

Critical International Relations Theories and the Study of Arab Uprisings: A Critique

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This study articulates that most of the critical theorists are still strikingly neglecting the study of the Arab Uprising(s) adequately. After almost a decade of the eruption of the so-called Arab Uprisings, the study claims that the volume of scholarly engaging of dominate Western International Relations (IR) theories with such unprecedented events is still substantially unpretentious. Likewise, and most importantly, the study also indicates that most of these theories, including the critical theory of IR (both Frankfurt and Habermasian versions), have discussed, engaged, analysed, and interpreted the Arab Spring (a term usually perceived to be orientalist, troubling, totally inappropriate and passive phenomenon) indicate a strong and durable egoistic Western perspective that emphasis on the preservation of the status quo and ensure the interests of Western and neoliberal elites, and the robustness of counter-revolutionary regimes. On the other hand, the writings and scholarships that reflexively engaged and represent the authentic Arab views, interests, and prospects were clearly demonstrating a strong and durable scarce, if not entirely missing.

Keywords: *International Relations, Critical Theory, Postcolonial, Arab Uprising(s), Middle East, Revolutions.*

Introduction

This study tries to elucidate why the hard-core realist security considerations (interests, survival, and regime stability) prevailed over democratization, development, and emancipation attempts in the region, despite the fact that positivist theories of foreign policy are not taking resistance and social movements into account. Neorealism, for instance, ignores the effects of nonmaterial elements, i.e. norms, values, emancipation claims, political identities, the aspirations of the Arab peoples, socioeconomic changes, the failure of economic policies, and the political will to establish the rule of law and social media networks.

Alternatively, and in contrast with the general wisdom that dominates the field of Middle Eastern studies, by emphasising these elements, and others, the study argues that Critical Theory (CT) and its applications in the field of International Relations (IR) could provide a wider, more comprehensive and accurate explanation not only to the foreign policy of revolutionary and non-revolutionary countries but also of the construction and formulation of domestic policy and how it determines foreign policy of the Arab Uprisings, and vice-versa.

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Now, and after almost a decade of the outbreak of the so-called Arab Uprisings, the study claims that the volume of scholarly engaging of dominant Western International Relations (IR) theories with such unprecedented events is still substantially unpretentious. Likewise, and most importantly, the study also indicates that most of these theories, including the critical theory of IR (both Frankfurt and Habermasian versions), have discussed, engaged, analysed, and interpreted the Arab Spring, a term usually perceived to be orientalist, troubling, totally inappropriate and passive phenomenon as Rami Khouri pointed out (Khouri 2011) indicate a strong and durable egoistic Western perspective that emphasis on the preservation of the status quo and ensure the interests of Western and neoliberal elites, and the robustness of counter-revolutionary regimes. On the other hand, the writings and scholarships that reflexively engaged and represent the authentic Arab views, interests, and prospects were clearly demonstrating a strong and durable scarce, if not entirely missing.

This paper substantially engages with the scholarly literature of the different IR theories that have been produced during the last ten days regarding the Arab Uprisings, with particular emphasis on the critical theory applications in the field of international relations (the Frankfurt School and the Habermasian project), in order to reveal and detect the fallacies, deficiencies, disconnection from reality (and even contestation) of these theories, and likewise pointed at what went wrong with the once was perceived as a promising alternative theoretical approach to the positivist and problem-solving theories. But first, it will outline the fundamental arguments and propositions of the main research agenda of the critical theory in the field of IR.

The Critical School of International Relations: An Overview

Critical Theory defined as the theoretical tendency that aiming at “further the self-understanding of groups committed to transforming society” (Steans et al., 2010: 106). Where it mainly originated in the early writings of Enlightenment philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Hegel and their theories on dialectics and consciousness, while the modern version of the school emerged in the late 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s in Frankfurt, Germany. The Frankfurt school was a reaction to the positivist theories seen to support the authoritarian European regimes of the first half of the twentieth century. The research agenda of the first generation of Frankfurt School theorists concentrated on a negative critique of the metaphysical, ideological, and social origins of authoritarianism. In addition, it relied on aesthetic and cultural critiques to understand the pervasive tendencies and/or influences of authoritarianism and conformism in capitalist societies (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972, Roach 2013: 172) in order to produce an emancipatory project in social science (and later in the field of International Relations) that seeks to prevent the re-emergence of such authoritarian social systems.

Essentially, the core elements of Critical Theory are, 1) scepticism of existing traditions and all absolute claims; 2) an interdisciplinary perspective; 3) a focus on

emancipation arising from changing historical circumstances; 4) a concentration on how to respond to new challenges confronting humanity; 5) an exploration of the underlying assumptions and purposes of competing theories and existing forms of practice; and 6) a refusal to identify freedom with any set of institutions or fixed system of thought (Bronner 2011: 1-2). Consequently, Critical Theory “involves understandings of the social world that attempt to stand outside prevailing structures, processes, ideologies and orthodoxies while recognizing that all conceptualizations within the ambit of sociality derive from particular social/historical conditions” (Booth 2008: 78).

From an ontological perspective, most of the critical theorists indicate that the subjects of knowledge are not given (as the positivists believe) rather formulate and constituted prior to perception or analysis of varying (and divergent) ideals, forces, and interests. Likewise, epistemologically they also claim that the objects of knowledge are intimately linked to theoretical practice and associated with the construction of political reality. For instance, Robert Cox and others believe that the so-called scientism and objectivity tendencies in IR, and in humanities in general, has inhibited any reflection on the moral and normative aspects of international relations. Consequently, the primary task of the first generation of the CTIR was to expose and to develop a critique of the underlying assumptions that constituted the basis of mainstream theoretical and empirical inquiry in the field, which usually was referring to the dominant realist-neorealist orthodoxy that looks at the existing international system as given and immutable, reified, and naturalized structure (Cox 2001: 46, George 1989, Yalvaç 2015).

In the field of IR, the critical school had been defined as a post-Marxist theory, “continues to evolve beyond the paradigm of production to a commitment to dialogic communities that are deeply sensitive about all forms of inclusion and exclusion-domestic, transnational and international” (Linklater 2001: 25). Others defined it as a broad group of different approaches and are in a radical position vis-a-vis mainstream international relations theory (Yalvaç 2015, Devetak et al. 2013). In fact, there are two branches of the Critical school: Critical International Relations (CIR) and the Critical Theory of International Relations (CTIR) according to Stephen Roach (Roach 2013, Samhat and Payne 2004). The former is also known as the “Frankfurt School of International Relations” as it adopts the ideas, concepts, and assumptions of the Frankfurt School, while the latter tries to overcome the shortcomings of the Frankfurt school's negative dialectics in terms of the origins of social authoritarianism by adopting many concepts and assumptions from liberalism and institutionalism in order to understand how and when the institutions work and how (and when) their processes create or prevent authoritarianism (Roach 2013: 174). This direction emerged in the late 1960s, as Jürgen Habermas sought to improve the Frankfurt school by claiming that a negative dialectic of authoritarianism was not enough and did not add further knowledge which could help us understand society more accurately. Instead of a “negative” dialectic, Habermas suggests what he called a “progressive” dialectic, which focuses on the aspects of communicative reason and social actions that expand our understanding and empower the emancipatory project through

democratic procedures that can mediate between the facts and norms of law (Habermas 1979, Linklater, 1998).

Other studies differentiate between two different forms of critical theory, can be broadly characterized as those that apply the insights of critical theory to the field of international relations; and those that aspire to develop a critical theory of international relations. Critical theory in the latter sense is “grand theory” seeking to provide a comprehensive account of the emancipatory potentials of the present era (Shapcott 2008: 335). In other words, the term critical theory in lower case letters is usually to refer to post-positivist theories such as feminism, historical sociology, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism, which are united in their critique of the mainstream, and particularly, of Neo-Realism. Critical Theory with capital letters (CT) refers more directly to the critical theory originating from the Frankfurt School and mainly particularly from the works of Jürgen Habermas (Yalvaç 2015).

In any case, this paper will refer to the term critical (with C and c) synonymously since it believes that in spite the occasional sometimes intricate differences between the two branches, “all critical theories are united in their critique of the main research agenda and the positivist orientations in international relations questioning, above all, the idea of value-free theoretical and social inquiry” (Yalvaç 2015) on one hand. Moreover, the ultimate goal of varied critical theory projects is to provide a social theory of world politics that broadening the traditional scope of IR, and freeing it from the limited state-centric models obsessions of positivist theories like neorealism, which mean criticising the overvaluation of the material dimension and the role that the forces of production, in favour of re-emphasis on the role that ideas, values, and ideologies in construction and maintenance of social and political structures on the other hand (Devetak 1995, Linklater 1996). One of the problems with the critical school, especially the CTIR version, is that when it tries to explain the behaviours of non-Western countries, it presumes, like neoliberalism and constructivism, that all countries/societies are civilized, peaceful, and progressive in an Enlightenment sense. This Eurocentric perspective constraint CTIR and ignores the role and effects of structural or material power variables which make emancipation goals unattractive or undesirable options. In turn, the critical school prejudicially accuses other countries that do not seek these goals of being “unprogressive”. Such criticisms – and others – will be discussed in detail later, with emphasis on the study of the Arab Uprisings and the study of revolution and change in international politics outside the Western hemisphere in particular.

Regarding the matter of emancipation, one of the main differences between the CIR and the CTIR is that the latter is trying to enforce the emancipatory project within the current system by focusing on the possibilities of the deliberative and communicative discourse power mechanisms. In contrast, the CIR theory is attempting to establish and implement the emancipatory project by changing the system itself (Anievas, 2005). Thus, and for several reasons that shall be mentioned in detail later, this study relies on the concepts, assumptions, ideas, and explanations of the Frankfurt Critical International Relations rather than the Habermasian critical theory of IR. In the post-revolutionary Arab World, the study

argues that the Habermasian emancipatory project cannot be implemented for several reasons; 1) the authoritarian nature of the social system itself; 2) the long record of failed reform-from-within attempts; and 3) the growing power of anti-emancipation forces.

In the following section, this study will outline the essential arguments and philosophical background of the main strands of the critical theory applications in the field of IR, the Frankfurt school (or the Neo-Gramscians project), and the normative project (the Habermasian project), by concentrate on the works of Robert Cox and Andrew Linklater in particular.

Frankfurt School

In essence, Critical International Relations (CIR) theory is not just an academic approach but also an emancipatory project, where it not only emphasises on the social explanation but also on politically motivated actions that committed to the formation of a more equal and just world by concentrates on the sociological features and dynamics of capitalism.

In the late 1930s, the Frankfurt School emerged as a response on the rise of Fascism and Nazism systems of power, the Frankfurt critical school theorists were concerned with what Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno called “the dark side of modernity” and pursued to understand the dilemma of why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition is sinking into a new kind of barbarism (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1972: xi). Interestingly enough, on different parallel contexts such as the Arab Uprisings, the CIR could provide a comprehensive understanding of emerging of new terrorist groups such as *Daesh* or the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the new global wave of populism and ultra-right-wing movements, and how to deal with it. For instance, comparing the knowledge productions of the orthodox-positivist international relations and terrorism studies with the critical terrorism studies (CTS).

On the one hand, Traditional Terrorism Studies (TTS) is not a self-reflexive project that does question the social context of the activity of theorizing nor the social conditions with which it deals. For such traditional theories like the TTS, and IR in general, “knowledge is always constituted in reflection of interests” (Ashley 1981: 207). On the contrary, the TTS remarkably emphasis on how to combat such terrorist groups and to develop counterstrategies, which in return create more of such groups since it remarkably relies on the excessive use of violence. In other words, as a positivist theory, the TTS conceives social problems (such as terrorism) as technical problems that require technical solutions (Jackson *et al.* 2009) while on the other hand, the CTS emphasis on the immanent critiques of the social life to provide insight into existing social contradictions that present more dialectical and reflexive insights on the origins and the motives that created such barbarian movements.

Furthermore, CIR theorists were one of the foremost philosophers that pointed at the dialectic and origin link between knowledge and power. The field of IR, according to Richard Devetak, was (and still) traditionally omission the

considerations about the relationship between knowledge and values; e.g., the state of knowledge, the justification of truth claims -the applied methodology, scope, and extent of the research (Devetak 1995). For Horkheimer and the first generation of Frankfurt School, knowledge was always (1) associated with State; (2) tend to reify existing power relations, and (3) changes that occur would be subject to state interests, thus, the most important forces for the transformation of social reality in order to expand human emancipation were social forces, not the explanation of an independent logic to be revealed (Silva 2005). Therefore, most of the critical theorists stress the necessity that scientific knowledge must be impartial, neutral, non-normative and pure. In the view of critical theory, most of the terms we use to identify entities and relationships have ontological meanings, and since theory (and researcher/s) is not separated from the world and the phenomenon they studied, these meanings are not the result of discoveries or revelations but presuppose the action of the researcher/s. Accordingly, ontological concepts in IR such as the nation-state, violence, governments, terrorism, etc., could refer to different meanings and not necessarily reflect identical things. In other words, contending theories produce contested concepts. Likewise, for a second-generation of CIR theory such as Robert Cox, since the theory is the way the mind works to understand the confronted reality, it is crucial to emphasise that every theory should not be dissociated from a concrete historical context(s) and being aware of how the experience of facts is perceived and organized to be understood (Cox 1995, Silva 2005).

Neo-Gramscians Project

Evidentially, thanks to Antonio Gramsci in the first place these philosophical themes entered the discipline of International Relations. In a parallel with the first generation of the Frankfurt School who were occupied with identified the influence of culture, bureaucracy, the nature of authoritarianism, the question of reason and rationality, and epistemological discussions to explain the failure modernity and the spread of socialism, Gramsci sought to elucidate the influence of hegemony and the superstructure/s on this phenomenon (Gramsci 2011, Cox 1983).

In fact, Gramsci has a crucial influence over critical theorists such as Robert Cox, Stephen Gill, Kees Van Der Pijl and Henk Overbeekc (or what is knowing as the Amsterdam School of Global Political Economy) and others. Those scholars and others have adopted and developed Gramsci's idea of hegemony and present it to IR field in order to understand global power structures and dynamics of domination through the paradigm of production, where economic patterns involved in the production of goods and the social and political relationships they entail (Cox 1983, 1987). Robert Cox for example, who considers the leading critical theorists in the field of IR, claims that power is understood in the context of a set of globalised relations of production demanding the transformation of the nation-state, and depends on the combination of material variable and ideas for acquiring legitimacy (Cox and Jacobsen 1974). Further, he emphasised the notion to look at global politics as a collective construction which evolving through the

complex interplay of state, sub-state and trans-state forces in economic, cultural and ideological spheres (Ferreira 2015).

In fact, Cox has sought to understand world orders as historical structures composed of three categories of forces: material capacities, ideas, and institutions (or ideational forces). The material capacities, firstly, concern the economic sphere of social structure, as well as including the technological and organizational potential. Consequently, they indicate not only how any society reproduces itself on its material basis but also how this reproduction is planned and anticipated (Cox 1987, Silva 2005). The second force is the institutional capabilities which consider a fundamental variable. In the Coxian project – as in Habermas’ project – Institutions play a crucial role in stabilizing and perpetuating particular order on the one hand. It also tends to reinforce the well-established power relations by cultivating compatible collective images on the other hand, not only because it reflects a specific combination of ideas and material power but also, they transcend the original order and influence the development of new ideas and material capacities (Cox 1995, Silva 2005).

The third force is the ideas (or the ideational forces). Cox believes that the state exists in the first place in the world system because of ideas, and since these ideas ‘In being so shared, these ideas constitute the social world of these same individuals.’ (Cox 1987: 395), either because of providing intersubjective understandings, or/and contain particular views of what in society is good, just, legitimate, natural, and so on (Cox 1981: 137-138). Likewise, ideas are the container of competing images of social order held by different groups. Ideas also are durable and historical, come and go, albeit slowly (Cox 1981: 139-140). As a result, Cox stresses the significance of what he called the concept of “the production of ideas” as well as the production of goods, and called to apply equally both concepts, since ideas have material reality (Cox 2002: 31-32).

Ideas (i.e., revolutions, resistance, and opposition, etc.) consider one of the most crucial forces of change in international relations. Cox brilliantly noticed that since ‘structures are made by collective human action and transformable by collective human action’ (Cox 1987: 395). As Anthony Leysens stated:

“The transformation of structures is possible because there is a shared intersubjective understanding between individuals, which extends to abstract concepts such as the state. The state exists because ‘In being so shared, these ideas constitute the social world of these same individuals.’ Therefore, although, humans are mostly ‘born into’ existing structures, the latter are not immutable, but have been created and can therefore be changed” (Leysens 2008: 149).

In other words, Cox indicates that one of the major sources of structural change of world structure is the disjuncture between the two forms of ideational phenomena, ideas (or the intersubjective notions of which they are constitutive come into conflict with ideological perspective) and institutions (the fora in which agents act politically) to seek different outcomes from institutional processes (Cox 1981: 138). Interestingly, however, Cox did not discuss the notion of divergences between material and ideational forces, and how it affects the possibilities of change in the world order.

For Robert Cox, and Neo-Gramscians perspective of IR theory in general, the most important aspect in developing a critical theory of IR is to understand state and hegemony, in which it could afford a non-deterministic yet structurally grounded explanation of change in international relations (Cox 1981, 1983, 1986, Joseph 2008, Germain and Kenny 1998: 5). In contrast to the deterministic and ahistorical mainstream IR theories that look at a concept such as the states and its relation to the society as a whole different and separated realm and ignoring the internal relation between the two, Neo-Gramscians see the separation of the public from the private, or the state from civil society, is a structural aspect of the capitalist mode of production. In other words, the state is not perceived only in its Weberian-institutional aspect but also in a Hegelian prospect. Where the state not only provide services or grantee the rule of law, but also produce violence, in which the ruling elite could employ to justify and maintain control and to justify power, as well as manufacturing the consent for its domination in terms of its relations with other social forces in society. By doing that, the ruling elites influence the functioning of the state in a way that facilities understanding how does the class nature of the state from the way the state maintains and supports the conditions necessary for the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production (Gramsci 1971: 261 quoted in Yalvaç 2015).

While realists stated that hegemony is usually globally exercised by the state and its institutions/agencies (domestically) and for the sake of subjection and repressive, Gramsci, on the other hand, believed that hegemony exercised by social forces that control the state, not only through forceful or coercive methods that aim to subject the public but also through producing consent. Gramsci understood that the moral, political and cultural values of the dominant group are dissipated through civil society institutions, obtaining the status of shared intersubjective meanings, hence the notion of consent helps in the proliferation of dominant ideologies to the extent they become common sense (Gramsci 2011).

The Neo-Gramscians understanding of hegemony variates from the deterministic mainstream IR theories. While Neo-realists define hegemony as the concentration of material power in one dominant state in the international system, or the strongest state in a specific region, the Neo- Gramscians, on the other hand, sought to broaden this understanding as a result of the Gramscian broader concept of power, by claiming that the concept of hegemony presents itself as a productive discussion (Silva 2005). Hence, Neo-Gramscians define hegemony in terms of social relations of production and the way dominant social classes organize their domination. Thus, hegemony is conceived not only in terms of force but also as a combination of coercion and consent to the legitimacy of existing institutions with respect to the reproduction of the existing social relations of production, and to opens up multiple possibilities for the reinterpretation of international reality (Cox 1986, Joseph 2008, Yalvaç 2015).

While Gramsci discussed systems of hegemony and domination within the border of domestic societies that were based on his experiences of the Italian society in the 1920s, Robert Cox was more interested in revealing systems of domination in both domestic and international systems, and drilling the social basis of hegemony and its inherent points or moments of contradiction (such as the

Arab Spring moment of 2011 and aftermath), where hegemony not only depend on force or the ability to project it but also on the consent and the will of system members, actors, and participants acceptance (Germain and Kenny 1998: 6, Cox 1986). In Cox's view, world hegemonies are based on the universalization of the state-society complexes of a hegemonic state, where hegemony at the international level links the dominant mode of production within the world economy with "subordinate modes of production" thus connecting "the social classes of different countries" (Cox and Sinclair 1996: 137). Or as he put it in his seminal and widely-quoted article of 1981: "based on a coherent conjunction or fit between a configuration of material power, the prevalent collective image of world order (including certain norms) and a set of institutions which administer the order with a certain semblance of universality" (Cox 1981: 139).

Overall, Gramsci's notion of hegemony (on the domestic level) has indeed perceived a significant influence in the development of a theoretical understanding of world orders as well as the dynamics of transformation and continuity processes on the international domain (Cox, 1995b; Silva, 2005).

The starting point of Robert Cox critical project is based on the Gramscian-based idea of hegemony, where the dominate states throughout history, fundamentally by relying on coercive capacities as well as their widespread consent, had successfully created and shaped world orders in a suitable way that serves and achieves their best interests (Cox 1995). In order to analyse world orders away from the state-centric model of neo-realism and neoliberalism, Robert Cox developed a new approach, which he called "world structures approach". According to this approach, in international system there are three modes of production or sphere of activity: (a) organization of production, more particularly with regard to the social forces engendered by the production process; (b) forms of states, which are derived from the study of different state/society complexes; and (c) world orders, that is, the particular configurations of forces. According to Faruk Yalvaç the dialectical relations between these levels of activity are irreducible and dialectically related and concretized in each of the elements of the historical structures (i.e., social forces, forms of states and world orders). These elements also constitute different types of historical structures, and each of these structures, in turn, is affected by a configuration between dominant ideas, institutions, and material capabilities (Yalvaç 2015).

In sum, Critical International Relations (CIR) theory (Frankfurt School) is concerned with how the existing order arose and its possibilities for transformation, to clarify the diversity of possible alternatives, and exploring the potential for structural change and building strategies for transformation, mainly by questioning the nature, dynamics and relations of social and political institutions, seeking to understand how they arose and may be transformed. In other words, it is essential to know the context in which it is generated and used. As well as, it is equally imperative to know whether the aim of knowledge itself has become an instrument to furthering the interests of the dominant states that reflect the interests of their hegemonic classes, and to maintain or change the existing social order (Silva 2005). Clearly, that was the purpose that pushes Cox to states his widely quoted phrases which investigates and interrogates the way

knowledge has been conditioned by the social, political, and historical context. Cox outstandingly claimed that “theories are for someone and for some purpose” and that “there is no such thing as a theory, divorced from a standpoint in time and space. When any theory so represents itself, it is the more important to examine it as ideology, and to lay bare its concealed perspective” (Cox 1981: 139, Cox 1986: 207).

For Cox, while problem-solving theories are preoccupied with maintaining social power relationships, the reproduction of the existing system, serve the existing social arrangements and support the interests of the hegemonic social forces, and attempting to ensure that “existing relationships and institutions work smoothly”, the critical theory, on the other hand, is a self-reflexive, criticizes the existing system of domination, and identifies processes and forces that will create an alternative world order (Cox 1981: 129–130). In other words, while the problem-solving theory accepts the world as a given, and points to the correction of dysfunctions or specific problems that emerge within the existing orders and structures of domination, where the overall goal the theory is to enhance the prevailing relationships and institutions of social and political domination, the knowledge that critical theory pursues and produced on the other hand is not neutral; rather it is politically and ethically committed to the purposes of social and political transformation.

The Habermasian Project

The other leading philosopher that constituted the origins of the critical school of IR is Jürgen Habermas. As one of the pioneers of the second generation of Frankfurt school scholars, the main outstanding political cause for Habermas philosophical project is exploring the future of democracy (Habermas 2001, 2012). In the field of IR, since his seminal work *The Future of Human Nature* (Habermas 2001), the Habermasian critical project in IR was explicitly built on a binary framework. One side interprets the normative and legal evolution of world society and assessing the possibilities for further moral development in the global arena, while the other side (the so-called the systems-diagnostic) analyse in functionalist terms the transformations of economic and political subsystems in the age of globalisation (Schmid 2018). The systems-diagnostic side consists of three core points:

1. The Structural transformation of the world economic system’ that has begun in the 1990s, and knew as globalisation, which characterised by the intensification of worldwide economic and communication flows and the dismantling of trade barriers (Habermas 2001: 51).
2. The fragmentation and the dangerous imbalance between the global scale of the operation of the market economy and the territorially bound political-administrative subsystem, which prohibited and restraint the states and governments’ abilities to intervene in the economy, levy taxes and secure the provision of social goods, and ultimately risks destabilising the entire social system (Habermas 2001: 52, Habermas 2009: 92).

3. The transformation aspect where the political and administrative functions that have historically been attached to the nation-state have to be ‘transferred ... to larger political entities (or reconstituting itself at a supranational level) which could manage to keep pace with a transnational economy’ (Habermas 2001: 52, Habermas 2012, Schmid 2018).

Accordingly, Habermas has inspired several IR critical theorists such as Andrew Linklater, Thomas Risse, Mark Hoffman, Kathryn Sikkink, Richard Devetak and others with his thesis on the paradigm of communicative action, which consists of the patterns of rationality involved in human communication and the ethical principles they entail (Linklater 1998, Risse 2000, Hoffman 1991, 1987, Sikkink 2008). Linklater for instance, who considers—like Cox—the leading scholar in this research programme, seeks to reveal all sorts of hegemonic interests feeding the world order as a first step to overcome global systems of exclusion and inequality (Hutchings 2001).

Several critical theorists believe that at this stage within the field of IR there is only one contributor to the so-called critical project in IR, and that is Andrews Linklater, who stands largely unrivalled in developing the Frankfurt School project of a “critical theory of society” (Shapcott 2008: 340). Since his early works on international political theory, Linklater’s works were dominated by the concern with identifying the different stages of development of the freedom of human subjects in the area of their international relations. Later On, his works progressively shift away from philosophical and normative questions and towards a greater engagement with sociological inquiry (Linklater 1980, 1982, 1998, 2011, Schmid 2018).

Linklater’s project aims to reconstruct global and local political communities has adopted the Habermasian ideals, methods, and mechanisms such as open dialogue and non-coercive communication, whereby all affected actors by political decisions put forward their claims and justify them based on rational and universally accepted principles of validity (Linklater 1998, Ferreira 2015). Besides Linklater, several scholars of the English School also adopted Habermas ideas. Generally speaking, the English School emphasises of the essentiality of normative aspects such as communication and convergence between actors and examines the ways in which systems transform into societies, with more “civilized” rule-governed interactions between states (Bull 1977). Moreover, this *loose* branch of critical theory of IR is more inclined toward normative reflection and prescription, and usually identified with the idea of an international society of states who not only coexist but recognize each other's right to coexist and develop rules of behaviour based on this recognition (Jackson 2000, Shapcott 2004).

The genuine contribution of the Linklater project in IR is that in his works, he transformed dissatisfactions with the ideal-normative theorising that seeks to complement the speculative history of moral development on the one hand, and his criticising of Habermasian project that decorporealised and excessively rationalistic normative theory on the other hand. Instead of that and relied on [the English School] sociological investigations of real-world processes of change in international society (Devetak et al. 2013: 489, Schmid 2018). Further, and in

order to enhance the ties that bind communities together, Linklater also emphasizes on the essentiality of extending the obligations (to protect) toward what he called 'the strangers', by do not allow concept such as citizenship and other related set of practices to restrict permitting the enjoyment of universal rights inside a community (freedom of conscience, movement, association, etc), by dividing global community into outsiders (immigrants/refugees) and insiders (citizens/natives). The need to protect vulnerable minorities could be achieved through the so-called 'universal concept of citizenship', which could be refashioned through open dialogue among those affected by global system, either reducing the degree of harm, and/or by granting them particular rights to avoid or mitigate the effects of discrimination and forms of violence (such as sexual violence and terrorism), forced migration, climate change and resource depletion (Linklater 1998, 2000, Ferreira 2015).

In addition, Linklater claims that the emotional aversion to pain, suffering, and the aspiration to see them minimised may represent a stronger moral foundation for a universalising project (Linklater 2007: 144–146). He seeks to draw the orientation towards analysing long-term trends in the collective development of '[s]ocial controls on violence and constraints on impulsive behaviour' (Linklater 2004: 9–11, Linklater 2010: 158), and explores how far different international systems have thought harm to individuals a moral problem for the world as a whole (Linklater 2002: 320, Linklater 2011). In the *Problem of Harm in World Politics*, Linklater's critical project of IR has constituted a new research agenda more circumscribed terms of the sociology of global morals with an emancipatory intent (Linklater 2011, Schmid 2018).

For many, one of the main criticisms to the heavily normative essence of Habermasian-Linklaterian critical approach, which based on communicative action, discourse ethics, and analysis of the relation between knowledge and human interests, is that in spite of it demonstrates very productive in understanding and evolving alternative critical positions within international relations, the forceless 'force of the better argument' is still insufficient (and even incompetent) in achieving universal human emancipation (Anievas 2010: 154, Yalvaç 2015).

IR Theories and the Study of Arab Uprising(s)

IR theories continue to neglect the causes and consequences of revolutions despite their importance vice-a-versa state behaviour (unit level) and the international structure (system level). Traditionally, revolutions cause radical changes and intersect with fundamental issues in international politics, such as war, the balance of power, security, stability, cooperation, identity, and even emancipation. Nevertheless, major theories of International Relations (i.e., realism, neoliberalism, constructivism, and critical school) still give little attention to the study of such revolutions (Walt 1997, Halliday 1999, Goldstone, 1997, Roach 2013).

For instance, what drives and determine states' foreign policy in a post-revolution period? Is it national interests, security considerations, emancipatory

trends, or all of the above? The neorealist school argues that due to the fears of revolution, the spread of instability, and the rise of extremist groups, non-revolutionary countries always try to contain the revolution within their borders, either by balancing against it (allies) or confronting (Walt, 1997). Furthermore, other studies (Goldstone 2011) show that there is an additional, “friendly” strategy employed by these countries designed to attempt to assist the revolutionary regimes to overcome social and economic crises. These strategies are employed in order to contain the conflict as much as possible and prevent its escalation.

Positivist theories of foreign policy are not taking resistance and social movements into account. Neorealism, for instance, ignores the effects of nonmaterial elements, i.e. norms, values, emancipation claims, political identities, the aspirations of the Arab peoples, socioeconomic changes, the failure of economic policies, and the political will to establish the Rule of Law and social media networks. By emphasizing these elements and others, the critical theory provides a wider, more comprehensive and accurate explanation, not only to the foreign policy of revolutionary and non-revolutionary countries but also of the construction and formulation of domestic policy and how it determines foreign policy, and vice-versa.

Neorealist theory, for example, argues that, because of the fear caused by the expansion of revolutions and the subsequent instability, non-revolutionary countries often try to contain revolutions beyond their borders, either by balancing against it or bandwagon. However, different studies show that other non-revolutionary countries have employed different strategies aimed at assisting states undergoing a revolution by overcoming their social and economic struggles. Ultimately, the vicissitudes that have occurred as a result of the Arab Uprisings cannot be disentangled from the wider context of the global political economy and globalization (Talani 2014).

This study tries to elucidate why positivist and traditional research agenda of hard-core neorealist and neoliberal approaches, which profoundly focusing on security considerations (interests, survival, and regime stability) on one hand, and on the prospects of democratization, liberalisation and the possibilities of regional functional integration, on the other hand, had prevailed over the post-positivist emancipatory agenda of critical theory of IR in the MENA region, in contrast with the general wisdom that dominates the field of Middle Eastern studies in the West (Keck 2012). The starting point is to mark the difference between revolutions that succeed in removing the political regime and replacing it with a new one, and those that fail to replace it. In the former, the differences between the pre and post-revolution periods become clear. While in the latter, these differences are unclear and cloudy. It becomes difficult (if not impossible) to observe or show the differences between the situational conditions before and after the revolution. Under these conditions, realists start to re-examine outmoded philosophical questions, and engage in outdated debates over topics such as why did the revolution occur? Or what is the revolution?

Despite the current backlash to the popular Intifada that occurred in the Middle East at the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, no one can deny that the Arab Uprising was an attempt to deconstruct authoritarian structures in the

Middle East through an emancipatory project of the Arab citizens that ultimately did not succeed. By emancipation, I mean what Ken Booth defined as “the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do” (Booth 1991: 319). When Arab citizens rebel against their authoritarian regimes, in addition to foreign (regional and international) supremacy and intervention in their internal affairs, these regimes and powers consider these revolutions as a threat to their security and interests. In order to protect and preserve their interests and security, they seek to spoil, foil, and vanquish these revolutions through many tools and means, i.e., foreign aid, military intervention, political manipulation, and economic sanctions. In sum, since 2011 there have been two conflicting tendencies in the Middle East, the cult and resurgence of the authoritarian state and the emancipatory movements of the people.

For many reasons, these emancipatory attempts were never completed. These “incomplete revolutions” failed to achieve people's goals and hopes. The main reason behind this failure was the traditional and reactionary authoritarian regimes, either within the revolutionary countries or neighbouring regimes. The domestic regimes, or the so-called “counter-revolution forces”, deterred the people from being ruled by civil and democratic governments and fair and just institutions that respect their rights enhance their freedoms. The other major reason behind the failure of the Arab Uprisings was the status-quo conservative regimes and monarchies, especially the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, who prevented the revolutionary countries from being free, independent, and sovereign. These monarchies considered these popular uprisings as a threat to the region that threatened their security, stability, prosperity and even survival. For example, as a result of the Arab Uprising, GCC countries are facing a new kind of threat that is considered the most dangerous since the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the popular intifada reached Bahrain and Oman in the middle of 2011, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) rose violently in Syria and Iraq, and the regional landscape became more chaotic and violent. These challenges forced GCC countries to focus their foreign policy orientations and approach in dealing with regional crises and conflict.

Theoretically speaking, instead of trying to contain or prevent the spread of the revolutions, as neorealism argues, these countries in fact acted in contradiction to this expectation. They intervened deeply in the affected countries in order to stave-off the revolutionary fervour, buttress their decaying institutions, and delay the attempt to reconstruct society and emancipate the population from the authoritarian regimes that have monopolized power since the creation of the modern Arab states following World War II. While neorealism has ignored the effects of non-material elements, i.e. norms, values, emancipation claims, political identities, the aspirations of the Arab peoples, socio-economic changes, the failure of economic policies, the political will to establish the rule of law, and social media networks, critical theory's emphasis on these elements (and others) provide a wider, more comprehensive, and accurate explanation. These explanations elucidate not only the foreign policy of the GCC countries towards countries like Egypt, but it also can answer the questions of why emancipatory attempts fail, and

how small states act in the international system—all questions which neorealism cannot answer.

While, theories such as Neoliberalism and Constructivism, argue that the growing impact of interdependence, globalization, the spread of democratic, liberal ideas and human rights, shared collective norms, values, and identities among Arab societies drive countries to concentrate on improving living standards, expanding freedom and democratization. In addition, these forces drive them to enhance cooperation as opposed to mere self-interests through the mobilization of national resources for defence objectives (Moravcsik, 2008).

Critical School and the Arab Uprising(s)

The first sign to evaluate whether critical theory had successes or not is to measure to what extent its presence and engagement in the ongoing mainstream debates within a certain field or research pool are significant. In the field of IR, one prominent study concludes that “various forms of ‘critical theory’ . . . constitute the main theoretical alternatives within the discipline” (Rengger and Thirkell-White 2007: 4–5). Rengger and Thirkell-White observed that several elements of a critical theory of various sorts had considerably lodged within the ivory tower of the robust, analytical and still heavily ‘scientific’ American academic cycles (op, cit: 9).

Another sign is to what extent a theory reflects, relate and committed to the topic/s it investigates and examines. For the Arab Uprisings, the core issue was and still the seek for freedom and emancipation. The massive number of ordinary peoples in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain in 2011 to Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon in 2019, and marched to the streets and public squares not to claim or demand security, stability or R2P as positivist approaches claim, instead they yelled for freedom and emancipate from fear, needs, and exclusion. In this regards, critical theory incorporates a wide range of approaches, which emphasise on the idea of emancipation that defines in the term of freeing people from the modern state and economic system and anticipate how the world could be reordered and transformed, and not only explaining it, as Marx stated. In fact, bringing the critical theory (as an emancipatory-seeking theory) back into the field of IR, Ashley and Walker argued, will enable those who were “exiled” or “excluded” from international relations to start speaking their own language (Ashley and Walker 1990: 259). For example, in the field of security studies, comparing orthodox security studies with Critical security studies (CST), while the former is immune to moral progress, seeking mainly to find a solution to the urgent ‘global’ security concerns, especially those that address the system of nation-states, and aim at maintaining the status quo, the latter, on the other hand, presents a challenge to the mainstream of international relations by undermining claims that the strategic realm is a realm apart. The CST is seeking to engage traditional thinking about the meaning and practices of security with the aim of addressing the emancipation of “those who are made insecure by the prevailing order” (Wyn Jones 1999: 118, 2001, Fierke 2007, Shapcott 2008: 334-335).

In fact, Critical school does not neglect or underestimate the significance of security challenges and other forms of violent challenges to face nation-states and people. On the contrary, and instead of the problem-solving style of analysis, it concentrates on the genesis and the structural origins, measures, methods and modes, discourses and practices that are created and establish these threats and challenges in the first place. In other words, it seeks to understand threats, not to explain it. For critical school, it is not enough to understand and trace the origins of harm and displacement in the world; but to use that understanding to reach fairer security arrangements that do not neglect oppressed claims to basic rights (Ferreira 2015). Therefore, no wonders that the main critical projects in IR (Coxian and Linklaterian) and other critical theorists as well are united in their political inquiry with an explicit emancipatory purpose. They aim at uncovering the potential for a fairer system of global relations, which resulting from already existing principles, practices and communities that expands human rights and prevents harm to strangers (*ibid.*).

In contrast, the positivist theories (i.e. realism and liberalism) concentrate on material structures in explaining and interpreting international relations and foreign policies. They concentrate on power (realism) and interest (liberalism) and take as inevitable the anarchic character of international structures and the formulation process of the nation-state (as the main actor). As such, the chance to adjust or modify this order is quite limited. On the contrary, Critical theory sees international and foreign policy as a historical phenomenon, shaped by social forces and intersubjective social structures such as norms, values, ideas, images, language, discourse and common meaning (Cox 1986, Linklater 1990, Weber 2001, Abadi 2008).

For instance, Robert Cox explained the historical structures of hegemony through three constitutive levels: state forms, social forces, and world orders. These levels are a result of the struggle between rival structures, and notably, diverse historical contexts produced specific configuration of social forces, states, and their interrelationship that will resonate as a particular world order (Silva 2005). While the initial level (state forms) covers the state/society complexes, it is crucial to pointed at the fact that the divergence of state' forms and structures that specific societies develop are derivation of the particular configuration of material capacities, ideas, and institutions that is specific to a complex state/society (Cox 1987, 1995). The second level contains the organization of production which reflects or expressed the observed transformations in the genesis, strengthening, or decline of specific social forces. For instance, in the prevailing form of the capitalist system, the social forces associated with the real economy as opposed to financial markets have been weakened in favour of strengthening private investors and corporations (*op, cit*; Silva 2005). The third level is the world orders that constitute the forces that determine the way states interact. Convincingly, Cox argues that the correlations between these levels are not unilineal but reciprocity. For instance, he believes that State forms affect the development of social forces by the types of domination they exert by enhancing the interests of one class at the expense of another. Likewise, he claims that transnational social forces have influenced states through the world structure, as evidenced by the reflections of

nineteenth-century expansive capitalism, or the proliferation of globalisation since the second half of the twentieth century on the development of state structures in the centre and the periphery, and from the North into the Global South (Cox 1995, Silva 2005).

According to this perspective, the Arab Uprisings, one can argue that Cox was correct when he perceptively referred to how the struggles and resistance against hegemonic 'global' structures will emerge within national societies in the first place since the historical bloc of working classes are still nationally organized, and could accumulate and expand to the transnational territories, as a result of the economic and social globalisation which lead to the internationalisation of production that led to the formation of a new class of transnational labour. By civil society, Gramsci meant "the network of institutions and practices of society that enjoy the relative autonomy of the state, through which groups and individuals are organized, represented and expressed" (Silva 2005). This network of institutions represents the essence of what he called '*historical bloc*' which refer to the relations between the material base (infrastructure) and the political-ideological practices that support a certain order. Accordingly, the change arises when the civil society challenges the hegemonic structure, then the possibilities for transformation arise from the notion of counter-hegemony at the heart of civil society starts to challenge the ruling elites and prevailing order, which comprises in search of or formulating alternative historical block (Murphy 1990: 25-46, Murphy 1994, Gramsci 2011, Cox 1987).

Critical school criticises the deliberate separation between facts and values that realism emphasises, arguing that realism neglects the social genesis and contents of these facts. This means that realism is not interested in the question of whether the theory should contribute to liberating people from oppression and deprivation, while suppressing meaningful engagement with the open-ended possibilities of social and political change. Despite the fact that a majority of scholars and students of international relations and foreign policy tend to employ mainstream positivist theories to explain and explore the nature and behaviours of foreign policy, these theories suffer from many shortcomings and misconceptions when dealing with topics like revolution, revolutionary foreign policy, and the actions of third world countries. This means that IR scholars must not only reconsider the nature of the state itself, but also re-examine and interrogate the motivations of how these states act in the first place (Mastanduno et al. 1989, Keohane 1969, Elman 1995, Hinnebusch 2015, Bayat 2010, 2017). Several studies have suggested that positivist theories (such as classical and structural realism) are not appropriate approaches to study the Global South's foreign policies and post-revolutionary external behaviours. The reason is due to the fact that these theories lack the appropriate knowledge to explain the behaviours of other non-Western countries, which do not share their history, culture, and values, and neglect several essential variables that construct and formulate state behaviour in the Global South (Smith 2002, Elman 1995).

Realism (classical and structural) largely focuses on analysing the behaviours and actions of great "Western" powers and gives little attention to small "non-Western", developing states, such as the Middle Eastern countries. Moreover,

realism is a static theory. It assumes that all units (states) in IR (nation-states in particular) are essentially identical and act in an identical manner for the sake of their self-interest (Waltz, 1979: 54). According to this view, states are seeking to achieve the same objectives and adopt the same policies to do so. Realism wrongly claims that all political entities are “*power-oriented*” actors who solely pursue selfish, materialistic interests. Thus, it neglects the influence of non-material structures and sources of power, such as ideology, identity, religion, revolutions, etc., and underestimates their independence and contribution in shaping a nation-state's external behaviours. Furthermore, realism is a unilateral, inevitable, and closed-ended theoretical framework. As a “traditional” theory, in Horkheimer’s definition, realism relies on an instrumental, rational-choice approach and a forceful separation between facts and values, based on a pre-given and unexamined definition of social reality (Horkheimer 1992). By neglecting topics like revolution, emancipation, global citizenship (cosmopolitan) governance and social movements, realism has not engaged with the open-ended possibilities of social and political change and emancipation projects that aim to liberate humanity from any kind of hegemony, oppression, and deprivation.

Critical International Relations Theories and Arab Uprising(s)

In international affairs, certain historical juncture moments as the end of the Cold War and the onset of the ‘unipolar moment’ represented a new window of opportunity for a new normative tendency in IR theory (Beardsworth 2011, Calhoun 2002: 887). According to David Schmid, the fall of the Soviet Union combined with the apparent waning of national borders and traditional power politics, and the unstoppable global economic restructuring and expanding worldwide communications, of a victorious liberal-democratic order and an emerging regime of human rights protection, that very realm of international politics that had long appeared blocked, impervious to change and devoid of emancipatory possibilities suddenly looked to be open for new normative theorisations (Schmid, 2018). Likewise, this study argues that the juncture moment such the Arab Spring, despite the underestimation claims of its effects and impact on world politics (Katz 2014, Onar 2015, Lynch and Ryan 2017, Bush 2017, Valbjørn 2017) could open a new possibilities and inspirations to the critical theory of international relations, particularly if we look at the popular intifadas of the Arab People as an integral segment of a larger anti-capitalism, neoliberalism, and anti-hegemony global reach resistance movements (Abul-Magd 2013).

In this case, and after almost a decade of the Arab Spring, critical IR scholars should analyse and understand it as being a chain of global resistance movements that start to take place since the early 2000s with U.S. invasion of Iraq 2003 and the global scale opposition and demonstrations against the war, Colour Revolutions in former Soviet countries 2003-2006, the economic and financial crisis of 2008; the green movement in Iran of 2009; the ongoing Democratic-led protesting in several Latin American countries since 2018; the movement of ‘occupying wall street’ of 2011; Catalanian-Spanish protests of 2011, Fresh

protests of 2018; global climate change rallies that started in 2019, and the Arab Spring 2.0 of 2019, Hong Kung protests of 2014 and 2019, and other forms of micro-level and micro-narrative of resistance against the global and local systems of power and dominations (e.g., women’s rights movements, students protests, anti-elections protests, and environmental protests). In sum, the Arab Spring, using Cox words, reflects a manifestation of the so-called global civil society revolution against systems of global domination (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. GDELT Project Map of Global Protests 1979-2015



Source: Mapping global protests redux. Available at <https://bit.ly/2YqN7mV> [accessed on December 30, 2019].

The previous map contradicts and opposes all positivist theses, whether the neorealist arguments on the stability of the international 'unipolar' order (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002, 2008, Wohlforth 1999, Krauthammer 1990/91, 2002/3, Ikenberry 2001, Ikenberry et al. 2011). As well as the neoliberal institutionalist and constructivist arguments on the proliferation and the stability of democratic societies, and the correlation between liberal-modern norms and stability and prosperity on the (Huntington 1991, Fukuyama 1992, Pinker 2018, 2011). In contrast to these false arguments, for decades the global system has vulcanising and fuelling resistance and rejections movements against the neoliberal and imperialist order of domination.

Regarding the Arab Uprising, according to Rafael Bustos (Bustos 2017: 53):

“while neo-realists tend not to focus on the Arab Spring itself but rather on the possible threats that derive from it (an increase in Jihadism, nuclear proliferation, etc.) and their consequences for alliances and US interests, critical theorists reverse the analysis and locate it in the economic causes and implications of armed interventions (e.g. neoliberalism, distribution of markets, the military leverage of US hegemony) as well as the social processes of vigilance and control that are associated with the “security obsession” (e.g. census elaboration, detention centres, massive espionage, “biopolitics”, etc.)”.

Although the Arab Uprising broke out ten years ago, the CIR did not appropriately engage or address it. Until now (2019), there have been few studies that tried to explain and investigate the causes, consequences, and outcomes of the Arab Uprising, although the roots of these Intifadas could find their genesis in the early writings of Frankfurt school scholars from the 1940s and the 1950s. The CIR can provide more rigour and lucid understanding to the Arab Uprising, either by focusing on the socio-political dynamics of authoritarianism, Neo-Gramscians studies on the role of hegemony and the power structure within the global political economy order, and the role of social forces (such as ideas, ideologies, institutions and material capabilities) in determining frames for individual and collective action. Likewise, the motivations and the reasons behind the outbreaks of the Arab Uprisings could be traced through the writings of Habermas and Linklater, for instance, on the discursive power of democratic norms, values, and promoting the global rule of law through dialogue and deliberation that enhances people's participation in political institutions that boost democratization, human rights, equality, and justice (Cox 1983, 1986, Linklater 1990, Habermas 1996, Gill 2003, Roach 2013).

For instance, with regard to the Egyptian coup d'état, disturbances in Syria and Libya, the riots in Persian Gulf countries and intervention in Yemen, Libya and Syria for critical theorists (neo-Marxists and neo-Gramscians in particular) represent a proof of a hypocritical US/EU discourse that does not hide market greed, and the crisis of transnational financial and capital classes. On the other hand, it reflects the profound crisis of the Arab nation-states. Critical scholars such as Eric Hobsbawm, Tariq Ali, Samir Amin, Hamid Dabashi, Gilbert Achcar, Noam Chomsky, Kees Van der Pijl and others (Amin 2016, Chomsky 2012, Dabashi 2012, Achcar 2016, 2013, Van der Pijl 2011) and others argued that the way in which the US tolerated the crushing of the riots at the hands of the Gulf security forces (in Bahrain and Yemen), with Saudi Arabia and the UAE at the head, and in Egypt, Syria, Sudan by the military juntas, reveals the double standards of the leading capitalist power (Bustos 2017: 51). For example, in 2013 Tariq Ali wrote: 'If the Arab uprisings began as indigenous revolts against corrupt police states and social deprivation, they were rapidly internationalised as western powers and regional neighbours entered the fray' (Ali 2013: 64).

Moreover, others believe that the Arab Uprisings does not represent any fundamental change on the global scale, and substantially has not varied the North-South relationships. Furthermore, Ali argues that comparing with Latin America revolutions in the earlier decade (2000s), the upheavals in several Arab countries have not produced true revolutions that have replaced elites or that have been capable of slowing neo-liberalism and breaking with their foreign partners, mainly because of the US, EU, and their allies' actions in the region (Ali 2013, Amin, 2011, 2016). Such claims led other critics to argue that critical theorists tend to extol and amplify the role of external actors to the point of becoming, in some cases, close to conspiracy theories (Bustos 2017: 53). Misleadingly, critical theorists – according to these criticisms – were wrong to look at the autonomy and decision-making will of internal actors in quite a limited way, unless they produce revolutions, and underscore the importance of transnational economic, financial,

and military factors, and their interaction as determinants of international policy (Ali 2013, Van der Pijl 2013).

In general, the critical studies of the Arab Uprisings (especially the CIRT and the Habermasian-based studies) could be summarized in four main categories. According to Stephan Roach, in order to explain the Arab Uprising from the view of CIR, some critical theorists suggested focussing on four political and social dynamics of these uprisings (Roach 2013: 181). These dynamics are the political identity and consciousness of the Arab peoples, the failure of neoliberal policies, the political will to instantiate the rule of law, and the role of social media.

Political Identity

The Arab Uprising was a crucial moment in the revival of a collective Arab political identity after decades of political hibernation. For CIR scholars, identity has provided a common framework for the solidarity that dictators had sought to suppress (Roach 2013: 181). The latest Arab Uprising movement was not identical to the movements of pan-Arabism of the 1950s and 60s, in fact, it was the opposite. In the 1950s and 1960s, leaders like Nasser, Saddam Hussein, and Assad employed collective identity and sentiments to achieve *false* regional unity and national independence from colonial and imperial powers through domestic mobilization and development, as well as nonalignment and external solidarity with other third world countries.

While the pan-Arabism moment of collective identity completely overlooked the demands of democratization, the rule of law, and human rights, the current wave was genuinely about democracy, freedom and human rights. In other words, the post-independence moment of collective identity was directed against external enemies, such as imperialist and capitalist powers, while the Arab Uprising was directed towards the local enemies (the authoritarian regimes and their pawns). Likewise, while the pan-Arabism moment was for the interests of the ruling regimes/elites, the Arab Uprising moment, on the other hand, was an action by the people against internal dictators, and sought to achieve public goods and objectives such as establishing a new democratic regime, enhancing the rule of law, and respecting human rights (Roach, 2013, Gause 2011), either through revolution or as Foucault was insisting incite to “cut-off the king’s head” (Foucault 1980: 121).

In this context, pan-Arabism was a liberation attempt that was not seeking to free Arab citizens from domestic authoritarian structures. In contrast, the Arab Uprising is considered an emancipatory attempt that tried (in Richard Ashley's words) to secure people's freedom from all kinds of constraints, relations of domination, and conditions of distorted communication and understanding that deny humans the capacity to make their future through full will and consciousness (Ashley 1981: 227).

The Failure of Neoliberal Policies

Any attempt to understand and explain the Arab Uprising and post-revolution policies of the Middle East must address the failure of neoliberal policies. Neoliberalist assumptions about the relationship between the liberalization of political and economic regimes on one hand, and democratization and stability on the other proved misleading. Even with the enormous amount of economic aid, political support, and military assistance from Western powers (especially from the United States, European Union, and the GCC countries) to these regimes, they failed to liberate and achieve stability and democratization. The reasons behind this ineffectiveness revolve around several economic and socio-political factors. On the economic level, these were primarily the massive levels of corruption, the continuation of the deficit in the balance of payments, the deterioration of developmental conditions, and the lack of strong industrial productivity. On the socio-political level, we see the systematic violation of basic human rights and the spread of torture, the blocking of the political sphere and the unwillingness of the growing number of super-wealthy elites to support the authoritarian regime (Gause 2001: 86, Roach 2013, Goldstone 2011).

During the last five decades, and particularly after the setback of the pan-Arab ideology and defeat in the Six-Day War of 1967 with Israel, the authoritarian Arab regimes began exchanging political freedom for economic liberalization. The majority of these regimes abandoned socialist ideologies and adopted restricted versions of capitalism and a liberalized economic system without fully democratizing their political systems. These regimes adopted rotten models such as “sovereign democracy”, “managed democracy”, “Islamic constitutionalism”, and “adaptive authoritarianism” and other hybrid regimes (Rutherford 2008, Zakaria 2007).

For many critical theorists, especially neo-Gramscians, the failure to materialise the alliance between these authoritarian regimes and the wealthy elites was not an isolated or insignificant event (Roach 2013: 181). For them, this was more than a clash-of-interests between the two blocs. It was a reflection of the changing norms, values, power dynamics, and the nature of social forces in Arab societies. Neo-Gramscians such as Achcar, Van der Pijl, Gill and others argue that the real reason behind the failure of establishing such an alliance was due to the inability of the regimes to enhance and legitimize elite control, especially in the economic field. This was compounded by the rising historic bloc of unemployed, marginalized workers and students who united to counteract elite control (Roach 2013: 181).

Eventually, these attempts failed for many reasons. Firstly, due to the absence of political freedom, which prevented the process of systemic liberalization from succeeding in the long term. Like their predecessors, the second generation of Arab dictators were also anti-democratic leaders. There was no effective oversight and the rule of law was restricted, which led to a marked increase in grievances, the violation of the social contract, and a fundamental overstating of the Arab states (Ayubi 1995, Owen 2012). Secondly, these regimes still drowned in rampant corruption. In most Arab countries, the reforms were unable to fight and

confront organized crime and the deeply corrupted elites (Roach 2013). Thirdly, both the people and economic elites viewed these liberalization attempts unfavourably. The absence of social considerations in economic policies neglected people's demands, and this inability to satisfy their basic needs drove them to rebel. Moreover, these policies were biased and intransigent, which makes the poverty rates in several Arab Uprising countries (i.e., Yemen, Egypt, Tunisia, Sudan and others) really going up (UNDP 2000, 2010, 2015, 2019). The growing super-wealthy elites were unwilling to support the authoritarian regime, which prevented the materialisation of the economic alliance between the new wealthy elite and the ruling bloc (Gause 2001: 86, Roach 2013).

The Political Will

Since the creation of the modern Arab states in the late 1940s and beginning of the 1950s, these countries have gained their independence from Western Imperial powers; however, the Arab people never gained their autonomy from the authoritarian regimes, both externally and internally. The Arab people continuously suffered from a lack of freedom and low standards of living. Indeed, much of what is known as “the Arab Uprising countries” including Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Tunisia, were at the bottom of the U.N. Human Development Index, World Bank development indicators and Freedom House reports. Due to the non-democratic political system, corrupt economic system, and the over-stated nature of these Arab countries over the last three decades, the citizens of these countries rose-up against their governments in order to emancipate themselves from fear, poverty, torture, and dependency. The massive numbers of protestors that marched in the streets and public squares were seeking freedom, integrity, justice, and equality (Ismail 2012, Kandil 2012).

Many Western countries believed that, in spite of the people's desires for democratization and the rule of law, the authoritarian regimes represented the best opportunity to liberalize the Arab regimes, enhance stability, and protect Western interests in the region (Roach 2013). However, the historical experience shows that the strategy of authoritarian stability proves to be short-lived and incapable of guaranteeing or sustaining stability and security in the region (Gause 2011):

Firstly, historical records show that Western powers cannot buy stability by selling out other peoples' freedom in the long run. After three decades of supporting Mubarak's regime, the United States failed to prevent the outbreak of the revolution, not only in Egypt but in other allied countries across the region as well. These revolutions proved that this kind of realpolitik policy was based on unrealistic assumptions (Keck 2012).

Secondly, the assumption that supporting unpopular authoritarian could serve the interests of the Western powers proved to be false. Therefore, authoritarian allies had become a strategic burden, as their domestic policies sowed the seeds of future upheaval and promoted hostility towards these Western powers and their interests in the region (Gause 2011, Katzenstein and Keohane 2006).

Third, the assumption that Arab and Muslim culture is incompatible with democracy, or that there is Arab exceptionalism towards democracy and liberalism

also proved to be inaccurate. The Arab Uprising moment showed that Arab societies are no different from others who seek freedom and democracy. The claim that the durability and the robustness of authoritarianism in the Arab world made the region miss the previous waves of democratization was a myth. Most of the Arab citizens in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Bahrain, and elsewhere rebelled against these authoritarian regimes, demanding freedom, justice, and equality (Bellin 2012).

The critical assumption on the discursive power of people's inclination to instantiate the rule of law, democratic norms, values and promotion of the global rule of law through dialogue and deliberation was more appropriate and relevant in explaining the Arab Uprising. It also refutes the myth of pre-given and unexamined (realist and liberal) conceptions of the social reality about the Arab World, such as the authoritarian-stability-nexus and Arab exceptionalism (Habermas 1996, Linklater 1990, Horkheimer 1992, Diamond 2010, El Hamalawy 2011, Wittes 2008).

Much Ado about Nothing: Critiquing 'Critical' Theory in IR Study of Arab Uprisings

After almost four decades of its emergence, the critical theory of IR has achieved several goals that contribute to pushing the debate in the field forward. According to Andrew Linklater (Linklater 1996, 1998), the main achievements of the critical theory of IR can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The critical theory still adheres to the challenges posed to epistemological positivism (rationalism), since they still believed that knowledge does not arise from the neutral engagement of the subject with objective reality; on the contrary, it reflects pre-existing social purposes and interests.
- 2) Challenging the positions that current social structures are unchanging. Critical theory, in contrast, supports the notion claimed that structural inequities of power and wealth are in principle changeable. Furthermore, it stresses the notion of emancipation, where the possibility of transforming these social orders and ending the fundamental forms of social exclusion could be achieved despite the epistemological position that defends a much more contemplative position.
- 3) Despite admitting the undeniable contribution and the influence of Marx and Marxists on critical school, it tries to overcome the inherent weaknesses of Marxism that stress the notion that class struggle is the fundamental form of social exclusion. Instead, it sees and perceived the modes of production as the fundamental determinant of the conflict in society and throughout history.
- 4) In the face of several forms of global (and local) exclusion, the so-called International Critical Theory (ICT) rejects and challenges the unjustified forms of exclusion. Alternatively, it calls to judge social arrangements by

their ability to embrace open dialogues with everyone and to envision new forms of a more inclusive political community.

Other scholars indicate that the main achievement of the critical theory in the field of IR (CIR in particular) since its emergence in the 1980s was exposing the deep relation between the mainstream approaches of IR theory (specifically neorealism, rational-choice, and neoliberal institutionalism) and the dominant interests they served in world politics: i.e., the maintenance of bipolar system and the manifestation of American preponderance, possessive individualism, and world capitalism (Brincat 2018). Likewise, CIR, and CTIR later on, sought to expose the consequential shortcomings of the predominant traditional theoretical theories by continuously challenging and questioning the fundamental postulates of the extremely-positivist field (Silva 2005). For instance, Jim George inducted that one of the clear achievements of the CIRT is that its direct ontological and epistemological criticism of positivism, rationalism and structuralism made it possible to rethink IR by enabling a broader thinking space, and enable the efforts that seek to develop alternative conceptions of the international that are sensitive to history and to the sociological understanding of the international (George 1989, Yalvaç 2015). Nevertheless, both of critical theory of IR and the critical IR theory are still suffer from several deficiencies and fallacies, which the study will articulate and highlight in the following section.

Notably, after years of expansion, the intellectual space that and the Frankfurt School-inspired theorists have traditionally occupied is declining in prominence and losing vitality (Schmid 2018, Dunne et al. 2013). According to Schmid, after occupied a significant space within the scholarly debates during the 1980s and 1990s, critical theory (either Neo-Gramscians and Habermasian projects) appears today decidedly out of fashion, increasingly fragmented, lacking in practical relevance and operating within very specific orientations and with theoretical, rather than more generalist, political interests in focus (Kurki 2012: 130–137). In particular, a quick cross-referencing of the leading critical database, platforms, journals, and recent critical books since 2010 shows that there are very few applications for such theoretical ideas on the case study of the Arab Uprisings (or other global south cases. Sadly, one study noticed that between 2011 to 2016, critical IR journals (e.g., journal *International Political Sociology*, *Millennium*, *International Studies*, and *Alternatives* journal), has shown little direct interest in the Arab Spring, but considerable interest in issues that cross the problematic of uprisings, interventions and conflicts in the MENA region (Bustos 2017: 52). Interestingly though, even those studies that address the Arab Spring were noticeably was away from interrogating or/and investigating the genesis of causes and topics that created the Arab Spring intifadas in the first place, and how to resist the resurgence of resilient authoritarianism and counter-revolutionary forces that crucially seeks to aborting the emancipation project that the Arab Uprising was hoping for.

For a large extent, these studies assimilate with neorealism and neoliberalism studies, in which positivist researches had focused on the outcomes, consequences, and repercussions of the Arab Spring on issues such as security policies,

immigration, R2P, resistance to the Israeli occupation, and in general to the processes of neoliberal globalisation (Bustos 2017: 52). Therefore, and as several scholars pointed out, due to its heavy emphasis on the external critique and the ‘dysfunctional side effects’ of capitalism and intrusions on other subsystems, critical theory (especially the Habermasian version) has become oscillates between the empty radicalism of its procedural utopia and the practical resignation demanded by its social and political analysis (Scheuerman 2006: 94, Schmid 2018). Not only that, the positivists themselves intensely criticised the so-called emancipatory-based critical theory. After more than twenty-five years, several numbers of these objections are still valid and consistently present. For instance, the neoliberal institutionalists accused critical theory of being preoccupied with agenda-setting and meta-theoretical reflection but unwilling or unable to produce substantive work in international relations. Moreover, the so-called “reflectivist” paradigms lacked a coherent research agenda that could structure their contribution to the discipline, and by implication provide real knowledge (Keohane 1998). On the other hand, several Neorealist scholars claimed that critical international relations theory had failed to deliver much in the way of empirical research (Mearsheimer 1995, Price and Reus-Smit 1998).

In this section, the study indicates the most chronical critiques and prolonged objections on the critical projects in the field of IR, with a concentration on the case of Arab Uprisings. By interrogating the Neo-Gramscians and Habermasian projects of IR, the study identified four main deficiencies. The cognitive (ontological and epistemological) fallacy, the Eurocentric-Capitalism fallacy, Modernity-enlightenment foundations fallacy, and the fallacy of the monologic (not dialogical) nature of Habermasian-Linklaterian normative and communicative turns in IR.

The Cognitive Fallacy

There are several criticisms of the Coxian critical project, one of these criticisms is being cognitively insignificant. For instance, and from a Marxist perspective, Benno Teschke claim that Robert Cox did not add new to the critical school of IR since numbers of his constitutive concepts (such as structures of accumulation) are not originated or developed by Cox himself, rather adopted it from Marx’s modes of production. Also, Teschke claims that despite his assertion on questioning the origins of knowledge about international relations, Cox did not completely follow his own suggestions when investigating the development of capitalism in a pre-constituted state system. Cox did not question the conditions and circumstances of the formation of capitalism structures, especially outside Europe, which restrains him from fully understand the main dynamics of several modes of non-European capitalism system (Teschke 2008: 173–175). Moreover, John Hobson indicated that Cox’s project also considers inherently Eurocentric (Hobson 2007). By failing to explain the geographical expansion of capitalism from the West to the East, makes his approach a prisoner of European modernity and historical experiences, which puts Cox project among other (positivists and post-post-positivist) IR research programmes that suffers from the triple fallacies

of ahistoricism, chronofetishism and tempocentrism (Hobson 2002: 6-15, Hobson et al. 2010: 3361-3363).

Likewise, the main problem with Habermas' theory of communicative action and its applications in the field of IR, is that it is an attempt to combine practical and emancipatory interests. In the end, it fails to accomplish neither of these two goals. This failure reflects both ontological and epistemological fallacy, despite the fact that Habermas himself proposes that knowledge is related to the idea of interests (Habermas 1992). By interests, Habermas pointed at two different types: the technical/practical interests that seek to understand and control the environment, and the emancipatory interests that seek change, not to understanding other subjects (Habermas 2001). Therefore, claiming that a certain theory is seeking to combine both interests under one umbrella is just preposterous and spurious since they are ontologically and epistemologically contradicting.

In addition, from a postcolonial perspective, besides the former criticism and when it comes to the case of the Arab Uprisings, Linklater's (and the Habermasian project in general) project suffers from additional genuine deficiencies and fallacies. For instance, Linklater starts his model from different epistemological (if not ontological) backgrounds. While he assumes and stresses the democratic and civic culture nature of the Western Liberal societies, as essential components of what he called a universal political community based on dialogue and communicative activity. In contrast, when comparing with the Arab society, which constitutes different social, economic and political bases. The Arab world is tribal, patriarch, authoritarian system of power. Away from the orientalist, exceptionalism and positivist perspectives on the Arab World and the Islamic Middle East in general, this region is structurally diverse from Western values and norms. It has different types of communicative and verbal civic communication that not necessarily contradict or reverse the Western-Liberal norms that Linklater exclusively depends on in his project. Such ontological and *epistemological* prejudices make his project reductionist and do not represent other cultures' values and norms that universal projects should be (Said 1994, Fierke and Jabri 2019, Acharya 2018, Acharya and Buzan 2019).

The Eurocentric-Capitalist Fallacy

Not only critical international relations theory which had been accused of being Eurocentric, but since the early Frankfurt school sociological works were, According to Brincat, "problematically confined to the examination of Euro and state-centric possibilities for emancipation" (Brincat 2012: 219). In fact, and despite all efforts of the so-called anticolonial, universal, pluralistic and global conversation projects, several leading critical scholars like John Hobson and others, believe that the explanations and illumination of critical school are still suffering from a Eurocentric bias which purports and needed to leave behind (Hobson 2012, 2011, Yalvaç 2015). Further, to overcome this shortcoming, critical school need to rethought and attempts to develop a true global more open, post-Western international relations, and institute different kind of universalism and cosmopolitanism that is based on inclusive perspective that concentrates on

empowering the oppressed (Global South) rather than the powerful and rich North (Jabri 2013, Fierke and Jabri 2019).

Likewise, the Habermasian project suffers from the same fallacy. While this critical direction emphasises on its profound cosmopolitan and universal tendencies in order to differentiate itself from the dominant Western IR theories, one of the main ‘common’ criticism to it is being Eurocentric, where most of its concepts, ideas, and norms (especially notions of emancipation, dialogue, communicative actions, etc) are genuinely originate and a product of European modernity and enlightenment, culturally specific, reflecting only the values of the European enlightenment. According to this skeptical perspective, such deficiencies would establish a problematic universalism that threatens to assimilate and legislate out of existence all significant differences (Hopgood 2000, Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, Fierke and Jabari 2019).

Furthermore, and while many critical theorists believe that the so-called Habermasian-Linklaterian critical project which involves building a global community that institutionalizes respect for the harm principle and grants all human beings the right to express their concerns and fears about injury, vulnerability, and suffering” (Linklater and Suganami 2006: 277), represents a close than ever to the universal model (Shapcott, 2008: 339-340). Critics disagree with such claims, and counter arguing that paradoxically while it claimed to be universal, in essence this project is built on modern and enlighten European ideas and notions such as human rights, institutions and international law. In addition, while this project tries to identify avenues for greater inclusion in international and global decision-making, it did not articulate how to overcome the structural inequality of power between the democratic (North) and Global South, which considers the fundamental restriction that prevents the remedying of ‘varieties of avoidable human suffering’ characterizing current global relationships (Shapcott 2008: 340-341).

The Modernity-Enlightenment Fallacy

One of the main critics of the Linklater’s communicative-based model is that it neglected the concept of the uneven, multilinear, and interactive nature of social development, which failed his model to specifically address the “material prerequisites” (e.g., the substantive levels of political, economic, racial, and gender equality) for “the force of the better argument” to be effective in a dialogic community and “detaches” emancipatory practices from the “material and social” relations of capitalism (Allison 2010: 154). By ignoring such concepts, it is not possible to imagine a dialogue, but takes the form of an uneven and combined development and reflects the Eurocentric bias in Linklater’s model (Rosenberg 2006, Yalvaç 2015). According to Alexander Anievas, Linklater’s model is “merely states a Euro-centric ‘inside-out’ bias by attributing the West’s development of higher levels of rationalization and morality to its unique ability to learn and borrow from other cultures” (Anievas 2010: 153). Indeed, such criticism makes Linklater’s project seems to be ‘uncritical political project’ or even difficult

to distinguish from other positivist IR analyses such as neoliberalism and constructivism (op, cit: 155, Yalvaç 2015).

Like Habermas, Andrews Linklater starts his project based on a genuine faith in the so-called 'democratic peace' condition that had been established in the Western hemisphere since the end of the Second World War. In the so-called 'Long Peace' order, there are no conflict or military confrontations between the Western powers, who deeply rely on non-coercion means and methods of interaction 'only' with each other and their 'democratic' non-Western allies. Linklater was entirely silent about the conflictual characteristics of several Global South regions such as the Middle East. Likewise, the role of Western powers in sustaining and fuelling these conflicts for decades, and how such intervention has diminished and aborted the possibilities of creating a perpetual condition of dialogue and peace in the region. Instead, Linklater, like others, blame the so-called non-democratic values and norms, and how these communities contradicting the Western norms and that Arabs maybe need to abandon such values and notions that consider the main obstacle that prevents the creation of the so-called dialogical global community. Such chronofetishism and tempocentrism view (to use Hobson's words that refers to a form of ahistoricism in which the present is thought to be explainable by looking only at present causal variables) which claim that European notions and norms such as democracy and dialogue stand as a constant structural condition, which makes the international sphere appears as a continuous, almost static realm, appears Linklater not only of being 'uncritical' but also 'neoliberal', 'neoconservative' if not even 'orientalist' (Hobson 2002, Hobden and Hobson 2010).

According to Hobson, such chronofetishist perspectives, which based on the assumption that the present can adequately be explained only by examining the present, which inherently indicates either bracketing or ignoring the past, create three illusions. First, the reification illusion, where the present is effectively "sealed off" from the past, making it appear as a static, self-constituting, autonomous, and reified entity, thereby obscuring its historical socio-temporal context. Second, the naturalization illusion, where the present is effectively naturalized on the basis that it emerged "spontaneously," thereby obscuring the historical processes of social power, identity/social exclusion, and the norms that constitute the present. Finally, the immutability illusion, where the present is eternalized because it is deemed to be natural and resistant to structural change, thereby obscuring the processes that reconstitute the present as an immanent order of change (Hobson 2002: 6).

The Monologic Nature Fallacy

The Habermasian-Linklaterian model of communicative actions and global political community that based on dialogue and intersubjective understanding between societies on the ground of the so-called widely accepted universal norms and values, suffers from several shortcomings. For instance, Yalvaç pointed at Linklater's model neglects the significant powers differential in the international society which makes negotiation and consensus difficult to achieve. Also,

Linklater's model is noticeably ambiguous and abstract when it comes to what he meant by the type of political activities that required for the sake of the formation of a universal communication community (Yalvaç 2015). Moreover, it is also not clear whether "the discourse ethic" is "always the best, or only, means for achieving transformation, or emancipation in general" (Eckersley 2008: 353).

Linklater ignored the role and the impact of uneven development conditions between the West and the rest of the world, which creates what I called 'the monologic' model of global communicative actions, where the Western democratic societies initiating and conducting dialogue within and among themselves, and not with others. In other words, the so-called Habermasian communicative action in global politics is a conversation with the self, to the mirror, not with others. In fact, the communicative and normative critical project deliberately (despite the Marxist background of both Habermas and Linklater) did not take into consideration the effects of socio-political and socioeconomic underdeveloped conditions in the Arab World and the rest of Global South. Likewise, it overlooked the long historical experience (and still ongoing) of state repression, violence, systematic exclusion, human rights violations, crushing civil society organizations, blocking of public space, and the elimination of any foreseen possibilities of dialogue and non-coercive verbal interactions.

Generally speaking, political repression and uneven economic development reflect not only the main elements that crushed the civic culture that embrace dialogue and democratic communities to emerge in the Arab World and other regions in the Global South, as the Welfare and democratic culture did in the post-1945 Europe and the West in general, but also it makes the dialogue between the North and the Global South is semi-impossible since Linklater and other scholars did not acknowledge and recognize other non-Western cultures and norms, as well as the structural conditions which were not present in such models. Overall, this is deeply ahistorical perspective, where the so-called 'universal' for Linklater and Habermas become only the West (or democratic societies), and the so-called the history of global ideas only reflect and represent the history of Western modernity and enlightenment notions, like the other positivist scholars he criticises them and their projects (Hobson 2002: 3-41).

Instead of calling for changing the international structures of inequality and injustice that inhibit sincere and genuine global conversation and dialogue, Habermas supports the calls of revision approaches that aim to 'fix' these structures. By arguing that, Habermas not only misunderstands the fundamental crisis of the global society and dysfunctional global order, he also misdiagnosed and misidentifying the reasons that aborting the attempts of establishing a successful global/universal dialogue project which Linklater had heralding it.

For example, in order to deal with the problem of democratic deficit of supranational institutions, which is not been filled by some form of transnational democratic process (Habermas 2015: 52) or been able to replace it with another radical alternatives, due to the persisting weakness of cosmopolitan solidarity that makes it difficult for the conventional model of democratic sovereignty based on a collective, self-legislative body to be 'scaled-up' beyond the national or regional level (Fine and Smith, 2003: 473-475; Schmid, 2018). Habermas called to replace

the existing dysfunction global system with what he called a more nuanced and realistic model of a ‘decentred world society as a multilevel system’ that builds on and reforms existing global institutions (Habermas 2006: 135–136, Schmid 2018). However, paradoxically, misdiagnosing the real crisis of the current dysfunctional global system mislead Habermas to foolishly indicate that the alternative world society is nothing but the same unfit and deteriorated European Union. Habermas believes that despite the existential crisis of the EU (not only because of the Brexit, but since the financial crisis of 2008) it still constitutes the suitable example of politics following the lead of the market in constructing supranational political agencies (Habermas 1998: 123), where the ‘democratic’ and institutional bodies will play a veritable ‘civilising role’ that of providing a ‘test’ of the ‘will and capability of citizens, of political elites and the mass media’ (Habermas 2012: 11–12). Moreover, Habermas claims that the existence of the EU represents ‘a point of departure for the development of a transnational network of regimes that together could pursue a world domestic policy, even in the absence of a world government’ (Habermas 2003: 96 Schmid 2018). With the completion of the Brexit deal, the consistently rising of ultra-right-wing parties inside Europe and cross the Atlantic on the one hand, and the increasing power, both domestically and internationally, of fascist and hyper-nationalist regimes in countries like India, Russia and China, The Habermasian bet on undermined Europe to save the world is just another mirage, if not nightmare.

Conclusion

In order to understand the current wave of democratization in the Arab World – regardless of the setbacks that have occurred - the study indicates that scholars should be moving away from the positivist (state-centric) perspectives that define international relations and foreign policy in terms of the pursuit of achieving “national” interests, which is defined in terms of power by sovereign states, and towards a more critical approach that places human-beings at the centre of analysis. A critical or emancipation-based perspective, in turn, claims that international relations should become a tool to achieve people's ends in ending fear, oppression and expanding freedom and justice beyond sovereign territories. Interestingly, this is done not only by the state but through other non-state actors, such as individuals, social movements, and civil society organizations. The emancipation of international politics and foreign policy projects aim to create and establish a “people-centric model” that does not recognize the separation between the internal and external sphere of the state's actions. According to Ole Waever, the territorially defined borders do not apply to foreign policy in today's world, or emancipatory foreign policy in particular (Waever, 1994). For countries like Germany, ‘emancipation’ refers to” a new sense of self-esteem, independence, and follow[s] enlightened self-interest” (Forsberg 2005). For China, emancipation is considered an anti-hegemonic attitude (Yilmaz 2016), and for other countries such as Egypt and the Arab Uprising countries, the claims of emancipation during the first wave of the Uprising of 2011 meant both of these understandings, including

seeking independence, countering hegemony and restoring national self-esteem. Therefore, and since emancipation meant freeing of people from physical and human constraints (e.g., war, poverty, oppression, and other material and normative constraints) which prevent them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do, it also means that scholars should first concentrate on individual human beings, not the state, and secondly on the achieving of people's ends and not those of the state.

Interestingly, critical theory is not the only approach that emphasizes the notion of emancipation and freedom. Liberalism is also built on similar ideas. However, while critical theory shares some traditions and practices of freedom and equality with liberalism school, its boundaries and prospects are wider than the liberalism. In other words, while Liberalism is largely seeking to achieve individual freedom, critical theory is seeking for human emancipation. Furthermore, and in spite of the fact that liberalism (and neoliberal institutionalism in particular) has a purported interest in bringing about change, its presuppositions are also having a purported interest in bringing about change (Keohane 1988). In other words, the neoliberal change is limited within the system, and not addressed to questioning the world state system itself, which means justifying the Western domination of non-European societies and keeping the order. Subsequently, it likewise displays a system-maintenance bias, which means that type of change is profoundly not radical or structural. Hence, this change, as Shapcott stated, becomes "more predictable but still not subject to critical reasoning" (Shapcott 2008: 332-333, Teschke 2014: 28, Hobson 2007).

On the contrary to such an adaptive-functionalist perspective, which in essence reflects and represents a latent proclamation to preserve and sustain the status quo of inequality and exclusion, critical school propositions call for change the global system itself. For instance, in contrast with Neo-liberal institutionalists, Cox persuasively argued that global hegemonic class is disseminating and consolidates its ideology through different international organizations and bodies (e.g., the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, G8, and United Nations) that expand and manifesting its domination by drafting global norms, controlling global structures of accumulation, division of labour, and the internationalization of production that enforcing the structural unequal development and complex dependency between the North and the Global South (or the core and periphery in other words). In turn, this leads to empowering transnational forces (e.g., MNCs and TNCs) that accelerates and catalysing the formation of a nascent global civil society that also exerts pressure on periphery states to adopt the accumulation strategies of the hegemonic state/s. In the final analysis, these weak states become what Cox called "transmission belts" between the hegemon block/s and their domestic societies. Which could result to the resurgence of resistance and creating new forces for anti-hegemonic struggles against such structures, or becoming a part of the hegemonies world system such as the 19th century Pax Britannica and the 20th and 21st centuries of Pax Americana (Cox 1989, Van der Pijl 1984, Gill and Law 1988; Gill 1993, Yalvaç 2015).

Despite the fact that Arab Uprising(s) without a question was a genuine emancipatory attempt, in a Linklaterian view. Andrew Linklater defines

emancipation as “powers of self-determination and the ability of initiate actions” (Linklater 1990: 135), while Richard Ashley defines it as: “[A]n interest in securing freedom from unacknowledged constraints, relations of domination, and conditions of distorted communication and understanding that deny humans the capacity to make their future through full will and consciousness” (Ashley, 1981: 227). Another scholar defines it as: “autonomy, freedom of action, security and freedom of individuals and nations from domineering and repressive structures and elimination of restrictive social grounds and contexts which are conducive to injustice, and redefinition and reconfiguration of justice and equality in the international system” (Abadi 2008). According to these definitions, it is clear that emancipation is considered a revolutionary-revisionist concept that requires not only changing the domestic and internal structures of oppression, but also changing the international structures of power. This is due to the fact that norms and values, and the hegemonic and oppressive structures they create, are the main sources of injustice, inequality, and authoritarianism in the world.

Consequently, critical theory projects in the field of IR traditionally – in principles – is consider the closest theoretical approach to address the Arab Uprising(s), due to the fact that it has been perceived to be an instrument of the powerless to advance more equitable types of global relations, by illuminating and highlighting possibilities of liberation and emancipation. Nevertheless, its presence in the mainstream debates and spaces is still marginalised. Therefore, and in order to push its research agenda further to occupied wider space, the study suggests that the proponents of the critical theory of IR should re-evaluate the Eurocentric and Enlightenment-based-Modernity foundations which cause several cognitive fallacies, as the study demonstrated. Moreover, some critical theorists also need to abandon their dogmatic, anti-academicism, and cognitive supremacist claims, and become less demagogic, sophistry, elitists, and isolationists, and become more inclusive and open to the contributions of Southern voices.

In fact, such deficiencies (and others) have been transcended, penetrated and proliferate in most of the critical studies, in which it led to making critical theory being marginalised and unwelcome within academia and among the young generations of IR scholars, outside the isolated micro archipelagic European academic elitist cycles. Finally, the necessity of departing its ivory tower and transform its theoretical claims and statements into practical projects and more related to the *realworld* (not the *lifeworld*), which will allow them not only to engage but also joining the masses in their struggle and fighting for emancipation. By doing that, the critical theory of IR will be able to change not only the field of IR but the real-world outcomes as well.

To sum up, since the aim of critical theory is “to understand how these (realistic) socially created constraints upon the freedom of human subjects (emancipation) could be reduced and, where possible, eliminated” (Linklater 1990: 1), and by focusing on Critical IR studies of foreign policy, revolution, and the correlations between a failed revolution and the inability to achieve human emancipation, this study tried to explore the main reasons behind the failure of emancipatory projects in non-Western societies, by showing and explaining how anti-progressive countries used and employed emancipation as an instrument to

prevent it. These counter-revolutionary and anti-emancipatory policies and projects have been drafted, supported, and designed by problem-solving theories. These theories must be tamed and challenged. In the end, the previous analysis expectantly highlighted the theoretical and practical potentialities diverse critical theories of IR enjoy, which could accelerate the realizing of these objectives, only if critical theorists overcome the fallacies and deficiencies the study has indicated and specified.

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