

Political Governance: A Hybrid Systematic Literature Review and Bibliographic Analysis

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Abstract

Political governance has become a strategic issue in contemporary governance studies, in light of political transformation, the digitalisation of government, challenges to democracy, and growing demands for transparency and public accountability. However, the literature on political governance remains fragmented across themes such as collaborative governance, digital governance, sustainability governance, political economy, and public policy. This study aims to map the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, research trends, and future research directions through a hybrid approach combining a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis. The study utilises the PRISMA framework and bibliometric analysis based on Scopus data with the aid of VOSviewer. The analysis focuses on publication trends, co-occurring keywords, collaboration networks, influential authors, and dominant thematic clusters. The results indicate that research on political governance has shifted from traditional public administration towards a more collaborative, participatory, digital, and sustainability-oriented form of governance. The dominant themes include governance approaches, democracy, political economy, policy-making, local government, transparency, and digital governance. The bibliometric mapping also reveals links between governance and AI, public health, decentralisation, and global governance. Furthermore, this study identifies significant gaps regarding algorithmic governance, AI ethics, cybersecurity, and the integration of sustainability into modern governance. This research contributes to mapping the intellectual structure and direction of development in political governance whilst providing theoretical and practical implications for the development of governance in an increasingly complex global era.

Keywords: Political governance; Digital governance; Collaborative governance; Bibliometric analysis; Systematic literature review.

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INTRODUCTION

Political governance has become a central issue in contemporary public administration, political science, and governance studies due to the increasing complexity of global governance, democratic transformation, and rapid technological development. Conceptually, political governance refers to the processes, mechanisms, and institutions through which political power is exercised, public decisions are formulated, and relationships between the state, society, and other governance actors are managed (Dorasamy, 2025; Tshiyoyo, 2025). Unlike traditional state-centered administration, contemporary political governance has evolved into a multidimensional concept encompassing transparency, participation, accountability, collaboration, responsiveness, and digital governance (Gemici, 2026; Kapesa, 2025).

The growing importance of political governance studies is closely associated with global challenges such as corruption, democratic backsliding, social inequality, declining public trust, and weak policy effectiveness. In this context, governance quality significantly influences political legitimacy, institutional stability, policy performance, and sustainable development outcomes (Mabizela & Dorasamy, 2025; Silva & Marvão, 2024). Previous studies demonstrate that effective governance strengthens democratic institutions, improves public participation, and enhances public service delivery, whereas weak governance often generates bureaucratic inefficiency, policy failure, and declining

citizen trust (Huamán et al., 2024; Madjid, 2024).

At the same time, the emergence of digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and algorithmic governance has transformed contemporary governance systems. Governments increasingly adopt digital governance and e-government systems to improve administrative efficiency and public service quality. However, these transformations also create new governance challenges related to algorithmic accountability, AI ethics, data security, cybersecurity, and democratic oversight of technological systems (Ishrat et al., 2025; Nabiyeu, 2025; Shark, 2025). Furthermore, the integration of AI and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies into public administration reinforces the need for adaptive, collaborative, and sustainability-oriented governance frameworks (Androniceanu, 2024; Söğüt & Polat, 2026). Consequently, political governance is no longer limited to state-society relations but increasingly intersects with technological transformation, institutional innovation, and global governance dynamics.

Despite the rapid growth of governance scholarship, the political governance literature remains fragmented across thematic areas, disciplines, and methodological approaches. Existing studies tend to focus separately on collaborative governance, local governance, fiscal governance, digital governance, or institutional accountability without providing an integrated understanding of political governance as a comprehensive

multidimensional field (Kaur & Philips, 2023; Nabiyeu, 2025). In addition, governance studies still exhibit limited theoretical integration and insufficient systematic mapping of intellectual structures, publication trends, collaboration networks, and emerging research directions (Hamilton et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2025).

Several previous studies have employed systematic literature review (SLR) approaches within governance research; however, most remain confined to specific governance sectors or issues. For example, earlier studies examined public participation in local governance, waqf governance, and digital governance independently without integrating broader political governance dynamics (Blankenship, 2019; Hofer et al., 2024; Innerarity, 2024). Moreover, limited research has combined systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis to comprehensively map the intellectual evolution of political governance studies. This limitation creates difficulties in identifying dominant themes, influential scholars, institutional collaboration patterns, thematic evolution, and future research agendas within the field.

To address these gaps, this study employs a hybrid systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis approach to examine the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, research trends, and future directions of political governance studies. The hybrid approach is particularly important because it integrates qualitative theoretical synthesis with quantitative bibliometric mapping of publication trends, influential authors, dominant

institutions, collaboration networks, and emerging themes (Saravanan et al., 2025; Tandan et al., 2026). While bibliometric analysis enables the identification of intellectual structures and scientific development patterns, the SLR approach ensures systematic, transparent, and replicable literature synthesis. The integration of these approaches is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of political governance compared with conventional review methods.

This study also offers significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it contributes to governance scholarship by systematically mapping the evolution and intellectual structure of political governance research. Practically, the findings are expected to support policymakers, researchers, and public institutions in understanding emerging governance challenges related to democracy, digital transformation, sustainability, and public accountability. Therefore, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of political governance research and identify future research directions within an increasingly complex and interconnected global governance environment.

Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Political Governance

Political governance has become a central concept in contemporary public administration and political science due to its strong relationship with institutional performance, democratic quality, and public policy effectiveness. Unlike traditional government approaches that emphasize hierarchical authority, governance highlights

interactions among governments, private sectors, civil society, and citizens in managing public affairs collectively (Ferry & Hofman, 2024; Islam, 2018). Governance therefore extends beyond formal state authority and includes collaborative networks, participatory mechanisms, and institutional coordination processes.

Governance generally refers to the capacity of governments to formulate and implement policies effectively while maintaining institutional legitimacy and public accountability (Mabizela & Dorasamy, 2025). Previous studies conceptualize governance through dimensions such as government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, political stability, accountability, transparency, and corruption control (Apaza, 2009; Balasubramanian, 2018). These dimensions indicate that political governance encompasses both political and administrative capacities within governance systems.

In democratic contexts, political governance is closely associated with transparency, participation, responsiveness, and accountability in public administration processes (Bezzina et al., 2021; Brinkerhoff, 2017; Herasymiuk et al., 2020). Recent developments also show a shift from hierarchical governance toward more collaborative, participatory, and network-based governance systems involving governments, private actors, civil society, and international institutions (Klinke, 2020; Sandra et al., 2025). Consequently, political governance has evolved into a multidimensional concept integrating political,

administrative, social, technological, and economic dimensions.

2.2 Defining Factors of Political Governance

The literature identifies several defining factors that determine the quality and effectiveness of political governance, including transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, institutional effectiveness, and collaborative governance (Moss & Buachoom, 2026; Rontos et al., 2015). Transparency refers to the openness of governmental processes and accessibility of public information, which are essential for reducing corruption and strengthening public trust (C. Chen & Ganapati, 2023; Schnell, 2023). Accountability reflects the obligation of political actors and public institutions to justify their decisions and actions before citizens and oversight institutions (Brinkerhoff, 2017).

Participation is another critical dimension because democratic governance increasingly requires citizen involvement in policymaking and public administration (Kim et al., 2026). In parallel, collaborative governance emphasizes cooperation between public institutions and non-state actors through stakeholder engagement, consensus-building, and shared decision-making processes (Lahat et al., 2020; Yigzaw, 2021). Institutional effectiveness and rule of law also play fundamental roles in ensuring policy implementation capacity, administrative professionalism, legal certainty, and fairness within governance systems (Kirmikiroglou et al., 2026).

Recent governance studies further highlight inclusiveness, sustainability

orientation, and ethical governance as defining elements of modern governance systems (Burgal & Agbo, 2026; Sinervo et al., 2026). At the same time, the rapid expansion of digital governance through artificial intelligence (AI), big data, e-government, and digital platforms has transformed governance practices and public service delivery. Nevertheless, these developments also generate challenges related to cybersecurity, data ethics, algorithmic accountability, and democratic oversight (Das & Singh, 2025; Khalil & Ali, 2026).

2.3 Evolution of Political Governance Studies

The study of political governance has evolved significantly over the last three decades. Early governance research primarily focused on state administration, bureaucratic efficiency, and institutional management. However, globalization and public sector reforms gradually shifted governance studies toward democratic participation, accountability, decentralization, and governance networks (Touchton & Wampler, 2025).

The emergence of New Public Management (NPM) during the 1980s and 1990s encouraged governance reforms emphasizing efficiency, privatization, performance-based administration, and market-oriented public management. Although NPM improved administrative efficiency in several contexts, critics argued that excessive market orientation weakened democratic accountability and citizen participation (Allen & Gann, 2022; Hansen et al., 2024). Consequently, governance scholarship increasingly

adopted collaborative governance and network governance approaches that prioritize participation and inter-organizational cooperation (Christensen, 2013).

More recently, governance studies have expanded toward sustainability governance, digital governance, and global governance. Technological advances such as AI, IoT, and data-driven governance systems increasingly influence policymaking and public administration processes (Gemici, 2026; Ruiz-Vanoye et al., 2025). Simultaneously, broader societal challenges—including democratic crises, declining public trust, climate change, and social inequality—have encouraged multidisciplinary governance research integrating political, social, economic, technological, and sustainability perspectives.

2.4 Political Governance in Contemporary Research

Contemporary political governance research demonstrates increasing thematic diversity and methodological innovation. Current studies frequently examine transparency, anti-corruption strategies, public trust, sustainability, digital transformation, and citizen participation within governance systems (Detthamrong et al., 2025; Jaimes et al., 2025). Fiscal transparency, for instance, significantly influences perceptions of corruption and democratic legitimacy (Bacchus & Boulding, 2022; Montes & Luna, 2021), while local governance studies emphasize participatory governance in improving public service quality and community engagement (Tri et al., 2023).

Digital governance has become one of the fastest-growing themes in governance scholarship. The integration of AI, IoT, and data-driven systems has transformed traditional public administration into more efficient and innovative governance structures (Gemici, 2026; Su et al., 2025). However, digital transformation also raises concerns regarding privacy, algorithmic bias, ethical accountability, and data security (Alowayfi et al., 2024; Emon, 2025).

In addition, collaborative and inclusive governance approaches have gained increasing attention through the involvement of multiple stakeholders, marginalized groups, and local communities in policymaking processes (Lahat et al., 2020; Yigzaw, 2021). Despite these developments, the literature on political governance remains fragmented across disciplines and research contexts, limiting integrated understanding of its intellectual structure and future research directions (Bekkers et al., 2013; Pildes, 2022).

2.5 Research Gap and Future Research Directions

Although political governance has received extensive scholarly attention, several important gaps remain unresolved. First, the literature is still fragmented across themes such as collaborative governance, digital governance, local governance, and sustainability governance, preventing the development of an integrated multidimensional understanding of political governance (Maulana & Dečman, 2023; Yadav et al., 2024).

Second, governance research remains methodologically imbalanced. Many studies rely heavily on qualitative case studies within specific regional contexts, limiting comparative analysis and generalizability, while quantitative and bibliometric approaches remain relatively underutilized (L. Chen et al., 2023; Tzagkarakis & Kritas, 2023).

Third, the rapid expansion of digital governance and AI has introduced emerging governance challenges related to algorithmic accountability, governance ethics, cybersecurity, and AI-driven public administration that remain insufficiently explored (Bokhari et al., 2026; Pipyros, 2026). Furthermore, the relationship between political governance and sustainability agendas still requires deeper theoretical and empirical investigation (Dorasamy, 2025).

Based on these limitations, this study employs a hybrid systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis to map dominant themes, publication trends, collaboration networks, thematic evolution, and future research directions in political governance studies.

METHODS

This study employs a hybrid Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and bibliometric analysis approach to examine the development of political governance scholarship comprehensively. The hybrid approach was selected because it enables the integration of qualitative literature synthesis with quantitative bibliometric mapping, thereby providing a more systematic, objective, and measurable understanding of research evolution,

dominant themes, intellectual structures, and future research directions within political governance studies. To ensure methodological transparency, rigor, and replicability, this study adopts the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework, which has been widely recommended in previous systematic review studies (Page et al., 2021; Veroniki et al., 2025; Zheng et al., 2025).

The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) articles published up to 24 April 2026, (2) English-language publications, and (3) studies focusing on political governance. All bibliographic data were retrieved exclusively from the Scopus database due to its extensive international coverage and reliability for bibliometric and interdisciplinary systematic review research.

Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to visualize citation networks, co-authorship relationships, and keyword co-occurrence patterns. This analysis facilitates the identification of intellectual structures, thematic evolution, research

clusters, and emerging trends in political governance research. The integration of SLR and bibliometric analysis not only synthesizes empirical findings but also maps the broader research landscape, including influential scholars, institutional contributions, collaboration networks, and thematic developments (Marzi et al., 2025; Nakagawa et al., 2019). Furthermore, bibliometric analysis provides strategic value by identifying academic productivity, influential publications, and the evolution of scientific discourse within a research field (Balbin, 2025).

The study began with a macro-level (top-down) keyword identification process, moving from broad search terms toward more specific conceptual focuses. Considering the fragmented nature of previous governance studies and the limited availability of comprehensive reviews on political governance, this study employed the keyword “political governance” within article titles, abstracts, and keywords to ensure global relevance and thematic consistency.

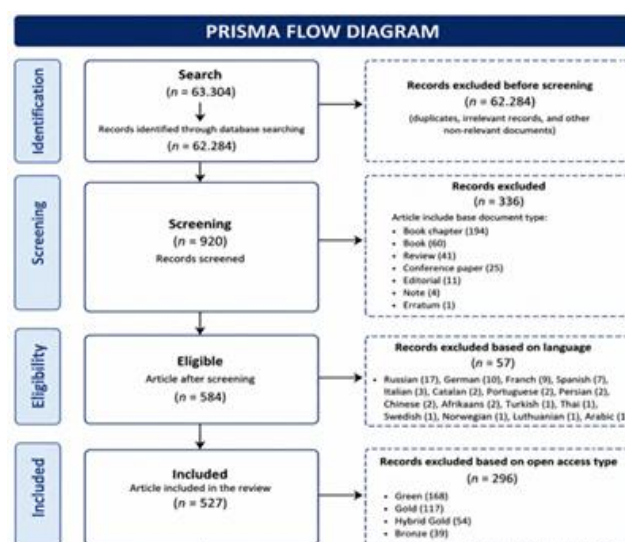


Figure 1. PRISMA-Based Screening and Selection of Political Governance Articles

Based on a Scopus search conducted on 24 April 2026 using the keywords "Political AND Governance" in titles, abstracts, and keywords, a total of 63,304 documents published between 1978 and 2026 were identified across multiple disciplines (see Figure 1). Following the PRISMA procedure, 62,284 irrelevant documents were excluded during the identification stage. The screening phase resulted in 920 articles, which were subsequently filtered by document type. Excluded documents included book chapters (194), books (60), review articles (41), conference papers (25), editorials (11), notes (4), and errata (1), leaving 584 articles eligible for further assessment.

The eligibility stage further excluded non-English publications, including Russian (17), German (10), French (9), Spanish (7), Italian (3), Catalan (2), Portuguese (2), Persian (2), Chinese (2), Afrikaans (2), Turkish (1), Thai (1), Swedish (1), Norwegian (1), Lithuanian (1), and Arabic (1) publications. This process resulted in 527 articles meeting the inclusion criteria. In the final stage, articles categorized as green open access (168), gold open access (117), hybrid gold (54), and bronze open access (39) were excluded. Consequently, the final dataset consisted of 261 open-access articles, which were analyzed to address the following research questions:

1. *RQ1: Does political governance remain a significant and relevant topic for future scientific research development?*
2. *RQ2: How have publication trends, thematic developments, authorship patterns, institutional contributions, and geographical distributions evolved within political governance research?*

3. *RQ3: What are the theoretical and practical implications of political governance research, and what future research opportunities emerge from the existing literature?*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed 261 Scopus-indexed articles on political governance by examining publication trends, journal sources, influential authors, institutional affiliations, and contributing countries. The findings provide a comprehensive overview of the intellectual development and global dynamics of political governance research.

RQ1: Does Political Governance Remain a Significant and Relevant Topic for Future Research?

The Scopus data indicate that political governance remains a highly relevant and strategically important research field. Over the past five decades, the number of publications has continued to grow, with a significant increase occurring in recent years, particularly after 2020. The earliest study was conducted by Kothari (1978) through the article *Disarmament, Development and a Just World Order*, which marked the early emergence of political governance discourse.

The rapid expansion of research demonstrates increasing scholarly attention across disciplines such as social sciences, economics, management, humanities, and environmental studies. Contemporary political governance research contributes substantially to debates on economic and social development (Al-Mekaimi, 2024), democracy and accountability (Pribadi &

Iqbal, 2022), public sector reform (Kader Jilani et al., 2026), sustainability and ESG governance (Carè et al., 2025), as well as resource management (Nnaa et al., 2015). These findings confirm that political governance continues to evolve as a multidimensional and globally relevant research domain.

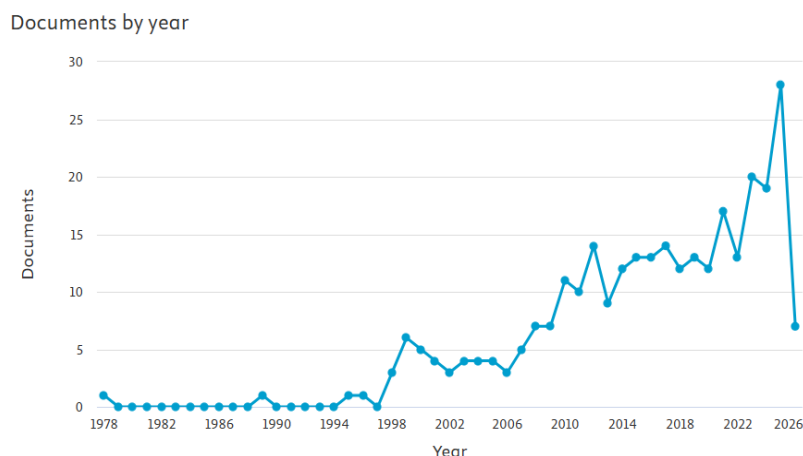


Figure 2. Issues and developments in research on political governance from 1978 to 2026

Since its first publication in 1978, political governance research developed slowly until the late 1990s, indicating its limited position within global academic discourse. However, publication trends began to increase in the early 2000s alongside growing attention to democracy, transparency, bureaucratic reform, and modern governance systems. The expansion became more significant after 2010, when political governance increasingly intersected with digital governance, public participation, sustainability governance, and technological transformation in public administration.

The publication trend reached its peak in 2025, reflecting the growing global relevance of political governance studies. This growth is driven by increasingly complex governance

challenges, the rise of artificial intelligence, demands for public transparency, and the strengthening of democratic governance. These findings indicate that political governance remains a highly promising field for future theoretical and practical research, particularly in developing adaptive, collaborative, sustainable, and technology-oriented governance models.

RQ2: What are the developments, distribution and trends in research on political governance, based on scientific publications, authors, countries, institutions and the dominant research themes at present?

The distribution analysis of political governance research based on country classification reveals the global development of this field. The United States dominates with 49 publications, followed by the United Kingdom with 34

articles and China with 31 articles. Other important contributors include Australia and South Africa with 20 publications each, Nigeria with 18 articles, Cameroon and India with 12 publications each, and Germany with 11 publications, while 10 publications were categorized as undefined affiliations.

These findings indicate that political governance research is not only concentrated in developed countries but is also growing significantly in

developing regions, particularly Asia and Africa. The increasing publication trend reflects rising global attention toward democracy, transparency, public participation, and governance reform across diverse political contexts. Overall, the cross-regional distribution confirms that political governance has become a multidisciplinary and globally expanding research field amid increasingly complex governance challenges.

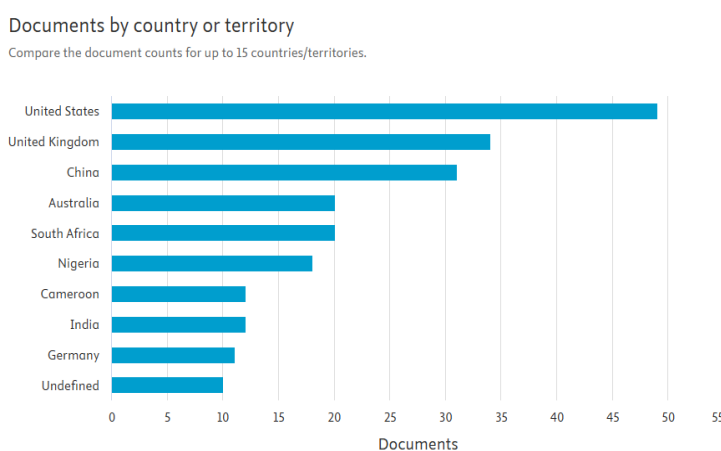


Figure 3. Article by country.

The country collaboration analysis shows that the United States, United Kingdom, China, Nigeria, and South Africa are the dominant actors in the global political governance research network (see Figure 3). The VOSviewer visualization demonstrates strong international connectivity through co-authorship and citation networks among authors and institutions across regions. The United States and the United Kingdom function as central nodes with extensive global connections, indicating their major influence on the intellectual development of political governance studies.

Significant contributions also emerge from China, India, Nigeria, South Africa, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Cameroon, confirming that political governance research is expanding beyond developed countries into Asia and Africa. This trend reflects growing global attention toward democracy, transparency, public participation, and governance reform in diverse political contexts.

The visualization further reveals regional research clusters. China and South Korea form a strong East Asian collaboration network, while Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, and Cameroon demonstrate close research connectivity

in Africa. Meanwhile, the United States and the United Kingdom maintain broad collaboration with countries across Europe, Asia, and Africa, reinforcing their global academic influence. These

findings highlight the increasingly multidisciplinary, collaborative, and globally distributed nature of political governance research.

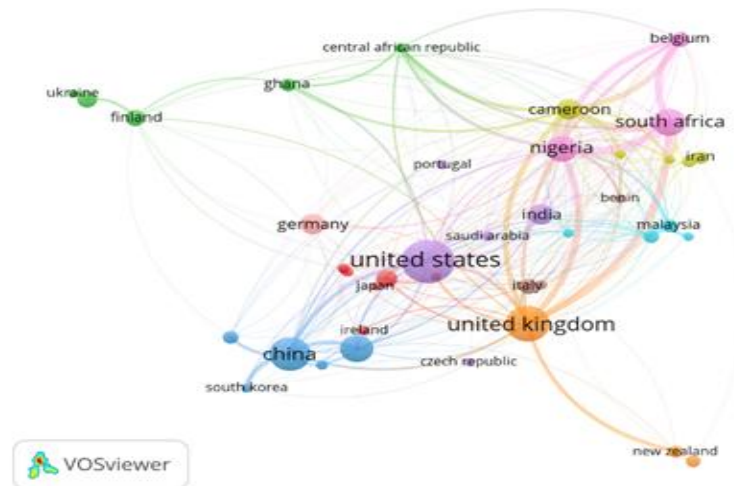


Figure 4. Network county vizualisation

The VOSviewer network visualization indicates that political governance research has a highly interconnected global intellectual structure. The United States and the United Kingdom appear as the main central nodes, reflected by larger node sizes and extensive international connections. This finding confirms their dominant academic influence through publication productivity, collaboration networks, and citation impact.

The close proximity among nodes reflects strong international collaboration and intellectual linkages in political governance studies. The dominance of the United States and the United Kingdom suggests that contemporary governance discourse is still strongly shaped by Western democratic governance perspectives, particularly regarding transparency, accountability, public participation, and institutional reform.

However, emerging clusters from Asia and Africa—including China, South Korea, Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, and Cameroon—demonstrate the growing contribution of developing countries. These clusters indicate increasing diversification in governance perspectives beyond traditional Western paradigms, especially in areas such as sustainability, bureaucratic reform, digital governance, and democratic governance in developing contexts.

Although global knowledge production remains centered on Western countries, political governance research has become increasingly multidimensional, collaborative, and globally diverse. Notably, the University of South Africa emerged as the most productive institutional affiliation, highlighting the significant role of African institutions in governance scholarship.

Documents by affiliation

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.

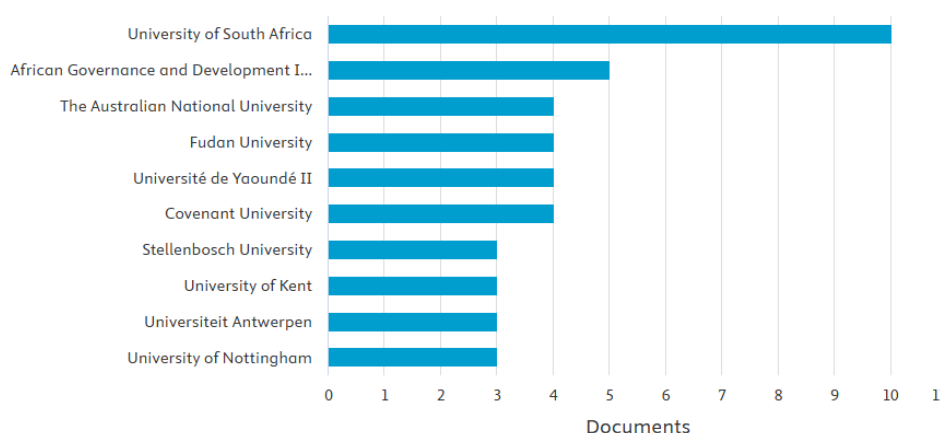


Figure 5. Institutional affiliations in discussions on political governance.

The institutional affiliation analysis reveals a strong contribution from African institutions in political governance research. The University of South Africa emerged as the leading contributor with 10 publications, followed by the African Governance and Development Institute with 5 publications. Other influential institutions include The Australian National University, Fudan University, and Covenant University, each showing relatively balanced contributions. These findings indicate that political governance research is expanding not only in developed countries but also in

developing regions facing challenges related to democracy, bureaucratic reform, institutional development, and public governance. The dominance of African institutions suggests that Africa has become an important empirical context for governance studies, particularly in areas such as governance reform, institutional capacity, and democratic development. Meanwhile, the involvement of institutions from Europe, Asia, and Australia demonstrates that political governance has evolved into a multidisciplinary and globally relevant research field responding to contemporary governance challenge

Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.

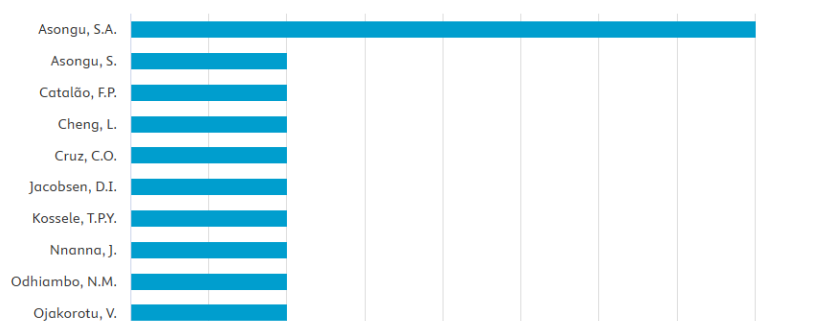


Figure 6. Contributors to the topic of political governance

The author productivity analysis identifies Asongu, S. A. as the most influential contributor in political governance research, with 8 publications. Other notable contributors, including Asongu, S., Catalão, F. P., Cheng, L., and Cruz, C. O., each produced 2 publications. These findings suggest that the development of political governance scholarship is still driven by a limited

group of core researchers who play significant roles in shaping debates on governance reform, institutional development, and modern political governance. At the same time, the relatively dispersed distribution of authors indicates that political governance research is multidisciplinary and continues to expand across diverse global academic contexts.

Documents by subject area

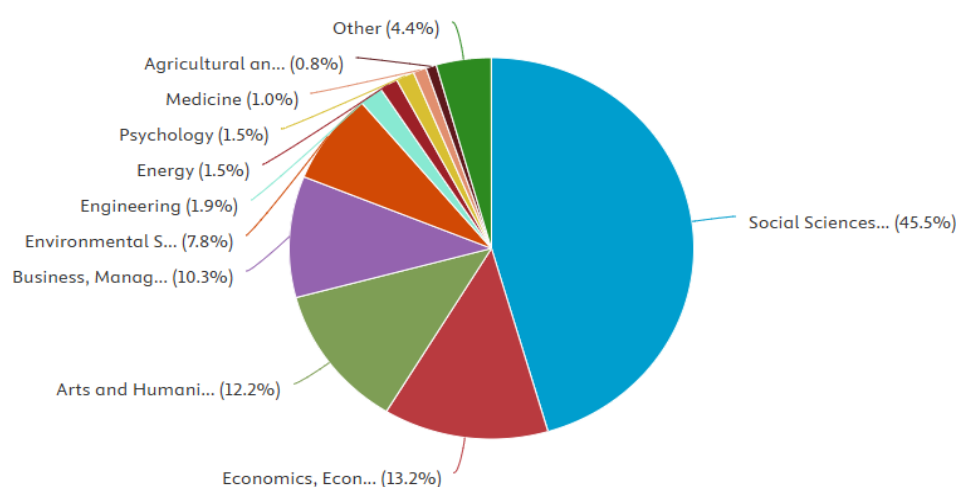


Figure 7. Various issues and areas related to political governance

The subject-area distribution shows that political governance research is dominated by Social Sciences (45.5%), highlighting its strong connection to politics, public administration, democracy, and public policy. Significant contributions also come from Economics, Econometrics and Finance (13.2%), Arts and Humanities (12.2%), and Business, Management and Accounting (10.3%). These findings confirm that political governance has evolved into a multidisciplinary field encompassing political, economic, managerial, social, and humanitarian dimensions. The involvement of Environmental Science, Engineering, Energy, and Medicine

further indicates the growing relevance of political governance in addressing contemporary global challenges, including sustainability, digital transformation, environmental governance, and modern public service systems.

RQ3: What are the theoretical and practical implications of developments in research on political governance, and what are the future directions and opportunities for research?

The bibliometric analysis of 261 Scopus-indexed articles using VOSviewer mapped the intellectual structure, dominant themes, and research evolution of political governance. This approach

provides important theoretical and practical insights by identifying well-established topics, emerging themes, conceptual relationships, and global collaboration patterns within governance scholarship.

The co-occurrence keyword analysis reveals that political governance research is primarily dominated by keywords such as governance, political governance, democracy, public policy, accountability, transparency, participation, institutional capacity, and digital governance. These themes indicate that contemporary governance studies remain strongly focused on democratic governance, institutional reform, public participation, and government effectiveness. At the same time, the emergence of themes such as artificial intelligence, sustainability governance, e-

government, and collaborative governance reflects a significant shift toward technology-driven and sustainability-oriented governance models.

However, topics including algorithmic governance, ethical governance, inclusive governance, and digital democracy remain relatively underexplored compared to conventional governance themes. This finding highlights substantial opportunities for future research, particularly in addressing digital transformation, social change, and the growing complexity of global governance. Practically, these findings may assist policymakers and public institutions in developing governance systems that are more transparent, adaptive, collaborative, and sustainable.

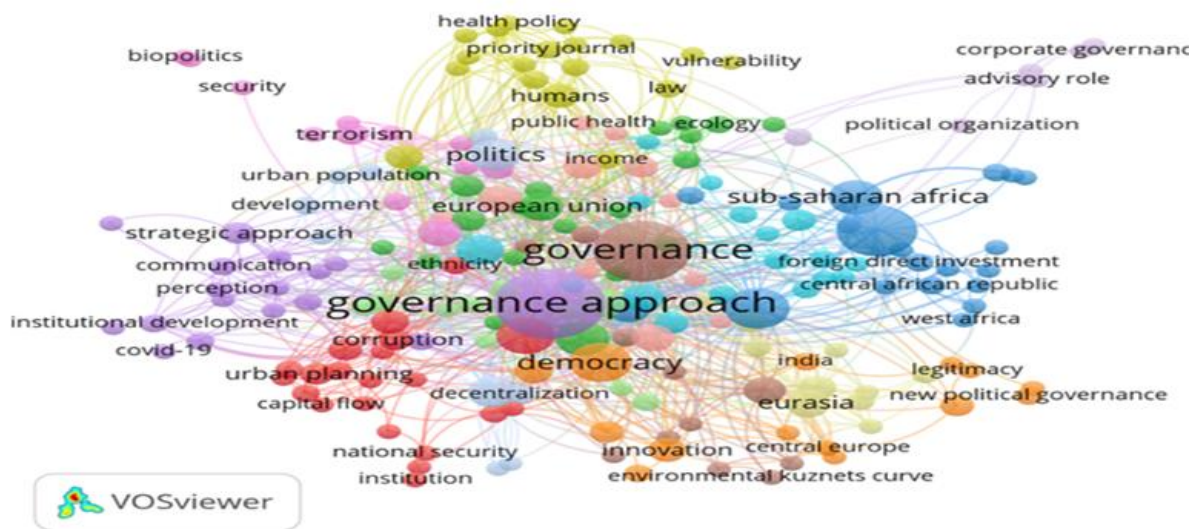


Figure 8. Co-occurrence framework and representation of key terms

The VOSviewer co-occurrence network visualization demonstrates that political governance research possesses a highly interconnected and

multidisciplinary intellectual structure. The keywords governance and governance approach appear as the central nodes with the highest link

strength, indicating the dominance of governance discourse across political, social, economic, and institutional contexts. Strong connections among keywords such as democracy, decentralization, institution, and corruption confirm that political governance research remains closely associated with democratic reform, institutional capacity, and public accountability (Camões, 2022).

The emergence of clusters related to public health, health policy, and COVID-19 reflects the expansion of

governance studies toward crisis governance and global health policy. Meanwhile, themes such as foreign direct investment, innovation, and corporate governance indicate the growing integration of governance with economic development and institutional transformation (Brou & Smirnov, 2023). The presence of regional clusters, including the European Union and Sub-Saharan Africa, further highlights the increasing use of comparative and cross-regional approaches in contemporary governance studies (Brosig, 2022).

Table 1. Keywords by authors

Rank	Keywords	Total link strength
1	Governanve approach	221
2	Governance	109
3	Economic Growth	56
4	Political Economy	52
5	Democracy	47
6	Political System	44
7	Politics	42
8	Policy Making	40
9	Political Governance	38
10	Local Government	39

The *Keywords by Authors* analysis reveals the dominant conceptual structure of political governance research based on total link strength within the bibliometric network. The keyword *governance approach* recorded the highest link strength (221), indicating that governance-based approaches constitute the primary analytical framework in contemporary political governance studies. Likewise, the prominence of *governance* (109) demonstrates a shift from traditional state administration toward a multidimensional perspective involving the state, market, and civil society

(Bellamy & Palumbo, 2017; Serhieiev et al., 2025).

The frequent occurrence of keywords such as *economic growth*, *political economy*, and *policy making* highlights the close relationship between governance, economic development, policy formulation, and institutional stability. Meanwhile, terms including *democracy*, *political system*, and *politics* confirm that democratic legitimacy, political capacity, and public accountability remain central foundations of political governance research. The emergence of *local*

government further reflects growing scholarly attention to decentralization and local governance as mechanisms for enhancing public service effectiveness and civic participation.

Discussion

Political governance is a central concept in political science because it concerns how power is exercised, public decisions are formulated, and governments respond to societal needs. Contemporary governance is no longer understood solely as state activity, but as a collaborative process involving the state, private sector, and civil society (Craps & Brugnach, 2015; Fox & Ward, 2008; Grabs, 2026; Johanson, 2014; Raustiala, 2023)). In this perspective, the state functions as part of a broader policy network rather than the sole center of authority.

In democratic systems, political governance is closely linked to legitimacy, participation, and administrative capacity (Fung, 2026; Kim et al., 2026). Democratic governance enables citizens to elect leaders, monitor government performance, and articulate public interests. Studies indicate that proportional representation and consensus-based systems tend to increase public satisfaction due to their inclusiveness toward minority groups (Papp et al., 2024). However, procedural democracy alone is insufficient. Dahlberg & Holmberg (2014), emphasize that public trust depends largely on professional, neutral, and effective bureaucratic institutions.

By contrast, authoritarian systems often produce faster decision-making through centralized power and limited

opposition (Beidollahkhani, 2026). Although such systems may generate short-term stability and development efficiency (Prysmakova, 2018), weak transparency, accountability, and civil liberties increase the risk of elite domination and abuse of power (Chałubińska-Jentkiewicz, 2021). Many developing countries consequently exhibit hybrid governance models that combine formal democratic institutions with authoritarian practices, producing governance structures that are procedurally democratic but substantively limited (Conduit & Akbarzadeh, 2020; Duarte et al., 2025; Robinson & Milne, 2017).

Political governance is also shaped by globalization and digital transformation. Increasing interdependence among states, international organizations, multinational corporations, and non-state actors requires governments to adopt more adaptive and collaborative governance systems (Chernysheva et al., 2021; Ghosh, 2024; Singh et al., 2025). Simultaneously, digital technologies such as e-government, open data, and artificial intelligence have improved administrative efficiency and transparency (Balaji, 2025; Gao et al., 2026; Gemici, 2026). Nevertheless, digital governance also raises challenges related to cybersecurity, technological inequality, and political disinformation (Saragih, 2025).

Ultimately, the effectiveness of political governance depends on institutional quality. Independent courts, legislatures, oversight agencies, and electoral institutions remain essential for maintaining checks and balances, legal

certainty, and democratic accountability (Durbach et al., 2020; Makulilo, 2023; Tokaji, 2022). Countries capable of integrating institutional strength, democratic legitimacy, public participation, and technological adaptation are more likely to produce responsive, equitable, and sustainable public policies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that political governance research has evolved into a more complex, multidisciplinary, and technology-oriented field alongside global governance transformation and growing demands for transparency, participation, and public accountability. The hybrid systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer reveal a significant shift from traditional state administration toward collaborative governance, digital governance, sustainability governance, democracy, and data-driven governance systems.

The bibliometric findings identify *governance approach* and *governance* as the central intellectual foundations of the field, strongly connected with democracy, political economy, policy making, economic growth, and local government. These results confirm that political governance is a multidimensional concept integrating political, administrative, economic, social, and technological dimensions. The global collaboration network remains dominated by countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, although the increasing contributions from Asia and Africa indicate the emergence of more diverse governance

perspectives. This study also identifies several important research gaps, including fragmented literature, the continued dominance of qualitative approaches, and limited attention to algorithmic governance, AI ethics, cybersecurity, and sustainable governance. Accordingly, the integration of systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis provides both theoretical and methodological contributions by mapping the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and future research directions of political governance studies. Future research should therefore adopt more integrative, comparative, and technology-oriented approaches to better understand the evolving dynamics of governance in contemporary global contexts.

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