

A Study on the Effective Paths to Enhance the International Communication Power of China's Rule of Law Discourse

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Abstract

Since the reform and opening up, the rule of law discourse, as a reflection of China's rule of law construction practice, has continued to develop, forming a socialist rule of law discourse system with Chinese characteristics. The report of the 20th CPC National Congress echoes the requirements of telling China's story and ruling the country in accordance with the law in a comprehensive manner, guiding the direction of expression of the socialist rule of law discourse system with Chinese characteristics. Nowadays, as an emerging power, discourse dissemination lags behind China's economic rise. In order to eliminate the hegemony of the Western rule of law discourse and grasp the ideological autonomy of the rule of law, it is necessary to strengthen the international dissemination and influence of the rule of law discourse of the socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics, to establish the authority of the rule of law discourse, to promote cultural self-confidence and self-reliance, and to enhance the soft power of the national culture and display the image of a great power.

Keywords: rule of law discourse, international communication, discourse power, national image

1. Introduction

Marx pointed out in *The German Ideology* that "language is the direct embodiment of thought." (Marx & Engels, 2009) Discourse has the attributes and functions of language, and through the expression and function of language, it builds compulsory expectations and forms a stable social order. Discourse is a set of "spoken rules of conduct" (Foucault, 2001), manifested through language expression, is a symbol system with ideological attributes, values. Within a stable system, discourse is transformed into norms based on power, reflecting a specific ideology and purpose. As an ideological symbol system and a form of social interaction, discourse is not only a tool for linguistic communication, but also has the function of calling, persuading and even changing others' ideas and beliefs.

In today's world, dialogue and cooperation are the main trends in international politics, and national discourse, as a form of game of national interests, is essentially a reflection of power relations (Zhao Qingsi, 2017). As an emerging power, the rise of China's economy has attracted the world's attention, but there is still an imbalance in China's national image in the international community in terms of weak discourse. The rule of law establishes order through legal rules and procedures, and the road of the rule of law with Chinese characteristics must be taken to improve China's international status and to shape China's discourse.

2. The Necessity of Enhancing the International Communication Power of China's Rule of Law Discourse

Nowadays, China has become the world's second largest economy, but the country's cultural soft power does not match its hard power, and the communication construction of the discourse system is still lagging behind. General Secretary Xi Jinping put forward the task of "enhancing the spreading power and influence of Chinese civilisation" (Gu Peidong, 2012) in the report of the 20th CPC National Congress, focusing on digging out and

presenting the spiritual connotation of Chinese civilisation, accelerating the construction of a discourse system and narrative system with far-reaching influence, as well as spreading and carrying forward the excellent cultural traditions, so as to present a trustworthy, fascinating and respectable Chinese national image. It points out that the new journey in the new era should enhance the country's cultural soft power, strengthen the building of international communication capacity, promote cultural self-confidence and self-reliance, and push Chinese culture to better reach out to the world.

With the development of the times, the construction of the rule of law in China has been profoundly influenced by the extraterritorial awareness of the rule of law. The introduction of the Western liberal theory of the rule of law has provided a strong impetus for the construction of the rule of law and has had a significant impact on the development of the rule of law. Nowadays, the liberal theory of the rule of law has become the ideological weapon and theoretical tool of the Western forces to implement the hegemony of discourse (Gu Peidong, 2012). In response to the hegemony of Western discourse such as the "Clash of Civilisations Theory" and the "China Collapse Theory" (Gu Peidong, 2012), we should strengthen the ideological autonomy of the rule of law, jump out of the framework of the Western discourse system, deconstruct the Western discourse, construct the Chinese discourse, enhance the discourse of Chinese specialties and cultural self-confidence, and strengthen the international dissemination of socialist rule of law ideology to highlight the importance of socialist rule of law.

From the time of reform and opening up to the beginning of the 21st century, the international dissemination of China's rule of law discourse relied mainly on the translation of laws and regulations. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, China's rule of law construction has entered the stage of comprehensive rule of law, and China has jumped from an "importing" country to an "exporting" country (Zhang Weiwei, 2022), and is gradually rising as a "civilised country" (Zhang Weiwei, 2022). The international dissemination of the rule of law discourse with Chinese characteristics is becoming more and more important.

The international dissemination of China's rule of law is a key link in enhancing China's rule of law discourse and influence and its participation in global governance. The requirements of the report of the 20th Party Congress on telling China's story and ruling the country in accordance with the law in a comprehensive manner have guided the direction of the expression of China's rule of law for the world (Xi Jinping, 2022). As an important carrier for constructing foreign rule of law discourse, enhancing the international dissemination power of the socialist rule of law discourse system with Chinese characteristics is a strategic need for the construction of China under the rule of law, establishing the discourse authority of the socialist concept of the rule of law, expanding the influence of Xi Jinping's thought on the rule of law, and a necessary path to enhance the country's cultural soft power.

3. Development of the Rule of Law Discourse in China

The socialist rule of law system with Chinese characteristics is a major achievement in the development of human institutional civilisation, an important basis for national governance in contemporary China, and a lasting guarantee for the balanced development of political civilisation and the economy and society.

The rule of law discourse is the linguistic expression of people's awareness of the phenomenon of the rule of law, reflecting, condensing and applying the practice of rule of law construction and the inherent laws. The rule of law discourse system with Chinese characteristics is a professional rule of law discourse system based on the high degree of summarization of the practice of rule of law construction in contemporary China in the governance of the country, based on the practice of rule of law in China. It includes decisions and notices on rule of law construction issued by state institutions, as well as the contents of important speeches of state leaders. The rule of law in China is a public power-led rule of law, serving the discourse system of top-down driven rule of law. Since the reform and opening up, the construction of the rule of law in China continues to develop, and in 2011 basically built a socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee put forward the construction of the rule of law discourse system with Chinese characteristics, to promote the "rule of law" towards the construction of the "rule of law in China". The rule of law discourse as a commentary on the rule of law in China has also continued to develop into a rich system of thought on the rule of law discourse with Chinese characteristics.

In December 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC was held, proposing the construction of a socialist democratic state, establishing the "sixteen-word guideline", which is significant for the construction of the rule of law in China. "Building a socialist democratic country" "Strengthening the socialist legal system, institutionalizing and legalizing democracy" "Democracy and the rule of law" "Equality before the law Everyone is equal before the law" and other slogans have been put forward one after another, providing strong support for the development of the rule of law discourse.

At the Fifteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1997, it was proposed that "our country should further expand socialist democracy, improve the socialist legal system, rule the country according

to law, and build a socialist country based on the rule of law.” Since then, “governing the country according to law” has been established as the basic strategy of the Party in leading the people to govern the country, and was incorporated into the Constitution at the Second Session of the Ninth National People’s Congress. The introduction of the discourse of “the rule of law” is an innovation and sublimation of the rule of law discourse of the previous stage, indicating that the law has risen from a tool in the objective sense to a mode of national governance. The transformation from “legal system” to “rule of law” has been completed, and the concept of the rule of law has basically been formed, elevating the status of the Constitution and the law, and the law and the rule of law have become the mainstream discourse of social governance.

At the beginning of this century, the study of rule of law discourse in China was just beginning, and the period from 2000 to 2007 was the beginning of the study of rule of law discourse in China. Academics mainly focused on the relationship between the rule of law and discourse (Liao Y, 2021), including the interpretation of rule of law issues, the relationship between public discourse and the rule of law, and the relationship between discourse and rule of law-related concepts, reflecting the academic community’s attention to and exploration of the two concepts of the rule of law and discourse.

The report of the 16th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) puts forward the idea of “adhering to the rule of law and implementing the Party’s leadership of the State and society”. The 17th CPC National Congress put forward and included the “socialist concept of the rule of law” in the report of the plenary session, combining “socialism” with “the rule of law”, which delineated the official framework for the development of China’s rule of law discourse and theory, and provided a framework for the construction of the rule of law in China. The combination of “socialism” and “rule of law” has defined the official framework for the development of China’s rule of law discourse theory, provided value guidance for China’s rule of law construction, and guided the construction of China’s contemporary rule of law discourse system. The report of the 17th National Congress points out that “we must insist on the central role of the leadership in overseeing the whole situation and coordinating all parties, improve the Party’s level of scientific, democratic and lawful governance, and ensure that the Party leads the people to govern the country effectively”. This enriches the understanding of the construction of the rule of law with Chinese characteristics.

Between 2010 and 2016, the study of rule of law discourse in China entered a phase of development. After the 18th CPC National Congress was held in 2012, the Party and the state clarified the importance of the rule of law and the construction of the discourse system and discourse capacity, and encouraged academics to study the rule of law from the perspective of discourse. In 2011, the socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics was basically completed. After the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the transition from constructing a “legal system” to building a “rule of law system” has been made, and the promotion of the “rule of law” is moving towards the comprehensive construction of the “rule of law in China”, with the rule of law as a key element. The practice and concept of building the rule of law in China have been comprehensively reshaped, and the rule of law discourse has made an all-round, systematic leap. Since 2012, the number of papers on China’s “rule of law discourse” has been on the rise, and the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2014 further promoted the development of rule of law discourse research. The conference made it clear that the overall goal of “ruling the country in accordance with the law in a comprehensive manner” is to “build a socialist rule of law system with Chinese characteristics and a socialist country under the rule of law”, and put forward the important task of “enhancing China’s discourse and influence in international legal affairs”. At this stage, the discourse of the rule of law has become an important theme in the study of the Communist Party of China (CPC), rule of law thinking, Xi Jinping’s thought on the rule of law, and rule of law in China, and the attention paid to it by the academic community has been increasing.

The Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was the first centralized plenary session of the Party to be held on the theme of the rule of law, in which it was made clear that the overall goal of “ruling the country according to law in an all-round manner” was to “build a socialist system of the rule of law with Chinese characteristics, and to build a socialist country governed by the rule of law”. The layout of the work is to “adhere to the joint promotion of the rule of law, governance and administration in accordance with the law, and adhere to the rule of law in the construction of the State, the Government and the society as a whole”. And the path of realization is “scientific legislation, strict law enforcement, impartial justice, and law-abiding by all”. After the meeting, the construction of the socialist rule of law system with Chinese characteristics was formally proposed and profoundly explained. That is, a complete system of legal norms, an efficient system of implementation of the rule of law, a strict system of supervision of the rule of law, a strong system of rule of law safeguards, and a perfect system of internal regulations of the Party. Since then, the theory of a unique socialist rule of law system has been formed, breaking the dominance of Western countries in the discourse of jurisprudence and providing a solid theoretical pillar for the development of Chinese jurisprudence.

In October 2020, at the Central Working Conference on the Comprehensive Rule of Law, the Party Central

Committee formally put forward Xi Jinping's Rule of Law Thought. Xi Jinping's thought on the rule of law is undoubtedly the latest achievement of the Chinese version of the Marxist theory of the rule of law, a uniquely Chinese discourse on the rule of law, and the crystallisation of the wisdom of the practice of the rule of law in socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The system of rule of law discourse with Chinese characteristics is a high level summary of the construction of the rule of law over the past forty years, which is constantly changing and improving with the development of the times. As the construction of the rule of law in China continues to deepen and the Party's policy orientation becomes clearer, the rule of law discourse is increasingly valued, providing theoretical support for the deepening of the theory and practice of the rule of law in China doctrinally, and providing practical action guidance for the construction of China under the rule of law in practice.

4. Effective Paths to Enhance the International Communication Power of China's Rule of Law Discourse

Enhancing the international dissemination of China's rule of law discourse is an important means of strengthening China's influence on the rule of law in the international arena. In a comprehensive manner, the international dissemination and influence of China's rule of law discourse can be enhanced by improving its international communication capacity, deepening international cooperation and cultural exchanges, and strengthening the cultivation of rule of law talents.

4.1 Improved International Dissemination of Rule of Law Discourse

Firstly, we need to build a conceptual framework for the rule of law that integrates China and the rest of the world. In order to enhance the international dissemination of China's rule of law discourse, it is first necessary to build a conceptual scope of the rule of law that can integrate China and the rest of the world, combining China's unique rule of law concepts and practices with the universal values and standards of the international community. Specific measures include: refining core concepts and systematically elaborating rule of law concepts with Chinese characteristics and international universality, such as "harmonious society" and "rule of law"; translating and promoting these concepts, accurately translating them into multiple languages, and widely publicising them through the international media, academic exchanges and cultural activities, so as to demonstrate China's successful experience in rule of law building and its unique advantages.

Secondly, regional differentiation of international communication should be strengthened. Taking into account the wide range of regions that are the recipients of international communication, the cultures, legal traditions and social backgrounds of different countries also require the development of regionally differentiated communication strategies. Specifically, in-depth research should be conducted on the legal systems, cultural habits and media ecology of individual countries to understand the acceptability of and concerns about rule of law discourse in different countries. The content and methods of dissemination are tailored according to the characteristics of different regions. For example, in developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, the practice and achievements of China's rule of law system in safeguarding social fairness and justice can be emphasised, highlighting China's national image of the rule of law and shaping and enhancing China's discourse; in developing countries, the experience and lessons accumulated by China in the process of building the rule of law can be highlighted, contributing to their wisdom of Chinese governance. In addition, the establishment and training of localised rule of law communication teams in each country can enhance the effectiveness of communication by using local languages and cultural methods.

Thirdly, the target segmentation of international communication should be strengthened. As different audiences have different needs and concerns with regard to rule of law discourse, it is essential to have a precise understanding of the needs of different audiences. Strengthening the targeting of international communication refers to the targeted design and implementation of communication content and methods in accordance with the characteristics and needs of different audience groups, so as to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of communication. Specifically, audiences in different countries can be segmented according to their occupation, age, educational background, interests and hobbies to determine their needs and preferences. Customised content and forms of communication are designed and introduced for different audience groups. For example, academics and other intellectuals can provide in-depth theoretical research on the rule of law and practical cases to show the development of China's rule of law theoretical research and research results; for the general public, the dissemination of the rule of law can be carried out in an easy-to-understand manner through social media, film and television works, and other forms to enhance the interest of the dissemination of the rule of law discourse, and to truly achieve the rule of law culture of foreign dissemination. At the same time, the establishment of an interactive communication mechanism with the audience to listen to feedback and opinions will also help to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of communication. The strategy of segmentation ensures that information is communicated more effectively to specific groups, making it easier for them to understand and accept, thus enhancing the overall effectiveness of communication.

4.2 Deepening International Cooperation and Cultural Exchanges

First, China should actively participate in the formulation and improvement of the rules of global governance. As a permanent member of the United Nations, China should actively participate in the formulation and improvement of the rules of global governance. It should actively participate in the rule of law rule-making of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and other international organizations, put forward its own views and proposals on governance, and promote international cooperation and consensus in the area of the rule of law. Through bilateral or multilateral cooperation, it should promote China's rule of law standards and experience to other countries, share China's successful cases in rule of law construction, such as its experience in anti-corruption and environmental protection, and promote international recognition and adoption of China's rule of law model, so as to enhance its international influence.

Secondly, international cultural exchanges and cooperation projects are being organised. For example, we organize and participate in international rule of law forums, academic seminars, cultural festivals and other activities to enhance exchanges and cooperation between the Chinese and foreign legal communities; we cooperate with other countries and international organizations to carry out rule of law research, training, internships and other projects to promote two-way exchanges on the rule of law culture; and we demonstrate the charm of the Chinese culture of the rule of law to the international community through publications, film and television productions, exhibitions and other forms of communication, and so on. The international dissemination of the culture of the rule of law has been promoted through the joint establishment of diversified international cultural exchange and cooperation programmes.

Thirdly, the rule of law cultural industry should be promoted internationally. The rule of law cultural industry is an important vehicle for the dissemination of rule of law discourse. To support the development of the rule of law cultural industry, the creation and distribution of books, films, television dramas and other cultural products on the rule of law should be encouraged; Chinese cultural products on the rule of law should be promoted to the international market and their influence broadened through platforms such as international book fairs, film festivals, cultural exhibitions and so on; and cultural brands on the rule of law that have an international impact should be created to enhance the visibility and reputation of Chinese cultural products on the rule of law.

4.3 Strengthening Education for the Rule of Law in International Communications

First, it is clear that the education and training mechanism for rule of law personnel is targeted. The cultivation of high-quality rule of law talents is an important force for improving the rule of law discourse system with Chinese characteristics and shaping the image of the rule of law. The education and training of international communication talents in the rule of law should formulate specific training objectives for talents in the rule of law, and make clear the international vision, cross-cultural communication skills and professionalism they need to have; and establish a perfect training mechanism for talents, including curriculum, teaching methods, practice opportunities, etc., so as to ensure that the training of talents is systematic and targeted.

Secondly, the construction of a platform for teachers of international rule of law personnel should be improved. High-quality teachers are the key to training international rule of law personnel. The international training of teachers should be strengthened in order to enhance their cross-cultural teaching skills and knowledge of the international rule of law; experts and scholars in the field of the international rule of law should be introduced to enrich the faculty and improve the quality of teaching; and mechanisms for exchanges between Chinese and foreign teachers should be established to promote exchanges and cooperation between Chinese and foreign teachers through mutual visits, lectures and collaborative research, among other means.

Thirdly, diversified training programmes for international rule of law personnel should be enriched. Diversified training programmes help to enhance the international competitiveness of rule of law personnel. Programmes such as international exchange students, joint training and international internships have been launched to provide students with international learning and practice opportunities. Cross-cultivation between law and foreign languages, international relations and other disciplines is promoted to enhance the comprehensive quality of students. Strengthen the practical teaching link, and improve students' practical ability and international perspective through mock courts, case analyses and other means.

Through the implementation of the above paths, the international dissemination of China's rule of law discourse will be significantly enhanced, helping to strengthen China's influence and discourse power in the international rule of law field.

5. Conclusion

China's rule of law discourse is open to development. It is a summary of China's rule of law construction and a practical crystallisation of Xi Jinping's thought on the rule of law. China's discourse does not seek hegemony of discourse, but uses dialogue to enhance the recognition of China's rule of law discourse in the international community. China's rule of law discourse tells a deep and thorough national story and presents a colourful, vivid

and three-dimensional image of China. The external dissemination of the rule of law discourse with Chinese characteristics is a long-term task. It requires continuous efforts and innovations by the Party, the Government and the people, as well as sustained and standardised work by many parties. Ultimately, the authoritative norms of Chinese rule of law discourse will be formed, and a system of rule of law discourse with Chinese characteristics, style and flavour will be constructed.

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