, Econometrics, and Finance, and 121 in Arts and Humanities. Google Scholar lists 24,800 documents on cross-strait relations, reflecting the extensive scholarly interest and research output on this topic.

The study of cross-strait relations as a focus for state agencies, research centers, and scholars raises essential questions about the specific topics researchers are addressing, who they are and the countries with which they are affiliated. This study uses bibliometric, text, and sentiment analysis on documents from the WoS database to explore these questions. The main objective is to map the landscape of cross-strait relations research, focusing on documents within area studies, IR, and political science, and then compare the findings based on the researchers' country affiliations.

2. Research on Research: Studying Cross-Strait as a Research Field

Scholars examine cross-strait relations from a wide range of perspectives, leading to increasing specialization within the field. These relations are explored across disciplines such as East Asian studies, security studies, and more. Gunter Schubert defines a research field as “a delimited ‘space’ of scholarly inquiry and investigation concerning phenomena which are grouped as a result of common

sense-thinking or intentional connectedness” (Schubert et al., 2021). Regarding cross-strait relations as a distinct research field, he argues that:

“*Cross-strait studies* addresses different ‘flows’ between the mainland and Taiwan, including people (人流), commodities (物流), capital (金流), information (資訊流), technology (技術流), business (商流), and—as a generic term—culture (文化流). From a different perspective, ‘cross-strait studies’ highlights interaction in ‘social action fields’ (or ‘contact zones’) such as companies, industrial parks, residential compounds, or other settings in which mainland Chinese and Taiwanese (as businesspeople, employees, residents, spouses, students or just tourists) interact” (*ibid.*).

Building on this definition, Schubert contends that cross-strait relations encompass high politics (such as government-to-government interactions, typically studied within IR) and low politics. He suggests that the study of cross-strait relations should be viewed as *kuan’an* (跨岸) or “trans-strait” rather than *liang’an* (兩岸) or “cross-strait.” According to Schubert, this field is situated at the intersection of China and Taiwan Studies—both of which fall under *liang’an*. In this framework, Schubert highlights the transnational dimensions of cross-strait relations, moving beyond a state-centered approach typical of IR to embrace the broader socio-cultural and economic exchanges that shape these dynamics.

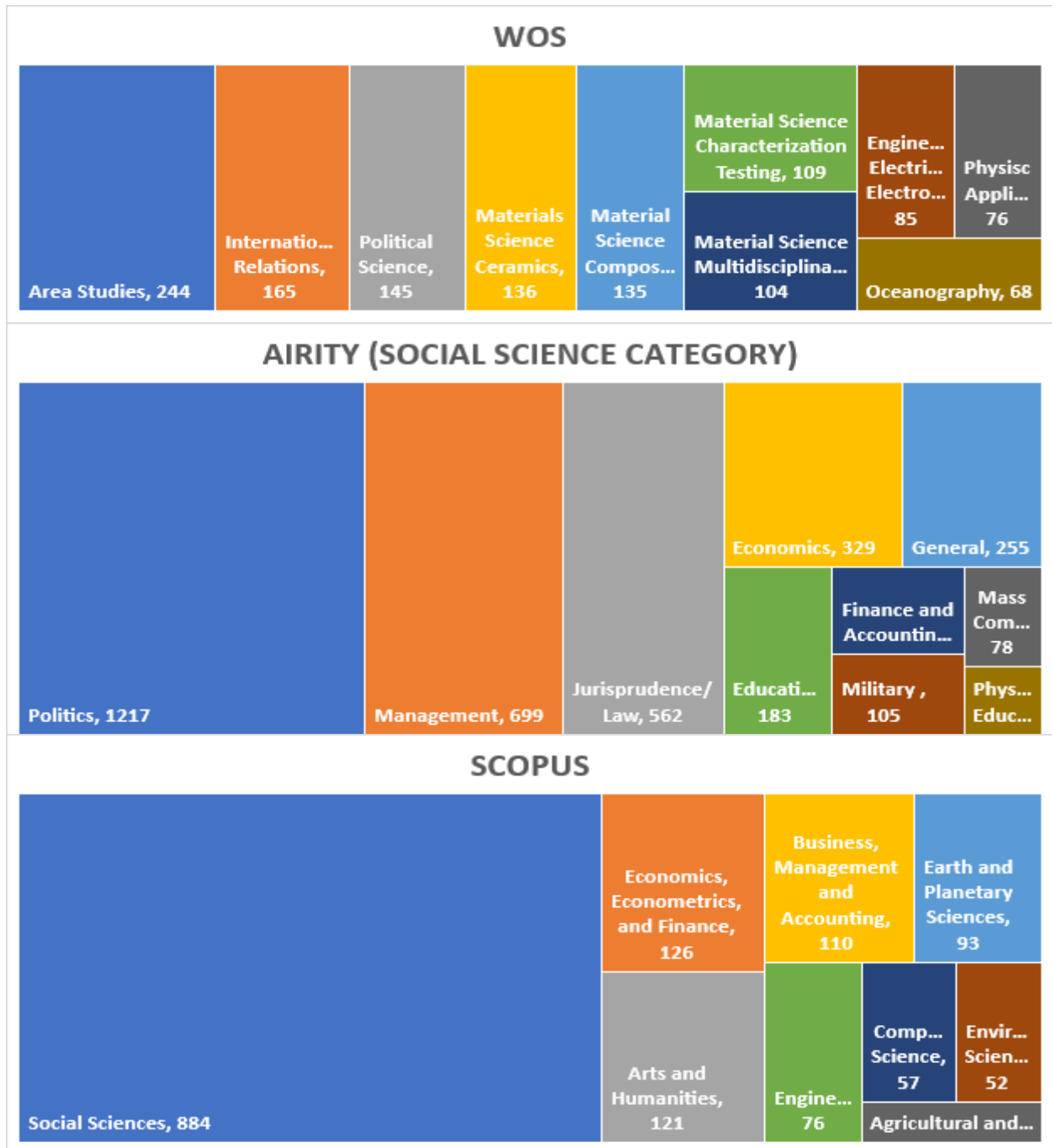
Schubert’s definition of cross-strait studies has sparked responses from other scholars. Shelley Rigger notes that in Schubert’s definition, the term *an*, meaning “side,” may unintentionally suggest a focus on unification. She argues, “Work on cross-strait relations—both *liang’an* and *kuan’an*—is infused with the notion that Taiwan’s unification with mainland China is the expected (inevitable?) outcome, and the absence of unification is the aberration that needs to be explained. Even people who do not favor unification sometimes argue in this way” (Schubert et al., 2021: 17). Beatrice Zani adds that Schubert’s use of *kua* for transnationalism would be more explicit if framed within a multidisciplinary and transnational perspective rather than confined to a “trans-strait versus cross-strait” approach (Schubert et al., 2021: 175). Additionally, Syaru Shirley Lin and Ching-Jou Jay Chen support Schubert’s perspective. Lin emphasizes that his definition broadens cross-

strait studies with a transnational and multidisciplinary outlook, while Chen highlights its value in focusing on people-to-people relations within cross-strait studies. Some scholars implicitly frame cross-strait relations as a distinct research field. Chun-Yi Lee, for instance, describes cross-strait studies as encompassing both top-down and bottom-up mechanisms within Taiwan Strait relations (Lee, 2013). Top-down analyses of state-to-state relations dominate the field, such as the dynamics between China, the US, and Taiwan. However, it also includes bottom-up studies that examine people-to-people connections, like those among businesspeople and migrants, which add a more grassroots perspective to cross-strait research.

While scholars may disagree on defining cross-strait studies as a distinct research field, their differing perspectives highlight a shared understanding. Cross-strait studies form a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary field focusing on Taiwan Strait relations. This field encompasses high politics—such as IR—and “trans-strait” relations, incorporating low politics and people-to-people ties, thereby including both state-level and grassroots perspectives. The predominance of social sciences, especially in Area Studies, IR, and Political Science, underscores the influence of top-down approaches, which Chun-Yi Lee (2013) describes as central to this area. Schubert's concept of *liang'an* also aligns with this view of state-centric analysis.

Data from critical databases reflect the field's focus. In the WoS, research on cross-strait relations is primarily concentrated in Area Studies, IR, and Political Science.¹ Scopus houses 1,206 cross-strait-related documents, with 884 in Social Science and additional research distributed across Economics, Finance, and the Arts and Humanities.² Taiwan's Airity Library database features 4,527 papers, with 1,167 categorized in Humanities and 3,382 in Social Science; notably, 1,218 in Political Science, 563 in Law, and 105 in Military Studies.³ Among those documents, 1,167 are categorized as Humanities, and 3,382 are under Social Science. In the Social Science category of the Airity Library, 1,218 documents are about Political Science, whereas 563 documents are about Jurisprudence or Law, and 105 are about the military. These databases collectively reveal the dominance of high politics in cross-strait research. Figure 1 summarizes cross-strait research categorizations across the WoS, Airity Library, and Scopus.

Figure 1. Cross-strait-related research categories across WoS, Airity Library, and Scopus.



The substantial number of research documents on cross-strait relations reinforces its recognition as a distinct research field. The availability of databases containing cross-strait research documents presents a valuable opportunity to analyze the development of this area of study. In other words, these databases serve as crucial tools for examining the evolution of research topics related to cross-strait relations.

Conducting research on existing scholarly works, often referred to as research on research (RoR), is not a new practice in IR. Several IR scholars have previously surveyed publications on specific topics to elucidate research trends. For instance, in 1977, William J. Dixon mapped the use of quantitative methods in IR articles published in *International Organization* from the 1960s to 1975 (Dixon, 1977). Similarly, Ali E. Hillal Dessouki and Bahgat Korany analyzed trends and approaches in emerging literature on foreign policy, identifying domestic sources, social change, modernization, and political economy as dominant themes (Dessouki & Korany, 1984). In 2002, David Shambaugh examined the research conducted by think tanks on China to chart the development of China studies within the field of IR (Shambaugh, 2002). He continued this work in 2011, mapping the research trends in China studies to identify both opportunities and challenges for further development in this research domain (Shambaugh, 2011).

Other scholars have conducted literature surveys to trace the evolution of specific concepts within IR. For example, Detlef Nolte examines the definition of regional power across various IR literature (Nolte, 2010). Similarly, Nazli Choucri and Robert Reardon explore information technology and cyberspace trends in IR and Political Science from 2001 to 2010 (Reardon & Choucri, 2012). In a survey of over twenty thousand articles published in 20 American IR journals, Peter M. Kristensen and Dustin Tingley found that the field of IR is divided into several divisions, with theories at the center of this scholarly discourse (Kristensen, 2012). Joshua D. Kertzer and Dustin Tingley, in their analysis of *International Studies Quarterly*, identified six critical developments in the study of psychology within IR, highlighting the integration of elite and mass political behavior studies with international political economy (Kertzer & Tingley, 2018). Additionally, Frank Havemann's survey revealed a core-periphery relationship structure in the literature and references within the field of IR (Havemann, 2021).

Aligned with the RoR concept, this study surveys existing literature on cross-strait relations and aims to map trends within this research field. Additionally, it seeks to identify and compare the dominant research topics in cross-strait studies based on scholars' country affiliations. This approach provides a comprehensive overview of topics and authors, highlighting prevalent issues that attract scholars from specific countries, such as Taiwan, China, the US, and others. The identified dominant topics may reflect the key issues or focal points driving scholarly interest in cross-strait relations within these nations.

3. Method

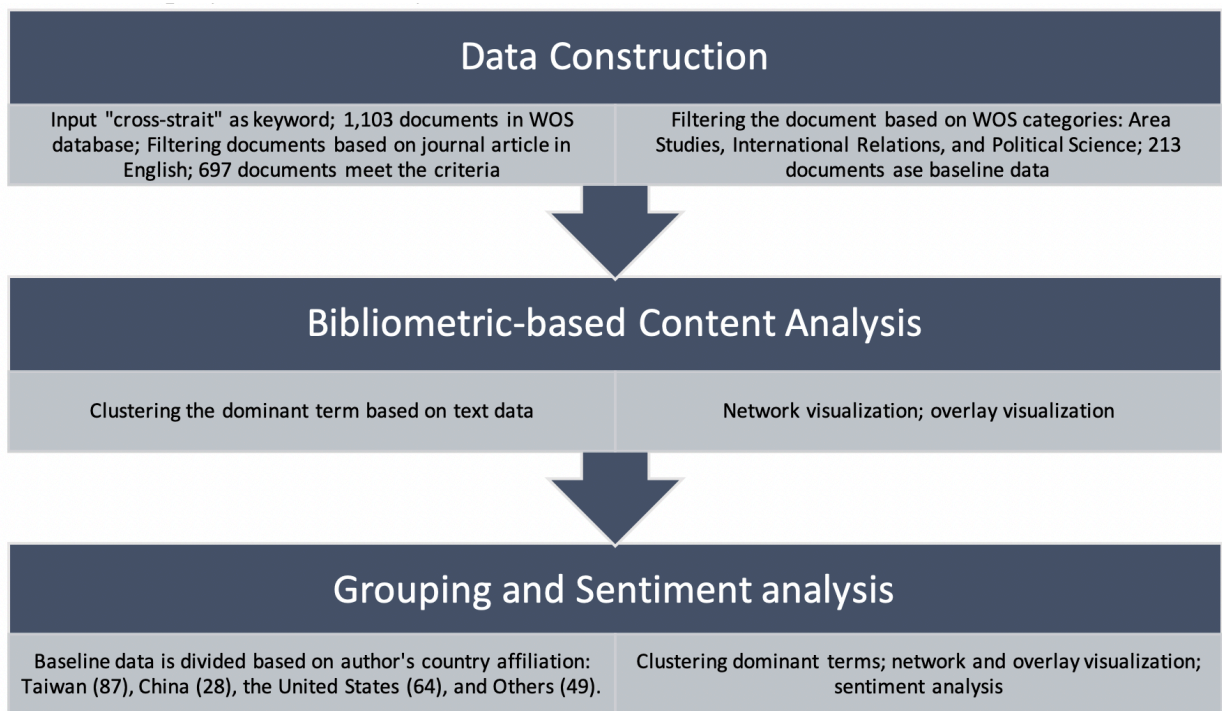
This study aims to map scholarly discussions on cross-strait relations as recorded in the WoS database. It selects the WoS database, with a specific categorization of Area Studies, IR, and Political Science as the object of study. Out of 1,103 documents on this topic, the mapping focused on journal articles published in English within the specified categories, resulting in 213 relevant documents for analysis. These documents were classified into four groups based on the authors' country affiliations: 87 papers were authored by scholars affiliated with Taiwan, 64 by scholars from the US, 28 by scholars from China, and 49 by authors from other countries.

This study utilized the Vos Viewer program for text clustering and network analysis within each group, yielding clusters of dominant terms and a network map. Additionally, sentiment analysis assessed the sentiments and emotions expressed in each group's texts—the final step involved comparing the results across the different groups. Figure 2 illustrates the research methods employed in this study.

The bibliometric analysis in this study involves three key steps. *First*, Vos Viewer identifies the number of terms within the group of documents based on their titles and abstracts. *Second*, a minimum occurrence threshold is set for each term to determine how many terms meet this criterion. *Finally*, Vos Viewer processes the qualifying terms, selecting only 60 percent of them as a default

measure to identify the most relevant terms. These steps were applied to the documents in each category. Results are presented in Table 1.

Figure 2. Research process in mapping cross-strait research in WOS database



In the Taiwan group, which consists of 87 papers, Vos Viewer identified 3,929 terms. After applying a minimum occurrence threshold of ten, 98 terms met the criterion. Using the default measurement of 60 percent, Vos Viewer determined that 59 terms were the most relevant. A similar process was applied to the other groups, yielding 47, 59, and 48 relevant terms for China, the United States, and other countries, respectively. Finally, sentiment and emotion analyses were performed for each group using the RStudio program.

Table 1. Results of the text analysis for term clustering and network analysis

Data	Number of documents	Number of terms*	Minimum number of occurrences of a term**	Terms meet the threshold***	Most relevant terms****
Baseline	213	3929	10	98	59
Taiwan	87	1777	5	95	57
China	28	728	3	78	47
United States	64	1332	4	99	59
Others	49	1312	4	80	48

Note: *all the specific terms in documents, **how many times a term occurred, *** the number of the term that occurred based on the minimum number that has been set in the previous step, ****VosViewer default process 60% of the words are the most relevant terms.

4. Results

The trend in cross-strait research within the WoS database shows significant fluctuations in document counts over the years. The first entries appeared in 1991, comprising just two papers. From 1991 to 2007, the annual number of documents varied but did not exceed seven per year. The peak year was 2017, with 17 documents published, followed closely by 2010, which saw 15 documents. Overall, the total number of cross-strait research documents in the WoS database has never surpassed 20 per year between 1991 and 2022. Figure 3 illustrates these fluctuations in the number of cross-strait research documents recorded in the WoS database.

The bibliometric analysis indicates that scholars from twenty countries are engaged in discussions about cross-strait relations, with the primary contributions coming from Taiwan, the US, and China. Figure 4 illustrates the affiliations of the top ten authors involved in this research. Additionally, Figure 5 presents an overlay visualization of cross-strait-related research trends. In 2008, discussions focused on Taiwan and China's policies regarding economic ties across the strait. By 2010, concerns emerged about agreements related to unification and the future of cross-strait relations. The role of the US, particularly concerning the Taiwan

Relations Act and Taiwan's status quo, became a central topic in 2012. In 2014, scholars examined domestic politics in Taiwan, its impact on cross-strait relations, along with the broader implications of these relations. In 2016, the policies and strategies of Tsai Ing-wen took center stage in scholarly debates about cross-strait relations.

Figure 3. Number of cross-strait research documents in the WoS database

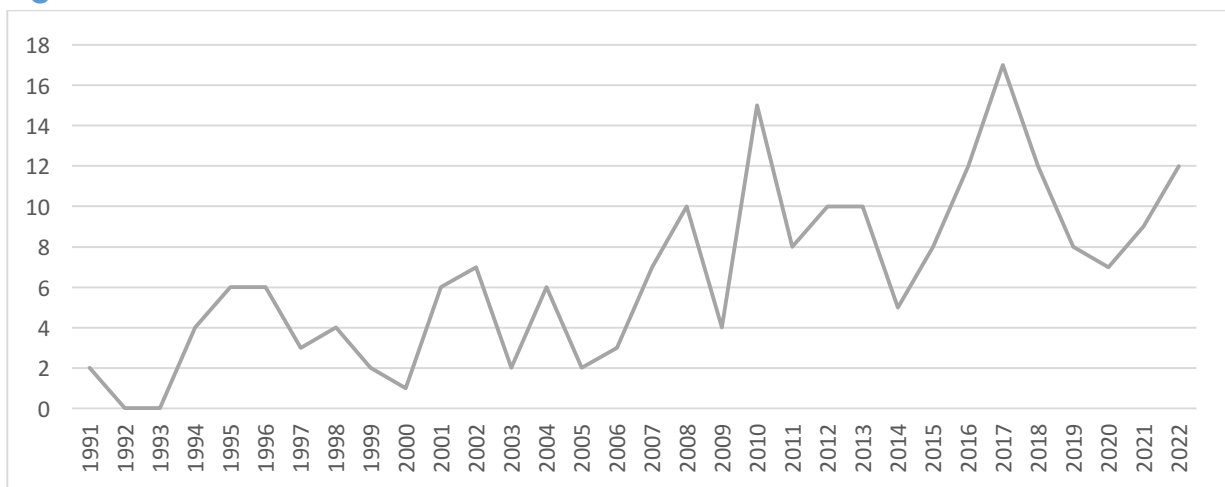


Figure 4. Top 10 authors' affiliation countries on the cross-strait-related research

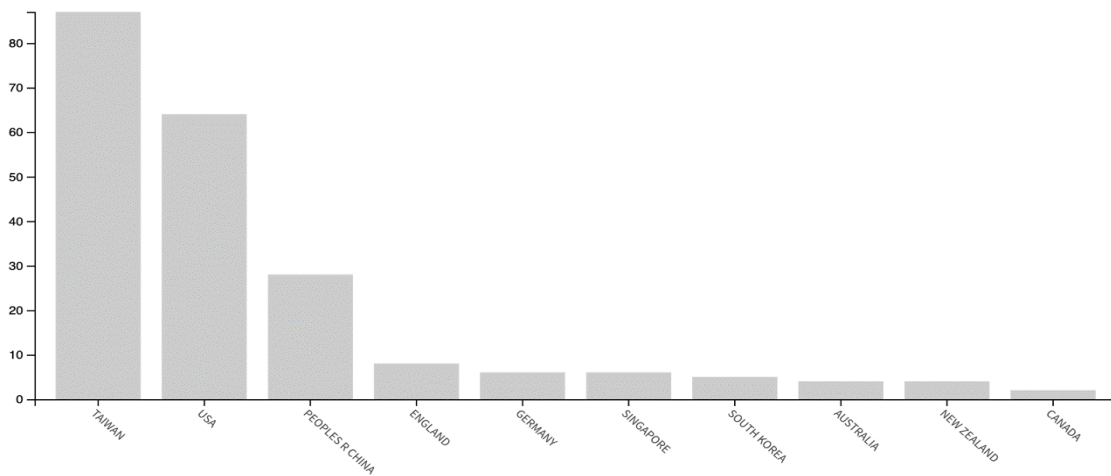
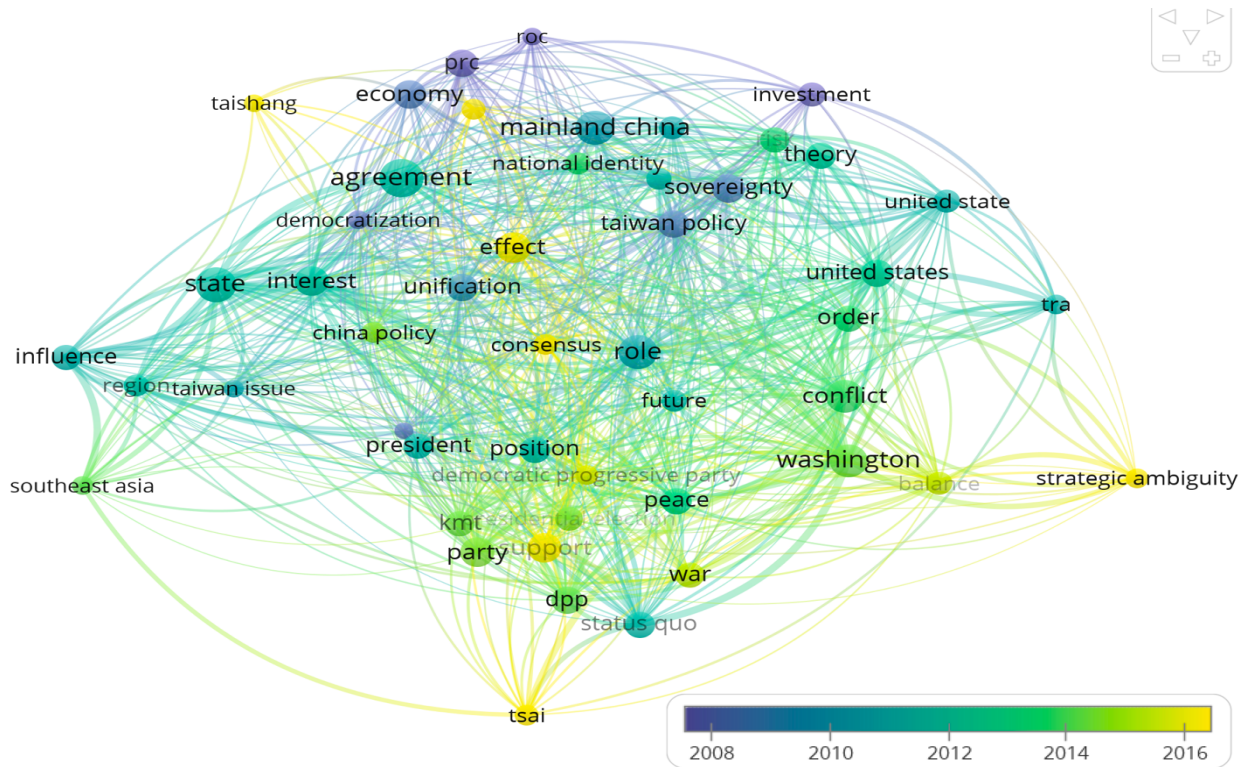


Figure 5. Overlay visualization of the cross-strait related research



The content analysis of research on cross-strait relations reveals three key points. *First*, scholars affiliated with Taiwan lead the discussion in terms of volume. This group often focuses on Taiwan-specific issues, particularly domestic politics, such as the ruling party, presidential elections, and democratic processes. *Second*, there is a notable emphasis on the significant influence of the US in shaping cross-strait relations, with many scholars arguing that the future of these relations is mainly contingent on US policies. *Third*, while cross-strait relations primarily involve China and Taiwan, they also have broader implications for regional security. Scholars explore how the Taiwan Strait affects other regions, especially Southeast Asia, indicating that cross-strait relations are considered interregional issues of significant concern for Southeast Asia rather than being confined to Northeast Asia alone.

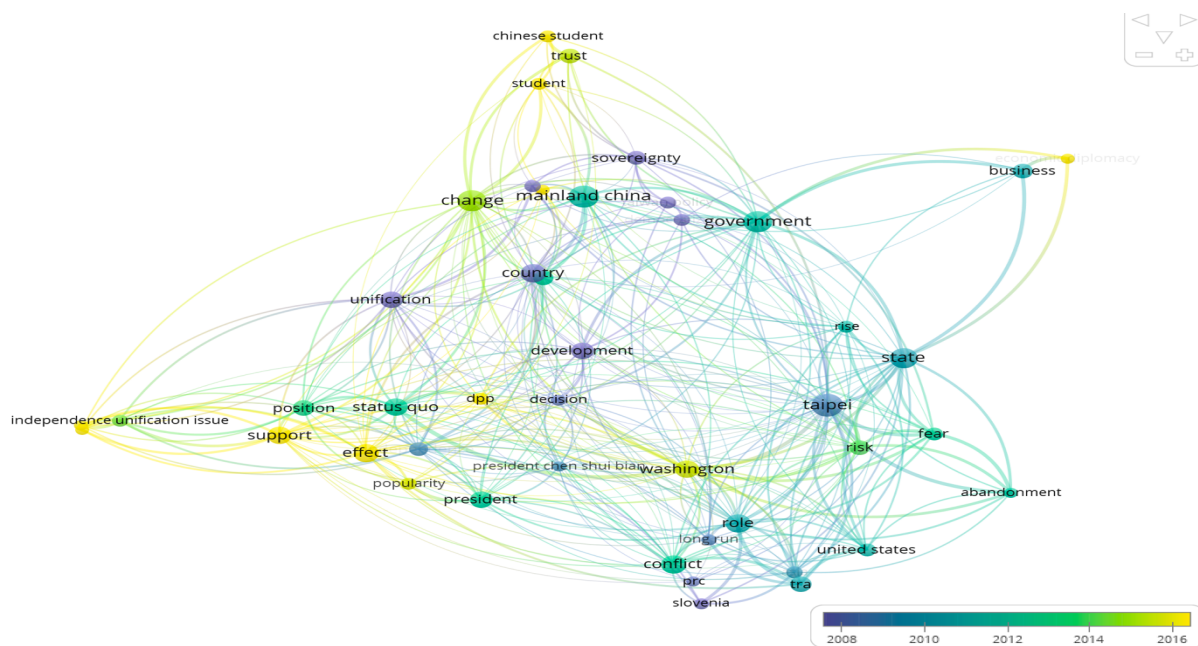
4.1 Taiwanese scholars' perspective: From national identity to economic diplomacy

Analyzing cross-strait research documents authored by Taiwanese scholars reveals six distinct clusters of terms (see Table 2). The first cluster focuses on democratization, national identity, sovereignty, and unification themes. Scholars explore the evolution of Taiwan's identity and its implications for cross-strait relations (Chu, 2004), the multidimensional and evolving nature of this identity (Chen, 2012), and how social interactions, such as those of Taiwanese students studying in mainland China, influence national identity (Wang, 2020). The second cluster addresses issues surrounding independence versus unification and the president's popularity. Researchers examine how generational differences shape attitudes toward independence and unification (Huang, 2019) and investigate individual perspectives on independence (Tsai et al., 2019), along with discussions of presidential elections (Chen, 2013; Wang & Cheng, 2015).

The third cluster examines the influence of the US and China on cross-strait relations. Scholars investigate various aspects, including the coercive tactics employed by the PRC and public resistance to these actions (Chong et al., 2023), Chinese public opinion regarding cross-strait relations (Pan et al., 2017), and the nature of US strategic ambiguity or clarity in its approach to cross-strait relations (Hsu, 2010b). Additionally, researchers explore US public opinion on cross-strait matters (Pan, 2023). In the fourth cluster, scholars focus on specific events and their implications for cross-strait relations, such as the impact of the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) electoral victory (Chung-Min, 2019; C.-M. Tsai, 2018), the experiences of Chen Shui-bian during his presidency in managing cross-strait relations (Hsu, 2010a), and the evolving issue of status quo (Lin, 2004). The fifth cluster addresses the risks inherent in cross-strait relations, including efforts to build trust between China and Taiwan (Liao, 2012) and the security dilemmas arising from the US-Taiwan alliance (Chen, 2012). Lastly, the sixth cluster delves into economic diplomacy between China and Taiwan. Research within this cluster explores the role of businesses in Taiwan's economic diplomacy (Liaw, 2016), the influence of media capital in Taiwan (Lin & Lee, 2017), and economic interactions across the Taiwan Strait (Leng, 1995).

Table 2. Clusters of dominant terms in cross-strait-related research by Taiwanese scholars

Cluster	Terms
1	Change, Chinese student, country, democratization, mainland China, nation, national identity, sovereignty, student, Taiwan policy, Taiwanese, trust, unification
2	Effect, independence, independence unification, individual attitude, personality trait, popularity, position, president, support
3	Asia, conflict, long run, PRC, role, Slovenia, TRA, United States
4	Decision, development, DPP, President Chen Shui Bian, status quo, Washington
5	Abandonment, fear, risk, Taipei
6	Business, economic diplomacy, government, state

Figure 6. Overlay visualization of the cross-strait related research by Taiwanese scholars

Scholars from Taiwan approach cross-strait relations primarily through the lens of domestic politics. The unification versus sovereignty debate became a significant concern for Taiwanese researchers in 2008. By 2010, their focus shifted

to the triangular relationship among China, the US, and Taiwan. In 2012, the challenges and risks associated with Taiwan's status quo position were central themes in their discussions. In 2014, attention turned to Taiwan's political changes and public trust in the government. Finally, in 2016, Taiwanese scholars concentrated on the DPP policies, economic diplomacy, and their implications for cross-strait relations.

4.2 US scholars' perspective: From TRA to potential war

Like their Taiwanese counterparts, US scholars also analyze cross-strait relations through six distinct clusters. The first cluster focuses on Taiwan's domestic politics, addressing issues such as competing narratives of nationalism (He, 2010), the presidential election competition (Hickey & Niou, 2016), the impact of these elections on national identity (Chung-Min, 2019), and the Sunflower movement (Chen & Yen, 2017). The second cluster centers on China, exploring topics like the framework of the One China Policy (Lin, 2022), China's approach to Japan-Taiwan relations (Liff, 2022), and the myth of consensus surrounding the One China Policy principle (Liff & Lin, 2022). The third cluster examines the DPP policies regarding cross-strait relations and identity issues. Scholars in this cluster discuss the state of cross-strait relations under the DPP since 2016 (Hsieh, 2017), its effects on national identity (Li & Zhang, 2017), Taiwanese view on China and the world (Gries & Su, 2013), and the development of Taiwanese consciousness in nation-building (Lynch, 2004).

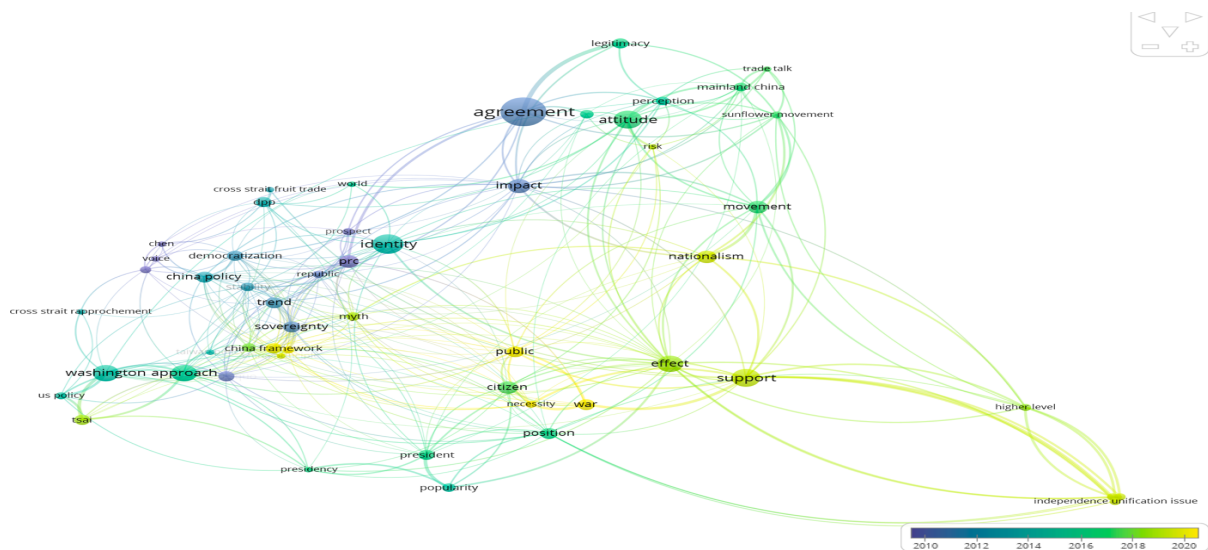
The fourth cluster addresses Taiwan's status quo and US policies concerning cross-strait relations. Key topics include preferences for maintaining the status quo (Huang & James, 2014) and its influence on voter behavior (Hsieh, 2020), the tension in the Taiwan Strait (Roy, 2000), and the impact of presidential popularity on political dynamics (T. Y. Wang & Cheng, 2015). The fifth cluster focuses on the independence versus unification debate related to individual political behavior in Taiwan. Scholars explore individual traits and attitudes toward this issue (Tsai et al., 2019), competing identities associated with independence and unification (Wang & Liu, 2004), and the prospects for Taiwan to maintain autonomy in the

face of pressure from China (Roy, 2017). Finally, the last cluster examines public support for policies and the potential for conflict (Yeh & Wu, 2021).

Table 3. Clusters of dominant terms in cross-strait-related research by US scholars

Cluster	Terms
1	Agreement, attitude, impact, legitimacy, mainland China, movement, nationalism, perception, presidential election, risk, sunflower movement, trade talk
2	China framework, China principle, consensus, Japan, myth, PRC, prospect, sovereignty, Taiwan policy
3	China policy, cross-strait fruit trade, cross-strait rapprochement, democratization, DPP, identity, President Chen Shui Bian, stability, voice
4	Approach, popularity, position, presidency, status quo, Tsai, US policy, Washington
5	Effect, independence unification, individual attitude, personality trait
6	Citizen, public, support, war

Figure 7. Overlay visualization of the cross-strait related research by the US scholars



In their 2010 works on cross-strait relations, US scholars examined the US commitment to assist or protect Taiwan. From 2012 to 2016, the dominant topics shifted to Taiwan's national identity, China's policy, and economic ties across the Taiwan Strait. In 2018, discussions centered on Tsai Ing-wen's policies and how Taiwanese people perceive cross-strait relations. By 2020, US scholars were increasingly concerned with public attitudes regarding the potential for conflict.

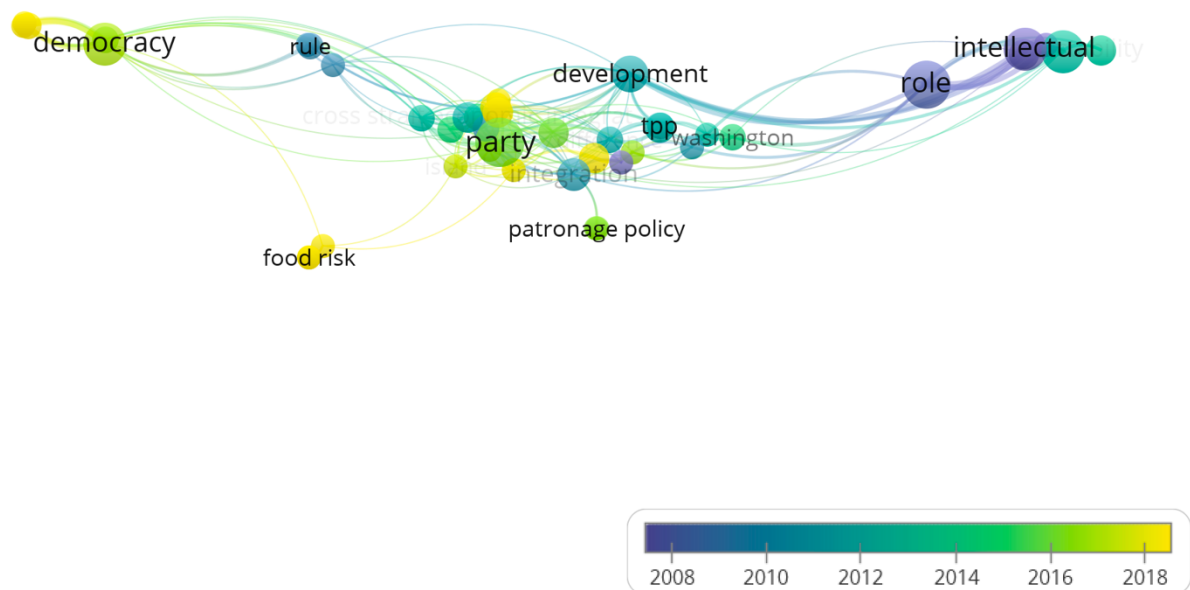
4.3 Chinese scholars' perspective: From economic integration to food risk

Although only 28 documents were authored by Chinese scholars, their discussions of cross-strait relations tend to focus more on economic integration than Taiwanese and US scholars. Their research reveals seven distinct clusters. The first cluster examines economic relations and the role of business in cross-strait dynamics (Huang, 12 C.E.; Keng & Schubert, 2010; Lin & Zhou, 2018). The second cluster addresses Taiwan's domestic politics, particularly the competition between the DPP and the Kuomintang (KMT) (Lin, 2016; G. Lin & Wu, 2017; Zhuo, 2018). The third cluster deals with economic issues (Lin & Wu, 2017; Wai, 2010; Zheng, 2021). In the fourth cluster, scholars investigate the role of nationalist movements in maintaining stability and the potential for conflict (Hao, 2005; Hu, 2018; You & Hao, 2018; Zheng, 2021). The fifth cluster centers on trade relations, including discussions about trade policy liberalization (Chen & Li, 2018). The sixth cluster explores the development of laws and regulations concerning cross-strait interactions (Chen et al., 2010). Lastly, the seventh cluster addresses food safety issues related to cross-strait relations (Kan & Yuen, 2018).

From 2008 to 2010, the dominant topics among Chinese scholars revolved around economic cooperation, trade relations, and developmental perspectives. Between 2012 and 2016, there was a noticeable shift in focus, with scholars increasingly interested in Taiwan's domestic politics and its implications for the stability of cross-strait relations. In 2018, discussions also emerged concerning food safety risks associated with cross-strait interactions.

Table 4. Clusters of dominant terms in cross-strait-related research by Chinese scholars

Cluster	Terms
1	Difference, ECFA, future cross-strait relations, integration, obstacle, patronage policy, Taiwanese business, TPP, United States, Washington
2	Chinese mainland, convergence, DPP, KMT, party, perspective, US Taiwan policy, world order
3	Class group, cross-strait economic integration, developmentalism, economic integration, economic policy, functionalism
4	Intellectual, nationalist movement, peace, role, stability, war
5	Country, democracy, trade facilitation, trade openness, trade policy
6	Development, government, law, rule
7	Food risk, risk, state

Figure 8. Overlay visualization of the cross-strait related research by Chinese scholars

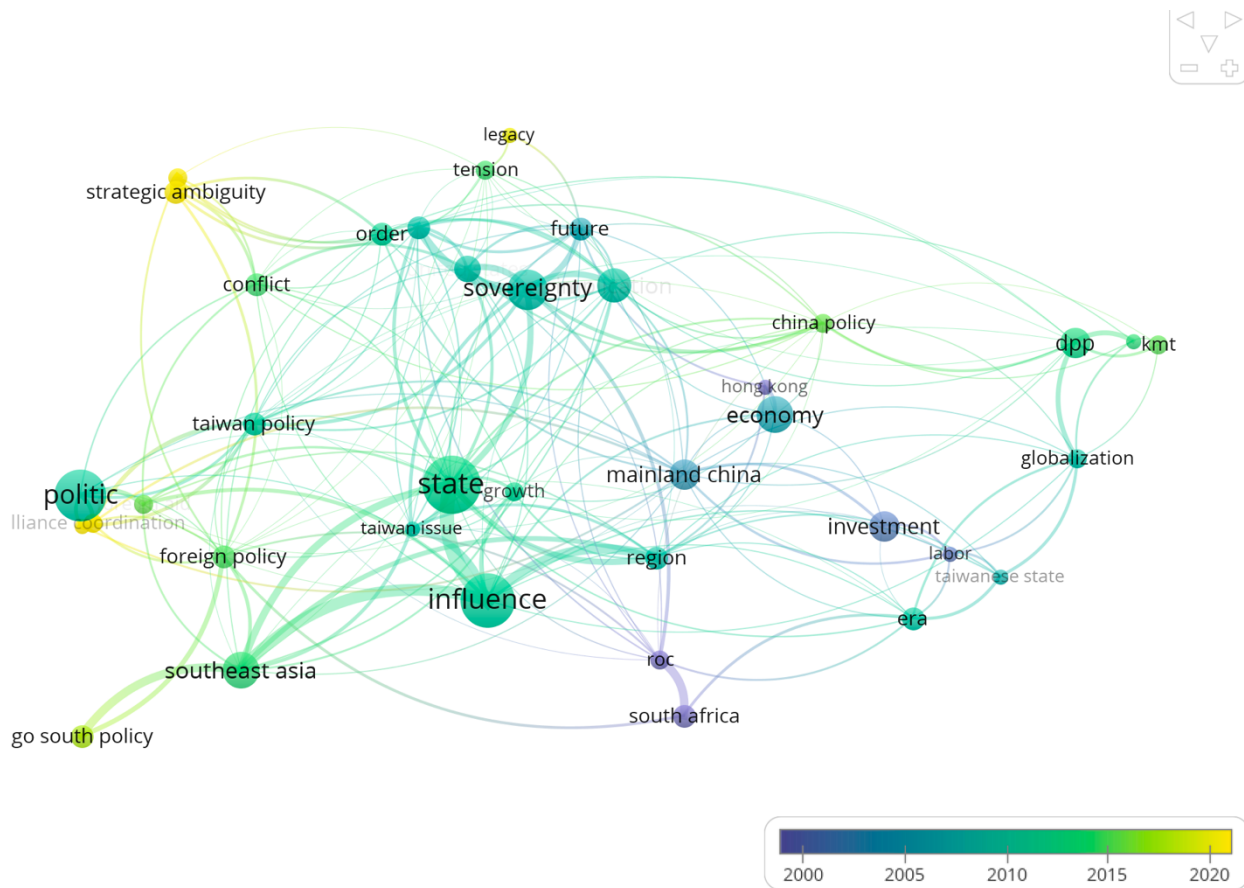
4.4 Other scholars' perspective

Scholars from countries other than Taiwan, the US, and China have organized their discussions on cross-strait relations into five clusters. The first cluster examines the future implications of the situation in the Taiwan Strait, focusing on the role of the US in this context. Key topics include the rise of new nationalism in China and its impact on cross-strait relations (Zheng & Fook, 2007), Washington's strategic ambiguity during the Trump administration regarding China-Taiwan relations (Boon & Sworn, 2020), and the potential for a crisis in the Taiwan Strait (Campbell & Mitchell, 2001). The second cluster centers on Taiwan's domestic politics, particularly the competition between the DPP and the KMT during presidential elections (Choi, 2015; Qi, 2013; Sullivan, 2013; Tsang, 2012). The third cluster focuses on economic relations, discussing aspects such as the characteristics of China-Taiwan economic ties (Fuller, 2008), Beijing's economic coercion (Cheng, 2021), and the opportunities for Taipei to engage in regional economic integration (Young, 2014). While in the fourth cluster, scholars discuss the alliance between the US and Taiwan and Taiwan's specific policy in the South China Sea and economic diplomacy (Nordhaug, 2001; Tubilewicz, 2016; Ye, 2022). Finally, the fifth cluster addresses Taiwan's foreign policy, especially concerning Southeast Asia (Bing, 2016).

Table 5. Clusters of dominant terms in cross-strait-related research by other scholars

Cluster	Terms
1	Conflict, future, implication, legacy, order, sovereignty, strategic ambiguity, tension, trump, United States, Washington
2	China policy, DPP, globalization, investment, KMT, labor, mainland China, presidential election, Taiwanese state
3	Economy, growth, Hong Kong, influence, region, state, Taiwan issue
4	Alliance coordination, Biden, foreign aid, politics, Taiwan policy
5	Foreign policy, Go South policy, ROC, Southeast Asia

Figure 9. Overlay visualization of the cross-strait related research by the other scholars



In the 2000s, scholars focused on Taiwan's economy and investment strategies. Between 2005 and 2015, discussions shifted to encompass Taiwan's domestic politics, the tensions with China, and China's policies regarding cross-strait relations. From 2015 to 2020, the emphasis was on the US-Taiwan alliance and Taiwan's relationships with Southeast Asia.

5. Comparing Scholars' Perspectives on the Cross-Strait Relations

5.1 Comparing the dominant term

When analyzing cross-strait relations, scholars from different countries exhibit similarities and differences in their focus areas. Common themes include concerns about domestic politics in Taiwan, cross-strait economic relations, and US policies regarding these dynamics. However, each group tends to concentrate on specific topics that are less emphasized by others. Taiwanese scholars often explore issues related to national identity, reflecting the island's unique political context. In contrast, US scholars tend to examine China's principles and public perceptions regarding the potential for conflict. Chinese scholars primarily approach cross-strait relations from an economic perspective, investigating topics such as the role of intellectuals and food security risks. Meanwhile, scholars from other countries frequently discuss regional implications, particularly how cross-strait relations influence Southeast Asia. This divergence in focus underscores the varied lenses through which cross-strait relations are studied across different national contexts.

The comparison of dominant terms in the literature on cross-strait relations reveals three key points. *First*, Taiwan emerges as the focal point of study in terms of the number of documents and the specific topics addressed. Scholars are particularly interested in the presidential elections, competition, and policies of the DPP and the KMT concerning cross-strait issues. This emphasis highlights Taiwan's central role in cross-strait dynamics. While one might argue that China and the US exert significant influence through their military and economic power, their positions on cross-strait relations are relatively stable. China adheres to the One China principle, with unification as the primary goal of its Taiwan policy. Conversely, the US consistently supports Taiwan's status quo, taking necessary actions if China employs military force in the strait. In contrast, Taiwan's approach to cross-strait relations is heavily influenced by its domestic politics, with the KMT and DPP adopting differing policies. Consequently, scholars conclude that Taiwan's domestic political landscape significantly shapes the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

Second, the US remains a critical player in cross-strait relations. While the relationship between China and Taiwan is unique, it is profoundly influenced by US-China and US-Taiwan dynamics. Although the US has a solid and consistent commitment to Taiwan, its policies vary depending on which political party is in power. The Republicans and Democrats have distinct approaches to cross-strait relations, indicating that US domestic politics also impact this area.

Third, the topics raised by scholars from specific countries reflect their unique perspectives. For instance, national identity has become a significant focus for Taiwanese scholars, highlighting its importance in Taiwan's domestic politics, especially in determining election outcomes and cross-strait policies. In the US, scholars are concerned with citizens' perceptions of war, which may reflect democratic values centered on individual rights; war remains a pressing issue in Washington. Chinese scholars tend to prioritize economic discussions, reflecting Beijing's perspective that emphasizes economic relations while asserting that political integration is both necessary and a non-negotiable principle. Additionally, scholars from other countries view cross-strait relations as extending beyond the tripartite relationship between China, Taiwan, and the US. They argue that these relations also have regional and global implications, particularly regarding Southeast Asia, as developments in the Taiwan Strait can significantly affect regional security.

Table 6. Clusters of dominant terms in all categories

Group	Clusters						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
All	Democratic Progressive Party, DPP, future, KMT, party, position, president, President Chen Shui Bian, presidential election, status quo, support, Tsai	Balance, conflict, order, peace, role, strategic ambiguity, TRA, United States, war, Washington	Consensus, democracy, economy, effect, investment, mainland China, national identity, rise, risk, taishang, theory	Agreement, China policy, democratization, perception, PRC, ROC, sovereignty, Taiwan policy, unification	Influence, interest, region, southeast Asia, state, Taiwan issue		

Table 6 (continued). Clusters of dominant terms in all categories

Group	Clusters						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Taiwan	Change, Chinese student, country, democratization, mainland China, nation, national identity, sovereignty, student, Taiwan policy, Taiwanese, trust, unification	Effect, independence, independence unification, individual attitude, personality trait, popularity, position, president, support	Asia, conflict, long run, PRC, role, Slovenia, TRA, United States	Decision, development, DPP, President Chen Shui Bian, status quo, Washington	Abandonment, fear, risk, Taipei	Business, economic diplomacy, government, state	
US	Agreement, attitude, impact, legitimacy, mainland China, movement, nationalism, perception, presidential election, risk, sunflower movement, trade talk	China framework, China principle, consensus, Japan, myth, PRC, prospect, sovereignty, Taiwan policy	China policy, cross-strait fruit trade, cross-strait rapprochement, democratization, DPP, identity, President Chen Shui Bian, stability, voice	Approach, popularity, position, presidency, status quo, Tsai, US policy, Washington	Effect, independence unification, individual attitude, personality trait	Citizen, public, support, war	
China	Difference, ECFA, future cross-strait relations, integration, obstacle, patronage policy, Taiwanese business, TPP, United States, Washington	Chinese mainland, convergence, DPP, KMT, party, perspective, US Taiwan policy, world order	Class group, cross-strait economic integration, developmentalism, economic integration, economic policy, functionalism	Intellectual, nationalist movement, peace, role, stability, war	Country, democracy, trade facilitation, trade openness, trade policy	Development, government, law, rule	Food risk, risk, state
Other	Conflict, future, implication, legacy, order, sovereignty, strategic ambiguity, tension, trump, United States, Washington	China policy, DPP, globalization, investment, KMT, labor, mainland China, presidential election, Taiwanese state	Economy, growth, Hong Kong, influence, region, state, Taiwan issue	Alliance coordination, Biden, foreign aid, politics, Taiwan policy	Foreign policy, Go South policy, ROC, Southeast Asia		

5.2 Comparing the sentiments

This study also employs sentiment analysis across the distinct groups of documents. The results reveal no significant differences in positive sentiment among the groups when discussing cross-strait relations. Trust consistently ranks as the most prevalent sentiment, while disgust remains the least expressed sentiment across

all groups. However, slight variations exist among particular sentiments. In the Taiwanese group, sadness is more pronounced than joy, whereas in the Chinese group, joy surpasses sadness. American scholars and those from other countries display sentiments similar to those of the Taiwanese group. Both the Taiwan and Chinese groups exhibit a noteworthy similarity: anger is lower than anticipation, with these two sentiments closely mirroring those of the other country group. In contrast, American scholars show a different trend, with anger ranking higher than anticipation.

All groups exhibit similar patterns regarding emotion analysis, though their percentages differ. The hierarchy of emotions is consistent: trust, fear, anticipation, anger, sadness, joy, surprise, and disgust rank from highest to lowest. Trust and fear are the top two emotions, suggesting that discussions surrounding cross-strait relations encompass hope and anxiety. Some scholars express optimism about the future of cross-strait relations, while others voice concerns about the potential for conflict and its implications for regional stability. Notably, anger and sadness, which correspond to negative sentiments, are more pronounced than joy and surprise, which align with positive sentiments. This result indicates that, despite the prevailing sentiment of trust, fears and concerns regarding cross-strait relations persist.

Figure 10. Sentiment and emotion by Taiwanese scholars in text analysis

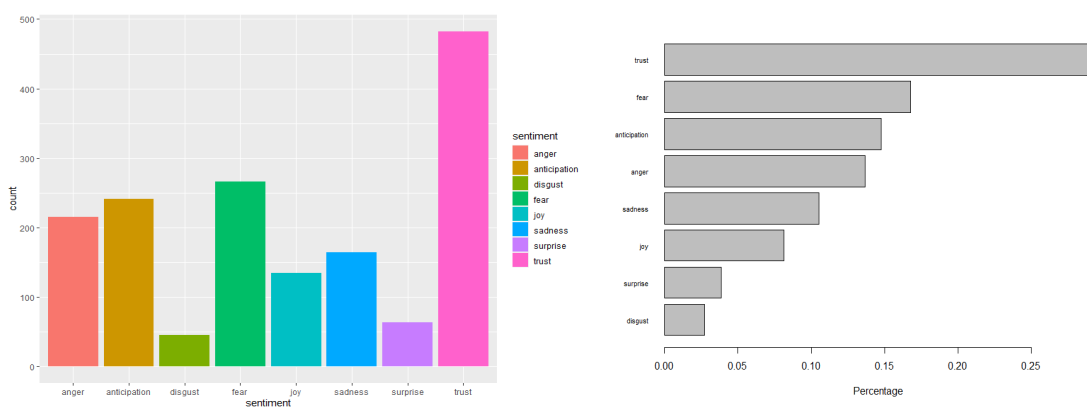


Figure 11. Sentiment and emotion by Chinese scholars in text analysis

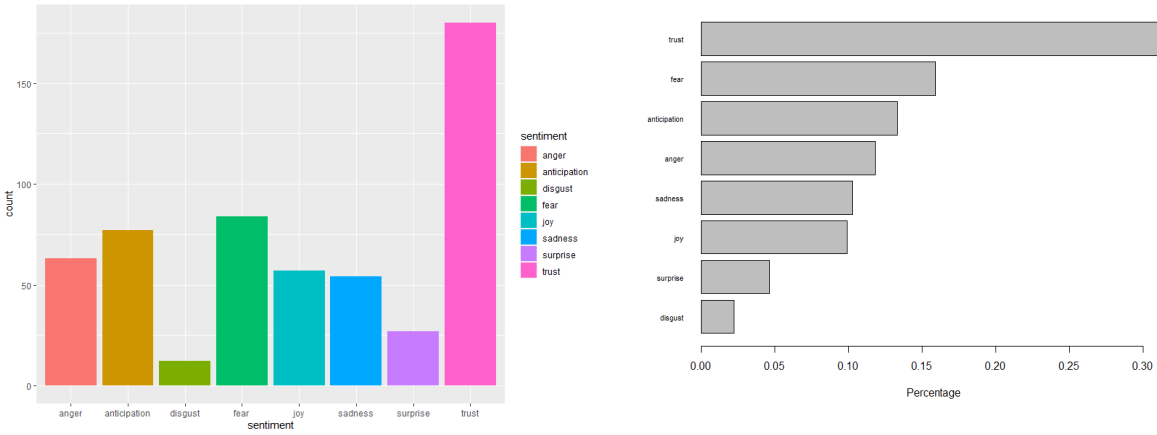


Figure 12. Sentiment and emotion by American scholars in text analysis

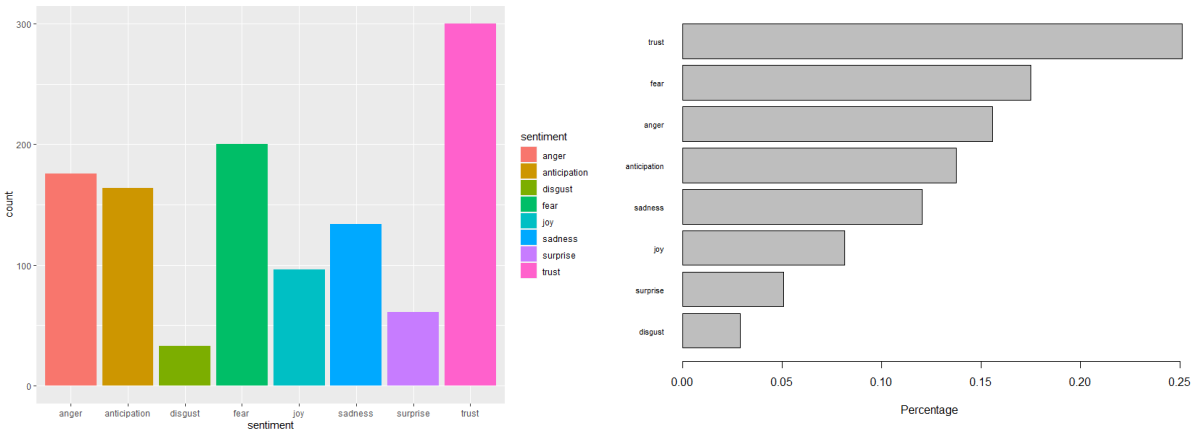
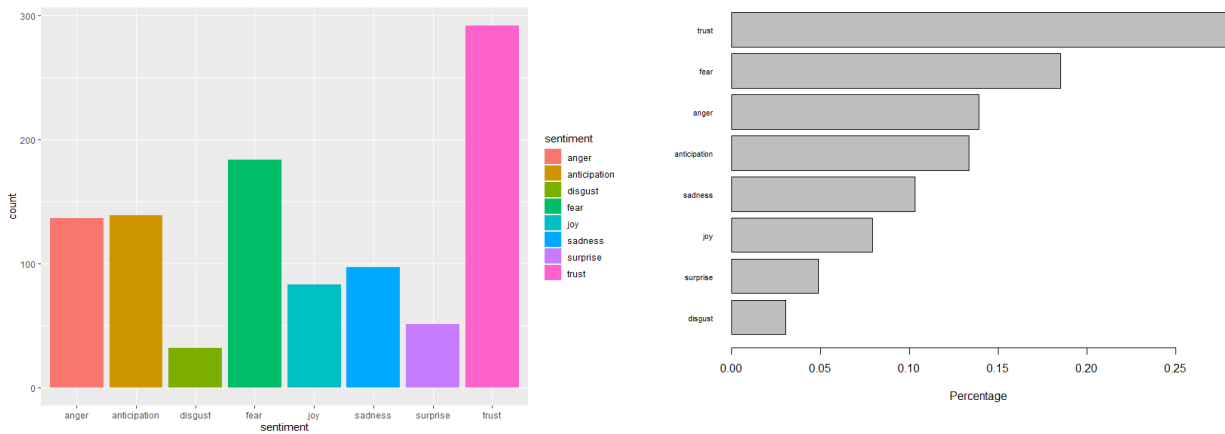


Figure 13. Sentiment and emotion by other scholars in text analysis

6. Cross-strait studies or Taiwan's perspective on cross-strait relations?

Cross-strait relations refer to the interactions between key actors across the Taiwan Strait: China and Taiwan. Reflecting on Schubert's definition of cross-strait relations as a field of study, this research partially aligns with his arguments. The study reveals that some significant terms reflect the roles of non-state actors despite all documents being classified under Area Studies, IR, and Political Science—fields that typically emphasize governmental or state-centric analyses. Terms such as citizen, student, nationalism, businessperson, and national identity are closely associated with non-state actors, thus connecting to Schubert's perspective on trans-strait relations.

Additionally, this study acknowledges the multidisciplinary or transdisciplinary nature of cross-strait relations. By incorporating scholarly works from countries beyond China, Taiwan, and the US, this field of study extends its scope beyond the Taiwan Strait. Scholars from Southeast Asia, for instance, analyze the potential ramifications of cross-strait conflicts in their region. Consequently, the elements of "trans-regional" or "inter-regional" perspectives can be integrated into the definition of cross-strait relations. This implies that cross-

strait relations as a research area encompasses inter-strait, trans-strait, and inter/trans-regional dimensions.

Furthermore, Taiwan's preeminence in the volume of documents and topics provides intriguing insights. Although cross-strait relations as a research field encompasses perspectives from both Beijing and Taipei, the Taiwanese perspective appears to dominate the discourse. This predominance raises essential questions: does it matter? The imbalance in quantity and perspective could significantly influence the narrative and discourse within the study of cross-strait relations. This scenario inadvertently fosters an asymmetrical dynamic, implying two key points: *first*, it serves as a source of Taiwan's soft power, reflecting the power of research; *second*, it underscores Taiwan's capacity to cultivate a robust narrative and discourse on cross-strait relations.

7. Conclusion

The survey and mapping of cross-strait research in the WoS database revealed that this field is far more intricate than merely examining relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. While the governmental relations often dominate the discourse, the significant role of non-state actors in cross-strait interactions cannot be overlooked. A critical finding of this study is the predominance of "Taiwan's perspective" within the realm of cross-strait studies. Taiwan leads in the number of published documents and the diversity of topics discussed, indicating a narrative dominance in academic debates surrounding cross-strait relations. This dominance is crucial for Taiwan's ability to effectively communicate its viewpoint on the Taiwan Strait to the broader epistemic community and academic world.

However, this study has limitations, as it relies solely on the WoS database. Expanding the analysis to include other databases, such as Scopus, Airtity Library, or Google Scholar, would enable a more comparative literature evaluation. Future research that compares cross-strait studies across these databases would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the development and current state of research in this area. Such comparative analyses could uncover

additional insights and enhance the dialogue surrounding cross-strait relations, fostering a more prosperous academic environment.

Notes

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1. Accessed on November 25, 2023
2. Accessed on November 25, 2023.
3. Accessed on November 25, 2023.

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