

Perspectives on Domestic Regional Public Goods Research: A Bibliometric Analysis of CNKI Journals (Postprint)

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The intensification of global issues, increasing difficulty in global governance, and the shift from globalization to regionalization have underscored the importance of regional public goods, making them a key focus of international political economy research amidst profound changes unseen in a century. [Method/Process] Based on 330 literature pieces on regional public goods collected in the CNKI database, this study employs CiteSpace to construct knowledge mapping, combined with selected textbooks, translations, and monographs on regional public goods, to analyze the current status, hotspots, and future development trends of domestic research in this field. [Results/Conclusion] Domestic research on regional public goods concentrates on three themes: concept and connotation, application of regional public goods, and China's approach to their provision. The study recommends expanding research content and updating research methods to better serve China's participation in global governance.

Full Text

Perspective on Domestic Regional Public Goods Research: A Bibliometric Analysis Based on CNKI Journals

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] The intensification of global problems, increasing difficulty in global governance, and the shift from globalization to regionalization have highlighted the importance of regional public goods, making

them a focal point in international political economy research amid unprecedented global changes. [Method/Process] Based on 330 literature items related to regional public goods collected from the CNKI database, this study employs CiteSpace to generate knowledge maps. Combined with selected textbooks, translations, and monographs on regional public goods, it analyzes the current status, hotspots, and future development trends of domestic research on this topic. [Result/Conclusion] Domestic research on regional public goods concentrates on three aspects: concepts and connotations, applications of regional public goods, and China's approach to their provision. The study recommends expanding research content and updating methodologies to better serve China's participation in global governance.

Keywords: Regional public goods; Belt and Road Initiative; Area studies; Knowledge map; Bibliometric analysis

1 Data Sources and Research Methods

This study's data originates from China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI). A fuzzy search was conducted in the CNKI database for literature with themes or titles containing "regional public goods," "regional public products," "regional international public goods," or "regional international public products." Given that geopolitical shifts toward a "parallel system" following the Russia-Ukraine conflict might increase relevant publications, the search was limited to before the conflict's outbreak in early 2022, yielding 577 initial results. After eliminating review articles, commentaries, news items, duplicates, and literature with low relevance, 330 valid documents were retained for analysis.

In terms of methodology, this study utilizes the bibliometric software CiteSpace to comprehensively apply knowledge measurement techniques. By mapping the knowledge domain of regional public goods research, it visualizes relevant research content, analyzes the evolution of domestic scholarship on regional public goods, and projects future development trends.

2.1 Temporal and Journal Distribution of Publications

Analyzing the temporal distribution of domestic research literature on regional public goods provides direct insight into the academic community's attention level and the field's growth trajectory. Domestic research on regional public goods can be divided into three distinct phases [Figure 1: see original paper]. The first phase (1999–2007) saw a cumulative total of 11 publications, indicating that research on regional public goods was still in its infancy with relatively weak scholarly engagement. The second phase (2008–2019) produced 279 publications. In 2008 and 2010, Fan Yongming published two articles in the top-tier journal *World Economics and Politics*, sparking interest in regional public goods within China's international relations community and establishing the concept

as a new perspective for analyzing regional cooperation. In 2010, the translation of *Regional Public Goods: From Theory to Practice*—originally published by the Inter-American Development Bank and Asian Development Bank in 2004 and translated by Fan Yongming’s team—significantly advanced domestic research integration with international scholarship. The third phase (2020–2021) generated 40 publications, showing a year-by-year decline and suggesting waning research momentum that requires new breakthroughs. As the Belt and Road Initiative has progressed from foundation-laying to substantive development, its circle of participating countries has expanded, making it a widely welcomed international public good and cooperation platform. The global shift from globalization to regionalization will undoubtedly reinvigorate research examining China’s cooperation with different world regions through the lens of regional public goods.

Using the journal classification from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ *AMI Comprehensive Evaluation Report of Chinese Humanities and Social Sciences Journals (2022)* as the standard, journals publishing regional public goods research are concentrated in core journals. Notably, both journals in the “international politics” category—*World Economics and Politics* (top-tier) and *Journal of Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies* (authoritative)—serve as key outlets, with *World Economics and Politics* alone publishing 16 relevant articles. The journal with the highest publication count is the CSSCI collection *Fudan International Relations Review*, with 27 articles. As a concept spanning political science and economics, regional public goods research primarily draws from Chinese politics and international politics (31.31% of sample literature) and economic system reform (28.43%), with additional contributions from economic theory, fiscal studies, trade, finance, and other fields. Table 2 lists the top five most-cited domestic articles on regional public goods, all published in the top-tier journal *World Economics and Politics*, demonstrating that this concept has become a highly prominent theme in Chinese academia.

2.2 Statistics on Authors and Research Institutions

Since the first academic paper on regional public goods appeared in 1999, Chinese scholars have conducted sustained and in-depth research on this theme, producing several influential scholars. Based on publication counts, Huang He leads with 10 articles, followed by Song Xiaofeng (7 articles), Lu Guangsheng (6 articles), and He Ping (6 articles). Notably, Huang He and He Ping from Fudan University have published monographs on regional public goods and co-edited Volume 22 of *Fudan International Relations Review* in 2018, linking regional public goods theory with the Belt and Road Initiative. In terms of institutional output, Fudan University (52 articles) and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (21 articles) rank highest. The former is a university strong in basic theoretical research, while the latter is a think tank emphasizing applied policy research, indicating that the concept of regional public goods has attracted attention from both theoretical and policy-oriented research communities, con-

tributing to theoretical exploration and practical guidance for China's foreign cooperation.

Other productive institutions include comprehensive universities such as Peking University and Jilin University, foreign language universities like Beijing Foreign Studies University and Shanghai International Studies University, finance and economics universities including Dongbei University of Finance and Economics and Central University of Finance and Economics, and research institutes such as the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies and Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. This distribution reflects multidisciplinary, multi-perspective, and multi-angle collaboration. Geographically, beyond Beijing and Shanghai, research institutions are spread across northeast, southwest, southeast, and northwest China, though central regions show comparatively less engagement.

To better understand author collaboration patterns, CiteSpace 5.8.R3 was used to generate a co-authorship knowledge map [Figure 2: see original paper]. In this visualization, label size represents publication volume, 连线 thickness indicates collaboration intensity, and color depth reflects temporal differences in collaboration. Overall, domestic research on regional public goods demonstrates a vibrant landscape with a substantial author community. However, few cohesive research teams have emerged. The largest collaboration sub-network exists within Fudan University's School of International Relations and Public Affairs and Institute of International Studies. Most collaboration remains intra-institutional, with cross-institutional networks yet to form, which hinders deeper and more sustainable research development. Considering published translations and monographs, the Fudan University research team, represented by Fan Yongming, Huang He, and He Ping, has made crucial contributions to promoting regional public goods research domestically and facilitating international academic exchange.

2.3 Keyword Distribution and Evolution of Research Hotspots

Keywords reflect the core content of literature, with high-frequency keywords representing research hotspots. A keyword co-occurrence knowledge map generated using CiteSpace 5.4.R1 reveals concentrated clusters around terms such as regional public goods, regional public products, international public goods, public goods, and regional international public goods. After removing non-informative keywords like "implications" and "suggestions," the timeline view of keywords in regional public goods research [Figure 3: see original paper] shows clear clustering effects, visually demonstrating that Chinese academia has produced substantial research around this concept that aligns with and serves China's diplomatic priorities. Chronologically, research evolved from regional economic integration in neighboring regions like East Asia to functional cooperation following the 2008 global financial crisis, and subsequently to the Belt and Road Initiative and a community with a shared future for mankind. Regional public goods have become an important analytical tool and research perspective for interpreting China's construction of new-type international relations in the new era, representing a significant dimension of major-country

diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

Keyword bursts—terms with exceptionally high frequency over short periods—are marked by red horizontal lines indicating their importance and attention level in the field, with longer burst duration suggesting stronger research frontiers. Using the Burstness function with γ set to 0.4 (other parameters default), 11 burst keywords were detected [Figure 4: see original paper]. After merging similar expressions, two distinct phases emerge: pre-2017 research focused on East Asian regional cooperation and neighborhood diplomacy, while post-2017 research concentrates on China and the Belt and Road Initiative. This shift reflects the close integration between regional public goods and China's Belt and Road Initiative.

3.1 Concept and Connotation of Regional Public Goods

The contradiction between individual rationality and collective rationality constitutes the greatest obstacle to inter-state cooperation in addressing public issues. As interdependence deepens, global public problems have attracted increasing academic attention. Public goods, an economic concept, refers to products and services provided by a government to satisfy public needs across society. In 1776, Adam Smith first assigned governments the function of supplying public goods in *The Wealth of Nations*, a concept that gradually developed through studies of government-market relations. In the 1960s, Kindleberger and Gilpin introduced the concept into international relations and international political economy, which subsequently evolved through two developmental stages: international public goods and regional public goods. The concept of regional public goods was first proposed by American scholar Sandler. Using international public goods as a reference, those supplied and consumed only within a specific region rather than globally can be considered regional public goods.

Domestic research on regional public goods follows two logical pathways: theoretically, it expands the traditional concept of international public goods in international cooperation, reflecting interdisciplinary integration between political science and economics; practically, it represents a fusion of hegemonic stability theory and regional integration theory, systematized through the developmental practice of regionalism and offering a new perspective for studying regional cooperation. Chinese scholars' definitions of regional public goods vary slightly, with three alternative terms besides the common "regional public goods": regional public products, regional international public goods, and regional international public products [Figure 3: see original paper]. Despite these variations, the shared emphasis is clear: "those international public goods supplied and consumed only within a specific region, not globally," characterized by "joint provision, collective decision-making, reasonable cost-sharing, and shared benefits, with externalities inevitably inviting involvement from extraregional major powers."

Supply and demand serve as a key to understanding regional public goods and

constitute their core research content. Due to the continuous emergence of global issues, demand for public goods is often treated as a priori, leading to scholarly neglect of demand-side analysis. Compared to demand, domestic academia focuses more on supply issues. As a type of public good, regional public goods exhibit the two fundamental characteristics of non-excludability and non-rivalry, inevitably creating free-rider problems and causing supply shortages. Particularly in recent years, with rising protectionism, populism, and globalization reversal, the severe shortage of international public goods and their increasing “privatization” have hindered global economic development. Under such circumstances, countries joining together to provide regional public goods for regional stability and prosperity will become a major focus in international politics and world economics. Because regional public goods cover smaller geographical areas, the benefits and costs for participating countries are more transparent, thereby avoiding the pervasive free-rider problem in global public goods. Cost-sharing thus becomes the internal mechanism through which regional public goods can best prevent privatization.

Current supply practices reveal three main models: the North American model (hegemonic supply), the EU model (regional major-power supply), and the East Asian model (multinational joint supply), with cooperation among emerging economies often proceeding issue-by-issue. The first model is primarily supplied by the United States. In monetary and financial affairs, for instance, the US dollar dominates as the primary external asset in most countries’ foreign exchange reserves and serves as the global currency for trade settlement and capital flows, with dollar stability directly affecting global financial stability. The second model involves dominant supply by regional major powers. For example, Japan, as Asia’s “flying goose,” has provided assistance to nearly all Asian countries including China and South Korea while serving as a market provider. The third model features cooperative supply by regional countries. After the 1997 Asian financial crisis, for instance, China, Japan, and South Korea actively engaged in mutual currency swaps under the Chiang Mai Initiative framework, playing a crucial role in regional financial stability.

3.2 Application of Regional Public Goods

Building upon conceptual clarification, domestic scholarship primarily employs regional public goods as an analytical tool for examining regional cooperation, giving it issue-specific attributes. In regional cooperation, both soft institutions and hard infrastructure exhibit non-rivalry and non-excludability in consumption, thus possessing public goods characteristics. Except for a few studies on ancient East Asian systems or the Ming dynasty’s East Asian international order, domestic research overwhelmingly focuses on contemporary issues, particularly after the concept’s introduction by Western scholars.

In terms of application areas and regions, three characteristics emerge. First, research on China’s cooperation with neighboring regions using the regional public goods framework is most abundant, covering security, economic, and

environmental domains. As a latecomer to international public goods provision, China should focus its supply content and partners on neighboring countries, concentrating on small-scale initiatives or local innovations. Liu Changming and Sun Yunfei analyze East Asia's security dilemma through the lens of security public goods supply-demand contradictions, arguing that China as a regional power should actively serve as a security public goods provider. Guo Yanjun examines US-East Asian security governance based on public goods externality theory, concluding that America's "control"-type security model—centered on bilateral military alliances and supplemented by multilateral mechanisms—can no longer meet East Asia's demand for regional security public goods. Zhang Rui and Wang Xiaofei argue that China-ASEAN power interconnection possesses regional public goods attributes and serves as a means to shape a closer China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

Second, research on cooperative mechanisms and institutional construction using regional public goods theory is relatively common, primarily focusing on China's periphery such as East Asia. Huang He and Yang Haiyan suggest that by leading the supply of regional public goods in the Lancang-Mekong sub-regional cooperation, China can promote the alignment of development strategies among regional countries, ultimately forming a cooperation network with China as the central node. Huang He and Dai Liting argue that the new regional cooperation mechanism—led by China and participated in by all Lancang-Mekong riparian countries—compensates for Western countries' inability to provide public goods due to declining power. Li Junjiu and Chen Jiabin contend that China plays a crucial role in providing important regional public goods to Northeast Asia—namely, an open trade market and a stable regional monetary and financial order—more safely and reliably than extraregional suppliers. Yuan Jirong discusses China's supply pathways in East Asian public goods, emphasizing consistency with China's domestic institutionalization and adherence to principles of steadiness, pragmatism, gradualism, and equality.

Third, literature examining China's competition with other major global powers through regional public goods has increased since the Belt and Road Initiative's proposal. He Zhigao studies competition and cooperation between China and the EU in providing regional public goods, emphasizing necessary coordination in supply and demand. Wang Lianhe notes that the hollowing-out of APEC and the collapse of the Trans-Pacific Partnership indicate America's more conservative calculations regarding regional economic public goods, with supply increasingly relying on regional cooperation rather than US leadership, creating space for China's participation.

Regarding analytical perspectives, domestic research generally follows two economic approaches. On one hand, the "supply-demand" angle analyzes the quality and efficiency of regional cooperation, focusing on equilibrium analysis of regional public goods. These studies cover major world regions and countries, examining both trade-production and financial-infrastructure products. Their conclusions demonstrate that due to the externalities of regional public goods,

extraregional countries have “legitimacy” in participating in their supply. On the other hand, the “cost-benefit” perspective analyzes the drivers and obstacles of regional cooperation, emphasizing incentive mechanisms for regional public goods. Calculating the costs and benefits of providing regional public goods highlights the internal motivations for regional cooperation, transforming traditional regional cooperation theory into a quantifiable and empirically testable framework that enhances scientific rigor.

In terms of analytical tools, domestic research predominantly employs qualitative methods with insufficient quantitative tools. Li Junjiu and Chen Jiabin use SWOT analysis to examine China’s advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and challenges in supplying regional public goods for Northeast Asian economic cooperation. Yang Haiyan employs cooperative game models to analyze supply dilemmas and cooperation mechanisms for regional public goods, proposing three incentive mechanisms for cooperative supply in conjunction with the Belt and Road Initiative. Pang Xun uses game theory to analyze models for overcoming collective action dilemmas in international public goods, noting that states can locally and gradually overcome collective action obstacles. Lu Changrong and Qin Dan analyze the dilemma of East Asian monetary cooperation based on game equilibrium with product heterogeneity, arguing that multilateral decision-making leads to inefficient equilibria.

3.3 China’s Approach to Regional Public Goods Supply

As economic globalization and regionalization deepen, global governance disorder has created common challenges for humanity: peace deficits, development deficits, governance deficits, and trust deficits. Effective strategies for public problem governance are urgently needed, and increasing international public goods supply has become a global consensus. Particularly after the 2008 global financial crisis, massive gaps in international public goods supply and their “privatization” tendencies have hindered global economic development. European and American countries, preoccupied with domestic concerns, have shown declining willingness to supply international public goods. Currently, deepening regional cooperation represents the most distinctive feature of the era, with regional governance becoming a normalized mechanism for stabilizing regional cooperation in international relations. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the regional turn in global governance. Regional cooperation in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe all demonstrates severe challenges of insufficient regional public goods supply.

Fan Yongming proposes that constructing regional public goods theory should incorporate Chinese characteristics to serve China’s diplomatic strategy. China’s active participation in global and regional affairs, its role in maintaining world peace and development, and its promotion of regional trust and cooperation demonstrate the responsibility of a major country. The Belt and Road Initiative represents a beneficial attempt by China to participate in global governance and provide international public goods. Regional coop-

eration platforms advocated by China—such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, China-CELAC Forum, and China-CEEC “17+1” cooperation mechanism—serve as regional public goods that provide institutional foundations for China’s cooperation with various regions while acting as vehicles for jointly building the Belt and Road, achieving integration of theory and practice. As the world’s largest international cooperation platform, numerous transnational activities under the Belt and Road Initiative possess regional or inter-regional public goods attributes, and areas covered by the initiative are likely to form new regional public goods supply patterns.

Based on the keyword burst map [Figure 4: see original paper], the Belt and Road Initiative has become a major focus of domestic regional public goods research since 2017. Research primarily examines the public goods attributes of the Belt and Road, China’s role and methods in supplying regional public goods, and the transition from China’s global governance solutions to implementation mechanisms for jointly building the Belt and Road. The legitimacy of China’s participation in regional public goods supply lies in the free-rider problem and supply incapacity of regional countries. Wang Fei argues that China’s participation in Latin American infrastructure development and provision of financial liquidity will effectively address the region’s long-standing shortage of regional financial public goods. Shi Yinghua and Hu Xiaoli conduct theoretical analysis on the connotation and supply of Belt and Road regional public goods, proposing the construction of effective supply mechanisms and supply model innovations tailored to demand. As Belt and Road projects have taken root worldwide and yielded early harvests, the new concept for high-quality development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period emphasizes broader, wider-ranging, and deeper opening-up to promote mutually beneficial international cooperation. Particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, scholars have begun interpreting China-Southeast Asia vaccine cooperation through the regional public goods lens, viewing it as powerful evidence of “people-to-people connectivity.”

Faced with the absence and failure of global international public goods, regional public goods will become a new growth area for future international cooperation. Especially as the Belt and Road Initiative deepens, it has become both a component of China’s participation in global governance and demonstration of its major-country responsibility, and an important means and implementation method of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. As a new perspective for promoting regional cooperation, regional public goods still have weaknesses in theoretical value and practical significance that require joint efforts from domestic academia to innovate.

Regarding research content, priority should be given to strengthening studies on the legitimacy of China’s participation in regional public goods supply and how China should supply them. Domestic scholars can ground their theoretical innovation in South-South cooperation, examining the legitimacy of China as an extraregional participant in supplying regional public goods for Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and other regions. This requires breaking free

from old theoretical frameworks centered on Western countries, such as “center-periphery” theory and dependency theory from the bygone era of old systems.

Regarding research methods, innovation is needed to increase the proportion of quantitative methods. For instance, game theory can enhance scientific rigor by 刻画 ing suppliers’ cost-benefit calculations and punishment space for free-riders. Additionally, economic models can be developed introducing marginal or infra-marginal analysis, using econometric software to quantify costs and benefits for both suppliers and demanders of regional public goods.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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