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# Chinese Universities and International Relations

*As Universidades Chinesas e as Relações Internacionais*

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**Abstract:** The article aims to explore, at first, the field of International Relations (IR) in China and its emergence as a discipline, in addition to a possible theoretical formulation of its own, analyzing in the end how it relates to the foreign policy of the Chinese Communist Party (PCC). Through a literature review, the article explores the relationship between universities, International Relations and Chinese foreign policy.

**Keywords:** Chinese University; International Relations in China; Chinese Foreign Policy.

**Resumo:** O artigo tem como objetivo explorar, no primeiro momento, o campo das Relações Internacionais (RI) na China e seu surgimento como disciplina, além de uma possível formulação teórica própria, analisando ao final como esta se relaciona com a política externa do Partido Comunista Chinês (PCC). Por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica, o artigo explora a relação entre as universidades, as Relações Internacionais e a política externa chinesa.

**Palavras-chave:** Universidade Chinesa; Relações Internacionais na China; Política Externa Chinesa.

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## **1. Introduction**

After the revolution, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, it was crucial that the country achieved international recognition. For this intent, China opted for the creation of organizations to study the international system and for the preparation and qualification of its diplomats to perform its function of representing the interests of the Chinese state (Yang, 2004).

At first, International Relations studies in the country focused on ideological lenses, on the promotion of socialism to the detriment of capitalism, as well as on the study of the history of the international communist movement and the revolutionary mobilizations of the time. With the reforms and reopening introduced by Deng in the late 1980s, the study of IR in the country took more pragmatic directions, since the international scope was already different (Wang, 2009). With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the polarization between capitalists and socialists, China was preparing to enter the international community with more intensity. The country's entry into the World Trade Organization is an example of a result of these efforts (Lynch, 2002).

The academic IR scenario has also followed this change. Faced with the introduction, debate and critical analysis of Western works, Chinese researchers realized that they had much to contribute to the field of International Relations (IR) studies from Chinese philosophical perspectives (Acharya, 2019). In this sense, there are discussions about the need for a school of Chinese thought and approach to International Relations, but there are still considerable difficulties for its materialization, mainly because some academics do not contest the fact that the possible Chinese theoretical approaches are not universal (Acharya, 2008).

In general, this article is divided into four parts: at first, the historical issues among IR development in the country are addressed; next, it is the Theory of IR with Chinese characteristics; thirdly, some of the main Chinese researchers in the field and research institutes are also highlighted; later, the role of academics in the construction of Chinese foreign policy is analysed and, finally, some considerations.

## **2. Historical issues**

At the time of the founding of the People's Republic of China, the configuration of the international system placed the country at a disadvantage. In the face of the Cold War and its political and economic developments, especially the sanctions imposed by

capitalist nations, led by the United States of America, China's security was threatened by an adverse international scenario. Such a situation made the study of International Relations (IR) essential. Aware of this need, Premier Zhou Enlai requested the establishment of IR discipline at the inaugural meeting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1949 (Geeraerts & Jing, 2001).

In the post-revolution, the new political system brought about structural changes in the most diverse spheres of Chinese society. From the countryside to the cities, the lives of Chinese citizens have been transformed. And for the sciences it was no different. Social sciences, more broadly, and International Relations, in a more specific aspect, felt the effects of Maoist policies for higher education, the need for knowledge for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the Marxist-Leninist ideology, in addition to the influence of the Soviet Union (Shambaugh, 2011). With the emergence of the “new” Chinese state, it became necessary to understand the dynamics of international relations to guide diplomatic ties thereafter (Leite & Maximo, 2013). However, limitations of an external and internal nature hindered the development of studies in the area (Geeraerts & Jing, 2001).

In 1952, most of the departments of Political Science and International Relations were closed due to the reorganization of higher education in China orchestrated by the Soviets, which did not necessarily imply the end of studies in this area; for example, in 1955, the Faculty of Diplomacy was founded and, around the end of the 1950s, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the CCP's Research Department established their own institutes for study in the field of International Relations: the Institute International Studies and the Institute of Foreign Affairs, respectively (Shambaugh, 2011).

In the early 1960s, with the intensification of Sino-Soviet conflicts<sup>5</sup>, Mao supported Zhou Enlai's proposal to create a network of institutions to train diplomats and

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<sup>5</sup> In 1950, when the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance was signed, a partnership began that marked world history. However, despite its initial success, this relationship began to enter a process of destabilization in the late 1950s. It is not a consensus among scholars in the field, but many authors point out that the beginning of the Sino-Soviet rupture started in 1956. In February of that year, Nikita Khrushchov criticized Stalin's actions. The Soviet leader's speech ended up offending the Chinese, not because of its content, but because they had not been consulted previously. In 1956, Moscow informed Beijing that it intended to carry out a military intervention in Poland. For their part, the Chinese were against such a measure and declared that this intervention would be an attack on Polish sovereignty. Beijing also disagreed with the Soviet intention to withdraw its troops from Hungary, which in the Chinese interpretation would be a betrayal of the Hungarian people. In both cases, Moscow changed the course of its actions, however, these events made clear the strategic contrast of the two actors. Despite these tensions, Sino-Soviet relations continued to develop between 1956 and 1957, mainly in the military and economic fields. In 1957, Soviet leader Khrushchov initiated a less warlike approach to the West. Chinese leader

researchers. Thus, in 1963, Fudan, Renmin and Peking Universities were instructed to establish departments of international politics (Xinning, 1997). The departments of Universities Fudan, Renmin and Peking were determined to focus on different areas. Peking University's international policy department was tasked with focusing on the study of national liberation movements; the study of communist movements around the world was under the responsibility of the department of Renmin University; the Fudan University department was responsible for the study of international relations in the western world (Leite & Maximo, 2013).

It is worth mentioning that this differentiation lasts until the present day, with the departments of these universities following different, but complementary, lines of study. Peking University currently focuses on Asian and Latin American studies, while Renmin University on studies related to the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries; and Fudan University, in turn, in western European and North American states (Wang, 2009).

In conjunction with the creation of departments for the study of International Relations at Fudan, Peking and Renmin Universities, ten institutes linked to the area were also developed in 1963. However, they were not associated with universities, but with government agencies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These institutes ended up being responsible for the production of texts and periodicals, as well as the translation of works by non-Chinese authors (Leite & Maximo, 2013).

Despite these efforts in the area, there was no inclination towards more in-depth theoretical production at the time. As Leite and Maximo (2013) indicate, in this period, in the field of IR, Chinese theorization was focused on the formulation of guidelines for practical action, political announcements of rules and principles to be followed and the formulation of strategies to deal with external actors (Leite & Maximo, 2013).

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Mao, in turn, declared at an event that year that China, the Soviet Union and socialist movements represented a force against the United States and its allies. While the Soviets saw the Chinese position as quite choleric, the Chinese also did not welcome the Soviet search for a relaxation of relations with the West. In 1958, the Soviets presented several proposals for military cooperation and integration between the two actors. China repudiated the proposals, accusing the Soviets of trying to dominate the country militarily. The Sino-Soviet relationship was progressively becoming more tense. In 1960, after a disagreement with Mao, Moscow withdrew more than 1,300 technical experts from Chinese territory and reduced support for the country. In 1962, at the time of a Sino-Indian military dispute, the Soviets sent military support to the Indians. In 1963, China did not sign the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, led by the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain. Over the years, China began to bet even more on multipolarity, positioning itself as a challenger from the United States and the Soviet Union (Westad, 1998; Jian & Kuisong, 1998, Roman & Dresch, 2017)

In the early years of the post-formation of the People's Republic of China, the field of IR progressed in the country, but at a slow pace. Gustaaf Geeraerts and Men Jing (2001) highlight that in the two decades that followed the Chinese revolution (1950 and 1960), the central characteristics of the study of IR in the country were: a predominance of Marxism and Leninism, having these two lines of thought served as a guide for research; that in turn, in IR, they served the needs of the Chinese State, especially with regard to diplomatic issues; studies on national security also stand out (Geeraerts & Jing, 2001).

The Sino-Soviet rupture in the 1960s was a milestone in the history of the study of IR in China. The end of political ties between the Chinese state and the Soviet Union led China to detach itself from Soviet ideological and conceptual influence. With detachment, the Chinese intellectual community was called upon to intensify research in international areas (Leite & Maximo, 2013). However, even with the departure of the two actors, the way the Soviets approached IR continued to be very present in the Chinese study in the area. For example, when entering the field of IR theories, Chinese academics ended up limiting themselves to Russian works and / or classics of Marxism-Leninism (Wang, 2009).

In the 1980s, with the end of the Cultural Revolution and with Deng Xiaoping in power with his reform and reopening policies, this situation started to take more prosperous directions (Shambaugh, 2011). During this period, there was a concern that went beyond just economic aspects. Chinese modernization was linked to scientific development, including the advancement of studies in International Relations (Leite & Maximo, 2013).

This moment of reopening implied the meeting of Chinese thinkers with authors and works from the Western intellectual tradition, as well as a reallocation of the thematic axes of intellectual discussions in the country, formerly guided by Maoist thinking about war and constant revolution. Deng's approach, more positive in terms of the international order, became central from that moment on (Leite & Maximo, 2013). While in the 1950s and 1960s, IR research was limited to imperialism, national liberation movements, international solidarity and the principles of peaceful coexistence, from the 1970s onwards, Chinese researchers were inclined to study the theory of interdependence, international cooperation, diplomatic strategy and cultural elements in international relations (Geeraerts & Jing, 2001).

The courses in ideology and political theory underwent a reform process in 1985. The CCP requested that colleges and universities should offer new courses in world politics, economics and international relations. In response to this instruction, practically all higher education institutions in the country started offering a new course called "Contemporary world politics, economics and international relations" (Geeraerts & Jing, 2001). In addition to the course, there was also an effort to produce teaching materials that encompassed such themes, but which ended up not meeting expectations, either for quantitative reasons or for the quality of the material. With this in mind, the CCP Central Committee launched the document entitled "The Decision to Improve and Strengthen Ideology and Politics Education in Colleges and Universities", in 1987. In general, the document reinforced the position that, due to the current situation at the time, a systematic understanding of international economics and policies was of paramount importance (Geeraerts & Jing, 2001, p. 255).

Since 1979, there has been a commitment to translating International Relations works in Western foreign languages into Mandarin, works that are predominantly linked to realistic theoretical thinking. It is worth mentioning that the translated works, in turn, had a strong link with the American academic tradition in IR. Over the years, works from other theoretical lines, such as liberalism and constructivism, striking within the US academy, began to be translated (Leite & Maximo, 2013). However, this entry of foreign academic studies took place in a non-systematic way, which led to an incomplete understanding of the theories (Chan, 1998). It is important to note that this does not mean that the Chinese did not understand Western theories, but that the unavailability of these works made their study difficult. The translation of Western works did not happen at the same pace as their critical analysis, which led, as stated by Geeraerts and Jing (2001, p. 257), to an *ad hoc* understanding of the concepts present in Western works as well as their theoretical limitations, generating discussions among Chinese academics. In the 1980s, many Chinese students went to study abroad, the United States being one of the main destinations. Those studying International Relations theory and history began to introduce Western studies by translating books and studies into Mandarin. The introduction process to Western works took place gradually (Chan, 1998).

In this sense, the 1990s are presented as a landmark for the study of International Relations in China, since with the international environment in its constant change, an adequate understanding of Western International Relations Theories was crucial; only the

translation of foreign works was not enough, more complete analyzes and criticisms were necessary (Geeraerts & Jing, 2001). After the Tiananmen Square incident and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, Western theories went through a period of questioning, but Chinese scholars soon expanded their interests, moving from international relations to globalization and gradually shifting from learning with the West to more independent thinking. So, in the face of these circumstances, Chinese intellectuals did not limit themselves to reproducing Western thought and theories, and sought to build an autonomous thought, shaped according to their idiosyncrasies (Wang, 2009).

### **3. Theory of International Relations with Chinese characteristics**

China has become an extremely important player on the international board. In line with the advance of its economic relevance, international policy debates involving China have grown considerably. But how do Chinese IR academics work? Do you use concepts and theories with Chinese cultural traits? Which Chinese researchers have gained international prominence in the field of IR, and which theories do they tend to move?

All of these issues are extremely relevant in the sense of opening space for an investigation regarding the dissemination of Chinese IR theories and their use by academics in general, as well as their recognition in the academic environment. Thus, what is intended to be discussed in this section is precisely the formulation of Chinese thinking in the IR and its outstanding researchers.

#### *3.1 A possible Chinese theoretical identity*

In order to answer the questions raised above, one must go beyond the theories already consolidated in the West, such as realism, liberalism, constructivism. As a result, it is necessary to close the gap between Asian and Western contributions in order to see new perspectives, seeking to understand the philosophical differences among them while enriching the IR debate, emphasizing the importance of looking beyond economically developed countries.

International Relations as a broad field of study in Social Sciences has different schools of thought originated in different countries. When looking at Asian studies, some countries, such as China, Japan and India, are taken into account because they are increasingly engaged in debates, and questions arise about the possibility of a “school of



thought” of their own. In this sense, China is the aspirant that stands out the most for this, in terms of projection, given its geographic dimensions and original millenary tradition (Qin, 2011).

However, talking about the construction of a theory itself is talking about a unit of thought that is often problematic and full of generalizations. In this case, thinking about a unified Chinese School is unlikely given the diversity of thoughts within the country itself, hindering their direct influence on the academic community (Jiangli & Buzan, 2016). Thus, it can be said that it is not a question of China's inability to contribute, on the contrary, the country has much to add to the existing theories.

As for International Relations Theories (IRT), Chinese approaches are referenced less frequently. This condition is due to a tradition in considering Western Eurocentric and American production as classic, as already consolidated. Thus, exploring a little more about the dynamics of the Asian study area as a whole is essential, in order not only to demystify it, but also to add values and broaden our understanding of IR.

First of all, every theory goes through a process, a set of products and challenges until its final formulation. In an attempt to formulate its own, China encountered several barriers throughout the phases due to the difficulty in its own insertion in the global IR discussion. But, even so, it achieved considerable advances, raising a plurality of approaches and contributions, such as the *tsinghua* approach and the *tianxia* approach (Lima, 2018), and the relational theory of world politics, among others that seek to insert themselves in the academy as a Chinese legacy for IR (Demir, 2017).

Regarding the approaches, one of the best known is *tianxia*. According to Qin (2007), the *tianxia* world view and the tax system play a fundamental role in the conceptual formulation of Chinese IR. Confucianism carries an important understanding of the universe or the *tianxia* worldview, in which the tax system has been rationalized and explained. Literally, *tianxia* means "everything under the sky". This ancient philosophical and cultural concept impacted the academic community of Chinese IR, raising interest from theorists in general. Thus, a probable theoretical motivation arises that rethinks China and the international political system, carrying more Chinese cultural baggage than the other existing approaches until then.

According to one of the biggest contributors to such an approach, Zhao Tingyang (2005), the world today is still considered a “non-world”, and the central problem that is faced is not the “failed states”, but the whole failed world. He then criticizes Western



theories because they are contributing to a disordered world, with its emphasis on the nation-state, and believes that it would be possible to adjust this system through changes based on ancient Chinese thought, according to the *tianxia* approach, which offers an alternative model of a future world order that takes into account the interests of the whole world, whatever their constituent elements are.

Thus, within this Chinese philosophy, the question of the ego was not visible to everyone and, therefore, there was no dichotomy between oneself and the other. As a result, in Chinese culture, there could be something distant in time and space, but there was never anything that was the opposite, intolerant. The second idea is the highest ideal of the *tianxia* philosophy: *datong* (great harmony). In a holistic view, this communion is inevitable, since the opposite elements always tend to complement each other (Qin, 2007). So, some elements are highlighted as the common choice in the global scope, the emphasis on the collective, the presence of a world institution capable of organizing and guaranteeing a universal order, this being the largest, instead of being limited to the nation-state, in addition to constant cooperation, without hegemonic interest, aiming at general harmony.

### *3.2 Criticisms and difficulties for a Chinese theoretical formulation*

Among the greatest difficulties in the formulation of a possible Chinese IR School is the minimal amount of productions with their own theories, since most Chinese scholars end up reproducing in their own works the classic Western concepts, since these are the sources most prevalent in universities. One example is the academic Tang Shiping, where much of his work is based on Western texts that have little discussion of China in general. In this way he ended up gaining prominence, but not for discussing with new approaches with Asian characteristics, but with the classic ones (Pan & Kavalski, 2018).

In addition, other factors are punctuated as difficulties for a theoretical Chinese formulation: the lack of an awareness of "internationality", beyond the domain of the western IRT discourse; and the absence of a firm theoretical core, for example (Do, 2016). The first factor comes from a culture that the world or even the state was not a clearly defined entity, moreover, the idea of sovereignty was not clear. China played a huge role in maintaining peace and trade, supplying public goods, but in general, the system had no room for internationality, and so the Chinese was not aware of internationality and, consequently, of integration. This is also included in the utopian character of the *tianxia*

approach, which even within Chinese territory has never been fully practiced, since individual interests end up overlapping the common interest in general (Zhang, 2010).

It was during the Movement of May 4, the greatest self-reflection of the Chinese, as they began to question not only Chinese technology and Chinese political and economic systems, but also Chinese culture as well as Confucianism. Although Confucianism gained a new version, modernizing it and becoming the Chinese learning school, the Western learning school, which was opposed to Confucianism, ended up becoming the dominant discourse, due to the greater spread of Enlightenment and Newtonian ideas (Qin, 2007).

Another issue that makes the theoretical formulation difficult is that it is usually necessary to follow an entire rigid structure through a research program that starts with an initial model and gradually grows. In addition, it is important to find regularities and causal relationships, seeking to understand the meanings in the social context. Callahan (2001) argues that any theory with a national identity must have a great idea: the American IR theory is democratic peace; for English School it is international society; and for the Chinese IR, the *Datong* (great universal harmony). As a consequence of these factors, the study of IR began to use Western discourse within the Chinese context (Qin, 2007).

In short, these are the main cultural differences between Chinese philosophy and the basis of Western culture. Traditional Chinese philosophy has focused more on human relationships, therefore, emphasizing the emotional part of human behaviour and the concern for adequate interpersonal relationships; Western philosophy focused more on material gains, therefore, emphasizing the rational part of human behaviour and disputing for relative gains in relationships between human beings and nature. Some changes were consolidated, and China started to adhere to some Western concepts as a means of having a strong and prosperous nation-state. Among these ideas, sovereignty was the most important in terms of relations with other countries (Qin, 2007). Therefore, although Western concepts have penetrated deeply into Chinese domestic discourse, the opposite is not true. In general, Chinese scholars have little space or impact on the international IR study community (Hellmann, 2011).

According to Wang (2002), the area of International Relations in China finds it difficult to prosper and to be recognized internationally because it is an area of recent approach, in addition to specific difficulties such as political control itself, the absence of

well-qualified academics, and absence of financial incentives. However, despite the ease of access to the internet and all the various sources of information available on international issues, these students also often demonstrate a very doctrinal and government-inspired interpretation on many issues (especially those related to China).

When China's rise is understood “literally” and treated only as a theoretical test case. Its theorizing tends to be hampered by a double tendency in IR: (i) thinking about paradigms and (ii) returning to familiar concepts. In doing so, it reinforces, instead of disturbing, a popular perception that the countries of the global South are particular examples of some universal phenomena already observed and theorized elsewhere (Pankavalski, 2018). As already noted, when China enters the theoretical debate, it is usually a matter of applying the main Western IR theories and practices to China, instead of extracting new theoretical ideas, in this point Acharya (2014) highlights that:

No doubt, this theorizing will have implications for specific IR theories. Yet its main purpose is not about validating or testing a particular theory, or a particular national school of IR theory for that matter. Rather, it is about reflecting on more meta-theoretical issues such as knowledge-production, power, identity, ontology, relationality, and spirituality. In this sense, it shares some of Global IR’s attempts to ‘develop concepts and approaches from non-Western contexts on their own terms and to apply them not only locally, but also to other contexts, including the larger global canvas’ (Acharya, 2014, p. 650 apud Pankavalski, 2018, p.12)

According to Do (2016), IR academics realized that, if China were not the power it is, the discourse about the existence or not of a Chinese IR School would not attract as much attention. With this, it can be said that there are some inherent causal relationships between material power and knowledge production, as seen in the field of US IR in studies at a global level. In addition to the connections between power and knowledge, the question of how China's geopolitical rise really shapes academic debates and practices is not analyzed in the best way (Do, 2016).

Finally, what is the role of academics in facing these difficulties? The IR field of study and universities as a whole have been closely related to government since its inception, as explained in the first section. In this way, many professionals are taken to work in different government sectors, representing the country in international affairs. In the perspective of Shambaugh, (2011), the time spent on these activities is equivalent to time not spent on research and other academic productions, justifying the difficulty in setting up a Chinese IR School. Also, according to the author, the amount of Chinese

academic production is not a problem, since they have a large number of publications. The problem in this case is the quality that these researches present, revealing the need for greater sophistication in their productions.

#### 4. The Chinese Academics

It is worth mentioning the participation of Chinese academics in the IR who work in some extension with China, and who discuss in their academic productions about the existence of Chinese contributions to the area, whether with theory or a ‘Chinese School’. In the book *Constructing a Chinese School of International Relations* (2016), Wang Jiangli and Barry Buzan compare the English School with a possible Chinese School, highlighting some authors as the main contributors to the discussion on IR in China. Some of these are shown in table 1 in order to better visualize your works and area of expertise.

**Table 01:** Outstanding Chinese Academics

Researcher	Highlighted publication / year	Working place	Research area
<b>Yan Xuotong</b>	<i>Ancient Chinese thought, modern Chinese power, (vol. 5) / 2013</i>	Tsinghua University	Foreign Affairs of China, International Security Challenges
<b>Hung Jen Wang</b>	<i>The rise of China and Chinese international relations scholarship / 2013</i>	Taiwan National University	Applied Econometrics, Monetary Economics
<b>Liang Shoude</b>	<i>Constructing an International Relations Theory with “Chinese Characteristics” / 1997</i>	Beijing University	International Politics, Chinese Politics
<b>Yongjin Zhang</b>	<i>System, Empire and State in Chinese International Relations / 2001</i>	Bristol University	IRT and Chinese history, politics, economic transformation
<b>Qin Yaging</b>	<i>Why is there no Chinese international relations theory? / 2007</i>	Beijing Foreign Studies University	Human rights, foreign policy and international relations

Source: Wang & Buzan (2014).

However, this discussion is not limited to Chinese universities, certain institutes, known as think tanks, also play an important role in the functioning and incentive of the development of International Relations in China. As previously mentioned, Beijing's growing involvement in the international community has generated a growing demand for in-depth research and analysis on foreign policy to assist Chinese leaders in decision-

making processes. One of the means found to supply this need was the system of research institutes in Chinese foreign policy (Glaser, 2013).

The National Association for the History of International Relations, the first Chinese national academic association dedicated specifically to IR, was created in the 1980s. In 1999, it changed its name to the National Association of International Studies in China (CNAIS - acronym referring to the name in English) “China National Association for International Studies”). The association was reformulated in order to include more topics relevant to IR. Currently, CNAIS covers almost all major research institutions in IR, with around 68 linked institutes (Leite & Maximo, 2013).

Other important and influential foreign policy institutes are, for example, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), the China Institute of International Studies - CISS, the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations - CICIR, Shanghai Institute for International Studies - SIIS, and China Institute for International Strategic Studies - CISS (Zhao, 2013).

However, it is important to note that the research organizations with the most influence over the foreign policy issues of the Chinese State are those that are directly linked to the government, the armed forces and the CCP, since they have channels to provide direct information to decision makers (Glaser, 2013). Still, academics at universities and institutes also play a leading role.

## **5. The role of academics in the construction of Chinese foreign policy**

There is a growing participation of university professors in political discussions that bring together specialists from different research units. (Glaser & Saunders, 2002). Both in the scope of foreign policy and national security, decision makers seek and receive, even if sometimes unsolicited, information, advice and suggestions from research organizations (Glaser, 2013).

Despite not being so expressive, research organizations provide information, analysis and advise decision makers, adding to the formulation of foreign policy. In addition, researchers are also invited to give lectures to government work units and even factories across China, for example. The topics of the lectures include analysis of the international system, Chinese-American relations, Taiwan, security, among others (Glaser & Saunders, 2002).

One of the functions performed by the institutes and academics (individually) is to inform leaders which issues can become challenges at the international level, as well as providing new ideas to assist decision makers in formulating more effective policies (Glaser, 2013). As an example, academics were crucial for the Chinese government to adopt a pro-multilateralism stance in the late 1990s. Academics from the institutes and who worked directly for the Chinese government collaborated with officials from the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote new concepts such as mutual security, win-win relationships (positive-sum model, in contrast to zero-sum models). Some other important concepts that were adopted by the Chinese states also came from academics, such as the idea of “peaceful rise”, which was soon replaced by “peaceful development” (Glaser, 2013, p. 101-102).

Until the early 1990s, academics at Chinese universities had almost no voice and impact on the country's foreign policy formulation process, since there were no reliable channels for them to submit their ideas. In the same proportion, they were rarely consulted by Chinese government officials. So, research and academic production ended up being restricted to the academic public. This situation started to take new directions from the late 1990s (Glaser, 2013).

So, in the new scenario, there are several channels that enable academics from universities and institutes to participate in the process of building Chinese foreign policy. One of them is participation in government meetings: together with government experts, academics are invited to participate in meetings organized by government ministries. Participants are chosen mainly according to their expertise and have no relation to the academic affiliation of the academic (Glaser, 2013). But personal connections are also an important factor. Family ties, common school history, teacher-student relationships, common geographic origin are some of the elements of personal relationships that can provide access and influence for academics (Glaser, 2013). But the qualification of the researcher is an indispensable factor. It is also common for some government departments to request papers for academics at universities and think tanks. Likewise, sometimes these researchers are involved in the preparation of important documents (Glaser, 2013).

While Chinese academics are moving to increasingly participate in the policy-making process, the Chinese government is also present within universities. The most current reforms in the university system, which make the hiring and remuneration of teachers more flexible, have reduced the dependence of universities on the government.

However, the government's presence is still established in the affirmative in universities with the presence of a CCP secretary who has the power to notify and penalize teachers who considerably distance themselves from the party's ideals (Leite & Maximo, 2013).

Due to the close relationship between the institutes and the CCP, the adhesion of the institutes for the analysis of foreign policy was also impacted, becoming even more discerning. Some institutions, such as the Institute for Strategic Studies of the National Defense University and the policy research institute of the Central School of the Party, had to be dismissed due to their connection with foreign scholars (Abb, 2013).

Academics, unlike international analysts who are part of the government, have less conservative thinking, expressing opinions more freely. And as Glaser (2013) states, the increased contribution of researchers to Chinese foreign policy has helped to reinforce the quality of their analysis within the government system:

The increase in communication and collaboration among institute and university experts has generally resulted in greater dissemination of knowledge and information, as well as an improvement in the quality of analysis produced for the government. Policy influence is difficult to assess and measure, but the decision-making system has become more consultative over time, with an increased role played by research institute specialists (Glaser, 2013, p. 124).

## **6. Final considerations**

The discussion on a possible formulation of a Chinese school firstly had to go through a historical analysis about the emergence of the study of International Relations itself. As mentioned, China understood the international area properly just after its relationship with other countries, mainly after the opening and reform in the 1970s, mutually with the period of stimulus to the globalization process. This scenario enabled China to understand and study the international scenario in a more pragmatic way as a way of developing more assertive strategies for its country.

With the paradigmatic change, the IR area gradually gained space in the country, being inserted in many universities, with different study specialties, managing to acquire greater freedom for their productions in relation to the CCP, although there are many needs for adjustments in this relationship.

*Tianxia*, as an example of a more eminent Chinese approach, represents one of the oldest and strongest Chinese philosophies, capable of contributing to a new theoretical perspective of IR, although this is still not considered sufficient to be in the same level of a theory. Its utopian character, however, demonstrates how China has a notion of



collective, contrasting with other classical theories of IR, not limited to the nation-state and anarchy of the international system, but on the contrary, this approach strongly asserts about the need for a higher universal order that is above all, without differences or particularities between nations.

On the other hand, despite the *tianxia*, Chinese academics of great prominence do not usually use such concepts in their productions, revealing a certain lack of priority or organization to lead themselves to a Chinese school of thought properly. Thus, many academics are even critical of the need to formulate a Chinese school, or their own theory, since the field of IR still needs to gain considerable space in the country.

Finally, the urge for the IR area in China are varied and, at the same time that China grows as a power in the global system, the very idea of hegemony is not recommended according to its philosophical approaches, as these aim at common collective agreement, and not only Chinese. China needs expertise in the field, and has a growing number of academics becoming important to the world's IR. Consequently, further research development, with higher quality, will improve China's chances of being a protagonist not only as an object of research, but as an active country and a contributor to the theoretical work of the science of International Relations.

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