InterAção

ARTIGOS

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Border studies and International Relations Theories: an emancipatory framework

Estudos fronteiriços e Teorias das Relações Internacionais: uma estruturação emancipatória

ABSTRACT:

Throughout the history of International Relations, borders have been marginalised both practically and, to a greater extent, theoretically. On the one hand, conceptualizations of borders are typically subordinate to other ideas within the field, such as sovereignty, territory, security, conflict, and peace. On the other hand, it is frequently regarded as a source of conflict or simply as a geographical boundary. Thus, it is not surprising that this situation of marginalisation (conventional view of boundaries) produced a hegemonic perspective on borders until the conclusion of the Cold War. Nonetheless, the rearrangement of the international system and the expansion of regional integration resulted in a more dynamic, complex, and multidimensional outline. This work seeks to answer the following research question: in what ways would a perspective contribute to the field of border studies? It is proposed that such a theoretical framework would reassign border studies from an underlying to a fundamental premise, elevating them to a more significant level. This reinterpretation has direct and indirect effects on border politics in practice.

Keywords: Borders; International Relations Theories; Border studies; Critical Theory; Emancipation

RESUMO:

Ao longo da história das Relações Internacionais, as fronteiras foram marginalizadas, tanto sobre sua importância prática quanto – e com maior intensidade – teórica. Por um lado, corriqueiramente a concepção de fronteiras fora subjacente a outros conceitos, tais como o de soberania, território, segurança, guerra, paz, por exemplo. Por outro, frequentemente ponderada como fonte de conflitualidade, ou meramente como limite territorial. Assim, não é surpresa que esta condição de marginalização (visão tradicional) formaram uma interpretação hegemônica das fronteiras até o final da guerra fria. Contudo, com o fim do conflito bipolar e o boom da integração regional, a instrumentalização das fronteiras passou a incorporar contornos mais dinâmicos, complexos e multidimensionais. Deste modo, o presente artigo visa apresentar a seguinte pergunta de partida: quais seriam as possíveis contribuições de uma visão [teoria] crítica para o campo dos estudos fronteiriços? Argumenta-se que o entendimento teórico, conceitual das fronteiras deve ser redirecionado para o cerne das discussões em teorias das relações internacionais, através da emancipação de sua acepção tradicional. Passando, portanto, de conceito subjacente, ao central. Na prática tal reconceptualização implica num redirecionamento das políticas (tanto estatais quanto internacionais) alusivas as regiões fronteiriças.

Palavras-chave: Fronteiras; Teorias das Relações Internacionais; Estudos fronteiriços; Teoria Crítica; Emancipação

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INTRODUCTION

Borders play a significant role in the development of International Relations (IR). Despite the fact that it was not the subject of direct investigation − neither theoretically nor practically − we may argue that its value exceeded the attention it received at the time. The theoretical and conceptual marginalisation of borders is explicable by reference to the various periods of the history of International Relations. International Relations analysts and theorists utilised a variety of understandings, the majority of which were based on the concept of war, prior to the establishment of the field as a distinct academic discipline in 1919 at Aberystwyth, United Kingdom (Cravinho, 2002; Milza, 2002a, 2002b). For this purpose, notions such as security, power, democracy, free market, and sovereignty, among others, were emphasised in the endeavour to comprehend war, based primarily on the international behaviour of states.

In general, borders were excluded from this conceptual scope because they lacked sufficient relevance to infer the behaviour of states on the international level. Throughout the 20th century, borders were typically incorporated into other distinguishing features of international relations, such as sovereignty (Vaughan-Williams, 2009), State (specifically within one of its constitutive elements, territory (Dallari, 2005), war (Wright, 1942), geo-

politics, and strategy (CORREIA (Correia, 2002), among others. In the aftermath of the cold war and the challenges of the 21st century, studies of IR return to the understanding of democracy (Dahl, 2000; Held, 1996; Lijphart, 1999), globalisation (SANTOS (Santos, 2002; Santos, 2003; Stiglitz, 2002), regionalism (Fawcett, 2005; Gardini, 2012; Hout, 1999), and terrorism (HOBSBAWM (Hobsbawm, 2008; Hobsbawm, 2007; Stokes, 2005), among other themes. However, border studies were never prioritized.

In light of International Relations Theories, the placement of borders did not change, whereas border studies were not a part of academic education and research. The direct and inaccurate linkage between the issue of borders and its geopolitical and realist usage, such as Ratzel's *lebensraum* (Smith, 1980), or Morgenthau's (Morgenthau, 1948) struggle for power, led to a misunderstanding of the topic. So, Realism, Liberal-Idealism, Marxism, Constructivism, Postmodernism, Feminism, Postcolonialism, and even Critical Theory pushed the idea of a border and its usefulness as an analytical tool to the side[1]. In this situation, studies of borders couldn't change the way international relations changed.

Confronted with such a scenario, in which we simultaneously experience different perspectives on borders, a dearth of studies on borders, and the challenges of constructing a theoretical

vision of borders, our primary objective in this article is to ponder the following question: what are the potential contributions of a critical view [theory] to frontier studies? It is argued that Critical Theory equips such domains with the tools necessary to comprehend their intrinsic complexity, thus making such analyses more accurate and closer to the local and regional reality.

This article utilises the deductive technique of analysis (De Vaus, 2001), as it demonstrates that In this context, border studies were unable to affect the development of international relations, examines the conceptualization of borders within the major positivist theories of international relations; and provides a possible contribution of Critical Theory to its reallocation as an analytical tool. A literature review based on secondary sources was conducted to achieve this goal. In general, qualitative analytical techniques are utilised (LAMONT (Lamont, 2015; Quivy & Van Campenhoudt, 1998).

Accordingly, this article is divided as follows: In the first section, we shall examine the conceptual genealogy of borders in relation to positivist theories of international relations, emphasising their marginalisation from an analytical standpoint. In a second moment, we shall verify the key premises of Critical Theory and its distinction from problem-solving theories (*ad hoc*) in order to emphasise its conceptual and practical contributions

to the emancipation of borders. In the conclusion, we will attempt to answer the initial question by referencing the critical assessment of the theoretical instrumentalization of borders.

THE CONCEPT OF BORDER WITHIN POSITIVIST INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORIES

The emergence of International Relations[2] as a scientific field had an immediate influence on the many perspectives of the international order at the time. This is the first element that must be highlighted: the first significant discussion in international affairs was centred on the concept of war. With this premise, we may comprehend why the major thinkers of various theories drew conclusions to support their stances, pointing to the emergence of theories of International Relations.

Every attempt to define, as with other theories of international relations, must go through an arduous deconstruction process (even though, under the aegis of critical theory, any and all theorization is not neutral). Borders evolved together with the history and theories of international relations, without distinctions. Therefore, it would be impractical to attempt to include all of its complexities, meanings, and definitions in a single article. In light of this, the purpose of this section is to describe how borders have been viewed within the major positivist theories of International Relations.

Realism, one of the major theoretical tendencies in International Relations, is driven by a fundamental condition of the state: its continued survival. This perspective explains the inevitability of conflict in the international system by articulating state conduct in terms of this condition. This scenario illustrates the pessimistic aspect of human nature, in which international interactions will always lean toward the defence of national interests. In other words, conflict would emerge from this primal situation, and the State would only continue to exist through war, the preservation of fear and distrust (Morgenthau, 1948). Borders serve as gatekeepers of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state(s) in this framework, albeit implicitly.

In this permanent threat of war (that is, an inevitable condition) in the international system, the conventional view of borders is applied, which is committed to an irrevocable situation of ongoing violence (both indirect/structural and direct/personal[3]). Understanding borders using such a prism and under these conditions requires, at the very least, the acceptance of a rigorous deterministic methodology as the main source capable of producing knowledge. From this viewpoint, the concern or occupation of borders would be the maintenance of state authority through maintaining its geographical integrity. Governments strive to monitor, regulate, and – in extreme and excep-

tional cases – restrict their borders as a result of this conceptual and practical reductionism about the role of borders.

Distrust, fear, hostility, and resentment are features of the international system that contribute to the survival of this unchanging notion of the immutable attributes of states. This (hegemonic) understanding of the purpose of borders as a place to be securitized, monitored, and controlled is maintained by the perpetual terror of violating their territorial integrity. According to the realist tradition, the international system's anarchic unit is responsible for its immutability (Waltz, 1979). In the international dimension, the opposite logic for the maintenance of national/international security would be the prevention of conflict/war through equity for everyone (Donnelly, 2005). To the benefit of this perspective, sustaining this vision of borders would promote the conventional worldview's interests.

According to the tradition of realism, any analysis that does not begin with a view of the State and, by extension, its borders (as a geographical boundary) would be reductionist. A pessimistic perspective on human nature, international relations, the role of the State, and the State's objectives leads to an equally negative perspective on borders.

In liberalism, borders are viewed as a cooperative instrument of States to establish an

international community (as opposed to a hierarchy of the international system based on the relative power of States) in support of trade and the reduction of an ongoing sense of fear in the international scenario.

In this framework and perspective, war would not be inevitable, as the essence of man and, hence, the conduct of states is not evil, but rather the result of institutional and organisational arrangements that foster selfishness. Since institutions and structures shape the way people are, liberalists see borders as institutions that should make it easier for people to work together and trade around the world in order to build a global community.

The relationship between peacebuilding and the political regime[4] of the State would thus not just occur through business, but would also create a new opportunity for democracy (considered as the most effective means of overcoming inequities and the selfish conduct of States) in the international community. This cooperation is predicated on the link between the number of liberal democracies (free trade) and the level of cooperation. In other words, this theory says that the more liberal democracies there are, the more cooperation there will be, and the more stable the international system will be (Mitrany, 1948).

There are several additional ways to under-

line the liberal principles of the 20th and 21st centuries and their implications for the various border situations across the world. Upon assimilation of such vicissitudes, frontier studies, according to this line of thought, begin to delineate the gap between frontiers in connection to the study of war, conflicts, and international security, for the comprehension of borders in relation to trade, cooperation, and regional integration (economic globalization, for example).

Such a paradigm shift can affect, if only superficially, the conceptual and theoretical understanding of boundaries that, in practice, will result in European disputes following World War II and the security problem between Germany and France (Vaisse, 1997). However, it is important to note that the concept of borders serves a secondary and undervalued role in both realist and liberal perspectives. There were substantial distinctions between the first two International Relations paradigms, realism and liberalism. Nonetheless, their perspectives on the State as the primary player, the anarchy of the international system, and the nature of conflict are comparable. Following this same understanding, the theoretical nuances of borders underwent superficial changes, only in terms of the role of defender of territorial integrity (bordering part) of the State as a source of integration and trade between the world democracies of the 20th century (emphasizing that the central as-

pect of the cold war was the ideological conflict between the representatives of democracy – the United States – and the representatives of socialism – the Soviet Union). Therefore, Europe was the setting for these ideological, commercial, and military conflicts.

Subsequently, Marxist theories, albeit seen through a more insightful approach in their modifications, will be essential to recover a non-traditional perspective in international relations. Thus, neither the State nor International Relations, and certainly not borders themselves, were important to Marxist theory.[5]

However, its methodology, which emphasises the historical reproductions of capital and the division of the globe as perceived through the on-going class struggle, renders it indispensable for comprehending the contemporary international conjuncture. Throughout the 20th century, thinkers used this approach—this methodology—in their research, including Lenin's imperialism (Lenin, 1999; Lenin, 1959), the dependencyists (Cardoso & Faletto, 1985; Santos, 2000) and Wallerstein's world-system theory (Wallerstein, 1991; Wallerstein, 2004). According to this viewpoint, the world would be divided into two large groups with the purpose of perpetuating capitalism's historical architecture. On the one hand, the bourgeois, who own the means of production and, thus, benefit from exploitation; on the other hand,

the proletariat, who, in turn, through the conscious inability to verify/visualize the dominant structures that limit their freedom, the majority (mass) of civil society (e.g., the proletariat), are constrained in their freedom (Marx, 2000). This ability must be under the control of the ruling class, which owns the production processes. Marx will identify a productive structure of capital that will constitute the basis of the global process in the 20th and 21st centuries. Much more could be written about Marx and his contributions to the study of international relations, but this study will remain focused on its ontological goal.

In this previously given perspective of the world, borders do not play a key role. By methodically marginalising the fundamental theoretical concept of the State, Marxist currents also rejected the concept of borders, thus distancing it (for the first time) from its inherent link to territory and the maintenance of sovereignty. So that the constant struggle between classes to replace the dominant way of making things would be a source of (international) conflict.

This movement of national interests, which was globally referred to as development, was better resolved at the international level by the variations of Marxism. And in them, interpretations of borders may be represented more clearly. In this scenario, borders take on their divisional meaning, referring to states with capitalist struc-

tures and those with communist structures. Based on the hegemonic potential of respective social classes, the internal organisation of states dictates their behaviour and place throughout the international system.

A new Marxist interpretation of the international system sought to explain its nature. The objective of dependency theories was to explain and alter the structural dynamics of capitalism based on the economic and geographical position of nations, with a focus on the centre (developed) and the periphery (underdeveloped). According to this viewpoint, the export of these structures not only perpetuates the mechanisms of exploitation of underdeveloped countries vis-à-vis developed countries, but also perpetuates this distorted view of this constructed reality, which is supported by the impossibility of freedom from these mechanisms (Bielschowsky, 2000; Cardoso, 1993; Santos, 2000). The economic difference between developed and underdeveloped countries would result in dependence. The function of dependence theory is to strive to eliminate these economic inequalities. Notably, the idea of dependency is intrinsically tied to the concept of asymmetrical (economic) growth resulting from this dominant structural arrangement. Similarly, the proletariat (peripheral nations) is exploited by the bourgeois (central countries).

Therefore, the international system would be structured in accordance with the position of states in proportion to their capacity in terms of the growth of their social structures. And class struggles would not be confined to the borders of the United States but rather revert to Marx's permeable definition of the State. All of these notions and conceptions of the world prompt us to consider the role of borders in theories of international relations. Recent scholars (Filho & Lemos, 2014; Ludwig, 2016; Ludwig et al., 2018; Prado & Neto, 2015; Scherma, 2012) have revived this agenda, but the theoretical consolidation of borders in International Relations has come a long way.

So far, we have observed that theoretical views of the world have passed through attempts to identify universal, immutable, timeless principles. In realism, evil is associated with human nature, the pursuit of power, and the dominance of politics over other aspects of public life (Morgenthau, 1947). In liberalism, the function of institutions is to transform human nature from virtuous to evil. Regarding the State as the sole and primary player in the international system. The basis of Marxism, which is founded on the (irreversible) historical exploitation of the proletariat by the control of the means of production, maintains, explains, and attempts to reverse the consequently unjust expansion of capital.

Some Marxist forms, such as dependency theorists, attempt to explain the unchangeable

dynamics of economic exploitation between industrialised and impoverished nations by analysing their historical construction and division. The function of the revolutionary state in spreading its revolution was linked to Lenin's imperialism, which divided the globe between oppressors and oppressed. In conclusion, the world-system theory reallocates states based on their positioning and structural development within the international system throughout human history.

In the late 1980s, as a result of the evolution of the Cold War's historical background and the international arena, new interpretations of international relations emerged. While trying to get away from traditional views of the international system, these people also came up with a number of problems with the most popular theories of the time, especially neorealism.[6]

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: CRITICAL THEORY AND THE POTENTIAL EMANCIPATION OF BORDERS

Critical Theory inaugurates a new conceptual stage in theories of international relations. Due to its detachment from traditional currents and methodological rigor, it became one of the most influential theoretical currents in the field. As with constructivism, the majority of his critiques are focused on realism (particularly the ne-

orealism of Kenneth Waltz (1979), the dominant theoretical movement of the Cold War era). As we saw in the last section, the central assumption of all positivist currents was the immutability of theoretical axioms (based on their timelessness). Initiated by the Frankfurt School, the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt came to be (Geuss, 1981). Authors from different generations worked together to reread Marxism in many different ways, always moving away from traditional views and even orthodox Marxism (Friedman, 1981; Wiggershaus, 1995).

Regarding international relations studies in particular, (neo) marxist currents were emphasised. Intellectuals such as Adorno, Marcuse, and Horkheimer were tasked in the early stages of the "school" with reclaiming a theoretical-methodological rigour independent of the partisan Marxists. For instance, Horkheimer, distinguishes "traditional theory" from "critical theory" and directly criticises classical positivism (of instrumental reason) by doing so (Horkheimer, 1976; Marcuse, 2013; Wilson, 2007). Traditional thinkers and critical thinkers are different because traditional thinkers know that you can't learn something or improve your knowledge without thinking about the social and political environment.

Habermas (2012) observed influence in the theoretical world through the introduction of ethics in discourse, the new role of communica-

tion and language in the theoretical production of reality. Where the hegemonic discourse (through discussion) establishes circumstances for the establishment of agreement. He says that emancipatory politics is based on communicative competence, which means that ideas are nothing more than communicative representations that are made and kept alive by making norms universal (Geuss, 1981).

Consequently, Critical Theory has Marxist roots, which emphasise production, classes, the role of the State in relation to capital and class interests, ideology as a source of reality disclosure, and the transformative function of theory. In addition, it remains a bridge between philosophy and the social sciences. Thus, it is necessary to reinterpret Marxism. Even with regard to the opening remarks of the critical theoretical current, its greatest strength would lie in the historical framework of the dominating exploratory structures of the global order, with an emphasis on the superstructure (political and civil society) (Avritzer & Costa, 2004). Following the Marxist tradition, the purpose of Critical Theory when showing such systems is to alter them, whereas "philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the objective is to change it" (MARX (Marx, 2000, p. 173).

Critical perspectives imply that knowledge is an essential component of political and social life. Its ambition is emancipation, not the political

legitimacy of multiple contexts. Consequently, this results in the enhancement of societal well-being through the decrease of inequities. This way of thinking about critical thinking promotes social change and guides the course of human history based on how well people have dealt with change in the past (Devetak, 2005, pp. 138–139).

Therefore, if theory is the attempt to understand a certain reality using axioms, and this is based on historical contextualization to understand such reality through the presentation of the structures and exploratory processes of the ruling class, resulting in the continuous and perpetual social exploitation, we can say that borders are also the result of this structural exploratory process as well as instrumentalized by governments and states (in some cases). In other words, it would be to the government's or state's best advantage to retain the traditional understanding of borders. Thus, the existing direct and indirect local and regional patterns of violence are reproduced. For the purpose of this study, the border is the reality to be observed and modified.

According to Critical Theory, "facts" and "events" are the result of historical and social contexts. As a result, they abandon positivism and determinism in their theoretical construction of international relations. Robert Cox (1981) will differentiate what he considers problem-solving theory from critical theory using Horkheimer's previously

established distinction. The first derives from traditional criteria for determining and comprehending contested reality. Comparatively, it would be as if these theories drew a picture of reality (in this case, the world) and included all of its features (such as power relations, national and international organizations, norms, political parties, ideologies, and values, among other things), which is supported by the idea of hegemony.

Gramsci's (2011a, 2011b, 2011c) idea of hegemony will be of paramount significance for the building and development of Critical Theory in this framework. Early 20th-century Italian philosopher Antônio Gramsci composed a series of reflections about Italy and the world in jail, which were eventually organised and published as "Prison Notebooks." In this way, Gramsci will essentially challenge the Marxist theory of history, in which the engine of history is based on the relations between modes of production (of capital), or, in other words, through historical materialism. This determinism or existential conditionality of capital will be referred to as "vulgar materialism." Gramsci saw it as reductionist to comprehend and assign all domains of a conflicting state (or groups of states) under the economic umbrella. A perspective of the world that is limited and simplified exclusively in terms of capital.[7]

Consequently, Gramsci will prioritise the political and cultural components of the super-

structure (note that the structure is not excluded, only the superstructure is given primacy). Gramsci bases his idea of hegemony on the organic link between civil society and political society (the State). Specifically, it is in this arena that the struggle for hegemony occurs (whether it is a war of movement or a war of position). Derived from the Marxist idea of alienation, a state's cultural and ideological hegemony resides in its capacity to spread its values (in accordance with its interests) without coercion, so forging consensus (Femia, 1981).

Therefore, the ability of states to wield influence in the international structure is directly proportional to their capacity to synchronise the export of their (domestic, internal) values with the construction of international consensus. In other words, it wouldn't necessarily be the wealthiest state or the one with the most production and destruction power. Instead, it would be the one that manages to export its interests through values in the international system. This dynamic is easier to understand when we look at the cold war, how it was set up, and how it was fought by imposing and exporting values.

In this regard, Cox argues that all theories lack impartiality since "theory is always for someone and for some purpose" (Cox, 1981, p. 128). Critical Theory's social sphere opposes the assumption that the international system's anarchic condition is unchangeable and timeless, as well as

a structural approach to hegemony that disregards the social and historical formation of actors and institutions. "Structures are socially produced," says Cox (1992, p. 138), so structures are things that the individual and society can relate to each other through.

In this framework, borders are seen as structural products with differing perspectives in different parts of the world. Therefore, they adhere to this fundamental logic by fulfilling distinct tasks based on their location. In Europe, for instance, (internal) boundaries are perceived considerably differently than in South America. The first conceptualises it in a more dynamic, multifaceted, and multidimensional perspective, which incorporates and assumes cultural, local, regional, economic, political, and social dimensions; the second continues to maintain the conventional, deterministic, and positivist perspective.

According to Devetak (2005, p. 150), "how states construct their moral and legal duties and how these reflect certain assumptions about the structure and logic of international relations," the theoretical vision of borders follows this structural statement arising from the interaction of agents and structures in both case scenarios. So, borders must be a reflection of themselves in the sense that we cannot separate ourselves from a vision based on society, since we are a part of it, and at the same time, this is where we want to get to in terms of how they work.

Concerning norms and their national and international social functions, a critical perspective adopts an organisational and boundary-drawing function as well as an emancipatory perspective in relation to the fundamental principle discussed in all positivist theories, namely the concept of sovereignty. Contrary to Kant, Rousseau, and Montesquieu, who considered that the maintenance and social condition of exclusion would lead to war, this critical approach emphasises a necessary and politicised border function throughout the historical period known as the "ancient regime." In this framework, maintaining sovereignty requires the promotion of "exclusion," causing strangeness, injustice, insecurity, and violent confrontations between states, and establishing inflexible borders between "us" and "them" (Devetak, 2005, p. 148). As with the concepts of war and sovereignty, the conceptualization of borders is a product of its time, with its normative regulation resulting from the social structure into which it is embedded. This is evident in their society's uniformity in connection to their goal. With the conclusion of the Cold War, these causalities are linked to the process of interdependence among the actors of the international system, usually known as globalization. Because North America became more powerful in the 1990s, there was more economic dependence and capitalism got closer.

The United States of America (USA) is responsible for the "universal" values that have historically been at the centre of international politics, in addition to being the undisputed winners of the bipolar war, including, but not limited to, democracy, the rule of law, a free economy, and respect for fundamental human rights. The global production of capital around the expansion of economic globalisation causes "the polarisation of the rich and the poor, feeding a society (in the sense of social organization) without laws, inhibiting civil society, and, consequently, the rise of excluding populism (far right, xenophobia, and racist groups)" (Devetak, 2005, p. 153). A state's hegemonic ability at the international level entails power, which, according to Critical Theory, may be attained through capacities. The evolution of historical structures is governed by these influences. Cox (1981) says that there are three forces that are always changing: material capabilities, which relate to a state's ability to produce and destroy; ideas, which are the intersubjectivity of culturally shared ideas that have historically served to keep certain habits and behavioural expectations alive; and institutions, which are a set of ideas set up in a political and legal arrangement that can either create or keep certain habits alive.

There is a strong link between the idea of hegemony and the comprehension of the world-ordering historical structures. We established that

Critical Theory seeks to disassociate itself from the previous hegemonic idea that dominated and perpetuated unequal global institutions during the second half of the twentieth century. Language, speech, and communication are some of the most powerful consensus-building strategies. Within a moral framework, Critical Theory, based on the findings of Linklater (1990), will define the concept of "ethical discourse" as a global, consensus-based ideal that aims to address a political problem. Without limits or limitations, dialogue drives such discourse (Devetak, 2005; Marcuse, 2013). Consequently, ethical discourse strives to universalize concepts, thoughts, and perceptions that transcend state borders (Kantian thought). They were unable to rethink, for instance, the notion of the State, where "the tyranny of the sovereign nation-state concept has impoverished the Western political imagination" (Linklater, 1998, p. 35).

Critical Theory has, in brief, an emancipatory goal and a transformational orientation based on three basic foundations. The first gradually acknowledges the universalization of political, moral, and legal ideas. The second argues that material inequality (in Marx's meaning of historical materialism) condemned by Critical Theory must be diminished. Lastly, it emphasises the significance of globalising (universalizing) tolerance for cultural, ethnic, and gender distinctions. Critical Theory had a direct effect as an alternative to

dominant International Relations ideas. Examining uneven structures with an emphasis on the super-structure and the role of institutions, ideas, and material capacities lent Critical Theory the scientific rigour that promoted it to one of the leading theoretical currents in International Relations.

The border, regarded as an institution (neoliberalism), only seeks to legitimise and perpetuate the relationship between regional structures (within the inter and intra-state link) and economic globalisation (which generates the region's common ills, such as trafficking, smuggling, migration, diasporas, etc.) so that it can occur as peacefully as possible. For instance, we do not see political and societal concerns over the South American borders because the problem-solving of borders continues to predominate the legitimacy of any public policy (in Brazil, for instance, the National Defence Plan and the National Defence Strategy (BRASIL, 2012a, 2012b). According to this critical and emancipatory perspective, traditionalist thinking about borders tends to legitimise not only public action (political society action), but also shapes, legitimizes, and perpetuates the violent and unequal social structuring of these regions, as "traditional conceptions of theory tend to work in favour of stabilising prevailing structures of world order and their monitoring of inequalities of power and wealth." Although critical theorists have not directly examined borders, we can deduce a few

aspects of this potential-and constantly evolving - interaction. By departing from positivist theories, Critical Theory provides the required tools for viewing borders in a unique, contextual, and critical way, allocating its analysis to an adequate temporal window and taking into consideration the local and regional dynamics at hand. In Critical Theory, the traditional view of borders must be seen as a problem-solving theory. This means that they offer a limited and constrained view of what borders are really for on both the national and international levels (Devetak, 2005, p. 142).

Although critical theorists have not directly examined borders, we can deduce a few aspects of this potential-and constantly evolving-interaction. By departing from positivist theories, Critical Theory provides the required tools for viewing borders in a unique, contextual, and critical way, allocating its analysis to an adequate temporal window and taking into consideration the local and regional dynamics at hand. In Critical Theory, the traditional view of borders must be seen as a problem-solving theory. This means that they offer a limited and constrained view of what borders are really for on both the national and international levels.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Recently, border studies have gained attention in the field of International Relations, intro-

ducing previously unconsidered perspectives. Nonetheless, this highlight of border studies is still in its inception and has a long way to go. The purpose of this article was to illustrate that border studies were not a part of the conceptual reflections within the Theories of International Relations, and continue to not be. Due to the potential for conceptual verification of borders in its neighbouring concepts, such as territory, state, power, traditionalism, positivism, and anarchy, among others, a feasible reflection on the topic was attainable. Throughout the greater part of the 20th century, International Relations scholars had one constant: war. IR theorists studied the behaviour of states, the nature of the international system, positivism, security studies, and the role of regional and international organizations, among many other things. This factor, which may have been the most important, kept borders from conceptually breaking away.

Regarding the benefits of examining borders through the lens of Critical Theory, we may emphasise the importance of recognising the political character of knowledge for this new understanding of boundaries in international relations. Also, to rethink how we study the modern state and the international political community in order to rethink the normative foundations of global politics in a fundamental way.

To comprehend the violent and uneven border arrangements, Critical Theory introduces historical function as crucial. This notion explains, for instance, why borders are seen differently in various locations by various players who build distinct structures. For instance, although the perspective of Europe's internal boundaries can fit into the closer view (in continual evolution—favourably or adversely connected to the challenges encountered by the European Union) of Critical Theory, in South America it continues to seek separation. from a classical, geographical standpoint and in close connection with the notion of a sovereign state (similar to the traditional view).

According to Critical Theory, a view of boundaries that focuses solely on the state viewpoint comes within what Cox termed problem-solving theory. In other words, a vision that strives to find unchangeable and eternal aspects in both thought and public activity. Even though the region has had multiple crises of legitimacy in recent years, South America has tried to change the way it thinks about its borders and, like Europe, become more independent in terms of not only economic integration, but also political, social, and cultural integration. This has been done by creating and strengthening regional integration in the region.

Lastly, the norms, communication, and language espoused by Critical Theory have a highly subjective nature with objective consequences.

Language represents the concept of limits that may be transmitted through communication and ultimately become societal norms as a result of social demand (forming or creating consensus). Therefore, borders are distinguished by their capacity to propagate whichever ideology would become dominant in a particular society, whether it be national or international. These features, while brief, contribute to this emancipatory essay on boundaries from a Critical Theory perspective.

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NOTAS

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[1]Schematically, for more information on the different theories of international relations, see (BURCHILL Burchill, S., Linklater, A., Devetak, R., Donnelly, J., Nardin, T., Paterson, M., Reus-Smit, C., & True, J. (2005). *Theories of international relations*. Palgrave Macmillan. , Cravinho, J. G. (2002). *Visões do mundo: as relações internacionais e o mundo contemporâneo*. Imprensa de Ciências Sociais. , Nogueira, J. P., & Messari, N. (2005). *Teoria das Relações Internacionais, correntes e debates*. Elsevier. .

[2]Note that International Relations in capital letters refers to theoretical currents in this field. While international relations with lowercase letters alludes to relations between actors in the international system.

[3]For a better understanding of this distinction, see Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peach Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, *6*, 167-191.

[4]Regime is understood here as "[...] the sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations" Krasner, S. D. (1982). Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables. *International organization*, *36*(2), 185-205.

[5]The justification, differences, and exploration of the use of Marx in International Relations can be better understood in Linklater, A. (2005). Marxism. In S. e. a. Burchill (Ed.), *Theories of International Relations* (pp. 110-136). Palgrave.

[6]See Jatobá Jatobá, D. (2013). *Teoria das relações internacionais*. Saraiva. For the many designations of the so-called "debates" in IR (first, second, third, and, more recently, fourth).

[7]The Marxist terminology for this economic feature was structure. The superstructure, on the other hand, was the part of society that dealt with politics and social life.