



## A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST CRITIQUE TO POWER-TRANSITION THEORY AS A PREDICTOR OF WAR

### GÜÇ GEÇİŞİ TEORİSİNE SOSYAL İNŞACILIK PERSPEKTİFİNDEN ELEŞTİREL BİR BAKIŞ

Ertuğrul GÖKÇEKUYU<sup>1</sup>

#### Abstract

The concept of *power* is inadvertently one of the most central topics in the field of politics. This concept has been intriguing for mankind as long as the human memory goes. Especially the realist school of thought has a primary focus on the power-narrative. One of the earliest studies undertaken was that of A.F.K. Organski who wrote *World Politics* in 1958 that constructed indicators what state *power* may or may not constitute. Organski's work being explanatory has prompted a scientific prediction of war based on these indicators. *Power Transition Theory* provides relevance from a practical realist stance in today's turbulent international order elaborating on Nation, International Relations and International Organizations. Constructivism criticizes the predictive abilities and the absoluteness as quick turn of events can make mockery of the tidiest of theories. However, this paper seeks to establish an alternative criticism to the *Power Transition Theory* as discussed in a vast body of literature on how wars are predicted during a transition of power on basis of Index of National Capability (INC).

**Keywords:** Constructivism, Power, Power Transition Theory, War, Conflict, Norms.

#### Öz

Güç kavramı siyaset bilimi sahasında çalışılan en merkezi konulardan biridir. Özellikle realist düşünce ekolünün odak noktası haline gelerek, güç kavramı ve anlatısı, mevcut siyasi düşünceler ve akımlar arasında önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu bağlamda, devletlerin güç anlayışı ve özüne dair önemli çalışmalardan biri, 1958 yılında A.F.K. Organski tarafından kaleme alınan "World Politics" adlı eserdir. Organski'nin çalışmasının amacı çatışma ve barış gibi olguları bilimsel bir şekilde çalışmak ve edinilen veriler üzerinden öngörüler geliştirebilmektir. Sosyal inşacılık ise realizmden esinlenen Güç Geçişi Kuramının bu öngörü iddiasını eleştirmektedir. Bu makale, International National Capability endeksi temelinde Güç Geçişi Teorisi'ne alternatif bir eleştiri sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal İnşacılık, Güç, Güç Geçişi Teorisi, Savaş, Çatışma, Norm.

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<sup>1</sup> Ass. Prof. Phd., Anadolu University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, [egokcekuyu@anadolu.edu.tr](mailto:egokcekuyu@anadolu.edu.tr) Orcid:0000-0001-5037-499X

## Introduction

Two alternative theories of international relations (IR) that examine state behaviour in the context of international relations are *social constructivism* (Wendt 1999) and *power transition theory* (Organski 1958). While Power Transition theory focuses on the allocation of power (Waltz 2001) among states and its impact on international conflict, Social Constructivism emphasizes the importance of social norms, values, beliefs and identity in influencing state behaviour. Power Transfer hypothesis is criticized by Social Constructivism for a number of reasons (Finnemore 1996). Power Transition theory overemphasizes the role of power as the main factor influencing state behaviour. According to Social Constructivism, power is socially produced and influenced by ideas and norms rather than being an objective concept (Onuf 2013). Power Transition theory does not acknowledge societal values and norms as factors that influence state behaviour (Kratochwil 2018). According to social constructivism, societal norms and values significantly influence how states behave, especially their choices about war and peace. According to the transition theory, conflict are more likely to occur when a state within the international realm achieves power parity nearing the power of the dominant power (Organski 1958). To expand on this statement, war may be predictable only when such a challenging power nears parity due to structural factors such as material arguments as in economic, military or political capabilities of states. Conflict or a possible war between states could therefore be a result of rising powers challenging dominant powers causing instability within the international realm. States would be more inclined to compete with each other in arms race that could be part of ideological, territorial or resource related tensions. However according to social constructivism, conflict is much more complicated and could result from a range of other factors, such as identity, ideology, and culture disregarding agency. For social constructivists the centrality of agency of states in determining their own behaviour is ignored by the Power Transition theory. According to social constructivism, states actively construct and shape their behaviour based on their own interests and ideas rather than acting in a passive manner solely on basis of structural arguments. For Social Constructivism the emphasis solely put on power structures and material arguments (Waltz 2010:15) disregards social norms and values leading to an oversimplification of conflict and the nature of agency. Contrary to the above argument Alexander Wendt argues in his book *Social Theory of International Politics* that conflict is not always the result of transitions of power in state authority (Wendt 1999). He highlights how societal norms and identity may have a central role in influencing state action and makes the case for the feasibility of peaceful transitions of power between states (Wendt 1999:318).

According to Douglas Lemke a prominent scholar who worked on the Power Transition theory argued that the Transition theories do focus on power but also tend to take into consideration state's satisfaction with the workings of the international status quo. While Lemke contends with the empirical support, he remains critical of the *generalizability* of the Power Transition theory (Lemke and Werner 1996:235). Lemke does support Organski's findings on China as a realistic contender and warns to be carefully optimistic of a possible future war as China can be predicted to achieve parity with the United States (Lemke 1997:30).

Lemke's critique in this respect concerns the lack of consideration of the Power Transition theory of the regional context. For Lemke conflict does not necessarily only rise in the traditional global sense but could also be quite regional. For Lemke the theory should be more nuanced focusing on geographic regions (Lemke and Tammen 2003:269) that may provide better explanatory insights. In this respect Lemke argues that the international system is multi-layered and overlapping hierarchical systems (Lemke and Werner 1996:237). According to Lemke's within every regional system there is a separate hierarchy that may play a crucial role in shaping global politics. Every system is dependent of the distribution of power, number of states and scalability of conflict. Lemke's argumentation has a distinct constructivist tone of voice as he emphasis the commitment to change of each and every state within any system. According to Lemke regional analysis must take into account the varying power dynamics such as historical, and cultural factors. This approach argues that regional power shifts could cause ripple effects extending beyond regional vicinities, influencing broader international dynamics.

Another scholar who is known to share Organski's central tenets is Robert Gilpin who (DiCicco and Levy 1999:680) argues that hegemonic transitions may go hand in hand with periods of relative peace. Gilpin has argued that reason for this relative peace may be correlated with dominant powers' inclination toward order compensating for systemic disruptions that might threaten their dominance (Gilpin 1988:609). The result of such tendencies for Gilpin would foster cooperation and stability which was an important association between power and conflict in the international arena. In addition to Gilpin, George Modelski and William Thompson's work on long cycles of global leadership was considered to complement Gilpin's theory of states inclining toward relative peace during power transitions. The latter proposed a theory of cycles of dominant powers and identified four distinct phases in these long cycles: the emergence of a new leading state, its consolidation of power and influence, the maturation of its dominance, and finally, its gradual decline as challenges and internal stresses accumulate. As their theory echoed Gilpin's notion of power transitions, their emphasis of the cyclical nature of global leadership challenged linearity of history adding more emphasis on structural and systemic dynamics in the international order (Modelski and Thompson 1996).

Ned Lebow a constructivist scholar in the same period has criticized the Power Transition Theory highlighting the role of ideas, norms, and identity in shaping international relations (Lebow and Valentino 2009:389). Lebow's critique falls in line with the constructivist arguments, asserting that the theory's emphasis on material power and realist assumptions. Lebow too argued that the Power Transition Theory had a deep flaw of neglecting the complex interplay of social factors in global politics. Lebow further criticized the notion that power transitions would merely occur on basis of shifts in material capabilities. He argued that state behaviour was a result of deep ideational factors such as beliefs, identities, and cultural norms. In his regard, such factors are instrumental in how states perceive power, cooperate, and engage in conflict as well as peace. Lebow's constructivist insights suggest that the way power is understood and pursued is context-dependent, challenging the theory's uniform application across different historical and cultural settings. By emphasizing the importance of narratives, historical memory, and collective identities, Lebow contributes to a more holistic understanding of power transitions. He contends that the narrative of power transition can significantly impact

state behaviour and interactions, often shaping the outcomes in ways that material power alone cannot explain.

One other significant Social Constructivist is John Ruggie who too disputes the notion that changes in power inevitably result in conflict in his work *Territoriality and Beyond* (Ruggie 2003). He argues that the relationship between power and conflict is more complex and that conflict can be avoided through diplomacy and peaceful negotiations. By highlighting the part played by social norms, common understandings, and agency in influencing state behaviour, these researchers challenge the Power Transition theory's prediction of conflict. They contend that diplomacy and discussions are effective ways to resolve disputes peacefully and that power is not the primary element influencing state behaviour. Alexander Wendt has a profound impact on our knowledge of the causes of war and contends that underlying social and psychological variables that determine states' identities and goals, rather than tangible ones like resources, territory, or power dynamics, are the main causes of conflict (Wendt 1999). Wendt contends that the interactions between states—which are influenced by how states view one another—are what define the international system.

In other words, there is in the vast body of literature immense amount of evidence that states are not only self-interested rational actors, but that they also take into account the social mores and ideas that shape how they interact with other states. Besides criticizing the tenets of structural arguments, constructivism is also quite capable in providing an explanation for why states might prefer conflict or war. A state in a given situation is more likely to act aggressively toward another state if it believes that such a state has hostile intentions, regardless of the relevant material circumstances. In Wendtian sense, the Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian systems are three categories of international systems that Wendt separates (Wendt 1999:43). According to the Hobbesian view of the world, all states are perpetually at conflict with one another over resources for survival. States work together to advance their shared interests in the Lockean system, but they are nevertheless prepared to employ force to ensure their own security. In the Kantian system, governments have come together to form a society in which they respect one another's sovereignty and cooperate to advance peace and security. Wendt contends that the beliefs and standards shared by states determine the form of the international system. The system will be more Hobbesian and war will be more possible if states view one another as rivals or foes. However, the system will be more Kantian and war will be less possible if states acknowledge their mutual interests and are prepared to work together. Wendt highlights the significance of comprehending the social and psychological aspects that influence state behaviour and the structure of the international system in his approach. He offers a more complex and complete analysis of the causes of conflict by emphasizing ideas and norms rather than just material aspects.

Constructivism holds that governments are not merely rational actors pursuing their material interests, but also subject to the concepts, standards, and values that define their national identities and impact how they view the global order (Burchill et al. 2013). One recent example wherein Constructivism provides an explanation is the Russo-Ukrainian war that can be sought in historical, cultural, and geopolitical identity of Russian interpreting Putin's actions against Ukraine. The tsarist and Soviet eras have a long history of attempting to sway Ukrainian politics as many Russians perceive Ukraine to be an essential component of the Russian world.

The notion of Ukraine as an independent state is seen as a Western imposition that threatens Russian security and identity. This can also be seen in Putin's outspoken views and behaviour in defending Russian interests in Ukraine. Putin has claimed that it is Russia's duty to defend Russian speakers and people of Russian ancestry living there, notably in the Crimea (Sayle 2016), and made case for the West attempting to isolate and weaken Russia by providing support to the Ukrainian administration as being anti-Russian and illegitimate. Putin's actions can be interpreted from a constructivist point of view as an effort to protect Russian identity and interests in the face of perceived Western threats. He sees the conflict in Ukraine as part of a wider conflict between the West and Russia over the direction of the international order. It is possible to see Putin's actions as an effort to bolster Russia's sway in the area and keep Ukraine from siding with the West. According to Table 1 Russia's CINC is nowhere to any transition which does not help the transition theory as Russia is not in a power transition phase.

Alternatively, a constructivist perspective does provide new insights in the social and psychological aspects that drive state behaviour, and can assist to explain the complex motivations such as in Putin's actions in Ukraine. *Power transitions* between dominant and rising governments can result in conflict, according to a well-known hypothesis in the study of international relations (Organski 1958). According to the Power Transition theory, conflicts are more likely to break out when a growing state starts to pose a threat to an established state's hegemony. The idea states that as an emerging state's capabilities (such as its military, economic, and technological might) approach those of an established state, there is a greater possibility of war. The dominating state may feel threatened and take measures to protect its supremacy when a rising state gets strong enough to challenge it, which can result in conflict. The relevance of power and power balances in international affairs is emphasized by the *Power Transition hypothesis*. This implies that conflict can result from power imbalances and that international stability depends on a balance of power among states and the theory has been used to explain both historical and modern instances of international relations, such as Germany's growth before World War I and China's current rise in relation to the United States. In terms of international relations, the *Power Transition theory* is a significant and extensively researched theory that has shaped our understanding of how rivalry for power and dominance among states can result in war.

Another case for the possible use of *Transition theory* model is to analyse China's most recent economic and military growth (Paul 2016). The advent of market-oriented economic reforms in the late 1970s caused China's traditional society, which was defined by a sizable population and a predominantly agrarian economy, to start to alter. As a result, the prerequisites for take-off were created, including greater foreign investment, open markets, and infrastructural development. Beginning in the 1990s, China went through a period of tremendous industrial growth, the rise of new industries, and ongoing economic progress (Kristof 1992). The nation's industrial industry expanded to rank among the largest in the world (Ikenberry 2008), and it became a significant exporter to other countries. China made significant investments in infrastructure and education during this time as well, establishing the framework for the ensuing stage of development.

China has just started moving toward *maturity*, putting an emphasis on social welfare, innovation, and diversification. The nation is investing in cutting-edge technology like

renewable energy and artificial intelligence while transitioning to a more consumer-driven economy. Also, it has worked to enhance social welfare by expanding access to healthcare and education. Nevertheless, Organski's model does offer a helpful framework for comprehending China's *industrialization process*, but it is crucial to keep in mind that this is only one method to conceptualize economic development and that other models may be more suitable to understand relations between states in the international arena. Realism besides its pragmatic outlook, also provides a theoretical framework for the study of international relations that emphasizes the influence of national rivalry, power, and self-interest in determining global outcomes. Realists contend that under a *self-help system* defined by anarchy and unpredictability, governments compete for existence and seek power as the driving forces behind international politics (Mearsheimer 2007).

### **Methodology**

The realist school of thought focuses on how nation-states act and how they compete with one another for control of resources. Such analyses highlight how crucial military might and the balance of power are in determining how things turn out on the global stage. Additionally, states must be ready to use force to safeguard their interests and that the pursuit of national interests frequently takes precedence over international institutions and norms. A more nuanced approach to measure state behaviour may be the significance of economic forces and technical advancement in determining international relations. Therefore, the unit of analysis in such measurements is the nation-state or the state as an actor in the international system. Such models emphasize the importance of power, both in terms of the distribution of power among states and in terms of how states use power to achieve their objectives in the international arena. Therefore, such analyses for how states interact with each other, how they pursue their national interests, and how they use various tools of power, such as military force, economic sanctions, diplomacy, and alliances, to advance their interests and goals.

Realist measurement models are based on a quantitative analysis of a state's capability, which are defined as the ability of a state to achieve its objectives in the international system. To start off, we can see that Organski attempted to measure a state's capability using two main indicators: its size and its level of development. The first indicator, size, refers to a state's population and territory, which are seen as important factors in determining a state's power. According to Organski, larger states are generally more powerful because they have more resources and a larger potential pool of soldiers, workers, and consumers. Therefore, he uses a state's population and land area as a measure of its size. The second indicator, level of development, refers to a state's economic, military, and technological capabilities. Organski argues that states with a higher level of development are generally more powerful because they have greater access to resources, technology, and military hardware. Therefore, he uses a state's gross domestic product (GDP) and its level of industrialization as a measure of its level of development.

Based on these two indicators, Organski creates an index of national capability (INC), which is a composite measure of a state's size and level of development. The INC is calculated by taking the natural logarithm of a state's population and land area, and adding this value to the logarithm of its GDP. The resulting sum is then divided by the square root of the state's

military expenditure as a percentage of its GDP. The INC is designed to capture the overall power of a state in the international system, taking into account both its economic and military capabilities. The INC formula is as follows:

$$\text{INC} = \log(\text{Population}) + \log(\text{Land Area}) + \log(\text{GDP}) - \sqrt{\text{Military Expenditure} / \text{GDP}}$$

Where:

- Population: The population of the country
- Land Area: The total land area of the country in square kilometers
- GDP: The Gross Domestic Product of the country in constant (2011) US dollars
- Military Expenditure: The amount of money spent by the country on military activities in constant (2011) US dollars

The logarithmic transformation of population and land area is used to adjust for the diminishing returns of size in terms of power. The square root of military expenditure as a percentage of GDP is used to account for the declining marginal utility of military spending. Organski's INC was based on a number of different indicators of national power, including a country's population, level of industrialization, military spending, and diplomatic activity. Organski also included intangible factors such as a country's cultural influence and its ability to mobilize public opinion.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the US government developed a measure called the *Composite National Power* (CNP), which was similar to the INC but included additional factors such as a country's technological and scientific capabilities, its natural resources, and the quality of its institutions. The CNP was used primarily for strategic planning and military assessments. The *Correlates of War* (COW) measures the *National Material Capabilities* (NMC) and produces periodic datasets since the eighties. The Correlates of War (COW) project has maintained a dataset called the *National Material Capabilities* (NMC) since the 1980s. The NMC includes a range of indicators of a country's military and economic resources, such as the size of its armed forces, its gross domestic product (GDP), and its energy consumption. The NMC is widely used by scholars and analysts to study the dynamics of international relations.

Another, the *Global Century Press' National Power Index* (NPI) is a relatively new study since 2017 and is designed to be a more comprehensive and nuanced measure of national power than the original INC. The NPI takes into account a range of factors, including a country's economic and military strength, its diplomatic influence, and its level of technological innovation. Over time, different scholars and analysts have proposed various adaptations and variations of the INC, including the use of different indicators and weighting schemes. Some measures have focused on a narrower range of factors, such as military power or economic power, while others have attempted to take a more holistic approach to measuring national power and influence. In this paper the dataset of the Correlates of War is chosen as it is the most widely used dataset across literature as seen in Table 1.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The table below provides information about states on indicators such as *year of observation* (year), *military expenditure* (mlex), *military personnel* (milper), Iron and steel

production (irst), *total population* (tpop), individual readiness status tracking (irst), permissible exposure limit (pec), urban population (upop) amounting to what is labelled as *Composite Index of National Capability Score* (CINC).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1.** Composite Index of National Score (CINC)

State	ccode	year	milex	milper	irst	pec	tpop	upop	cinc	version
CHN	710	2016	145039000	2333	807609	5679028	1403500	526464	0.230618	2021
USA	2	2016	604452000	1381	78475	3293117	322180	197817	0.133058	2021
IND	750	2016	51052000	1346	95477	1641825	1324171	251579	0.086841	2021
RUS	365	2016	46626000	798	70453	1322198	143965	56926	0.036473	2021
JPN	740	2016	47342000	247	104775	716148	127749	92655	0.032967	2021
ROK	732	2016	33778000	628	68576	474449	50792	34203	0.023262	2021
BRA	140	2016	23545000	335	31275	354063	207653	102248	0.023258	2021
GMY	255	2016	38281000	179	42080	462143	81915	16498	0.016593	2021
INS	850	2016	8171000	396	4746	319750	261115	44953	0.016215	2021
IRN	630	2016	15882000	523	17895	442620	80277	30455	0.01535	2021
PAK	770	2016	7471000	644	3553	111338	193203	46967	0.01515	2021
TUR	640	2016	8764000	511	33163	200266	79512	39315	0.01479	2021

The *Transition theory* distinguishes three stages of industrialization where differences and shifts in power levels between nations are strongly connected with forecast regarding the transition of power. Countries have the capacity to overcome economic hardships because they have the natural will to do so. The wars were the end outcome of clearly visible national struggles to advance into higher levels of power. According to this viewpoint, countries' ability to move through the stages of industrialization would directly affect their ability to compete on a global scale. The ability of nations to gradually advance through the stages of industrialization also implied a gradual increase in power and was a necessary component of national modernization. These factors meant that a country's ability to modernize its industry would be a global process that would continue over time. A similar capacity would be connected to how power shifts are distributed.

A country would begin the first stage of industrialization while it was still a preindustrial society. A preindustrial nation would not have much authority during this stage. A nation is in the second phase when its power is transitionally growing. The nation would be able to industrialize during this second period, which would also see a massive rise in power. The nation would then reach its full power maturity in the final phase. This occurs when a country of this type is fully industrialized and continues to grow economically. A country's ability to modernize its industry is inextricably linked to the constitution of power. However, a nation

<sup>2</sup> All figures in the table such as iron and steel production in thousands of tons/ Military Expenditures for 1816-1913: thousands of current year British Pounds. For 1914+: thousands of current year US Dollar/ population in thousands etc.

must be able to keep up its pace in order to go into the third phase, which implies that such a country must also be able to use the forces responsible for the modernization of its industries. The structural distribution of material arguments, geography, land mass, and a country's geopolitical position together with the population occupies a fundamental position in the framework.

A powerful central administration that can mobilize both people and material resources is necessary to organize a population into economic outcomes. Such political modernization must be capable of influencing both domestically and internationally. The degree of authority, the economy, and the capacity to produce commodities are all determined by the lack of the phases of industrialization, a sizable population, or a centralized government. In order to maintain the confidence, trust, and allegiance of the populace, industrialization also entails the use of technology to channel ideas and cultures with high levels of life. The bureaucratic apparatus must implement strategies to channel information in order to establish a viable market for economic connections with other countries.

### **Constructivism versus The Composite Index of National Capability Score**

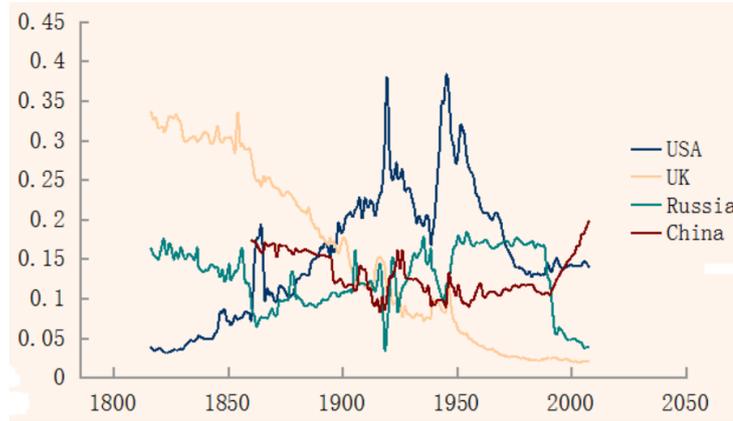
According to the *Transition theory* only three potential candidates could challenge the United States, namely the Soviet Union, China, and India. From a Constructivist perspective to Soviet Union's fast-track industrialization has brought about a rapid Soviet industrialization which provided the Soviets great military power. However, this military power was not matched with an equal or more economic advancements. Such a forced industrialization of the Soviet Union created an imbalance in economic terms, but also a diverse set of problems such as a lack for freedom of action for individuals as well as groups, organizations and other entities. This can also be traced back to the widely accepted notion that Russia today is not considered to be a diversified economy (Graetz and Shapiro 2020). Soviet Union's forced industrialization is assumed to be a given military priority, which may have ultimately led to the country's economic stagnation and political instability. However, from a Constructivist perspective, this imbalance may be a product of the Soviet Union's particular historical and cultural context, rather than as an inevitable outcome of the country's socialist ideology or economic system.

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In this sense the Constructivist perspective scrutinizes the relevance of using quantitative measures such as the CINC score to assess a country's power and influence in the world, as these measures do not account for the complex social and cultural factors that shape state behaviour and international relations. Instead, Constructivists would rather argue that it is more important to examine the discursive practices and social norms that underpin state behaviour and shape the ways in which states interact with one another.

From the table below it can be seen that the CINC score of Russia has taken a tumble around the nineties and that it was not able to recover in the years ahead. From a Constructivist perspective, another criticism to the *Transition theory's* focus on essentializing states assuming that they are static entities with fixed identities and interests. In contrast, Constructivism highlights the importance of social constructions of reality and the ways in which states' identities and interests are constantly being constructed and re-constructed through social interactions and discursive practices.



**Graphics 1.** Comparison of CINC Values of USA, UK, Russia and China 1800 - 2000

China on the other hand having achieved a higher CINC-score recently surpassed the CINC-score of the United States. According to the *Transition theory* China's rise would have been an unavoidable clash with the United States (US) that would want to continue its predominant position as a global leader. In this line of thought China's higher CINC-score should imply the US losing its economic and military influence, as the Communist competitor is growing in strength. However, from a constructivist perspective the *power transition theory* focuses solely on material factors, such as military and economic capabilities of China, and neglects the role of norms and ideas. On the contrary in today's events, one may perceive that it is not the new power that challenges the old power, but it is the old power that mobilizes military forces in a geography that might transfer beliefs of animosity which does not fit the assumptions of the *Transition theory*.

The *Transition theory* assumes a zero-sum game, where the theory assumes that the rise of a new power is a direct threat to the existing power. This zero-sum view of power relations overlooks the possibility of cooperation and mutual benefit. Constructivists argue that states can work together to address common challenges, and that the rise of a new power may actually create new opportunities for cooperation. On the other hand, the *Transition theory* also ignores agency and assumes that states are passive actors that respond to changes in the distribution of power. However, constructivists argue that states have agency and can shape the distribution of power through their actions. States can choose to cooperate or compete, and their choices can have significant impacts on the outcomes of power transitions. The power transition theory oversimplifies power and assumes that power is solely based on military and economic capabilities. However, constructivists argue that power is multifaceted and includes other factors such as diplomatic influence, cultural appeal, and moral authority. The power transition theory's narrow focus on military and economic capabilities overlooks these other dimensions of power.

Overall, from a constructivist perspective, the power transition theory is too deterministic and overlooks the agency of states and the role of norms and ideas in shaping state behaviour. Similar to the Constructivist perspective Organski was neither convinced that the Soviets would surpass the power of the US. The Soviet Union had not completed the

modernization of its economy and the US had already had an early start which made it almost impossible for the Soviets to equal the strength of the United States. For Organski, the Soviets had also reached their natural power maturity, and as a side-effect its rate of growth was slowing down and did not have the potential to disturb the power advantage of the United States. India, too possessed a large population base that was sufficient to surpass the US as well as the Soviets. However, China compared to India and the Soviets had a much larger population, as well as had completed her primitive unification, and was already rapidly industrializing.

### **Conclusion**

The discourse surrounding international relations involves various theoretical perspectives that provide distinct lenses through which to understand the complex dynamics of power, conflict, and cooperation among states. Social constructivism and power transition theory offer contrasting viewpoints that contribute to the broader understanding of state behaviour and the potential for conflict within the international realm. Social constructivism emphasizes the role of societal norms, values, and shared beliefs in shaping state behaviour. It contends that conflicts arise from a range of factors beyond material considerations, including identity, ideology, and culture. States are seen as active agents that construct and shape their behaviour based on their interests and ideas, rather than merely reacting to structural conditions. On the other hand, power transition theory suggests that conflicts are more likely to occur during periods of power shifts, particularly when rising powers challenge the dominance of established powers. The theory underscores the role of economic, military, and political capabilities in determining the potential for conflict. While power transition theory offers insights into the relationship between changing power dynamics and conflict, it can be criticized for its deterministic nature, as it sometimes overlooks the agency of states and the influence of norms and ideas.

The analysis of China's recent economic and military growth offers a compelling study for examining the applicability and limitations of the power transition theory and the constructivist perspective within the field of international relations. As China embarked on market-oriented economic reforms in the late 1970s, its traditional agrarian society underwent a transformation, leading to significant changes in its economic and military capabilities. The subsequent stages of industrial growth, infrastructural development, and the pursuit of cutting-edge technologies such as renewable energy and artificial intelligence have propelled China onto the global stage as a major player. The power transition theory, as exemplified by Organski's model, offers a framework to comprehend China's industrialization process in the context of shifting global power dynamics. The theory's emphasis on power parity and its prediction of potential conflicts during periods of rising power is relevant to China's trajectory. It's essential to recognize that the power transition theory operates within a materialist framework, focusing on economic and military capabilities as primary indicators of power. This approach, while informative, tends to overlook the influence of norms, ideas, and cultural factors that can shape state behaviour and interactions on the international stage. The comparison of China's rise to the United States in terms of Composite Index of National Capability (CINC) scores demonstrates the limitations of using quantitative measures alone to assess a country's influence and power. Constructivists argue that such measures neglect the

complex interplay of historical, cultural, and social factors that shape state behaviour and international relations. Rather than focusing solely on material capabilities, constructivism encourages us to explore how states construct their identities, interests, and interactions, which can influence the outcomes of power transitions.

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