

Beyond International Society: The World Society idea from English School to Critical Theory

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Abstract: This article aims to scrutinise the *international society* concept in order to point out its insufficiencies within contemporary world politics. We conclude that the concept of *world society* is a better choice concerning discussions about normative challenges on International Relations Theory. Here, nonetheless, a renewed *world society* idea comes into view. Considering its origins in the English School, we remember that *international* and *world society* concepts are two out of three possibilities for world order, as pointed by Wight (1991). In this sense, we argue that both of them, within the English School, lack elements when it comes to contemporary International Relations debates. We run, then, through Critical Theory contributions, mainly from Jürgen Habermas, to develop a *world society* concept that fits into a transnationalised reality. Although we don't always agree with Habermas, we critically defend his intellectual proposal and his attempts to advance the discussion about cosmopolitanism, that here deals with the *world society* idea.

Keywords: International Relations Theory; Critical Theory; international society; constitutional patriotism; world society; English School; cosmopolitanism.

Introduction

Considering the advanced globalised context in which the historical constellation – shaped until recently by the primacy of nation-states as political actors – appears to be threatened, is the concept of *international society* still sufficient? No, we argue, it is not. What is vital, now, is developing the *world society* idea in order to provide normative basis to contemporary international politics. This perception is based upon Critical Theory, an important school of thought within International Relations (IR) theoretical debates. Before, however, we shall analyse some contributions of the English School, which gave

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to IR studies the very concepts – core to this article – of *international* and *world society*. It is important to note that within the Critical Theory tradition we take mainly Jürgen Habermas's ideas. When it comes to the English School, on the other hand, the discussions regarding these two main concepts come from Bull (1966) and, in contemporary readings, from Buzan (2004).

The Critical Theory of IR does not see the great exponents of the Frankfurt School as its main authors, which prompts the discussion about the relevance of Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth within this field of study. Habermas's contribution to philosophy and social sciences is obvious, but his role within IR debates and theories is still considered controversial (Diez and Steans 2005; Haacke 2005). Such controversy derives from the accusation that Habermas uses the very same premises of the domestic context to think about the international environment – usually from the perspective of the rationality of communicative action. Indeed, Habermas brings out different meanings and methodologies, aiming to rescue the possibility of reconfiguring identities development and transnational solidarity networks, opposing to statist and nationalist elements normalised in IR.

The so-called English School – also known as the school of the *international society* or the British institutionalists – sustains that there is a *society of states* at the international level, a sort of global social contract (Watson 2004). This is held despite systemic anarchy (i.e. the lack of a global ruler or a world state), as opposed to realistic and liberal models of IR (Buzan 2014: 170). It is a matter of perceiving how ideas, and not only material capacities, shape the conduct of international politics as an object of analysis and theoretical criticism. In this sense, as with normative reconstruction, one of the three main contributions of the English School to a Critical Theory of IR¹ (Linklater 1992) takes place through the concrete development of world history, international law, and political theory, remaining receptive to normative and narrative approaches, as we find in Frankfurtian thinkers such as Habermas, Honneth, and others.

Therefore, we outline a dialogue that is drawn from the English School in order to develop it in a more suitable way under Critical Theory tradition, aiming to analyse the viability of a *world society* concept that goes beyond the *international society* one. This problem permeates the debate between cultural plurality and moral solidarity, which in IR comes from the English School. If solidarity refers to the imperative of crucial values, such as human rights, through a universal approach – rescuing the Kantian notion of transcendent moral principles – then plurality protects differences and draws attention to the dangers of creating a moral imperative from Western normativity. R. J. Vincent (1984), an English School scholar, already pointed out the possibility of a reality in which principles as justice and human rights coexist in a scenario that respects the normative division between people in ways of non-distinct moral valuations. Our intention is to follow this path, although seeking a sort of *world society* through a Critical Theory approach.

To reach the intellectual path argued here, we start by rescuing the English School influence on IR Theory, giving special attention to *international* and *world society* concepts. A second section investigates the Critical Theory approach, arguing that the

International Theory could be improved, if surpassed their own canon. Through the assessment of the works of Jürgen Habermas (2001; 2012) and Axel Honneth (2003; 2012), we emphasize the ideas of *post-national constellation* and *recognition between States*. The last section aims to absorb a renewed *world society* idea within a critical-theoretical project, thus reaching this article's core.

The importance of the English School: the concept of *international society* and the idea of *world society*

As a consolidated theory of IR, the strength of the English School is the ability to mediate between distinct views of this discipline, being considered by many as a *middle ground* theory. The book *The Anarchical Society* (1995), written in 1977 by Hedley Bull, is considered the cornerstone – although not the first – of this school of thought. This is due to the concept of *order* within international politics, as conceived by Bull (1995) through a Grotian influence, which is the main axis for English School ideas. Thus, in an era characterized by the theoretical debate between behaviourists and traditionalists, this book was used as a guide for the latter. By defending historical and philosophical methods in detriment of hard and natural sciences methods, as in behaviourist thinking, the English School was the main theoretical tradition in what we can call the *second great debate* of IR.

Between the two theoretical schools consolidated until the rise of the English School was (i) Realism, concerned with security issues and with the respective competitive dynamics of international politics, applying principles such as *human nature* (founding the 'first wave' of realists) to the security dilemma, and always placing the State as the main (if not the only) actor within an anarchic international system; and (ii) Liberalism, which in turn advocated a greater institutionalization of international politics, aiming to create a cooperative sphere that could give rise to mechanisms that would prevent armed conflict between states through an interdependent international system.

Both traditions were the exponents of the *first great debate* of IR. As a middle ground theory, the English School retains elements of both traditions, creating theoretical possibilities and focusing its efforts on systemic issues concerning the possibility of changes in the international system through the *Evolution of the International Society*.² Adam Watson's book (2004), starting from this very notion of *international society* evolution, deals specifically with systemic changes in relations between different political communities throughout history. One should consider the idea that such a society, as well as other forms of similar social organization, constitutes a system of inclusion and exclusion (Bull and Watson 1984; Linklater 1992) that in recent centuries has evidenced the exclusion of non-western countries, which points to the normative formulation of this society.

Still on the *international society*, it is important to rescue the work of Martin Wight *International Theory: Three Traditions* (1991), in which he discusses three great theoretical traditions within International Theory from which the schools we understand as theories of IR originate. The author relates a philosopher to each of the three traditions, thus quoting Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius, and Immanuel Kant, who are associated

respectively to Realism, Rationalism, and Revolutionism (Wight 1991). In conceptual language, Hobbesian Realism uses the notion of *international system*, while Rationalism uses *international society*, and the revolutionary aspect uses *world society*, a sort of *brotherhood society*, as pointed by Wight (1991). This contribution is also known as ‘the three Rs’ of IR. One can glimpse here a *via media* between Hobbesian political realism and Kantian utopian cosmopolitanism, in terms enshrined by John Rawls’s (1999) political liberalism and his ‘realistic utopia’.

The relevance of Wight’s (1991) contribution to IR is to enable structural reflection on this discipline, understanding the possibilities of change in the structure of international politics. This contribution breaks with some static views of IR, which essentialize such structure and conceive it as immutable – the case of realist anarchic *international system*, well evidenced through Waltz’s Structural Realism (1979). In line with Watson’s work (2004), one can glimpse the possibility of a structural cleavage to the *world society* through the interaction between international actors. A central development within Bull and Watson’s work (1984) refers to these structures, which conceive an *international society* where states, as social actors, share common values, customs, and institutions, reflecting on the viability of a world society. Wight (1991) pointed such development as a revolutionary form of global organization.

But *world society*, even in English School tradition, emerges in a suspicion context. Barry Buzan (2004: xiii) points that this concept attracts ‘neither consistent usage nor, and in contrast to international society, any systematic attempt to explore its meaning’. Considered from the traditional usage, *world society* takes non-state organizations, individuals, and the global population as a totality for worldwide arrangements, transcending the states-system as normally conceived in IR. Also following Buzan’s (2004: 1) takes on *world society*, one can realize that ‘[w]hile international society is focused on states, world society implies something that reaches well beyond the state towards more cosmopolitan images of how humankind is, or should be, organised’. But – and this is a substantial problem – these images are not developed all out within English School works, due the prominence that this tradition gives to Realist and, even more, to Rationalist views as described by Wight (1991). Thus, when conceived as a potential world order in a revolutionary way, the *world society* idea is hardly seriously considered.

As pointed by Stivachtis and McKeil (2018: 2), ‘to maintain the English School relevance in a globalising context, an English School position on meaning and significance of a world society is needed’. This concept comes from Wight (1991), due to his attention towards moral issues. Wight argues that any IR discussion which does not glimpse a *world society* is poor, and at the same time defends a Rationalist point of view. *World society* thus appears as a desirable horizon which would be never reached, but should be aimed – and here we have an idealistic side of Wight. It leads to what Linklater and Suganami (2006) call a ‘soft revolutionism’ in Wight (1991). So, we can conclude from it that the *world society* idea was already born lacking a praxeological effect, which incurs, at least in its previous conceptualizations, into a poor normative contribution.

A first attempt to formulate a wider concept of *world society* is seen in R. J. Vincent (1986). He points out, and this argument structures his whole book, that the advance of

the *world society* is possible through the spared practice of human rights in the society of states (Vincent 1986: 2). Criticising moral relativism as a way to build up a *world society*, Vincent (1986) argues that a minimum standard of justice is desirable on an international sphere – and here his argument approaches a universalistic moral argument rooted in human rights. Therefore, *world society* develops in the same way that human rights are developed in a global way. It is clearly an argument that comes from the solidaristic side from the theoretical/moral struggle that exists between pluralistic and solidaristic approaches.

It is in Bull (1966) that such an important dichotomy initially appears. The processes of change in the international political structure and the respective greater interaction among certain actors from different localities lead to the confrontation of distinct political cultures, which can lead to problems such as conflict or the imposition of norms from an ethnocentric bias. Here one has the possibility of interpreting this contact from a pluralistic or from a solidaristic point of view (Williams 2005 and 2015; Souza 2013). Within the English School, some authors are divided between those who defend a pluralistic bias and those who defend a solidaristic bias as a way of thinking about the relations between international actors. In the end, one can see that this cleavage starts from different perceptions about *ethics* in IR.

In this sense, given a pluralistic approach, Bull³ appears as the most influent thinker, followed by names as Robert Jackson and James Mayall (Williams 2005). The pluralistic axis is based on the central argument that it is not possible to have a global consensus on issues that refer to justice, which leads international actors – in this case with major emphasis on the state's figure – to acquiesce only in what means the reciprocal recognition of sovereignty and the respective illegitimacy of external intervention (Bull 1966). Thus, the ideal type of international organisation is the *international society*, in which institutions are created aiming that states share certain norms among themselves, while maintaining their sovereignty in the face of external impositions. It can be said that it's a more sceptical thinking, since it's satisfied with an international order of coexistence, not envisioning the possibility of an extensive cooperation and symbiosis.

The solidaristic bias has in J. R. Vincent, Nicholas Wheeler, and Andrew Linklater its main defenders (Williams 2005). This axis has a strong inclination towards human dignity, assuming that all individuals are carriers of fundamental rights that must be protected, in agreement with Habermas (2012) and his interlocutors. There is a Grotian rationality here regarding the imposition of laws that are *fair*, which is already evidenced in Bull's own work (1966). Thus, territoriality is more diffuse (Williams 2005) and international law has prevalence over domestic laws when it defends that people are members of the *international society* (Souza 2013) – which already points to the notion of *world society* as used by Wight (1991). This debate can be summarized as follows: if from pluralistic bias diversities are respected due to the dangers of a universal normativity, in solidaristic bias the aim is to create a common ethics between different people, varying the range of its products from an *international* to a *world society*.

What's more, Williams (2015) proposes a synthesis between pluralism and solidarism, arguing that these two should not be seen as opposing projects. Rather, we should

envision the possibility of a *solidarity pluralism*. Here's the excerpt that expresses the benefits of the union between these perspectives:

Developing a pluralist account predicated on the desirability of ethical diversity in the world holds out the potential for pluralism to follow the path of solidarism towards becoming a more fully developed normative theory of international relations. In parallel with solidarism's commitment to ethical cosmopolitanism, usually via human rights, pluralism can offer an account of the ethical significance of diversity (Williams 2015: 107).

However, Barry Buzan (2004: 10) points that this debate between pluralistic and solidaristic forms of world order, in which both sides points toward an *international society* – or even to a *world society* –, obligates 'the English school to engage with the element of liberal revolutionism'. In other words, within the English School, even if we consider a pluralistic bias, the shadows of a *world society* are still visible – and this is a paradox, given the subdevelopment of this concept when compared to the *international society* one.

Despite the different possibilities regarding pluralism-solidarism discussion, there's still a crucial problem stemming from English School formulation towards a *world society*: even when thought in a solidaristic way, the State's role remains central. This kind of revolutionary society is considered first as a *society of states*, because it appears as a progression from *international society* idea. Thus, even when, theoretically, the *world society* is glimpsed, the background is still that of *international society*, which means that the states are placed in a central spot. It is a narrow way to think of a *world society*. As pointed out on our introduction, we argue that the *international society* idea is not able to deal properly with contemporary world politics; similarly, a *world society* that is merely a progression from this very *international society* is also inadequate.

As Buzan (2014) stressed, there is no way to develop a theory of IR as (i) an alternative to more extreme positions of classical and liberal models or as (ii) a third way between realists and constructivists without distinguishing states from people and societies to the extent that different conceptions of world order lie between plurality and solidarity among states, people, and societies. This is quite evidenced within approaches as the political-moral agency in philosophical theories of human rights: while jusnaturalists and realists postulate a human nature, and liberal political accounts advance it as fundamental right by virtue of their humanity, the so-called discursive or narrative accounts absorb a constructivism while emphasize a social and linguistically co-constitutive reality. For Buzan (2014: 86), 'English School aims a functional equilibrium between how the power and the interest, as well justice and responsibility patterns, operates within International Society, how reality and ideal meets each other, and how the normative and the empiric are intertwined'.

The theoretical blindness, that comes from a statecentric mode of conceiving IR, denies the possibility to use English School's *world society* concept in a serious way. We can see now why Buzan (2004) says that *world society* is an undeveloped idea within English School tradition. So, in order to overcome this insufficiency, Buzan (2018) separates

world society in three different categories, namely: (i) a normative one, (ii) a political one, and (iii) an integrated one. Such division lays on the argument that the *integrated world society* is an ideal-type which absorbs normative and political sides of world society.

We can see, in Buzan's work (2018), a distinction between a moral/subjective sphere and a praxeological/objective sphere. Whatever the importance of advancing this discussion, Buzan (2018) incurs in a simplification in regard to normative issues, while he also lacks the normativity within political praxeology. In some sense, then, he tries to fix the insufficiency in the very *integrated world society* concept, but in doing so he deals with superficial concepts. The moral issues behind a normative argument about *world society* does not need to be transcendental, as in his case. The core of his argument under a *normative world society* can be found here: 'Humankind can be used as an ethical and moral referent regardless of whether it has any organisational expression or even any universal self-consciousness' (Buzan 2018: 3).

One can see a moral referent itself, in a Kantian sense, as a starting point. However, we advocate that the ethical argument, as a moral effectivity, is developed through communication itself, in an action that creates new patterns of recognitions and of alterity. We agree with Buzan's research agenda towards *world society*: moral and political spheres should definitely run together. But only reaching a better comprehension about normative issues, which is the very source and core of *world society* idea, can we advance this merge. Seeking to glimpse a best usage of *world society* principles, it is necessary now to put this concept in another theoretical box. Critical Theory appears as an appropriate candidate.

Critical Theory beyond IR traditional thinkers: post-national constellation and recognition between States

'Theory is always for someone and for some purpose. All theories have a perspective. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space, specifically social and political time and space.' These Robert Cox's (2000: 1539) famous words are representative of the spirit of IR's Critical Theory, and of its proximity with the Frankfurt School. Furthermore, as developed in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Adorno and Horkheimer (1985), Frankfurt School seminal work, this theoretical approach keeps as its core, within IR, the denunciation of illuminist project ambiguities. Therefore, emancipation is maintained as a central element of critical analysis as a concern about different forms of hegemony possible in the environment of international politics (Silva 2005; Cox 2000).

Within IR, Habermas's ethical and normative concerns were under criticism, since some scholars of IR – mainly the Realist school – see them as utopian. However, such criticisms of Habermas's relevance in IR context cannot be sustained anymore, given the importance assigned to Critical Theory within the discipline since the *third debate* (Hoffman 1987; Lapid 1995), which has gained even more prominence from the *fourth debate* onward⁴ (Diez and Steans 2005). In this regard, Habermas's influence on the work of those who promote such debates through Critical Theory is indisputable.

If internationalists like Cox and Linklater – this one also as an English School supporter – are considered the main critical theorists within IR, we cannot presume that their works are detached from the Frankfurtian origin of such critical thinking. The Habermas dialogue is reinforced by Linklater (1998); on the other hand, Cox's (1986) usage of hegemony concept from Antonio Gramsci shows that Critical Theory, in the context of IR, goes beyond its Frankfurtian roots. Critical Theory's original method, however, explained in its genesis throughout the classic text of Max Horkheimer (1972), is used as the cornerstone of this school in IR – mainly in the process of questioning what has hitherto seen as a constituted theory and of analysing interests behind such constructs. This also resumes the position of Mark Hoffman (1987), according to which Critical Theory can be used as a part of an effort of theoretical restructuring within IR.

When Linklater (2000) takes Hoffman's (1987) agenda in order to develop a Critical Theory under Habermasian influence, IR studies gains new possibilities. Through Habermas's contributions to IR theory, we can take the term constellation [*Konstellation*], announced in the subtitle of the first volume of Habermas's last work (2019)⁵, as a sort of starting point, which lead us to a metaphorical set of historical-cultural references. This Habermasian meaning is deliberately below the critical-theoretical meaning elaborated by Benjamin and Adorno (literary and dialectic-linguistic) and closer to the historical meaning developed by Dieter Henrich (1991), according to which a philosophical constellation is defined as a dense set of people, ideas, theories, problems, or documents interacting with each other; in this case, only the analysis of its whole, and not of its isolated components, makes it possible to understand the philosophical effects and the philosophical future of these people, ideas and theories (Oliveira 2020: 338).

This programmatic sense of historical constellation, according to Habermasian post-metaphysical thought, challenges the teleological and deterministic sense found within Hegelian philosophy of history:

History means something different from the temporal dimension in which - like Kant - the norms of rational law are developing progressively and result in a cosmopolitan state of humanity [*Weltbürgerlichen Zustand der Menschheit*]. Instead, Hegel is the first to make clear what it means to identify traces of practical reason in history itself during the transition from subjective spirit to objective. Hegel initiates the detranscendentalization of the world-forming spontaneity of a mind, whose theoretical and practical activity is no longer attributed to an intelligent ego, but to a mind that also works through history in the form of finite intelligences of socialized subjects, that is, subjects rooted in historical contexts. From the point of view through autonomous subject of thought and action of Enlightenment independence, history is a resistant medium (Habermas 2019: 511, translated by the author).

From the conjunctural analysis that he develops as a diagnosis of our time, Habermas examines the *post-national constellation* as a way of interpreting the political and social transformations of a transnational era (Habermas 2001). Under this aegis, the author proposes a *constitutional patriotism* to replace the *national patriotism* in a reality of transnationalisation of law and identities (Habermas 2001). Assuming the deterioration of the *nation* idea as we know it today, it's possible to think of a community of law in which individuals are brought together by a series of moral values that are legitimated through communicative action. We need to point here that Habermas thinks the national state from the perspective provided by Benedict Anderson (1983), according to which a nation is, above all, an imagined community, built in different modes, often leaving the state to reach the nation, other times following the opposite path. According to Habermas (2012), the national state's artificial and constructed character would act in favour of an extending solidarity beyond national borders, aiming European solidarity in the European case.

Thus, the notion of a sovereignty based on individuals – and not only within states – is constructed, and those individuals can start to recognize themselves as global citizens in what Habermas calls *world society* (Habermas 2001; Habermas 2012). Such construction presents its own challenges, since this project establishes a normative universalisation through an exclusively European perspective on the reality designed, evident in ideas like *patriotism* and *constitution*, bequeathed from European law system. Globalisation, according to Habermas, opens a horizon in which global political and social decisions are based on the structures capable of accommodating their complexity: highly evolved administrative state mechanisms, as dynamic and flexible markets, operates much more efficiently by considering their populations as customers, undermining the citizens direct engagement. The task of a critical theory consists precisely in diagnosing, confronting, and casting some explanatory light on such normative challenges – something that is learned and understood rather than as an inevitable overwhelming destiny, resulting from the complexification of capitalism and its most recent neoliberal waves.

In the historical constellation splintering, composed by territorial state, nation, and an economy constituted within national borders with a half convincing institutional democratic process (Habermas 2001: 78), emerges the post-national constellation as an Habermasian attempt to configure ideas amid an increasing transnationalisation of reality context. Putting globalisation as the epicentre of his analysis, a phenomenon that the author treats more as a process than as a specific end (Habermas 2001), the philosopher argues that the forms of political and social organisation are changing substantially. Thus, the expansion and universalisation of the technique lead *international society* to new processes of rationalisation (Habermas 2009), which, in its turn, lead to new problems of a transnational nature – such as ecology, radioactivity, and the financial market – and new forms of post-national constellation. This is why *international society* must be transplanted by a *world society*.

Such a context raises an imperative to think about how democracy can be maintained amid the increasing weakening of nation-state and through financial market raises. The kernel of this Habermas's work can be seen through the following passage:

I am not so interested in this work about the reasons for or against the continued dismantling of political union, but rather the solidity of reasons that both supporters and skeptics can put on the table and, more specifically, the reasons for and against the achievement of a post-national democracy (Habermas 2001: 113, translated by the author).

Coherent with his tradition of a ‘radical democrat’, Habermas chooses to question the directions of this growing porosity of state’s borders – rather than support it. The product of the post-national constellation can only be supported if there is a democratic legitimacy in it (Habermas 2001). Hence, we can see the Frankfurtian philosopher as a sober cosmopolitan, since despite his sympathy for a supranational project – and more than sympathy, once he sees it as inevitable – he does not blindly support, by taking the negative possibilities of such an enterprise, the results in a strengthening of neoliberalism on a global scale.

In this context, there is the author’s denial about the establishment of a global *federative republic* (Habermas 2012: 95), in which the current nation-state would act as federative entities within a global executive power. Instead, Habermas (2012) proposes a reverse model in which, from the institutionalisation of new international organisation, States can articulate – through global citizens – the common laws. Thus, there would be a supranational legislature elected by citizens, a notion that meets the need for democratic legitimacy to the cosmopolitan project proposed by Habermas. It would be up to the states to carry out what was deliberated in this supranational instance, in addition to guaranteeing the freedoms of their citizens,⁶ who would be both citizens of their states and of this new *world society*.

Such *world society* is the cornerstone of a Habermasian contribution to its cosmopolitan project, namely the cleavage of a *national patriotism* to a *constitutional patriotism*. In this sense, cosmopolitanism must be rethought beyond the union between states, starting to encompass the role of the citizen as an active actor in the international political process: thus, the process of state from the nation concept, as a community of origin, expands more and more (Habermas 2001). One can point out here the main difference between the Habermasian proposal and other proposals which, agreeing with the diagnosis of historical constellation ends, advocate for a project of global governance.⁷

Governance, as stated by Rosenau and Czempiel (2000), for example, is still centred on states as political actors, considering just the interaction between states and international organisations, excluding individuals as citizens of a cosmopolitan community that needs democratic legitimacy. It is a similar problem that we have pointed about English School’s *world society*. In this context, Habermas (2012) makes an accurate critique of cosmopolitan projects that do not include individuals as legitimising agents. It is extracted from the Frankfurtian philosopher’s discourse that every supranational project must take into account the action of global citizens, otherwise they become undemocratic undertakings. On a supranational level, the decision-making sphere is farthest from the ordinary citizen than in the national political process.

The Habermasian proposal is only possible from an active position of the individual/citizen – which takes up the above-mentioned question that a post-national constellation can only be legitimate (and desirable) if it is effectively democratic. Thus, a *world society*, organised through a supranational body that promotes a global legal order, can only be achieved through the transnationalisation of national public spheres (Habermas 2012) – what points to a great cleavage when compared to English School's *world society* or the liberals' *governance* idea. Through these public spheres, civil solidarity would be developed. In such development, individuals from different states feel themselves participants in the political process of other States, managing to establish a bond of solidarity between subjects of rights from different localities, creating a bond with them (Habermas 2001). Thus, it is understood that political cosmopolitanism is preceded by an identity cosmopolitanism.

Avoiding a Eurocentric position,⁸ Habermas (2001, 2012) does not try to point what should be done in a domestic environment regarding cultural particularities. In Habermasian *world society*, countries have freedom to choose their internal politics such as fiscal, infrastructural, healthy ones, among others. What should be universalised is the morality expressed on human rights, because, as pointed by him, human rights are the normative frame for a cosmopolitical community (Habermas 2001: 136). Therefore, human rights – and, respectively, peace – are the only truly universal moral value. It goes towards the central idea, presents in a later book (Habermas 2012: 5), which says that human rights effectivity depends upon the institutional incorporation on a *world society* politically constituted. Then we have a (i) *world society* that must be politically constituted by people and (ii) a universal norm – human rights – that needs this space in order to become globally effective.

As pointed by Luiz Repa (2013: 201), the notion of constitutional patriotism must be able to replace nationalism as a source of solidarity, since it is structured in such a way, through abstract principles, that it is difficult to see why it should be limited to national or European borders. On the contrary, constitutional patriotism joins a desubstantialisation, with a proceduralisation of popular sovereignty whose first result is precisely to take from the people the marks of an inclusion or exclusion of principles, remaining only the determination to be a member or not. The power remains with the people, and not with States or organisations. This is the effort that Habermas does in order to balance universalism and cultural differences.

In summary, it is possible to draw some points in sequence for the foundation of the Habermasian proposal: (i) the diagnosis of the shattering of the historical constitution from globalisation and the increasing transnationalisation of political, social, economic, and ecological phenomena; (ii) the logical need to create a cosmopolitan community capable of dealing with such phenomena, integrating States and citizens as active actors under the seal of a supranational organisation capable of articulating these very actors through a legislative and a judiciary; (iii) a greater commitment to the jurisprudent of this community in the process of creating a normativity that is common to all global citizens, building a universalism sensitive to differences; (iv) the solidification of a post-national democracy through the construction of a common political culture, which

develops through communicative action in deliberative spaces of transnational public spheres; (v) the complete transformation of international politics into a global internal policy, civil society into a global society, and the international community into a cosmopolitan community.

However, even within Critical Theory tradition, there are some points that will take us beyond Habermas. As Andrew Buchwalter (2013: 24) puts it so well, Honneth (2003) does not object the notion of collective identity itself, whose usefulness is recognised by the Frankfurtian as a mean of understanding the shared experience of minorities and other groups fighting for recognition in the face of social disrespect. Nevertheless, Honneth states that this concept is not easily applicable to the nation-state, certainly not those belonging to the constitutional States of West, which are too amorphous to articulate a viable notion of identity and, in any case, are concerned with issues other than those associated with struggles against exclusion. Certainly, all debates about the problems and challenges for a cosmopolitan theory of global justice inevitably go through the problem of the rationale (in Kantian terms) or the normative justification of international relations and human rights, often resuming Hegel's criticism of Kant's formalism.

If we cannot simply envision a solution of social engineering or jurisprudence of international relations through protocols, conventions, treaties, and transnational documents between nation-states – as could propose a superficial reading on *international society* concept within English School – we do not want to incur into a normativism, imposing dogmatically some, for example, normative conception of a categorical imperative to all parties concerned. If political realism, or the mere description of international relations and their legal arrangements, is incapable of providing a normative justification, the procedural-formal or deontological solution leads to the same sterile formalism that Hegel identified in the Kantian proposal to the extent that its effective reality [*Wirklichkeit*] is not ensured by its coherence and logical-semantic validity. Certainly, the problem of normativity in Hegelian philosophy and its implications for a reformulation of cosmopolitanism deserve a specific approach. An important contribution can be extracted from the recent thesis of Kevin Thompson (2019), according to which normativity is articulated from a metaphysics of freedom and law, that is, from a Hegelian science of law as result, truth, and grounding of human freedom itself. This is precisely the core of Habermasian and Honnethian approaches that deny such metaphysical-ontological commitment in their respective reconstructive theories of post-metaphysical thinking from Hegel's critique of Kant.

In his second seminal text dedicated to the theme of cosmopolitanism (*Recognition between States*), Honneth (2015) retrospectively revisits the philosophical itinerary of his original intuitions and thesis in his first elaboration of a recognition theory (Honneth 2003; *Kampf an Anerkennung* was originally published in 1992), confessing that the reason which leads him to 'reconstruct Hegel's theory of recognition was to gather ideas that would not only allow rethinking the concept of justice, but also lead to a better explanation of the relationship between socialisation and individuation, between social reproduction and the formation of individual identity' (Honneth 2012: vii).⁹

Still raising the suspicion directed at his predecessor about extending to the international scene a domestic *modus operandi*, Axel Honneth's objective in this essay is mainly to elaborate a distinct description of nation-state agency¹² when compared to dominant IR approaches, avoiding both the universalisation of identity policies and the particularisation of nationalist and populist movements. Thus, Honneth (2012: 140) questions the extent to which the concept of collective identity can be used to characterise and understand large-scale entities such as National States. Since it is not a question of completely rejecting the notion of collective identity, Honneth seeks to transcend the descriptive level of international political realism, for example, when a nation-state recognises the self-determination, emancipation or independence of a people or nation.

We can reexamine the diplomatic relations between nation-state and remember, through the work organised by Sombra Saraiva (2007), three paradigmatic examples that help us to situate the problem of recognition between States in descriptive and normative terms. On December 20, 1777, the Kingdom of Morocco became the first country in the world to recognize the independence of the United States, just a year and a half after the U.S. Declaration of Independence – the War of Independence by states of New England was still underway and the outcome was far from successful, as only on February 6, 1778, the first European country (and arch-rival of the British), France, recognized the USA as an independent nation. Surely the most important recognition would be that from United Kingdom, which only occurred on September 3, 1783, when it signed the Treaty of Paris, ending the American revolutionary process and recognizing USA independence. A second example can be found in 1825, when United Kingdom was the first European country to recognise Brazil's independence from Portugal, proclaimed in 1822.

As in the first example, the second carries economic interests allied to political and social interests: in the USA case, the taxes paid to the metropolis, that triggered the insurrection of the thirteen colonies; and in the Brazilian case, the abolition of the African slave's trade. Both favoured the new configurations of the British imperialist agenda, driven by the Industrial Revolution. A third example can be found in the creation of the Jewish state. Despite enormous pressure from many international community sectors and internal criticism from Zionist leaders, on May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion, recognized as the chief leader of 600,000 Jews at the British Palestine, boldly declared Israel's independence in Tel Aviv, immediately recognised as the State of Israel by President Harry Truman, regardless the strong opposition from many US Congressman, including his Secretary of State, George Marshall, and his Secretary of Defence, James Forrestal.

Geopolitical conjuncture, encompassing military, security, and national sovereignty issues, as well as political-economic and diplomatic interests, underlies the processes of recognition among states, according to a historical-world density that Honneth (2007) resumes from Hegelian philosophy, as Habermas did. However, when he employs the resources of recognition theory in order to deal with topics that permeate those about an international ethics, going farther than problematic attempts regarding a *world ethics* [*Weltethos*], Honneth still couldn't rescue Hegel, whose thoughts were the starting point for the central aspects of Honnethian social and moral theory. In fact, Axel Honneth (2012: 145) argues that Hegel's thoughts hardly help us to formulate a theory

of recognition among States, to the extent that he refuses to accept a connection between foreign policy and collective identity efforts within civilised States.

Absorbing this thought directly from political realism, Honneth argues that Hegel understands the nation-state relations as no much more than exercises of strategic self-affirmation. For Honneth, therefore, Hegel is not of great value when it comes to considerations on recognisable relations at the international level. Van Hooff (2010: 46) believes that we can include the three levels of Honneth's recognition (love, rights, achievement) in order to understand cosmopolitanism as the view that all human beings have at least one legitimate claim and expectation. In fact, the practical relationships with the self [*Selbst*] that crystallises themselves as self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, depends on relationships of mutual recognition in primary sociability (love), legal institutions and moral norms (law), and networks of solidarity and shared values (solidarity). Such patterns of intersubjective recognition can be translated into cosmopolitan terms. Certainly, the most trivial understanding of cosmopolitanism focuses almost exclusively on the second level and sees individuals primarily as holders of rights – notably when the fundamental concept of human rights is inflated in discussions about global justice. A richer understanding can encompass the first and the third levels. What a richer and deeper conception of cosmopolitanism can bring to the discourse of global ethics is an expansion of scope and a deeper understanding of what global justice requires. This is a way to seek a viable *world society*.

From International to World Society: a critical-theoretical project

The normative concern in English School theoretical formulation (Souza 2013; Williams 2015) is a point of connection with Habermas and Critical Theory in general. We can glimpse that through Linklater's contributions. A *paradigm of communication*, as constituted by Habermas (2015), gives to IR theory new tools to construct a normative project which could not be done by a *paradigm of production* (Linklater, 2007: 49). There is a double critique here, directed both to (i) traditional IR theory as also to (ii) Marxist materialist influence on Critical Theory. *World society*, through a critical-theoretical approach, should be established on a discursive ethics axis, departing more from a Kantian influence than from a Marxist one.

We should always remember that Critical Theory teleology is emancipation. It keeps a Marxist influence, however, the path to reach emancipation is far larger than that one thought through materialist lens, as used by Karl Marx. Therefore, critical theorist tends to go epistemologically beyond historical and dialectic materialism, thinking a broader emancipatory perspective. Hence, regarding an ethical bias, emancipation could be accomplished only in a cosmopolitical reality, where a *world society* emerges as a space of communication among individuals, transcending national states limitations. Thus, *world society*, as a critical-theoretical project, holds in its core an emancipatory intention based on a communicative rationality.

Buzan's (2018: 218) efforts toward the improvement of the *world society* idea reach the conclusion that 'one could also take a discursive approach to all this.' It is what we

are trying to do here. There still is a great distance between English School and Critical Theory on a fundamental subject: this very cosmopolitical project, what leads to our investigation towards the *world society* concept. In this aspect, it is necessary to remember the important discussion – discussed in our first section – between pluralism and solidarism. Beyond English School tradition, this discussion is also found in the debates around theories of justice, where Rainer Forst (2010) is an interesting intellectual when it comes to a better understanding of this issue. However, here we depart from Habermasian diagnosis about a post-national constellation to think about how an ethical community could be constructed globally.

Some people argue that, although Habermas considers the multicultural reality and the plurality of forms of social interaction around the world (Habermas 2001), this perception does not seem to effectively influence his diagnosis for the structuring of this so-called *post-national constellation*. This point refers to the disapprovals established by intellectuals of Critical Theory, particularly the feminists of the *fourth generation* (such as Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, Judith Butler, Amy Allen, Rahel Jaeggi, Catherine MacKinnon, among others) who denounce the lack of attention given by prior generations to issues related to colonial emancipation and the formation of cultural, gender and ethnic identities (Benhabib 2006). For Honneth (2003), the symbols of political recognition would not be enough to build up a solid basis for transnational cooperation.

From the contrast between Hobbesian realism and Kantian cosmopolitanism, the Honnethian recognition theory seems promising in order to rescue a realistic conception of cosmopolitanism, because it not only assumes moral realism¹¹ in intersubjective and societal relations, but also rejects a dogmatic reading of the normative challenges of a moral universalism¹² – as he recognizes it in his first public approach to the theme in one of the conferences celebrating the bicentenary of the opusculum *Perpetual Peace*, held at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität from Frankfurt, in May 1995 (Honneth 1997).

We suggest that the project towards a *world society* did not come from the omnipotent intervention of Western nations, but from the historically irreversible process of moralising international relations. As pointed by Habermas (2021), with the collapse of Soviet communism and real socialism in 1989, a new world order could finally abandon the Hobbesian realistic model and go toward a Kantian cosmopolitan model for the 21st century. According to Honneth (1997), this process may not have escaped Enzensberger (1994) so easily if he had directed his attention to other forms of Human's Rights policy, but his aversion to moral universalism is so strong that he limits his scope to prove his thesis of a dangerous societal burden in the case of humanitarian intervention. Honneth then evokes the recognition of human rights through *soft power*, within Joseph Nye (1990) lexicon.

If it is in Kant (1989) that Habermas absorbs the guidelines of his cosmopolitan project (2001; 2012), it is with Hegel (2005) that he defends the legitimisation forms of a supranational *life-world*. In the tension between *system* and *life-world*, although these are the two levels according to which society is structured, Habermas (2015) summarises the former as the material field and the latter as the symbolic space in which communicative actions are carried out. Intersubjectivity, central to the study on mutual recognition since

Hegel (2005), is a fundamental element to undertake the objective proposed here, i.e. understanding the challenges of universal normativity.

English School discourses found in Bull's pluralist bias a connection with the struggle for recognition in Axel Honneth (2003), who inheriting the tradition of the Frankfurt School, and arising as the great exponent of the *third generation* of the latter, criticises his own great predecessor and advisor, Habermas. Regarding Habermas's (2015) formulation on how social actors are manifested in the intersubjective sphere – which concerns communicative action – Honneth (2003; 2007) argues that his advisor is naive to presuppose understanding in the place of conflict. The moral grammar of social conflict (Honneth 2003) refers precisely to this perception.

In this sense, the very foundations of Habermas cosmopolitan project (2001; 2012) are threatened, because despite having the same inspiration in Hegel (2005) as in Honneth, the author supposes a rationality centred on a communication that generates understanding instead of conflict, which affects his entire conception about principles such as *constitutional patriotism* and the way in which individuals would supposedly come to perceive themselves in a transnationalised reality. An example of this mentioned situation is another notion worked by Habermas, that of *civic solidarity*. However, it only shows us that thinking a world society through a critical-theoretical perspective is an heterodoxic exercise. It is to say, that if Habermas appears as an important thinker to glimpse a *world society* that goes beyond the national state, we have yet some steps to go forward.

With an argument much more prone to solidarity if placed within the framework of the English School, Habermas (2001: 126, translated by the author) talks about such *civic solidarity* in which 'Swedes and Portuguese would be willing to answer for each other'. Closer to Honneth's theoretical framework (2003), we argue that the *international society* is permeated by a normative hegemony (Cox 1986) that is intended to be imposed among people to create a unique ethical community, based on Western values (Jung 2019). In this context, conflict emerges when groups that do not recognise themselves in this normativity uses extreme actions to rebel themselves against the imposition of such normativity, as occurs in the case of terrorism (Jung 2019). Every effort to impose something has a resistance counterattack. Looking to this very fact is that Habermas (2012) prevents his theory of being a Eurocentric one, because he conceives different levels of solidarity for different contexts. It finally leads us to the argument present in the previous section, when Habermas defends that only *some values* are truly universal.

We perceive that the attempt to build a universal normativity can be dangerous, because conflict is more possible than understanding; communication has a lot more different rationalities than the notion of European intersubjectivity can suppose. In these terms, aiming to maintain viable Habermas theoretical box, it is interesting to think through the contribution of Enrique Dussel (2001), regarding the possibility of a cosmopolitan reality that, before it can be realised, must be transmodernised to transcend Eurocentric modernity. One can then intertwine what Jung (2019) and Dussel (2001) say, in a theoretical framework anchored in Honneth (2003), to conceive that the intersubjectivity that guides Habermasian communicative ideal must be thought through

other terms, beyond European rationality, still bearing in mind the conflict as a moral grammar of international relations – and not the consensus. Thus, the communication thought by Habermas as key component to *world society* shouldn't be discardable: we only need to expand it in a path in order to comprehend different forms of intersubjectivity. It is allowed by Habermas himself, when we put it within the elements that cannot be consensualised in a global scale.

The Rawlsian idea of global justice can also aid an articulation between globalisation and democratisation without falling back into the false dilemma of choosing between an anti-state cosmopolitanism and an anti-globalist nationalism (De Oliveira 2003: 439). In fact, both Rawls (1999) and Habermas deliberately sought to avoid the extreme positions that stem from Hegelian criticisms of Kantian cosmopolitanism, either in the direction of a philosophy of history that culminates in a post-history/end of history (Fukuyama 1992) or in the direction of a political realism that cannot contain the escalation of war conflicts and civilising clashes (Huntington 1996).

According to Bull (1995), it is possible to establish order in an environment with diverse ethical communities, which can lead to the conclusion that, if communication is necessary for order, diverse ethical communities can communicate. This joint dialogue, although in different normative positions, can then create a transnational project in the terms outlined by Dussel (2001), in which a legitimate political community is formed from the margins. Just as throughout history there have been a series of approximations and detachments in the *international society* pendulum (Watson 2004), the formation of institutions and common practices through interaction, although through conflicts and distinct perspectives (Honneth 2003), may transcend the *international society* towards a new perspective: the *world society*.

We defend that *world society* is a possibility to world order, a project present both in English School as in Critical Theory tradition. As argued along this paper, the English School approach fails in conceiving a primacy to State, in a concept that should be thought through the transnationalisation of citizenship, from a prism that does not impose a determined normativity. Thus, on the one hand, the transnational reality that is drawn in the international context, well perceived by Habermas (2001) but initially made possible by Bull (1995), is combined with a non-Eurocentric proposal for this transnationalisation on the other hand. It would signal the emergence of Kantian revolutionism (Wight 1994), but in a critical way.

Ethical diversity in *international society* demands a plural vision that considers differences. At the same time, in the process of building a cosmopolitan project, this diversity must be seen from a solidarity bias. Finally, the solidarity pluralism proposed by Williams (2015) is intersected as the format in which the recognition itself is a way of perceiving the existence of a legitimate other, albeit with distinct normativity. If we detach from statecentric addiction, Williams (2015) argument is an interesting one. Dialectical tension produces new synthesis from recognition (Hegel 2005), synthesis that brings the different ones closer, even among conflicts. Self-determination through the other conceives distinct but interconnected ethical communities; conflicting, but which are recognised; separate but connected (Honneth 2007). Thus, a cosmopolitan community

is made possible, while far from being free of tensions, coexists through the will of social actors and adapts yourself to a *world society* design. It serves as a follow-up to the agenda proposed by Linklater (1992), the one of a normative reconstruction of Critical Theory in IR.

Conclusion

Despite the vanguardism which English School scholars showed through the *international* and *world society* idea, we need to go beyond it, seeking a critical-theoretical project that aims a *world society* in a cosmopolitical reality. The idea of *world society* is a project that needs to be rethought from more solid foundations, in order to be justified and legitimised. It can also be argued that, if reality is increasingly transnational, reflecting on ways to democratise and legitimise this phenomenon, it is one of the main challenges of contemporary political philosophy and IR theory, mainly Critical Theory. Finally, we must think about the feasibility of a transnational reality, which is organized differently from the Westphalian system of States. The diagnosis of the present times is precisely carried out by Habermas (2001) when he conceives the post-national constellation in which new forms of political and social organisations continues to emerge from the analysis of an unprecedented economic and cultural globalisation.

We conclude with the perspective that a cosmopolitan reality, synthesised by the concept of *world society*, will still be composed of conflict, although the conflict itself is inevitable and even necessary as a way to build institutions and practices that legitimise the political constellation of this new transnational horizon. This horizon is always dynamic and generative, in a phenomenological sense that opposes static and essentialised analyses. The challenge now would be to cultivate spaces through post-national constellations such as the European Union, Mercosur, BRICS and the transnational forums as United Nations itself, as occurred with the WHO (World Health Organization) and related organs in their difficult interactions and dialogues with several nation-states in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We assume, therefore, that cosmopolitanism and post-national constellations do not eliminate relations and recognition between States, but rather make them both more viable. The existence of conflicts remains the greatest evidence that there is a democratic space between different social actors that set themselves and claim rights in a transnational political arena, besides being a true engine of the dialectic of recognition, producing new stellar configurations of historical processes. Finally, a *world society* is both viable and desirable, directing the cosmopolitan ideal that develops from Kant to an increasing and more concrete effectiveness.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the journal reviewers and Camila von Holdefer for their critical remarks.

Notes

- 1 In contrast to Mark Hoffman's (1987) proposal, Linklater proposes that the Critical Theory of IR should be based on the Frankfurt School to act in three axes: (i) normative, (ii) sociological, and (iii) praxeological.
- 2 The English School is also known as the 'School of International Society', so it can be affirmed that the most important notion built upon this theoretical tradition is precisely that of the existence of an *international society* beyond an *international system*.
- 3 Although Bull, at the end of his career, was directed to a more solidaristic conception according to Souza (2013).
- 4 There is no consensus on this nomenclature, since the 'third debate' is a series of nomenclatures and interpretations to understand the theoretical evolution of the discipline.
- 5 We point here to the work *This too a History of Philosophy* [Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie], a two-volume book. The first one, that we emphasize here, is *The occidental constellation of Faith and Knowledge*.
- 6 Ensuring the freedom of citizens is pointed out by Hegel (2005) as the ethical function (*Sittliche*) of the State.
- 7 Identified with the liberal view, the proposal for global governance emerges as a conjunctural analysis of the Cold War, observing the regimes established between the countries that led to cooperation even in the midst of conflict – in what realists like John Mearsheimer would call the 'Balance of Terror'. Since the end of the Cold War, this proposal gains even greater momentum, bringing elements of transnationalisation and state weakening in the face of global issues, thus advocating a governance between states to deal with this weakening. See Rosenau and Czempiel (2010).
- 8 Although we admire Habermas's work, two axes of criticism directed to it can be conceived: (i) the naivety regarding its tendency to presuppose understanding in the place of conflict; and, even more critical, (ii) its project of a rationality based on European modernity, which leads a series of criticisms from a post-colonial view. As stated in our paper, Habermas (2001, 2012) demonstrates a concern with otherness, but his assumptions could be pointed as Eurocentric, as is remarkable in the construction of his *Theory of Communicative Action* (2015), criticized in broader terms – and at the epistemological level – by authors such as Aníbal Quijano (1992) and Donna Haraway (1988).
- 9 As pointed by Nythamar de Oliveira et al (2015), this approach to the problem of recognition between States was presented for the first time, in German and English, at an international symposium about justice held in Porto Alegre in 2009. Although it doesn't point directly to the subject of global justice, this essay represents an instructive effort by this Habermas's successor to apply the tools of recognition theory to the general domain of international affairs.
- 10 On international players agency see Buzan and James (2000).
- 11 Moral realism is the view that there are moral facts or moral values regardless of human agents, thinking subjects or intersubjective relations.
- 12 A dogmatic reading of moral universalism takes normativity for granted either by assuming moral realism a priori or by adopting some form of essentialism (i.e. universals as essences or substances).

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Além da Sociedade Internacional: a ideia da Sociedade Mundial, da Escola de Inglesa à Teoria Crítica

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo examinar o conceito de *sociedade internacional* a fim de apontar suas insuficiências dentro da política mundial contemporânea. Veremos que o conceito de *sociedade mundial* emerge como uma melhor escolha em relação às discussões sobre os desafios normativos na teoria das Relações Internacionais (RI). Aqui, no entanto, uma ideia renovada da sociedade mundial vem à tona. Considerando suas origens na Escola Inglesa, lembramos que os conceitos de sociedade internacional e sociedade mundial são duas de três possibilidades para a ordem mundial, como apontado por Wight (1991). Neste sentido, argumentamos que ambos, dentro da Escola Inglesa, carecem de elementos quando se trata de debates contemporâneos de RI. Assim, corremos através de contribuições da Teoria Crítica, principalmente de Jürgen Habermas, para desenvolver um conceito de sociedade mundial que se encaixa em uma realidade transnacionalizada. Embora nem sempre estejamos de acordo com Habermas, nós desestimulamos criticamente sua proposta intelectual e suas tentativas de fazer avançar a discussão sobre o cosmopolitismo, que aqui trata da ideia da sociedade mundial.

Palavras-chave: Teoria das Relações Internacionais; Teoria Crítica; sociedade internacional; patriotismo constitucional; sociedade mundial; Escola Inglesa; cosmopolitismo.

Received on 7 February 2022 and approved for publication on 29 August 2022.



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