

# *Preliminary Analysis of Hotspots and Frontiers of Research on Foreign-Related Rule of Law in China: Based on CiteSpace Visual Analysis*

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**Abstract:** As a bridge between “domestic rule of law” and “international rule of law”, “foreign-related rule of law” is a matter of national sovereignty, security and development interests, and is an important pivot point in the strategy to promote the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. At present, China's foreign-related rule of law has made significant progress, but there are still shortcomings. This paper takes the relevant literature from 2015-2022 in the CNKI China Knowledge Network database as the research object, analyses authors, institutions and keywords through CiteSpace software, draws a visual network mapping, compares the current situation of foreign-related rule of law research, identifies trends in the literature and preliminarily analyses research hotspots and frontiers, with a view to providing relevant support for further promoting foreign-related rule of law.

## 1. Introduction

In 2020, the Central Committee's work conference on comprehensively following the rule of law clearly proposed that "we should adhere to the integrated promotion of the rule of law at home and the rule of law in foreign affairs". The foreign-related rule of law, a manifestation of the concept of "rule of law" in the foreign-related field [1], is an important part of the construction of China's rule of law, an innovative development of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics [2], and an important element of thought on the rule of law. “Foreign-related rule of law” is closely linked to and inseparable from “domestic rule of law” and “international rule of law”, mainly in the following ways: On one hand, " domestic rule of law " and “foreign-related rule of law” are two aspects of domestic rule of law, while “domestic rule of law” and “international rule of law” are two aspects of the global rule of law, both of which are indispensable. On the other hand, "foreign-related rule of law" plays a bridging and interactive role between "domestic rule of law" and "international rule of law", is a matter of national sovereignty, security and development interests, and is an important pivot point in the strategy to promote the modernization of national governance system and governance capacity [3]. As so far, China has made significant progress in foreign-related rule of law, for example, Professor Huang Wenyi, Dean of the Law School of Renmin University of China, pointed out in his lecture series "Telling the World about China in the Past Decade" that China's

foreign-related rule of law work has made positive progress in four main areas: strengthening legislation in foreign-related areas, improving the foreign-related rule of law service system, further promoting international cooperation in law enforcement, justice and anti-corruption, and actively promoting the rule of law in international relations[4], but it cannot be denied that there are still some shortcomings in foreign-related rule of law construction. At present, scholars have conducted some research and achieved some results on the 'rule of law in relation to foreign affairs', but there is still a gap in the relevant bibliometric statistics.

In this paper, I use CiteSpace 6.1R2 BASIC software to analyse the relevant literature, draw a visual network map, sort out the current status of research on foreign-related rule of law, identify trends in the literature and analyse the hot spots and frontiers of research, in order to provide relevant support for further promoting foreign-related rule of law.

## 2. Literature Sources and Processing

The CNKI China Knowledge Network database was used as the source database, with the subject term "foreign-related rule of law", and the search period was from January 1, 2007 to September 12, 2022. If the scope of the search and the source categories of the literature are not limited, a total of 410 articles were retrieved, including 303 academic journals, 7 dissertations, 5 conferences, 45 newspapers, 40 academic serials, 1 antiquarian book and 9 special journals, with the earliest publication date being 10 January 2015. If the scope of the search was academic journals, the literature sources were set to be restricted to Peking University Core and CSSCI, and 113 articles were retrieved, with the earliest publication date being 15 March 2015. In response to the above, the search period has been adjusted to 1 January 2015 to 12 September 2022 for journals. In addition, due to the relatively small volume of literature, the search was set to "search for journals, with no restriction on the type of source" in order to make the data analysis effective. Based on the above criteria, 303 academic journals were searched, and through screening, culling and excluding duplicate publications or literature not related to the topic, the final valid literature was 225.

To start the preparation work, export the 225 valid titles in "Refworks" format, name them "download\_00.txt" and download them to the input subfolder of the CNKI folder. Run CiteSpace 6.1R2BASIC with time slicing set to January 2015 to September 2022; time slice set to 1, i.e. 1 year as a unit; author, institution, keyword threshold (top N) set to 50 in node type; pruning can be selected multiple times Here, the first line of pathfinder and pruning sliced networks, and the second line of pruning the merged network graph pruning algorithm are selected for pruning. The selection of the above algorithms will also be partially adjusted to enhance the mapping effect.

## 3. Basic Analysis of the Results

### 3.1. Time Distribution

The time distribution of literature research is one of the important indicators to measure the development trend and hotness of foreign-related rule of law research. In this study, firstly, the time distribution statistics of 225 valid literatures were conducted. Through the time distribution, the annual publication volume can be observed visually, and the results of the annual publication volume statistics are shown in Figure 1. The annual volume data shows an overall incremental increase from 2015-2022. In particular, the annual volume of articles issued in 2015-2019 averages less than 5 articles per year, with a low volume of articles issued, in a stable state, with slight but small fluctuations; 2020-2022 shows a rapid increase. By September 2022, the year with the fastest growth rate in annual publications will be 2021, and the year with the number of publications about to exceed 100 will be 2022. Overall, the number of articles published per year is increasing year on

year.

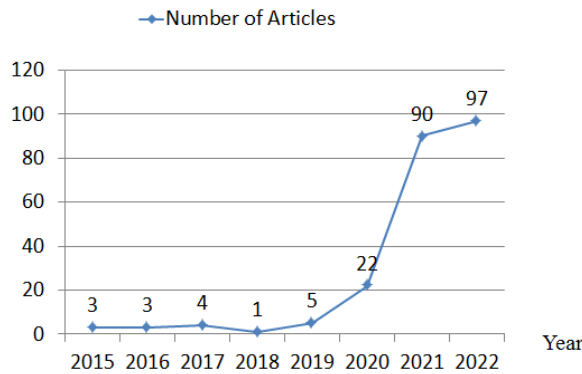


Figure 1: Statistical chart of the number of articles issued per year

### 3.2. Authorship Analysis

CiteSpace software was used to analyse the authors as follows: time slicing was set to 2015.1-2022.9, years per slice was set to 1; node type in CiteSpace 6.1R2BASIC had seven options, here Author was selected. The default options for links and selection criteria apply. The generated graph consists of network nodes and links, with the network nodes representing the authors and the links representing the co-relationships between authors. Running CiteSpace to generate a co-occurring knowledge graph of the study authors, the graph showed  $N=107$ ,  $E=23$  (density=0.0041), i.e. 107 network nodes, 23 links and a network density of 0.0041 (Figure 2).

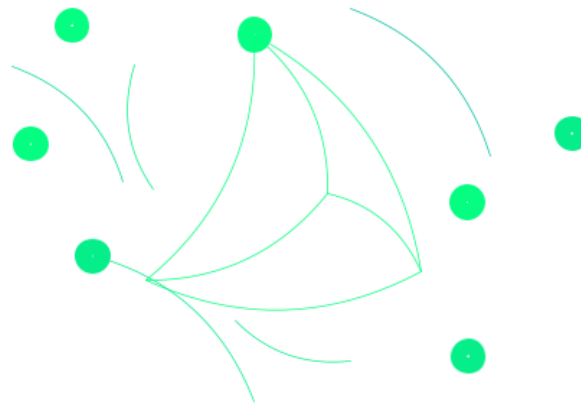


Figure 2: Author co-occurrence knowledge graphs

The graph above shows that the entire mapping network is fragmented, with fewer links between author nodes, indicating that foreign-related rule of law research is only collaborative between a few individuals, with most being independent. In addition, the data also shows that there are 23 authors who have published at least two articles, namely: Mo Jihong, Liu Xiaohong, Shang Haowen, He Zhipeng, Zhang Wenxian, Jiang Bixin, Chen Baifeng, Cai Congyan, Huang Wenyi, Huang Huikang, Gu Huajian, Ye Qing, Du Chengming, Zhang Jing, Zhang High, Huang Jin, Feng Shuo, Wu Chuanyi, Wu Ka, Liu Huawen, Huo Zhengxin, Liu Renshan and Yan Jia.



## 4. Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis, Cluster Analysis: Hotspots

### 4.1. Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

The keywords of the article are a high level summary of the main idea and core content of the article, and also imply the research value and direction of the article. The following software will be used to visualise the keywords and analyse the visual mapping: keyword co-occurrence analysis, keyword clustering analysis and keyword emergent analysis.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis, using keywords as nodes, can reflect changes in hot areas, analytical perspectives and research methods in different time series, thus revealing the intrinsic connections of the discipline. Keyword co-occurrence mapping consists of two parts: nodes and links. The nodes represent keywords, and the size of the nodes corresponds to the frequency of keywords (large nodes correspond to high frequency; small nodes correspond to low frequency); the links represent the common relationship between keywords.

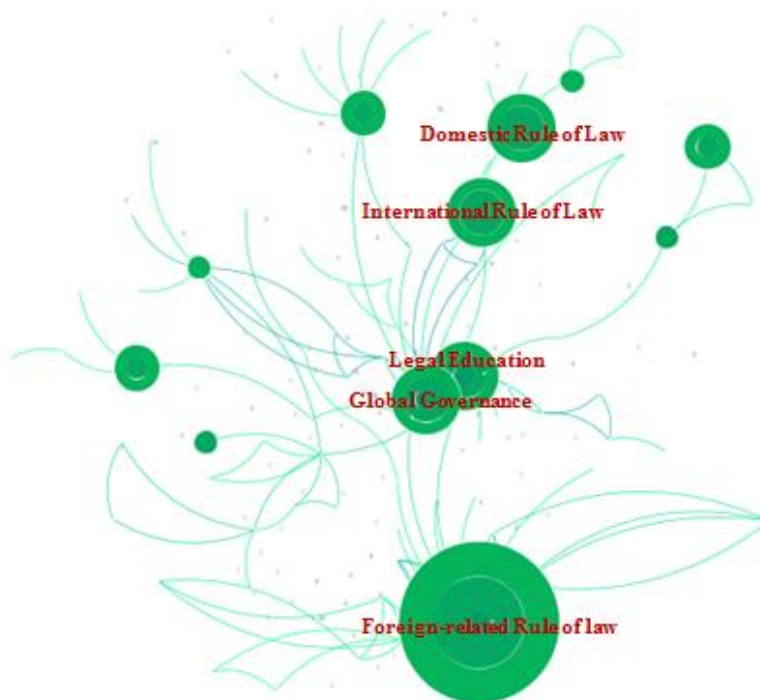


Figure 4: Keyword co-occurrence mapping for foreign-related rule of law research

The co-occurrence analysis was carried out on 225 documents, and the duplicated keywords were merged, and the mapping showed "N=148, E=155", i.e. 148 nodes and 155 links. The results of the co-occurrence mapping are shown in Figure 4: there are 148 Chinese keywords, and 7 keywords with a frequency of not less than 10, namely: foreign-related rule of law, international rule of law, global governance, domestic rule of law, legal education, international law, and talent training. On this basis, combined with secondary literature reading, it is found that the current research on foreign-related rule of law is more concentrated in foreign-related rule of law, international rule of law, domestic rule of law, legal education, personnel training, foreign-related law, foreign-related relations, extraterritorial application, extraterritorial effectiveness, etc.

## 4.2. Keyword Cluster Analysis

On the basis of the keyword co-occurrence mapping, the LLR algorithm above was clicked, through which the keyword labels can be quickly extracted to generate the keyword clustering mapping. In particular, a Modularity Q value greater than 0.3 and higher represents a more significant clustering structure, and a Weighted Mean Silhouette S greater than 0.5 represents a credible clustering result. After running, the results generated a total of 10 clustering labels (Q=0.8361>0.3, S=0.974 3>0.5), namely (Figure 5): case agreement, global governance, legal education, rule of law, rule of law talent, domestic rule of law, seeking opinions, legal English, extraterritorial application, and Belt and Road. The above clustering labels reflect to a certain extent some of the hot spots in China's foreign-related rule of law research.



Figure 5: Cluster mapping of keywords in foreign-related rule of law research

Based on the clustering analysis, a clustering timeline analysis was conducted, and the timeline view was selected in layout-visualizations to generate a keyword clustering timeline map (Figure 6). As can be seen from the figure, there is a significant increase in keywords from 2019 to 2022. keywords around 2022 mainly include: foreign relations, constitution, political and legal education, governing by law, administration by law, arbitral tribunal, interim measures, extraterritoriality, long-arm jurisdiction, dispute prevention, dispute settlement, etc. The above keywords also reflect, to a certain extent, some of the hot spots in the study of the rule of law in relation to foreign affairs.



Figure 6: Timeline view of keyword clustering in foreign-related rule of law research

### 4.3. Hotspots

As mentioned above, the frequency of keyword occurrences correlates with research hotspots, and it is generally believed that a high frequency can represent a research hotspot. Through the above-mentioned keyword co-occurrence analysis and cluster analysis, the main hotspots of research on foreign-related rule of law in China can be detected. At present, the hotspots of research on foreign-related rule of law in China can be initially summarised as: foreign-related rule of law, foreign-related rule of law and domestic rule of law and foreign rule of law, and talent training.

Hotspot I: Research on the concept and connotation of foreign-related of law

With the first clarification of the concept of "adhering to the integrated promotion of the rule of law at home and the rule of law in relation to foreign affairs", the international jurisprudence community has become more enthusiastic about the study of the rule of law in relation to foreign affairs [5]. What is "foreign-related rule of law" is not clearly defined in the conference documents and has not yet been unified in the academic community [6,7], and there are still some misconceptions about the basic concept in the domestic academic community, such as the confusion between "foreign-related rule of law" and "international rule of law". For example, the misconception that "foreign-related rule of law" is confused with "international rule of law" exists more commonly [8]. For example, Huang Huikang (2022) argues that the concept of "foreign-related rule of law" is a new concept [9] with a rich connotation. First of all, it is necessary to accurately understand and grasp the connotation of the concept of "foreign-related rule of law"; He Zhipeng (2022) argues that the conceptual choice of "foreign-related rule of law" implies terminological innovation [10]; Zhang High (2022) argues that the existence of foreign-related law indicates that there is an international rule of law in addition to the domestic rule of law. According to Zhang (2022), the existence of foreign-related law indicates that there is a dimension of foreign-related rule of law in addition to international rule of law and domestic rule of law, which needs to be specifically examined and defined [11].

Hotspot II: Foreign-related of law, domestic rule of law and the international rule of law

At the early stage of the study, there was confusion between the "foreign-related rule of law" and the "international rule of law" and a lack of understanding of the relationship between the "domestic rule of law" and the "foreign-related rule of law", which to a certain extent generalised the "foreign-related rule of law". To a certain extent, the term "foreign-related rule of law" has been generalised. Within the academic community, there is even a proposal to replace "international jurisprudence" with "foreign-related jurisprudence" as a first-level discipline [12]. Based on this, scholars have conducted a lot of research on the relationship between "foreign-related rule of law", "domestic rule of law" and "international rule of law", for example, Duan Zhongwei et al. For example, Duan Zhongwei et al. (2021) analyze the concepts of domestic rule of law, foreign-related rule of law and international rule of law, and propose countermeasures to promote domestic rule of law and foreign-related rule of law in an integrated manner [13]; Ding Libai et al. (2021) believe that domestic rule of law, foreign-related rule of law and international rule of law are the three main bodies of interaction between domestic and international rule of law. A deep understanding of the interaction among domestic rule of law, foreign-related rule of law and international rule of law is the key to grasp the concept of interaction between domestic rule of law and international rule of law in thought on the rule of law [14]; Zhang Yao (2022) argues that unlike domestic rule of law and international rule of law, foreign-related rule of law is in between the two and forms a system of its own [15]; Huang Huikang (2022) points out that it is necessary to clarify the interrelationship between "domestic rule of law" and "foreign-related rule of law", "foreign-related rule of law" and "international rule of law" "As the foreign-related wing of the national rule of law, the foreign-related rule of law plays the role of a bridge and a link between the two separate legal systems of

the national and international rule of law [16].

Hotspot III: Legal education and cultivation of rule of law talents

The training and education of legal personnel is an important part of the comprehensive rule of law and has a fundamental position in the construction of foreign-related rule of law. The keyword co-occurrence map shows that legal education and rule of law talents occupy a certain research position; the keyword clustering map shows that legal education and rule of law talents belong to one of the research hotspots; the keyword clustering timeline map shows that legal education and rule of law talents have a long research timeline, and there have been scholars conducting research on them from 2015-2022, for example, Du Huanfang (2020) points out that it is necessary to give full play to the fundamental and pioneering role of university law education in the cultivation of foreign-related rule of law professionals, and at the same time to play the role of practical departments, government departments and foreign-related enterprises to strengthen top-level design [17]. Meng Qingyu et al. (2021) pointed out that it is necessary to accelerate the structural reform on the supply side of the training of foreign-related rule of law talents in local universities, innovate the interconnected and common talent training supply mode of the government, universities and other social subjects, and show the new role of local universities in the overall planning of the strategic layout of foreign-related rule of law work [18]. According to Cui (2022), the construction of foreign-related rule of law talents should explore the use of a closed-loop talent training model, build a set of standardized, systematic and whole-process training mechanism for foreign-related rule of law talents, and form a virtuous cycle of talent training, etc. [19].

## 5. Keyword Emergent Analysis: Frontiers

### 5.1. Keyword Emergent Analysis

A keyword burst is a significant increase in the frequency of a keyword over a short period of time. This significant increase in frequency provides a visual indication of the level of interest in research at a given time, which allows the identification of relevant hotspots and frontiers in the research field. The identification of frontiers can provide an update on the evolution of research in a discipline, which can be used to predict trends in the research field and identify issues that need further exploration. CiteSpace software was run to analyse the keyword bursts, with Minimum Duration set to 1 and  $\gamma[0, 1]$  set to 0.3 in Burstness, and the burst items found =32 after running, yielding top 32 keywords with the strongest citation bursts (see Figure 7). The results show that: early research focused on China's accession to the WTO, implementation mechanism, discipline development, teaching model, asset sharing, soft law governance, offshore recovery, international hard law, case agreements; mid-term research focused on rule of law talents, law schools, training model, global governance, internationalization, legal issues, legal risks, legal education, governing the country by law, rule of law; recent research, starting from 2021, research The key words focus on legal English, rule of law China, core elements, private international law, national governance, ad hoc arbitration, cultivation paths, foreign-related law, new liberal arts, rule of law system, new era, domestic rule of law, etc. Accordingly, a brief overview of the frontiers of foreign-related rule of law is combined with secondary literature reading.



### Top 32 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

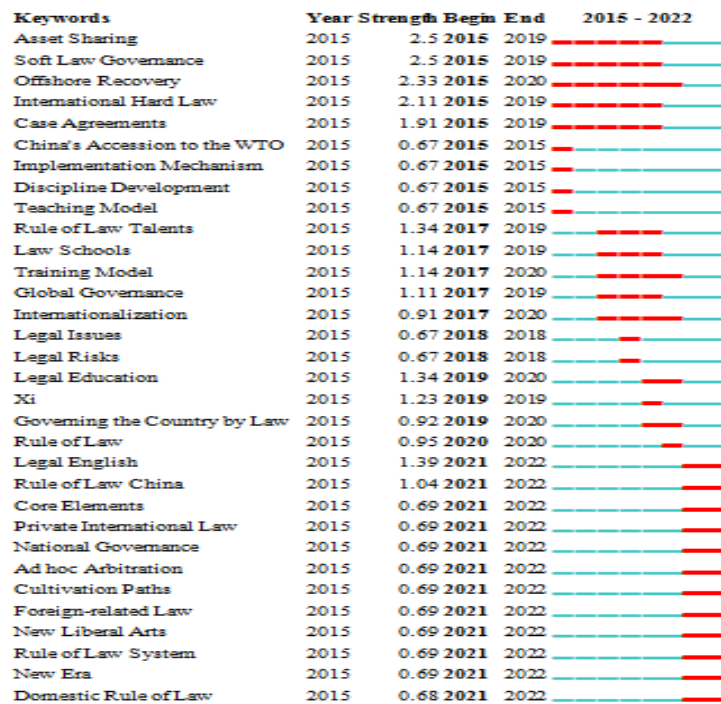


Figure 7: Keyword emergence mapping for foreign-related rule of law research

## 5.2. Frontier Analysis

### Frontier I: Building a foreign-related of law system

The foreign-related rule of law covers multiple levels, such as legislation, law enforcement, justice, law-abiding and legal services. In order to better promote the rule of law at the national level and the rule of law in foreign-related areas, the construction of a foreign-related rule of law system should be further strengthened. At present, China has made the following progress in its foreign-related rule of law work: strengthening legislation in foreign-related areas (e.g. accelerating the improvement of the legal and regulatory system of anti-sanctions, anti-interference and anti-long-arm jurisdiction, enacting the Export Control Law of the People's Republic of China, the Regulations on the List of Unreliable Entities, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Anti-Foreign Sanctions, etc.), further promoting (e.g. improve China's judicial assistance system, deepen international cooperation in the judicial field, and expand the coverage of international judicial assistance. (e.g., intensifying efforts to recover and pursue fugitives and repatriate and extradite overseas, and strengthening international cooperation in anti-corruption), improving the foreign-related rule of law service system (e.g., establishing a sound legal system for foreign-related work, promoting the universal establishment of legal counselors and police liaison officers in foreign embassies and consulates, etc.), and actively promoting the rule of law in international relations (e.g., fully participating in the international rule-making process in areas such as anti-corruption, climate change, maritime and bases, etc.) [20]. However, compared with the rule of law at home and abroad, the rule of law in foreign affairs is still relatively weak, for example, scholar Huang Huikang (2022) points out that the direction of academic research on the rule of law in foreign affairs is mostly focused on the international rule of law or the level of intersection with the international rule of law, but not enough attention is paid to the construction of the foreign-related rule of law system itself, such as foreign-related legislation, law enforcement, justice, law

compliance, law usage and legal services, and academic research has begun to show "The problem of "sectoralization" and "fragmentation" has begun to emerge in academic research. Research on the basic theory of foreign-related rule of law needs to be strengthened [21]. According to Zhang, the construction of China's foreign-related rule of law system should be based on the dual concepts of the community of human destiny and national dignity, respect for national sovereignty and dignity, protection of core interests and development interests, and the combination of goodwill cooperation and legal struggle. It should be based on the principles of respecting national sovereignty and dignity, protecting core interests and development interests, and combining goodwill and cooperation with legal struggle, and constructing a specific system that includes legislation, law enforcement, justice and foreign-related legal services at multiple levels [22].

#### Frontier II: Enhancing the practical dimension

The keyword emergence map shows that some of the research keywords starting from 2021 are legal English, ad hoc arbitration, cultivation path, and foreign-related law, which reflect the need to strengthen the practical aspect of the foreign-related rule of law from the side. For example, Lu Jiang (2022) points out that the practice of the rule of law in relation to the Belt and Road not only reflects the awareness of rules, security and fairness in thought on the rule of law, but also forms a concrete practical path of countermeasures, competition and cooperation. More importantly, in terms of global governance, the community of human destiny and the principle of "sharing and building together" have revealed new propositions in international law. Therefore, the future practice of foreign-related rule of law in the "Belt and Road" should closely focus on thought of rule of law, accelerate the strategic layout of foreign-related rule of law, and form a strong foreign-related rule of law protection system, so as to promote the high-quality development of the "Belt and Road" and reshape the new order of international rule of law [23].

#### Frontier III: Empirical analysis and cross-sectional research

While theories on foreign-related rule of law should be studied in depth, responses should be proposed and empirical analysis and cross-sectional research should be carried out, taking into account China's national conditions and practical basis. For example, Liu Rensan (2022) argues that modern technologies such as big data should be used to strengthen empirical analysis and cross-sectional research on foreign-related rule of law, and to establish a permanent mechanism of cooperation between theoretical researchers and practical departments on foreign-related rule of law, so as to effectively promote the deepening of research on foreign-related rule of law and the transformation of results in China [24].

## 6. Conclusions

This study applied CiteSpace to visualize and analyze the literature related to foreign-related rule of law research, and drew keyword co-occurrence mapping, keyword clustering mapping and keyword emergence mapping of foreign-related rule of law research in China. On this basis, combined with secondary literature search and reading, the relevant hotspots and frontier trends of foreign-related rule of law research were analyzed, and conclusions were drawn: firstly, the current hotspots of foreign-related rule of law research are mainly focused on research on issues related to the concept and connotation of foreign-related rule of law, research on foreign-related rule of law and domestic rule of law and international rule of law, research on legal education and training of rule of law talents, etc.; secondly, the frontiers of foreign-related rule of law research. By combing through the visual knowledge map and analyzing the relevant veins of China's foreign-related rule of law research, the author aims to provide relevant data support for the subsequent development of China's foreign-related rule of law research.

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