

JOINTLY CREATING NEW GLORIES OF
CYBERSPACE RULE OF LAW, AND
WRITING A NEW CHAPTER IN THE INTEGRATION OF
DIGITAL AND REAL ECONOMIES

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China's Internet construction began in the mid-1990s and has gone through three major stages of development, each with distinct development characteristics and all with significant achievements, continuously driving the high-quality development of the national economy. Along with Internet construction from its inception to gradually achieving major breakthroughs and significant accomplishments, cyberspace rule of law has also evolved from nothing to something, from weak to strong, and from sporadic to widespread, providing adequate rule of law support for China's Internet construction.

I. THE FIRST STAGE (1994-1999): SETTING SAIL

The years from 1994 to 1999 saw China's Internet construction in its first stage, marked by a connection to the global Internet through a 64 K dedicated line. This period symbolized the beginning of China's cyberspace era, where the journey of Internet construction set sail.

1. China's Internet Started Early, Covered a Wide Range, and Progressed Rapidly. — As early as the *Long-Term National Program for Scientific and Technological Development (1956-1967)*, China proposed to develop semiconductor and computer technology. Documents such as the 'Eighth Five-Year Plan' and the 'Ninth Five-Year Plan for National Informatization' proposed to build communication trunk lines as planned, vigorously promote the construction of information highspeed ways, and include the Internet into the construction of national information infrastructure. In 1994, China's national computing and network facilities were connected to the international network through a 64 K dedicated line, achieving full-function connectivity

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with the global Internet and marking the beginning of China's cyberspace era.

2. *Hardware Construction Has Served to Ensure and Promote the Rapid Development of the Internet Industry.* — During the period of the 'Ninth Five-Year Plan (1996-2000)', 'eight vertical and eight horizontal' communication trunk optical networks were officially completed, with the number of computers reaching 3.5 million and the number of online users reaching 8 million, respectively. In terms of network scale and technology, we have caught up with some developed countries and even surpassed some. Meanwhile, the commercial application of the network and the establishment of portal websites have opened the curtain for Internet entrepreneurship. China's Internet has begun to provide access services to the public, and companies such as IBM and Intel have begun to place online commercials in China.

3. *Cyberspace Rule of Law and the Development of the Industry Are Promoted Simultaneously.* — China has successively promulgated the *Regulations on the Protection of Computer Software*, the *Regulations on the Security and Protection of Computer Information Systems*, and the *Measures on Ensuring Security of Internationally Connected Computer Information Networks* and amended the *Criminal Law* to provide institutional guarantees for the development of the Internet industry. Meanwhile, research on cyberspace rule of law began to sprout, concepts and propositions such as information law and Internet law began to appear, and experts and scholars began to discuss new businesses and issues such as network facility security protection, network information content management, network crime, and e-commerce.

II. THE SECOND STAGE (2000-2011): RAPID ADVANCEMENT

From 2000 to 2011, China's Internet development achieved high-speed growth, with remarkable achievements attracting worldwide attention, thanks to its high-quality and extensive infrastructure.

1. *Network Infrastructure and Technological Innovation Have Developed Rapidly.* — By the end of 2011, China covered most cities and towns with fixed broadband and constructed the world's largest IPv6 demonstration network, with 3G users reaching 128 million and the cloud computing

market reaching 31.5 billion yuan. China has become one of the leading countries in the sensor network standards working group of the International Organization for Standardization.

2. *The Internet Industry Has Rapidly Expanded.* — By the end of 2011, 77 Internet companies had been listed either domestically or internationally, with social network users reaching 244 million, instant messaging users 415 million, and users of online music, video, and applications each over 300 million. E-commerce platforms such as JD.com have grown rapidly, with online shopping users reaching 194 million and users of online payment and banking services both over 160 million.

3. *Construction and Research of Cyberspace Rule of Law Grows Vigorously.* — In 2000, the State Council successively promulgated the *Telecommunications Regulations* and the *Administrative Measures for Internet Information Services*, which provided for the security of telecommunications networks and the security management of user information. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted the *Decision on Safeguarding Internet Security*, which divided Internet security into internet operation security and internet information security.

4. *Research on Cyberspace Rule of Law Has Been Vigorously Carried Out.* — Research institutions such as the Cyber and Information Law Society of the China Law Society have been established one after another. Professional journals such as *Internet Law Review* and *Netinfo Security* have been successively issued, covering areas such as network privacy, network security, network crime, and standardization of network civil and commercial behaviors. A series of research results have been achieved, making significant contributions to the development of the network industry and institutional construction.

III. THE THIRD STAGE (2012-2025): HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

From 2012 to 2025, China's Internet construction entered a new era, achieving higher levels of high-quality development. With the information age gradually transitioning into the artificial intelligence era, the construction of cyberspace rule of law also presented new characteristics, formed new systems, and produced new results along with the rapid progress of information technology.

1. There Have Been Breakthroughs in Core Technology Innovation. — China has become the world's first country to build a network based on 5G standalone architecture, the largest network infrastructure globally. The registration of 117 generative AI services has been completed, with more than 10 large models exceeding 100 billion parameters. Between 2012 and 2022, China accounted for 70% of global AI patent applications.

2. The Internet Industry Is Thriving. — By the end of 2022, the scale of the big data industry reached 1.57 trillion yuan, with platform enterprises valued at over 1 billion yuan reaching 167. By the end of 2023, Internet businesses achieved an income of 1.75 trillion yuan, and the online retail scale exceeded 15.42 trillion yuan. Thanks to policy support, technological innovation, and industrial prosperity, the pace of Internet e-commerce development, including JD.com, has also accelerated. China has been the world's largest online retail market for 11 consecutive years. By June 2024, the number of online shopping users and online payments in China exceeded 900 million.

3. The Basic Framework of the Cyberspace Rule of Law System Has Been Established. — During this period, more than 150 legislations in the field of cyberspace were enacted, forming the basic framework of the cyberspace legal system. The *Cybersecurity Law*, the *Data Security Law*, and the *Personal Information Protection Law* have been promulgated successively, constituting the main framework of the cyberspace legal system and providing clear legal norms for various conducts and relationships in cyberspace. The *Regulations on the Management of Deep Synthesis of Internet Information Services*, *Regulations on the Management of Algorithm Recommendation of Internet Information Services*, and *Interim Measures for the Management of Generative Artificial Intelligence Services* provide an institutional basis for the development of generative artificial intelligence. Internet courts have been established in Hangzhou, Beijing, and Guangzhou, innovating the model of cyberspace justice, improving the efficiency and fairness of cyberspace justice, solving new types of cyberspace disputes by law, and combating cyberspace crimes. Meanwhile, China insists on guiding its participation in the formulation of international cyberspace rules with the concept of building a community of shared future in cyberspace, releasing initiatives such as the *Global Initiative on Data Security* and the *Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Initiative*, building dialogue and cooperation platforms and exchange mechanisms such as the World Internet

Conference, and strengthening international cooperation on cyberspace justice and law enforcement.

4. Research on Cyberspace Rule of Law Is Flourishing. — Research on cyberspace rule of law keeps pace with technological trends, promptly addressing legal issues arising from new technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing. These include legislative research and practical exploration in areas such as data security, algorithm recommendation, and generative artificial intelligence, striving to ensure that rule of law construction keeps up with technological development, and providing a guarantee for the sound development of new technologies. The research focuses on building a comprehensive cyberspace rule of law system, including the system of Internet laws and regulations, enforcement systems, supervision systems, and supporting systems, emphasizing the coordination and cooperation between systems to achieve comprehensive and systematic development of cyberspace rule of law system. The research approach is practice-oriented, closely combining the actual problems and practical needs of cyberspace. It conducts special research and legislative law enforcement practice on issues strongly reflected by netizens, such as cyber violence, human flesh search, telecom fraud, and cyber addiction. The research is more open, based on national conditions and Internet development, exploring a distinctively Chinese model of Internet governance. At the same time, it actively participates in international exchanges and cooperation, contributes Chinese wisdom and solutions, and promotes the construction and improvement of the global cyberspace governance system, playing an increasingly important role in international law-based cyberspace governance.

IV. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE OF CYBERSPACE RULE OF LAW

With the breakthrough development of cyberspace information technology, AI products and services are increasingly and comprehensively entering the fields of production and life, reshaping the pattern and path of the human economy and society, and bringing both opportunities and challenges to the construction of China's cyberspace rule of law. The new picture of the future cyberspace rule of law is gradually unfolding.

1. The Cyberspace Rule of Law System with Chinese Characteristics Will Be Further Improved. — Building a cyberspace rule of law system with Chinese characteristics is the overarching goal of cyber legislation in

China. It is foreseeable that China will accelerate legislation in fields such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, online platforms, big data, and cloud computing, forming a more comprehensive cyberspace rule of law system and providing institutional guarantees for the continuous prosperity of the Internet industry. The cyberspace legal implementation system will be further improved, with targeted and effective cyber supervision and law enforcement measures adapted to the new features of internet development and governance, promoting fair competition and sound development in the industry.

2. The New Order of International Cyberspace Rule of Law Will Continue to Be Mature. — With the opening up of China's economy and its going-out to the world, there will be wider exchanges and deeper practical cooperation between international companies, businesses, and regulations, all of which will jointly push the building of a shared future in cyberspace to a new stage. China will actively lead the construction of the rule of law in global cyberspace, safeguard the sovereignty, security, and development interests of cyberspace, provide Chinese solutions and contribute Chinese wisdom to the construction of the global cyberspace rule of law, and make the Internet better benefit the people of all countries in the world.

3. A Sound Cyber Legal Environment Will Facilitate the Rapid and Sound Development of the Industry. — The rule of law plays a crucial role in stabilizing the foundation, managing expectations, and ensuring long-term benefits. As the cyberspace rule of law system continues to improve and become more comprehensive, China's cyber development environment will become more favorable. The order of cyberspace will be more standardized and cyber justice will be more evident, fully protecting the rights and interests of all parties. It provides a broad space for trial and error, encourages and supports innovation and creativity, and fully assists the healthy development of the cyber industry. This lays a solid foundation for the next level of the digital economy.

In the future, with continuous breakthroughs in network technology and innovation in the network industry, cyberspace rule of law will advance rapidly with boundless prospects ahead.

(Translated by Xu Xinyan & Yang Huairen)
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