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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF TRADE WARS IN THE GLOBALIZATION ERA

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### Abstract

The trade war that escalated in 2018 had a profound and lasting impact on international trade, political relations, global supply chains, and economic growth. This study explores the research landscape and identifies research directions related to the topic of 'trade war'. The data were collected by accessing the Scopus (856 documents) and Web of Science (480 documents) databases, both of which were published from 1990 to 2025. The study employed bibliometric analysis in R Studio. The evidence consistently demonstrates that trade wars impose substantial welfare losses on participating economies, with GDP contractions, consumer price increases, and supply chain disruptions affecting both primary combatants and third-party nations.

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### Introduction:-

The growing interconnectedness in the era of a globalized world has profoundly shaped the modern world. We can connect with people instantly by teleconferencing, phone, e-mail, and travel anywhere incredibly fast. In addition, millions of workers have migrated around the world in search of thousands of jobs from advanced countries to emerging markets. Globalization has resulted in the development of global value chains, where production processes are distributed across multiple countries, and has promoted the expansion of multinational corporations (Deese and Baisi, 2022). Adam Smith advocated for free trade in his book "The Wealth of Nations," challenging the practices of Mercantilism. The traditional trade theories believe that trade is beneficial based on the comparative advantage of countries (Xu, 2024). However, completely abolishing all tariffs could lead to high levels of unemployment due to a decrease in domestic production and the dominance of foreign goods in the country's internal markets (Oermann and Wolff, 2022).

The international trade regime is firmly regulated by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which prominently features the essential Most Favoured Nations clause that ensures countries reap significant benefits from trade agreements (Parsapour, 2024). The engagement levels among member countries grant trade preferences, either bilaterally or multilaterally, and foster regional cooperation among them (Akman et al., 2020). However, this interconnectedness has also led to tensions, which give rise to conflicts between nations, particularly in the form of trade wars over trade policies that often involve tariffs and other protectionist measures (Akman et al., 2020).

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This escalation indicated a move away from decades of trade-liberalization and prompted crucial questions about the costs and effects of protectionist policies, especially in a time of deeply interconnected global value chains.

### **Theoretical Foundations and Historical Background:-**

The trade war exhibits recurring patterns from historical times to the present, originating from the World Wars. Historically, the U.S. has used high tariffs to safeguard its developing industries. This pattern is reflected in legislation such as the Underwood-Simmons Tariff of 1913, the Emergency Tariff Act of 1921, the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act of 1922, and the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of the 1930s. In recent years, similar trade disputes have emerged during Trump's presidency, especially targeting China and its allies. Issues like unfair trade practices, intellectual property theft, and trade deficits have prompted the adoption of protectionist measures (Bimantara, 2019). Today, trade wars often turn into a cycle of retaliation, with countries imposing reciprocal tariffs on each other's goods and services. Such conflicts disrupt global markets and reflect the complex interests of nations. Often driven more by political motives than economic ones, these disputes highlight the intricate nature of international trade (Zeng and Liang, 2022).

In the current global trade landscape, many countries rely on China because of its significant economic scale, extensive manufacturing capacity, extensive global integration, and strategic policies. China's deep integration into the global market has created value chains in which a significant number of businesses depend on it as a final destination. For example, the iPhone was designed in California, with parts sourced from Japan and South Korea, and assembled in China. Lead foreign firms can leverage their significance to influence the host government, either as key market players or as sources of supply and investment for the local economy. Additionally, the expansion of global value chains (GVCs) has fostered the development of free trade-oriented transnational coalitions. These coalitions aim to counter import-competing interests in support of maintaining the current economic arrangements. The increasing influence of foreign interests in domestic politics has led to a significant backlash against globalization (Manger, 2009). China's role in global value chains poses a risk to other nations because of its supremacy in manufacturing, its management of essential resources such as rare earths, and the resulting reliance of other countries on its supply chains, which can result in trade conflicts and economic power leverage.

The expansion in China's economy at the expense of the United States and other economies is creating fear of job loss and welfare in other countries. The growing trade deficits between the United States and China have provided evidence of a trade war between the countries (Parsapour, 2024). As a result, the United States is creating alliances with Asia and Europe, shifting the global supply chain dependence from China to other countries, such as Vietnam, India, and European countries through a strategy of "de-risking" and "diversification". Many other countries are also shifting their supply chains to Mexico, Vietnam, and India, as a wake-up call against China, with the policy China Plus One. US-China trade relations grew substantially after China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. China's membership acted as a catalyst, leading to an "explosion of trade between countries." This rapid integration was also partly driven by China's important role in global value chains (Savchenko et al., 2023). However, increasing trade imbalances, concerns over intellectual property rights, and technological competition created tensions that eventually escalated into an open trade conflict starting in 2017-2018 (Knobel et al., 2024). The trade war initiated by the United States employed several legal tools, such as Section 232 National Security Investigations (including steel, aluminum, and possibly automobiles) and Section 301 investigations into China's intellectual property practices (Ciuriak et al., 2018). These actions challenged the post-World War II liberal trading order and the WTO's multilateral dispute resolution systems.

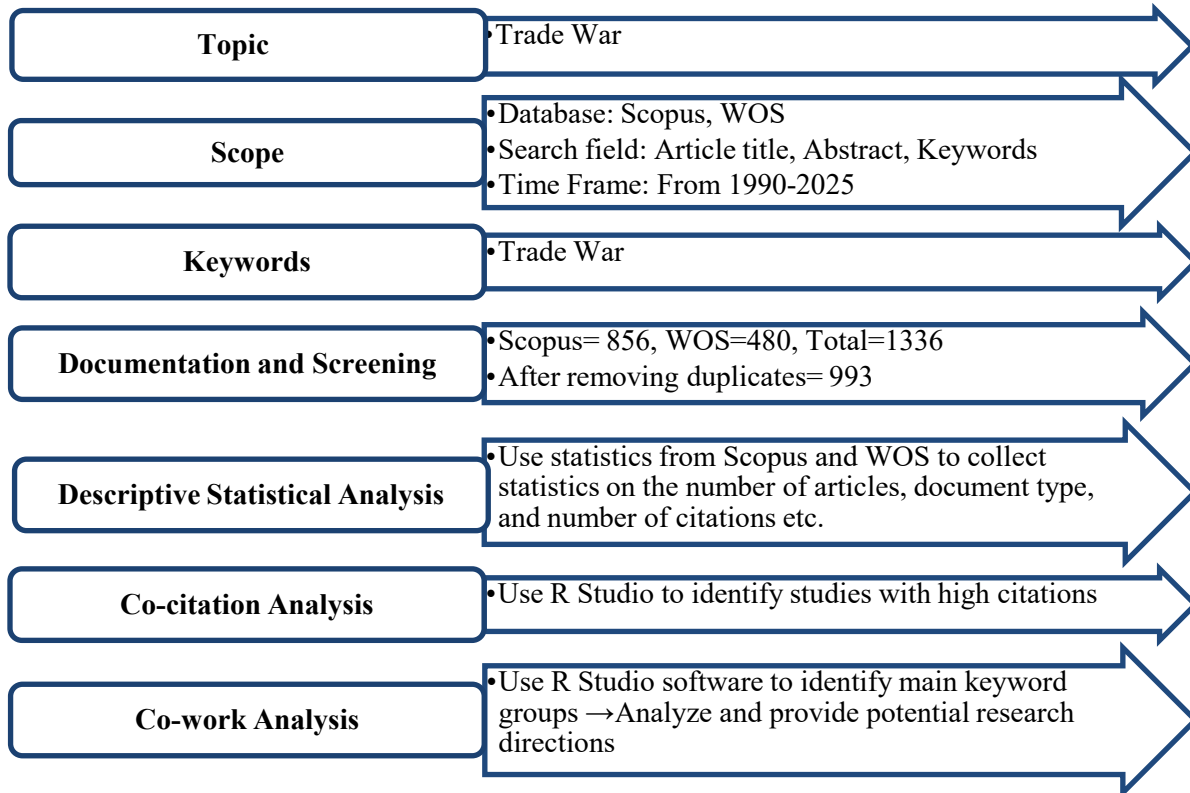
In the past, the United States economy had a global advantage in terms of industrial strength, technological advancement, the dollar's value, and military hegemony. As globalization continues, many countries, particularly developing ones, are benefiting. There has been significant economic expansion in these countries due to the availability of cheap resources and labor, attracting considerable investment (Maidinuer, 2024). Globalization has increased international trade and capital flows, creating new opportunities. As a result, China has become the largest trading country and the second-largest economy in the world. This economic expansion in China has provoked reactions from Western countries, particularly the United States (Maidinuer, 2024). The present study used bibliometric analysis to examine the trade war's effect.

### **Methodology:-**

The present study utilizes Biblioshiny to conduct the bibliometric analysis. The Scopus database has been retrieved using the keyword "trade war", which was used to extract data from articles, titles, abstracts, and keywords. This

search retrieval produced 856 articles spanning from 1990 to 2025, and these results reflected the application of exclusion criteria. Similarly, an effort was made to retrieve data from Web of Science, yielding 480 articles from 1990 to 2025 using the same keyword "trade war". The exports from Scopus were in a BibTeX file while Web of Science exported in csv format. Using R Studio, both datasets from Scopus and Web of Science were merged, duplicates identified and removed resulting in a total of 993 articles as shown in Fig 1. This duplication is primarily because some of the published articles or journals were available in both databases Scopus and Web of Science.

**Fig 1: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analysis (PRISMA) for Bibliometrics**



**Source: Authors' Compilation**

**Annual Production of Articles:-**

From 1991 to 2010, article production remained consistently low, averaging only a few publications each year. A gradual increase began around 2011, with a significant surge occurring after 2017. The number of articles rose sharply from 44 in 2018 to a peak of 147 in 2020, marking a major shift in output. The trade war between the United States and China transformed international trade. It began with retaliatory tariffs imposed due to national security concerns, leading to a significant decline in trade and investment (Bown and Kolb, 2018). This high productivity continued into the early 2020s, with between 135 and 142 articles produced annually from 2021 to 2024. Overall, the data reflect a clear upward trend in article output, particularly in the last decade (Table 1). The U.S., being the most traded country in China, had a trade deficit. This was the result of China's exports to the US being more than four times the US's exports to China. As a result, the US trade deficit rose to 375 billion dollars (Swanson, 2018). At first, the target was on large import items such as washing machines, steel, aluminium, and solar panels. But soon it became apparent that US trade policies were targeting China (Fajgelbaum and Khandelwal, 2021). The US-China trade war became a global concern, disrupting supply chains, slowing economic growth, causing financial instability, and posing challenges for global governance.

**Table 1: Annual Production**

Year	Articles	Year	Articles	Year	Articles	Year	Articles
1991	4	2001	0	2011	2	2021	135
1992	1	2002	2	2012	6	2022	142
1993	3	2003	1	2013	1	2023	117
1994	1	2004	3	2014	7	2024	134
1995	3	2005	3	2015	3	2025	91
1996	1	2006	2	2016	3	-	-
1997	5	2007	3	2017	6	-	-
1998	5	2008	2	2018	44	-	-
1999	5	2009	1	2019	102	-	-
2000	4	2010	4	2020	147	-	-

Source: Authors' Compilation from Biblioshiny

**Article Production in Various Country:-**

Though the US-China trade war mainly impacted the two nations involved, it also caused considerable spillover effects on third-party countries and the global economy. The extent and nature of these effects depended on each country's trade ties, competitive standing, and level of integration into global value chains. Table 2 presents the distribution of article production among various countries. China leads with 527 articles, followed by the United States with 385 and the United Kingdom with 76, indicating substantial output from these regions. Noteworthy contributors include South Korea, Australia, Germany, and India, each producing between 40 and 63 articles. A mid-tier group of nations, such as Canada, Japan, France, and Malaysia, contributed between 20 and 30 articles. Bolt et al. (2019) highlight that the euro area, even as a third party not directly involved in the conflict, experienced positive outcomes, including trade diversion, more affordable imports from China, and enhanced competitiveness. These factors contributed to increased output and employment.

Meanwhile, Tan et al. (2019) point out that bystander countries like Germany and Japan could also benefit from activity diversion, although these gains were relatively modest when compared to the significant losses faced by the US and China. Many additional countries from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East published fewer than 10 articles each, with several nations contributing only a few. This indicates broad yet uneven engagement in article production worldwide. Satoru et al. (2019) similarly observe that certain Asian countries gained from the US-China trade war, as production and trade flows shifted to other locations. Shagdar et al. (2018) conclude that although other countries might experience positive changes, their gains would be substantially smaller than the losses faced by the two major economies, resulting in an overall negative impact on the global economy. Žemaitytė et al. (2020) report that \$43,777 million (0.22 percent of real GDP) of US imports were sourced from other countries following the imposition of tariffs, indicating a significant redirection of trade. However, this trade diversion came with a cost, as new suppliers were often less efficient than the original Chinese suppliers, leading to welfare losses.

**Table 2: Country Production**

Country	Frequency	Country	Frequency	Country	Frequency
China	527	Thailand	8	Russia	3
USA	385	Pakistan	7	Tunisia	3
Uk	76	Sweden	7	Uruguay	3
South Korea	63	Austria	6	Kazakhstan	2
Australia	52	Brazil	6	Peru	2
Germany	46	Israel	6	Philippines	2
India	40	Finland	5	Portugal	2
Canada	27	Mexico	5	Saudi Arabia	2
Japan	27	Nigeria	5	United Arab Emirates	2

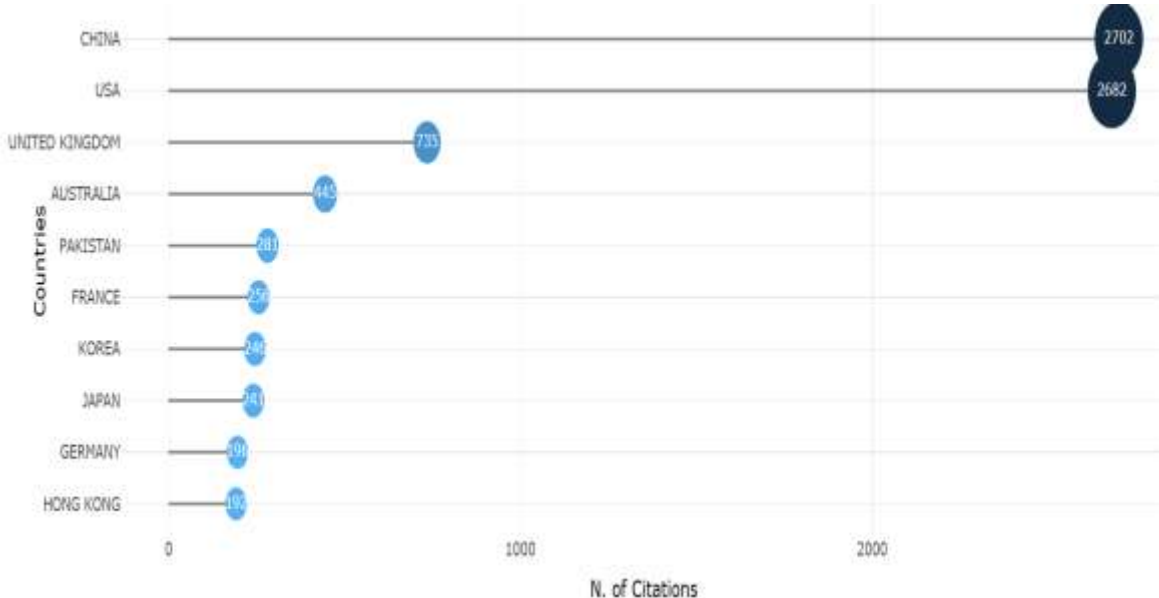
France	26	Belgium	4	Bahrain	1
Malaysia	21	Denmark	4	Belarus	1
Switzerland	21	Greece	4	Colombia	1
Italy	19	Lebanon	4	Cyprus	1
Singapore	17	Lithuania	4	Egypt	1
Indonesia	14	Norway	4	Hungary	1
Vietnam	14	Poland	4	Kyrgyzstan	1
South Africa	13	Ukraine	4	Libya	1
New Zealand	11	Bangladesh	3	Monaco	1
Turkey	11	Czech Republic	3	Slovakia	1
Ireland	9	Ghana	3	Sri Lanka	1
Netherlands	8	Romania	3		

Source: Authors' Compilation from Biblioshiny

**Most Cited Countries:-**

A comparative analysis of article production and citation impact highlights a significant gap between research volume and scholarly influence across countries. China, with 527 articles, leads in publication count and has the highest number of citations at 2,702, reflecting both high productivity and impactful research. The United States, with 385 publications and 2,682 citations, is close behind, indicating strong international visibility and influence per paper (Fig. 2). In contrast, countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia exhibit moderate levels of production, with 76 and 52 articles respectively, yet they attain substantial citation counts of 735 and 445. This indicates a higher citation-per-article ratio and, consequently, a greater impact per research contribution. Pakistan, despite producing only 7 articles, accumulates 281 citations, suggesting that its outputs are highly influential relative to volume. Conversely, some countries with moderate to high production, such as India (40 articles) and Malaysia (21 articles), do not appear on the top-cited list, indicating a possible gap between research quantity and international impact. This mismatch highlights the need not only to increase research output but also to enhance the quality, relevance, and visibility of scholarly work to boost global citation performance. Overall, the data emphasise that while research productivity is important, citation impact more accurately reflects the influence and reach of scholarly contributions, and the two do not always align.

**Fig 2: Most Cited Countries**



Source: Authors' Compilation from Biblioshiny

**Keyword Analysis:-**

Table 3 clearly illustrates the long-term frequency of key economic terms from 1991 to 2025, effectively highlighting the shifting research interests in global trade discussions. A significant trend is evident with the term "Impact," which was not utilized before 2019 and skyrocketed to 51 mentions by 2025. This sharp increase underscores a growing emphasis on impact-focused analysis. The term "China" demonstrates remarkable and steady growth, rising from a mere single mention in 1997 to an impressive 47 mentions in 2025, reinforcing China's prominent role in trade conversations. Furthermore, terms such as "InternationalTrade" and "Policy" have consistently been at the forefront, with "InternationalTrade" standing out as the most frequently used term overall, growing from just four mentions in 1997 to 28 in 2025. Additionally, "Trade" and "Tariffs" are trending upward, especially following 2018, indicating a heightened academic focus on trade dynamics and protectionist policies. Knobel et al. (2024) note that positive effects on certain industrial sectors resulted from reduced dependency on imports or exports subjected to higher duties, or from options to quickly redirect trade flows to alternative suppliers and customers. This variation in sectoral impacts highlights the complex nature of modern global value chains and the different levels of substitutability among products and suppliers. Agricultural industries were especially affected by retaliatory tariffs. Žemaitytė et al. (2020) noted that the US agriculture and automotive sectors were the most impacted by the trade war. Adjemian et al. (2021) provide a detailed analysis of the soybean market, highlighting significant financial losses for US farmers resulting from Chinese retaliatory tariffs on agricultural exports. Chow et al. (2020) also note that these tariffs severely damaged US agricultural exports, particularly soybeans, resulting in significant financial setbacks for farmers. Ramos et al. (2020) observe that agricultural and animal products, as well as some final goods such as footwear and electronics, were heavily impacted, whereas mineral products faced less disruption.

The terms "Liberalization," "Prices," and "Performance" demonstrate clear and noticeable growth, particularly after 2020, a direct response to global economic disruptions and reforms. The increase in mentions of the "United States," reaching 20 occurrences by 2025, decisively highlights this country's critical role in global trade analysis. The data unequivocally shows a significant shift in academic focus from the broad trade concepts of the 1990s to more complex and politically sensitive topics, including "Impact," "Tariffs," and specific country references such as China and the United States from 2018 onward. This trend aligns seamlessly with major geopolitical events, including the US–China trade war and the substantial trade realignments that have taken place in the wake of the pandemic. Cheng et al. (2020) found that the US-China trade war markedly decreased US final and intermediate demand for Chinese products, especially impacting the Electronic, ICT, and Electrical sectors, which saw the largest declines. The overall US deadweight losses amounted to \$1.5 billion, with total losses to consumers and importers reaching \$3.3 billion, equivalent to 0.05 per cent of the gross US output.

The earlier period from 1991 to 2000 clearly showed limited thematic diversity and minimal term usage. In stark contrast, data from the post-2010s reveal a significant increase in specialisation and depth. Notably, the term "Policy," which appeared only four times from 2000 to 2011, rose to 39 mentions by 2025. This notable trend underscores the growing importance of policy analysis in trade research. The accompanying table not only documents the dynamic shifts in thematic focus over time but also vividly illustrates the increasing complexity and geopolitical emphasis in international trade scholarship in recent decades.

**Table 3: Word Frequency Over Time**

Year	Impact	China	Policy	Trade	International Trade	Tariffs	Performance	Prices	Liberalization	United States
1991	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1992	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
1993	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
1994	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
1995	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
1996	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
1997	0	1	1	0	4	2	0	0	0	0
1998	0	1	3	0	4	2	0	0	0	0
1999	0	1	4	0	5	3	0	0	1	0

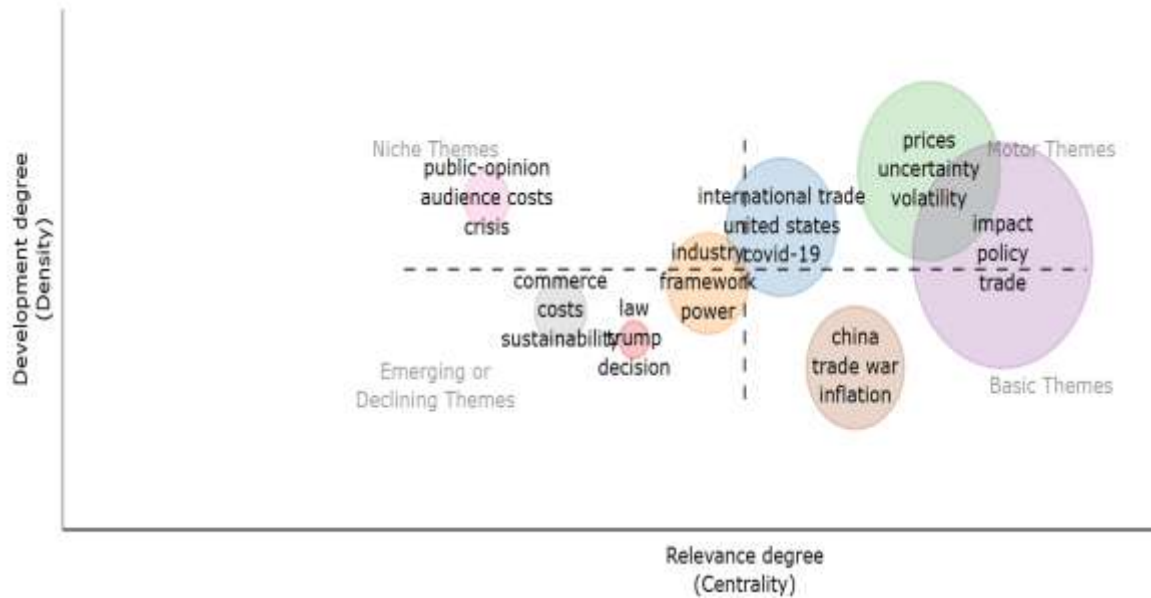
2000	0	1	4	0	7	3	0	0	1	0
2001	0	1	4	0	7	3	0	0	1	0
2002	0	1	4	0	7	3	0	0	1	0
2003	0	1	4	0	7	3	0	0	1	0
2004	0	1	4	0	9	3	0	0	1	1
2005	0	1	4	0	9	3	0	0	1	1
2006	0	1	4	0	9	3	0	0	1	1
2007	0	1	4	0	9	3	0	0	1	1
2008	0	1	4	0	9	3	0	0	1	1
2009	0	1	4	0	9	3	0	0	1	1
2010	0	1	4	0	10	3	0	0	1	1
2011	0	1	4	0	10	3	0	0	1	1
2012	0	2	4	1	11	3	0	0	1	2
2013	0	2	4	1	11	3	0	0	1	2
2014	0	2	5	1	11	4	0	0	1	2
2015	0	2	5	1	11	4	0	0	1	2
2016	0	2	5	1	11	4	0	0	2	2
2017	0	3	5	1	12	4	0	0	2	2
2018	0	4	7	2	13	5	0	0	2	3
2019	1	8	10	5	16	5	0	0	2	6
2020	3	12	13	10	19	5	2	1	4	9
2021	7	15	18	12	24	5	5	2	6	13
2022	16	23	21	15	25	10	5	8	11	14
2023	27	30	29	23	26	14	10	14	13	16
2024	44	41	34	26	28	22	14	18	15	20
2025	51	47	39	32	28	25	21	21	20	20

Source: Authors' Compilation from Biblioshiny

**Thematic Map Identified by the Co-Occurrence Network:-**

Figure 3 presents a thematic map based on co-occurrence network analysis, organizing key research themes in the field of international trade according to their centrality (relevance) and density (development). The analysis reveals that themes such as “prices,” “uncertainty,” and “volatility” are positioned as motor themes, indicating that they are well developed and highly influential within the literature. In other words, it represents high centrality and high density. In contrast, “impact,” “policy,” and “trade” fall under basic themes, suggesting that, while central to the field, they remain conceptually broad or underdeveloped. This shows high centrality and low density. Thematic clusters such as “China,” “trade war,” and “inflation” also appear in this quadrant, reflecting their strong relevance to current debates but ongoing theoretical consolidation. Niche themes, including “public opinion,” “audience costs,” and “crisis,” are well-structured yet peripheral, indicating focused but limited influence. Niche theme represents low centrality and high density. Meanwhile, themes like “commerce,” “costs,” “sustainability,” “law,” “Trump,” and “decision” are situated in the emerging or declining quadrant, suggesting they are either losing prominence or have not yet matured. This shows low density and low centrality. Bridging themes, such as “international trade,” “United States,” “COVID-19,” “industry,” “framework,” and “power”, lie near the center of the map, acting as connectors across thematic areas, representing conceptual linkages between various quadrants. Overall, the figure illustrates an evolving research landscape increasingly shaped by economic instability, geopolitical shifts, and policy-driven inquiry.

Fig 3: Thematic Map Identified by the Co-Occurrence Network



Source: Authors' Compilation from Biblioshiny

### Conclusion: -

Globalization and trade wars are interconnected. Though globalization offers numerous advantages, it also causes tensions and conflicts among nations. Evidence highlights the dangers of protectionist escalation in a connected global economy and is manifested in significant costs imposed on the economies involved, including lower GDP growth, welfare losses from increased consumer prices, disruptions in supply chains, and sector-specific dislocations. The rise of trade wars has exposed the difficulties of maintaining an open and rules-based international trading system amid increasing economic nationalism and protectionism. To tackle these issues, it is crucial to strengthen international institutions, foster cooperation among countries, and address the root causes of trade conflicts. The trade wars of the mid-2020s have reshaped the global economy, moving from basic price competition to a more complex contest over “green protectionism” and technological independence. As manufacturing shifts to emerging hubs within the BRICS+ bloc, these countries discover that their traditional edge of low-cost labour is being challenged by new environmental trade barriers, such as the European Union’s Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). This policy change affects specific sectors: heavy industries like steel and cement in India and Brazil now need to quickly adopt “Green Steel” and hydrogen-based methods to avoid costly carbon tariffs that could make their exports uncompetitive in the Western markets.

The business sector is responding to this tension by reconfiguring supply chains, shifting from the lean efficiency of “Just-in-Time” to a more resilient “Just-in-Case” approach. This trend is clear in industries like automotive and energy, where the race for control over the Electric Vehicle (EV) supply chain has prompted countries such as Indonesia to utilize their critical mineral resources like nickel through local processing and added value manufacturing. Meanwhile, multinational companies are embracing “friend-shoring” and “China + 1” strategies to broaden their geographic footprint, aiming to reduce the risks of trade wars and climate-related disruptions at major ports. The broader effect on global trade is a growing divide: some emerging markets are advancing rapidly into high-tech green manufacturing, while others face increasing “Green Premiums” and a technological gap that could hinder their growth if they fail to navigate the increasingly politicized climate policies and international trade challenges. Future research should explore long-term structural impacts, distributional effects, and the interaction of trade policy with other aspects of economic strategy to offer a more comprehensive analysis of trade conflicts in the 21st century.

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