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Three-Dimensional Collaborative Path to Enhance China's Rule of Law Discourse Power in Global Climate Governance

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ABSTRACT
Against the backdrop of global climate governance entering its 3.0 epoch—defined by normative reconstruction and power redistribution—developing nations confront systemic marginalization in international rule-making and discursive contention. To mitigate this structural imbalance, this paper constructs a tripartite collaborative framework integrating domestic rule of law consolidation, foreign-related legal talent cultivation, and international public opinion shaping. Anchored in interdisciplinary international law and global governance theory, this framework addresses the cross-border nature of climate rule of law discourse. Drawing on a 12-indicator quantitative evaluation system and panel data spanning 2024–2025 (with projected 2025 values derived from official trend analyses), this study empirically validates the nonlinear synergistic coupling relationship among the three dimensions. The findings demonstrate that isolated advancement in any single dimension yields diminishing marginal returns, while cross-dimensional coordination generates exponential gains in discursive influence. Three paradigmatic case studies further corroborate that integrated progression of the three pillars has enabled China to evolve from a passive rule-taker to a proactive rule-shaper—defined as a state's capacity to propose, advocate, and promote international climate norms, rather than merely complying with externally imposed rules. Finally, targeted policy recommendations are formulated to consolidate China's discursive leadership and advance the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities within global climate governance.

KEYWORDS
Global climate governance; Rule of law discourse power; Tripartite collaborative mechanism; South-south cooperation; Mixed methods

1 Introduction

Following the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, global climate governance has undergone a profound paradigm shift, evolving from a narrow environmental concern into an encompassing arena of geopolitical competition, economic restructuring, and normative contestation. Within this context, rule of law discourse power—conceptualized as a state's capacity to formulate, interpret, and enforce international climate norms while securing normative recognition—has emerged as a pivotal determinant of influence in global governance.

As the world's largest developing nation and a major contributor to global climate action, China has achieved substantial progress in climate governance subsequent to the implementation of its dual carbon strategy. Nevertheless, three persistent bottlenecks constrain its discursive prowess: an incomplete domestic climate legal regime, a deficit of high-caliber interdisciplinary foreign-related legal professionals, and a structurally skewed international public opinion landscape. Extant scholarship predominantly examines these dimensions in isolation, failing to capture their interactive dynamics and synergistic potential.

Climate rule of law discourse power is inherently interdisciplinary, necessitating three interconnected pillars: domestic rule of law as the institutional fundamental, foreign-related legal talents as the practical vehicle, and international public opinion as the legitimacy cornerstone. This tripartite framework aligns with the cross-border, multi-stakeholder essence of global climate governance and circumvents the limitations of unidimensional legal analysis.

This paper addresses the research gap of fragmented dimensional analysis by constructing and empirically validating a three-dimensional collaborative pathway, furnishing both theoretical insights and actionable guidance for augmenting China's climate governance discourse power.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Domestic Research Progress

Domestic scholarship has laid fragmented theoretical foundations yet lacks integrative and systematic analysis. You and Li (2023) devised a coordination framework for domestic and foreign-related climate rule of law, yet neglected the correlative mechanism between judicial practice and international discourse dissemination. Wang and Zhang (2025) conducted a typological analysis of China's climate litigation cases, but failed to explore their spillover effects on international norm formulation. Mo (2022) delineated core competencies for climate negotiation professionals and

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proposed a cultivation model, without elaborating on interdisciplinary curriculum design. Zhang (2022) documented Western media's stigmatization of China's climate endeavors, yet omitted the formulation of tailored communication strategies for South-South cooperation.

2.2 Foreign Research Dynamics

Western academic discourse predominantly reflects the perspectives of developed economies and underscores their dominance in normative formulation. Hoffmann (2023) scrutinized the policy ramifications of climate litigation and advocated a citizen-judiciary-policy feedback loop. Vogler (2024) analyzed the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism as an instrument to entrench Western regulatory hegemony. The majority of Western studies marginalize the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and disregard the legitimate developmental entitlements of developing nations.

Recent scholarship from the Global South addresses this lacuna: Jones (2024) conceptualizes developing nations' climate discourse power as a function of domestic institutional capacity, international representation, and public legitimacy, resonating with the framework advanced herein. Smith (2025) further accentuates the potential of South-South cooperation initiatives to counterbalance Western-centric narratives.

2.3 Research Gap

Contemporary literature exhibits three salient limitations: inadequate empirical scrutiny of domestic-international rule of law coordination, ambiguous pathways for interdisciplinary talent cultivation, and insufficient communication mechanisms calibrated to developing nation contexts. No extant study has operationalized the synergistic nexus between domestic legal reform, talent development, and public opinion shaping. This paper redresses these gaps via the construction and empirical validation of a three-dimensional collaborative framework.

3 Methodology

This study employs an interdisciplinary mixed-methods paradigm integrating theoretical construction, quantitative econometric assessment, and multi-case holistic inquiry.

3.1 Theoretical Construction Method

Grounded in synergy theory and global governance theory, this approach constructs the tripartite collaborative model. It delineates the connotation, logical hierarchy, and interactive mechanism of the three dimensions, establishing the theoretical bedrock for subsequent empirical and case-based analysis.

3.2 Quantitative Econometric Assessment Method

A 12-indicator comprehensive evaluation system is formulated across three dimensions, with raw data sourced from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE), Supreme People's Court, CGTN, and the Oxford University Reuters Institute.

(1) Domestic rule of law foundation: legislative completeness, enforcement efficacy, judicial specialization, policy coherence

(2) Foreign-related talent capacity: international law proficiency, cross-cultural negotiation acumen, policy design expertise, representation in international institutions

(3) International public opinion influence: positive reporting ratio, agenda-setting capability, recognition among developing nations, citation rate by third-party academic outputs

All indicators are standardized via min-max normalization to eliminate dimensional disparities:

Positive indicators: $x' = \frac{x - \min(x)}{\max(x) - \min(x)}$

Negative indicators: $x' = \frac{\max(x) - x}{\max(x) - \min(x)}$

The entropy weight method is deployed to assign objective weights to individual indicators. The coupling coordination degree model is utilized to verify synergistic interrelationships:

$$C = [\frac{U_1 \times U_2 \times U_3}{(\frac{U_1 + U_2 + U_3}{3})^3}]^{1/3}, D = \sqrt{C \times T}$$

where U_1, U_2, U_3 = standardized dimensional scores; C = coupling intensity; T = comprehensive developmental level; D = coupling coordination degree.

3.3 Multi-Case Holistic Inquiry Method

Three paradigmatic, high-impact cases are subjected to holistic, in-depth analysis: Green Belt and Road Initiative normative diffusion, South-South cooperation clean stove dissemination project, BRICS climate negotiation coordination.

This methodology elucidates synergistic mechanisms across dimensions and validates the model's practical applicability.

4 Empirical Analysis

4.1 Domestic Rule of Law Foundation

China's climate governance is undergoing a fundamental transition from policy-driven governance to law-based governance. As of June 2025, a rudimentary legal edifice anchored in the *Environmental Protection Law*, *Renewable Energy Law*, and *Air Pollution Prevention and Control Law* has been established. The national carbon market, inaugurated in 2021, remains the world's largest emissions trading system by coverage. Projected 2025 trading volume and case counts are based on linear extrapolation of 2021–2024 annual growth rates, validated by expert interviews (n=3) with MEE officials. The projected 2025 trading volume reaches 235 million tons (a 24% year-on-year increase), with a turnover of 14.63 billion yuan, encompassing 3,378 key emitters across four sectors and attaining near-complete compliance.

Judicial advancements are equally notable: over 620 carbon-related cases have been adjudicated nationwide, accompanied by the establishment of 2,400 specialized environmental tribunals and 8 dedicated environmental courts. Forty-five Chinese environmental judicial rulings have been incorporated into the UNEP Global Judicial Database. Nevertheless, the absence of a dedicated *Climate Change Act* engenders regulatory voids in carbon rights delineation, cross-border carbon governance, and climate litigation procedures.

4.2 Foreign-Related Talent Capacity

China's climate legal talent pool is expanding at an accelerated pace. Sixty Chinese scholars contributed to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, with 148 serving as lead authors. In 2025, prominent Chinese academics assumed pivotal leadership roles within the IPCC. China also occupies multiple senior positions in UNFCCC subsidiary bodies, and leading domestic universities have instituted specialized climate law programs, training over 200 interdisciplinary professionals annually. Projected 2025 talent output is extrapolated from 2022–2024 enrollment and graduation data from top Chinese law schools. Notwithstanding, a critical deficit persists in high-end talents endowed with both international legal expertise and negotiation experience.

4.3 International Public Opinion Influence

Global perceptions of China's climate endeavors are progressively improving. A 2025 CGTN global survey reveals that 78% of respondents from developing nations acknowledge China's substantial contributions to global climate action. However, Western media coverage manifests structural biases: 38% of reports focus exclusively on China's aggregate emissions, while only 12% highlight its leadership in renewable energy deployment. China has extended climate assistance to more than 120 developing countries, and the 2024 BRICS New Delhi Initiative on Climate Change has secured endorsement from 78 countries.

5 Case study

5.1 Green Belt and Road Initiative Normative Diffusion

China's *Green Investment Guidelines* have been adopted by 133 financial institutions managing assets exceeding $55 trillion. The adoption rate rose from 12% in 2019 to 42% in 2025, with six ASEAN nations integrating these guidelines into their domestic regulatory frameworks. Synergistic mechanisms: normative alignment (domestic rule of law), expert technical guidance (foreign-related talent), international normative promotion (international public opinion).

Coupling effect quantification: Isolated normative promotion (U_1=0.6, U_2=0.2, U_3=0.3) yields a projected adoption rate of 18%. Integrated synergy (U_1=0.8, U_2=0.7, U_3=0.6) elevates the rate to 42%, confirming cross-dimensional coordination amplifies outcomes.

5.2 South-South Cooperation Clean Stove Project

One million clean stoves have been distributed to 54 developing nations, curbing annual carbon emissions by 12 million tons. The initiative's success emanates from a tripartite strategy: formal legal accords, localized expert training, community-level public engagement. This integrated approach augmented local trust by 42%, with 12 nations adopting the project as a national exemplar.

Coupling effect quantification: Sole legal framework deployment (U_1=0.7, U_2=0.2, U_3=0.4) results in a local trust increase of 15%. Tripartite synergy (U_1=0.8, U_2=0.7, U_3=0.7) drives the 42% trust gain, validating the model's practical efficacy.

5.3 BRICS Climate Negotiation Coordination

At COP27, a 15-person legal delegation orchestrated BRICS negotiating stances, successfully advancing provisions on historical responsibility and climate finance. This coordinated endeavor amplified the collective influence of developing nations by 35%, with 68% of China-proposed amendments incorporated into the final accord. Synergistic mechanisms:

domestic legal expertise, professional talent proficiency, unified developing-nation narrative construction.

Coupling effect quantification: Talent-only negotiation (U_1=0.3, U_2=0.8, U_3=0.4) secures 30% of proposed amendments. Full tripartite synergy (U_1=0.7, U_2=0.8, U_3=0.7) achieves 68% adoption, demonstrating synergistic gains in discursive impact.

6 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Augmenting China's climate governance discourse power necessitates the integrated advancement of domestic rule of law consolidation, foreign-related legal talent cultivation, and international public opinion shaping. The nonlinear synergistic nexus among the three dimensions constitutes the core driver of systemic enhancements in discursive influence. Isolated efforts in any single dimension fail to yield sustainable progress; integrated synergy generates exponential gains.

6.2 Policy Recommendations

(1) Expedite the enactment of a dedicated Climate Change Act to delineate carbon rights, standardize climate litigation protocols, and redress regulatory gaps in cross-border carbon governance.

(2) Expand interdisciplinary climate law curricula and establish national simulation training platforms for international climate negotiations to cultivate high-caliber foreign-related legal professionals.

(3) Institute a dedicated South-South climate communication fund and leverage multilateral platforms to innovate climate narratives that reflect the perspectives and interests of developing nations.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study harbors several limitations worthy of acknowledgment. First, the quantitative assessment is constrained by a limited indicator scope; while the entropy weight method mitigates subjective bias, it may not fully capture nuanced inter-dimensional dynamics. Second, projected 2025 values, though grounded in official trends and expert validation, remain unvalidated and may diverge from actual outcomes. Third, the tripartite collaborative framework confronts practical impediments, including potential resource conflicts between domestic legal reforms and international talent development, substantial implementation costs for large-scale South-South communication initiatives, and institutional coordination barriers across governmental departments. These factors may impede the framework's scalability in resource-constrained contexts.

Future research may address these limitations by expanding the indicator system, incorporating longitudinal data to validate projected 2025 values, and conducting targeted case studies of institutional coordination mechanisms to identify cost-effective implementation pathways. Additionally, cross-national comparative analysis could explore the framework's adaptability in other developing nations with divergent institutional capacities.

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