

Beyond Peace and War

Towards a Typology of Power Transitions

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Given the meteoric rise of China, the emergence of other important powers, and major redistributions in the global balance of power, power transition theory (PTT) has become an important intellectual factor again. Many observers are anxious about China's ascendance (and that of other powers) and expect serious conflict between Washington and Beijing in the years to come. Many of them ground their skeptical expectations in PTT or at least a much curtailed understanding of it. To give just two examples, former US official Susan Shirk claims in her book about China that “history teaches us that rising powers are likely to provoke war,” and political scientist Christopher Layne echoes that “throughout the history of the modern international state system, ascending powers have always challenged the position of the dominant (hegemonic) power in the international system—and these challenges have usually culminated in war.”¹ Such skepticism, however, is problematic for three reasons. First, it is false theoretically; PTT does not claim that all rising powers will resort to war or that all power transitions will result in war. While highlighting the inherent dangers of power transitions, PTT actually acknowledges that they might result in peace as well as in war. Satisfaction with the existing status quo is the key factor here. Second, it is false empirically; not all power transitions in history have resulted in great-power wars. Third, it leads to flawed policy advice; if rising powers are always aggressive and always challenge the international order, then it makes sense to attempt to contain or oppose them. If, however, rising powers are not always dissatisfied and do not always challenge the status quo, then policies meant to oppose them might breed dangerous dissatisfaction in the first place. Recognizing that even traditional PTT allows for “peace-

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ful power transitions” as well as for “power transition wars” is a useful antidote against such self-defeating policy choices.

This article argues that the spectrum of power transitions or better power transition constellations is even broader than this and goes beyond just war and peace. Consequently, the article amends PTT by adding a variable that captures the willingness of rising powers to commit themselves to change the status quo. (This is not the same as mere dissatisfaction, and both might not be congruent.) Such an addition increases the potential types of power transitions from two (peaceful power transition and power transition war) to four. In addition, the article maintains that it is necessary to discuss the peculiar role of the dominant power within the PTT framework. Indeed, the dominant power (and its behavior) is much more important for the course of a given power transition than traditional PTT would have it. It is important to grant the dominant power the same variance with respect to its evaluation of the status quo (i.e., its satisfaction) and its “will to power” that we also grant the respective rising powers. That is, if we can imagine rising powers that are dissatisfied as well as those that are satisfied, and if we can imagine rising powers with a strong or a weaker will to power, then the same must hold true regarding the dominant power. Thus, a complete scientific analysis of power transitions would also have to include the satisfaction status and will to power of the dominant power. The final section of the article offers a first sketch of such an endeavor. Doing so extends the erstwhile nonpeaceful/peaceful power transition dichotomy to a much more complex and realistic typology of power transition constellations that should be employed when one assesses the prospects of current power shifts.

Power Transition Theory in a Nutshell

A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler established PTT.² A central element of the theory, one in which it differs most profoundly from all forms of realism (and many other international relations [IR] theories), concerns the international order. Many IR theories assume that the ordering principle of the international system is anarchy.³ In contrast, PTT describes international politics as less marked by anarchy and more by a hierarchy resembling a pyramid structure overseen by the respective dominant (i.e., most powerful) power. This dominant power once created and designed the international order according to its convictions, wishes, and interests and since then guarantees and defends this order.⁴ It can do so not only through sheer, overwhelming force but also through international organizations in which the dominant power and its allies obtain disproportional voting powers and therefore can enact their dominance directly and materially. According to this view, in addition to material factors, the normative fabric of the international order is also angled towards the dominant power.⁵

The goods and profits that the international order produces often benefit mainly the dominant power and its allies.⁶ The dominant power and its entourage can enjoy the benefits of the order, but some states outside this inner circle receive none (or, at least in their perception, not enough) of the aforementioned goods and thereby “consider the

international system to be unfair, corrupt, biased, skewed, and dominated by hostile forces.”⁷ The dominant power can cynically disregard complaints as long as they come from lesser powers, but the situation changes when discontent is found within a great power or when a discontented power starts to rise.⁸ Ascendant powers that are not satisfied with the order and their place in it—according to PTT—typically wish to change the status quo or even establish an entirely new international order. Because those who profit from the old order rarely agree to such a restructuring (which would almost certainly diminish their share of benefits), PTT expects the new, dominant power to enforce or at least try to enforce changes violently.⁹ In these cases, power transition wars are common. Since rising or challenging powers are not suicidal, PTT does not expect them to attack the dominant power before they have at least reached parity with it.

In a nutshell, then, PTT holds that times of massive power shifts, a situation of power parity, or even an overtaking at the top of the international system might lead to a systemwide great-power war over the control of the international order. Thus, if a power transition (defined as overtaking at the top of the international system), prolonged parity, or at least massive disruptions of power are on their way, PTT warns that we are entering risky times. The power development, however, merely provides an opportunity that PTT does not assume is automatically realized.¹⁰ PTT also requires some measure of willingness that is commonly understood in terms of satisfaction with the status quo of the international order—or, more precisely, a lack thereof. A power that is overtaking the former dominant power or is finding itself in a prolonged period of parity with that power will likely initiate a war *only* when it is dissatisfied with this status quo.¹¹ Although proponents of PTT mainly use the theory to explain the outbreaks of (power transition) war, it also entails a somewhat less developed theory of (power transition) peace.

Towards a Typology of Power Transition Constellations

Adding the Will to Power

Besides power development and satisfaction with the status quo, however, another factor should be added to the theoretical corset of the PTT. This factor concerns the willingness of a power to affect its international environment. Benjamin Fordham asserts that this willingness cannot be presupposed: “We should be cautious with accounts of foreign policy ambition that assume enhanced international power and influence are intrinsically appealing. In the last two centuries, potentially powerful states have not mobilized their national resources to the extent one would have expected if this were the case.”¹² Maybe such a factor is even necessary to identify *great* powers in the first place. Elli Polymeropoulos and others, for example, mention foreign policy central themes (*Leitideen*), which they believe are a deciding factor in whether or not a potentially powerful nation can be called a great power.¹³ Fordham calls his similar concept “foreign policy ambition.”¹⁴ In the context of PTT, this article prefers to speak of “will to power.”¹⁵

In PTT the power development decides whether a power transition is possible at all.¹⁶ The satisfaction of the rising power then decides whether a given power transition will be peaceful or nonpeaceful. Overlooked, however, is the possibility of an actor that denies or even transcends a possible power transition—for example, a rising power that increasingly accumulates power but at the same time either intentionally or unintentionally refuses to take on the role of a contender/challenger and subsequently the role of the dominant power.¹⁷ Hence, a power transition may happen arithmetically but not substantially. Such a pure arithmetic power transition should be distinguished from other forms of power transition. To secure this kind of case theoretically, PTT needs a variable that can capture the will of an actor to utilize its (potential) power to sustain or challenge the status quo of the international order.

In fact, this is less novel for PTT than it may seem. Proponents of this theory have for a long time pointed out that it combines aspects of opportunity with aspects of willingness.¹⁸ Instead of introducing a new factor to capture the aspect of willingness, though, the latter was often mixed up with the existing variables. Especially the satisfaction variable has often been used to capture willingness. However, satisfaction is generally more about what an actor dislikes about the status quo of the international order and less about the intensity with which actors pursue changes. Therefore, it seems reasonable to introduce a different factor that better reflects the willingness of a rising power to make a possible power transition a reality.¹⁹

To do so, this article proposes adding the factor *will to power* to the theoretical framework of PTT.²⁰ Will to power has at least three possible dimensions. First, it can be understood as *level of activity* concerning the interaction of an actor with its international environment. The second dimension asks if the actor in question has—besides a general international activity—a *specific project of order* that it wishes to implement in the international arena. The final dimension addresses the *means that an actor is willing to utilize to assert its preferred policies and interests*. The more an actor accepts or even embraces the use of force, the more it will be ready to make a potential power transition a reality by all means necessary. The more an actor rejects the actual use of military means, the more likely it will not enforce a potential power transition. All of these dimensions are highly relevant for the will-to-power factor and are possibly interdependent. (For example, an actor that has a specific policy project it would like to implement internationally will most likely also show some international activity to further this project.)

One should note that will to power is probably not strictly dichotomous but an ordinal scale ranging from very low to very high. A tipping point must be somewhere on this scale, however, with states below eschewing and those above embracing the possibility of realizing a potential power transition. One must also remember to understand will to power as contingent upon time and place, as Fordham reminds us: “The specific foreign policy ambitions of particular states depend heavily on the time and place in which they find themselves. Establishing overseas colonies was once a goal of many states but has now been almost entirely abandoned.”²¹ Will to power influences *whether* an actor is ready to deploy its accumulated political, economic, and military power to shape the in-

ternational order. *If* an actor is willing to do so, then (dis)satisfaction gives information about the direction and form this action will take.²²

At this point, it is helpful to introduce another differentiation—namely, one between those power transitions *in the broader sense* and those *in the narrower sense*. Without a corresponding power development, a power transition is simply not possible. One might argue whether it is fitting to talk about such a power development only after an overtaking takes place, or when parity is reached, or even before that if the rising challenger is rapidly approaching—but we can agree that without such a development, no power transition can ever occur. At the same time, a certain power development taken for it is not enough. In a sense, power is always virtual and latent (before actually being exercised); a power *transition* is not a physical event that emerges solely from a change in the raw power development. Much more, it is necessary to bring about a power transition actively. A power that deliberately isolates itself from its environment—a power that explicitly denies taking advantage of its power resources—will never cause a power *transition* despite all of its increase in power. If such a power somehow winds up at the top of the international power pyramid (i.e., if it has accumulated more power resources than all potential competitors), then we can talk only of a *power transition in the broader sense*. A *power transition in the narrower sense* is different; it occurs then—and only then—when the power development is met by a certain will to power. Only in such a case does the question emerge regarding whether or not the power transition will be peaceful—a question answered by the satisfaction variable.

Recall now the different conceptual and theoretical meaning of the three variables of PTT. The pairing of power development and will to power explains whether a given historical point in time is ripe for a power transition in the international system—in other words, whether a power transition in the narrower sense will take place. If so, both factors must be present. Nevertheless, we still have no clue about whether or not this power transition will be peaceful. Remember that *every* power transition is hallmarked by a corresponding power development and will to power; thus, these variables cannot give us any further information. At this point, satisfaction comes into play. In standard PTT, satisfaction is (falsely) often regarded as a measurement of the willingness to bring about a power transition in the narrower sense. This, however, gives away the analytical surplus value of the satisfaction variable: the special value of satisfaction shows when the willingness of the rising power to initiate a power transition is already established.

With the three elements of PTT that we have established (power development, will to power, and satisfaction with the status quo of the international order), we can now move beyond the dichotomy of power transition war / peaceful power transition and assemble a *typology of power transitions*. We have a total of eight combinations for our three elements (fig. 1). Only one of them entails a peaceful power transition, and only one entails a power transition war. The other six combinations lead to events that do not meet our criteria for power transitions in the narrower sense, but two of them can still count as power transitions in the broader sense.

	<i>No power transition</i>				<i>Power transition in the broader sense</i>		<i>Power transition in the narrower sense</i>	
Power development	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+
Will to power	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	+
Satisfaction	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	+
Result	Mute dissatisfaction	Powerless criticism	Fellow traveling	Bolstering the status quo	"Missed" power transition	"Eschewed" power transition	Power transition war	Peaceful power transition

Figure 1. Combining the elements of a peaceful power transition

These different combinations describe varying events induced by the presence/absence of the three variables of PTT. As we can see, the peacefulness of a power transition depends upon the satisfaction variable. Consequently, from a policy viewpoint, whenever we can detect signs of dissatisfaction or even decreasing satisfaction among rising powers, we should implement policies to work against this tendency. Furthermore, whenever we detect rising powers that are not (yet) dissatisfied, we should refrain from policies that might fuel dissatisfaction. This is all the more important because dissatisfaction with the international order is regarded as a source of conflict and turmoil not only in the context of PTT but also in IR generally.

If the necessary power development is visible but a will to power is missing, then we are dealing with a power transition in the broader sense and could talk about an "eschewed" or a "missed" power transition. A power transition is eschewed when the rising power is satisfied with the current order and is not willing to become the new, dominant power in this order. A power transition is missed when the rising power is indeed dissatisfied with the international order and therefore has a real motive to change it, but the necessary willingness, embodied in the will to power variable, is absent. For example, the rise of the United States in the nineteenth century is much better understood as a missed or an eschewed power transition than as an example of a peaceful power transition.²³ This perspective is also underlined by Organski and Kugler's observation that the United States voluntarily kept its distance from the European theater (then the center of world politics and the international order) a long time after it had already formally reached the top power position.²⁴ A few centuries later, the United States finally realized the (peaceful) power transition. Hence, the absence of one condition for the emergence of a power transition in the narrower sense may be only temporary. It would be a mistake, then, to assume that a once eschewed or missed power transition stays that way in the long run. This notion holds especially true in cases in which a power transition in the broader sense is combined with dissatisfaction and thus bears the danger of a nonpeaceful power transition once the power transition in the narrower sense is realized.

The other constellations are not power transitions at all but should also be described. Specifically, when we cannot identify a power development that could lead to parity in

the foreseeable future, a rising power that is satisfied with the international order and has shown a will to power most likely will support and stabilize the status quo. When such a power is dissatisfied, it probably will utter powerless criticism directed against an international order that is perceived as unjust. When such a power is satisfied but shows no will to power, we can call it a “fellow traveler.” Finally we say that a nonrising power is trapped in “mute dissatisfaction” if it has no will to power and at the same time is dissatisfied.

Taking the Dominant Power Seriously

All of the above have been quite in line with traditional PTT in that the final responsibility for the peaceful or nonpeaceful occurrence of a power transition rests solely on the shoulders of the rising power. Its rise starts the entire process; its will to power decides whether we are dealing with a power transition in the broader sense or one in the narrower sense. Ultimately, its satisfaction is the key to whether a peaceful or nonpeaceful power transition occurs.

The role of the dominant power, in contrast, is rather passive and limited in standard PTT.²⁵ At best, the dominant power can hope to *manage* an impending power transition by accommodating the rising power one way or the other, thereby increasing the latter’s satisfaction with the status quo of the international order and maximizing the chances of a peaceful power transition.²⁶ Such a scenario, however, downplays the agency of the dominant power itself. It seems curious to disregard the wishes, desires, and interests of the (still) most powerful actor in the international order even when it is declining.

At a minimum, when analyzing the dominant power, PTT should check for the very same variables that should also be checked with regard to the rising power. That is, we should definitely inquire about the dominant power’s satisfaction with the status quo of the international order since it is far from certain that the dominant power is always satisfied.²⁷ In fact, PTT has long argued that the dominant power *is* satisfied by definition, maintaining that it created the international order, presides over it, and thus has no reason to be dissatisfied.²⁸ Such an argument, however, disregards the possibility that either the international order or the interests of the dominant power—or both—may change over time, especially during a long period of dominance.²⁹ It is not implausible that a dominant power that was indeed perfectly satisfied with the way things were at some point in the past has, over time, changed its views. Think no further than the current dominant power—the United States—that arguably has defied the rules and norms of “its own” international order many times during the last decades.³⁰

Will to power (or the lack thereof) should also be surveyed regarding not only the rising power but also the (declining) dominant power. Of course at some point in time, a dominant power must have possessed a certain will to power; otherwise, it would not have come into its position. But it is faulty to assume that will to power must remain unchanged over a long period of time. In other words, it makes sense for PTT to suppose that a dominant power that has just assumed this position and has formed an interna-

tional order according to its wishes and interests has a healthy dose of will to power. At the same time, however, such a historical snapshot should not be perpetuated theoretically. A dominant power—one that probably begins its reign not only with will to power but also with a great deal of satisfaction—can grow dissatisfied over time, either because the international order it created develops a life of its own and moves away from its original settings or because the interests of the dominant power itself (e.g., through a change of ruling elites) change over time and are no longer reflected in the international order. Similarly, will to power could erode over time and give way to a kind of fatigue in international leadership that can be defined as “unwilling[ness] to pay any substantial price in lives or money for international goals.”³¹ Eroding will to power could also (but does not have to) be the result of growing dissatisfaction. A declining dominant power that “resigns” would enhance the prospects of a peaceful power transition. At the same time, however, a dissatisfied dominant power—that retains its will to power—could choose to counter its dissatisfaction by proactively trying to change or re-create the international order. In such a case, the presence of a dissatisfied dominant power decreases the prospects of a peaceful power transition.

Taking the dominant power seriously in such a manner expands the list of power transition scenarios enormously (fig. 2). We now end up with eight scenarios for power transitions in the narrower sense alone.³²

Power transition in the narrower sense								
Power development	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Rising power's will to power	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Rising power's satisfaction	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
Dominant power's satisfaction	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Dominant power's will to power	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+
Type	Peaceful power transition (Type 1)	Peaceful power transition (Type 2)	Peaceful power transition (Type 3)	Peaceful power transition (Type 4)	Uncertain power transition (Type 1)	Uncertain power transition (Type 2)	Power transition war (Type 1)	Power transition war (Type 2)

Figure 2. Extension of the typology of power transition constellations

The illustration also shows that by taking the dominant power fully into account, new situations arise that were hitherto unimaginable. For example a *peaceful power transition* is possible *despite* a dissatisfied rising power if the dominant power is lacking in its will to power (peaceful power transition types three and four). We can also identify different forms of a peaceful power transition. Type one exemplifies the ideal, typical, peaceful power transition imagined by PTT and may be described as a kind of “passing of the torch.” Types two and four can be more aptly described as a “leave me alone” attitude of the dominant power that has grown dissatisfied with its international order and has lost its will to defend it. Type three, in which the dominant power is satisfied but still unwill-

ing to shoulder the burden of defending its order against the remonstrance of the dissatisfied challenger, might be termed “resignation.”

Furthermore, two kinds of *uncertain power transitions* emerge whose outcome must remain unclear for the time being. In type one of such an uncertain power transition, the rising power is satisfied with the international order, thereby signaling a peaceful power transition. However, the declining power has retained its will to power, thus signaling that it intends to keep its top spot. Furthermore, since the declining power is also satisfied with the current international order, such a constellation might be primed for a kind of coleadership out of which a peaceful power transition might result over time. At the same time, persisting will to power on both sides could still lead to conflict. More dangerous, however, is type two of an uncertain power transition. Here, too, we deal with a satisfied rising power, and will to power is present regarding both the rising and the dominant power. Differing from type one, however, the dominant power is dissatisfied with the status quo of the international order, making an amicable comanagement with the rising power less likely.

In contrast, not much change can be found in the *power transition war* category. That is, when a dissatisfied rising power meets a dominant power clinging to its superior position, the probability of conflict is high, regardless of whether the dominant power is satisfied or dissatisfied with the status quo. However, we might speculate that a constellation in which *both* the rising power *and* the dominant power are dissatisfied is at even greater risk of degenerating into war (because hostilities can be expected from both sides) than a constellation in which *only* the rising power is dissatisfied.

Conclusion

Common wisdom’s treatment of PTT often cuts it down to statements like “power transitions often lead to war” or “rising powers will challenge the dominant power for leadership in the international system.” In fact, however, even traditional PTT has never been this narrow. Besides the possibilities of a power transition war, the theory always included the potential of peaceful power transitions.

Broadening PTT by including the factor of *will to power*, which enables the detection of power transitions in the narrower sense (in contrast to formal overtaking that can be called power transitions in the broader sense), widens the spectrum of power transition constellations. Besides *peaceful power transition* and *power transition wars*, we now can identify *missed power transitions* and *eschewed power transitions*. Going one step further and taking into account the possibility that the dominant power’s satisfaction with the status quo and its will to power not only matter but also may vary, we find that the number of potential power transition constellations can increase even further.

What does this tell us about the future of world politics? Most of all, it tells us that—even if the United States is declining and other powers are rising—war and conflict are not inevitable, even in the case of a power transition. War is only one of many outcomes that may arise from a power transition constellation. The declining dominant

power and rising powers can make policy choices that decrease this possibility, mainly by boosting each other's satisfaction with the status quo of the international order. Keeping a power transition constellation peaceful is demanding but possible, and discerning this possibility is the first step towards putting it into effect.

Notes

1. Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4; and Christopher Layne, "China's Challenge to US Hegemony," *Current History* 107, no. 705 (January 2008): 16.
2. A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1958); and Jacek Kugler and A. F. K. Organski, "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation," in *Handbook of War Studies*, ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 171–94. See also Douglas Lemke and Jacek Kugler, "The Evolution of the Power Transition Perspective," in *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger*, ed. Jacek Kugler and Douglas Lemke (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 3–34; Ronald L. Tammen et al., *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000); Douglas Lemke, "Great Powers in the Post–Cold War World: A Power Transition Perspective," in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, ed. T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michael Fortmann (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 52–75; Ronald L. Tammen and Jacek Kugler, "Power Transition and China—US Conflicts," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1, no. 1 (2006): 35–55; and Ronald L. Tammen, "The Organski Legacy: A Fifty-Year Research Program," *International Interactions* 34, no. 4 (2008): 314–32. For a harsh critique, see Richard Ned Lebow and Benjamin Valentino, "Lost in Transition: A Critical Analysis of Power Transition Theory," *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (September 2009): 389–410.
3. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).
4. Randolph M. Siverson and Ross A. Miller, "The Power Transition: Problems and Prospects," in Kugler and Lemke, *Parity and War*, 59.
5. Harald Müller, "Mächtekonstellationen," in *Internationale Politik als Überlebensstrategie*, ed. Mir A. Ferdowski (München: Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2009), 5.
6. One problem of PTT, however, is that these profits are seldom clearly defined. See John R. Oneal, Indra de Soysa, and Yong-Hee Park, "But Power and Wealth Are Satisfying: A Reply to Lemke and Reed," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 4 (August 1998): 518. See also Tammen et al., *Power Transitions*, 6.
7. Tammen et al., *Power Transitions*, 9.
8. Siverson and Miller, "Power Transition: Problems and Prospects," 59.
9. PTT does not expect all of these attempts to be successful. Precisely because former and future dominant powers usually clash in a period of parity, the outcome of a war can't be predicted. History reflects many unsuccessful bids for power transition in which the declining major power was able to defend its position at least for a certain time.
10. Kugler and Lemke, *Parity and War*, 12.

11. Unfortunately, in the past, PTT has been rather unsuccessful when it comes to convincingly conceptualizing and operationalizing satisfaction. Carsten Rauch, “Why They Don’t ‘Get’ No Satisfaction: Satisfaction as Concept in IR Theory and Power Transition Theory” (paper prepared for presentation at the Fourth Global International Studies Conference, Goethe University, Frankfurt, 6–9 August 2014).

12. Benjamin O. Fordham, “Who Wants to Be a Major Power? Explaining the Expansion of Foreign Policy Ambition,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 5 (September 2011): 601.

13. Elli Polymeropoulos et al., *Asiatische Großmächte—China, Indien und Japan als Akteure regionaler und internationaler Ordnungspolitik*, SWP-Studie S 11 (Berlin: SWP, April 2011), 7.

14. Fordham, “Who Wants to Be a Major Power?,” 601.

15. I deal with the will to power and its relationship to the other variables at length elsewhere. See Carsten Rauch, *Das Konzept des friedlichen Machtübergangs: Die Machtübergangstheorie und der weltpolitische Aufstieg Indiens* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), chap. 8.

16. Studies of PTT usually understand a power relation as entering into a period of parity when the weaker (rising) power has reached 80 percent of the power resources (often measured in terms of gross domestic product) of the stronger (declining) power. See A. F. K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). Debates within PTT address whether parity alone already leads to a higher probability of conflict or whether a power transition in the form of an actual overtaking is necessary.

17. Such a possibility can even be found in the writings of Kenneth Waltz: “The possibilities of rising in the international system, and the costs and benefits of doing so, vary as systems change; but *states decide* whether making the effort to advance is worthwhile. Japan has the capability of raising herself to great-power rank, but has lacked the inclination to do so. Systems change, or are transformed, depending on the resources and aims of their units and on the fates that befall them” (emphasis added). Kenneth N. Waltz, “Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 343.

18. See, for example, Woosang Kim, “Power, Parity, Alliance, Dissatisfaction, and Wars in East Asia, 1860–1993,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 5 (2002): 655; Douglas Lemke and Suzanne Werner, “Power Parity, Commitment to Change, and War,” *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 2 (1996): 237; Suzanne Werner and Jacek Kugler, “Power Transitions and Military Buildups: Resolving the Relationship between Arms Buildups and War,” in Kugler and Lemke, *Parity and War*, 191–92; and Henk W. Houweling and Jan G. Siccama, “A Two-Level Explanation of World War,” in Kugler and Lemke, *Parity and War*, 115.

19. One can find some rudimentary approaches in this direction. See Lemke and Werner, “Power Parity, Commitment,” 235–60; and Suzanne Werner and Jacek Kugler, “Power Transitions and Military Buildups: Resolving the Relationship between Arms Buildups and War,” in Kugler and Lemke, *Parity and War*, 187–207.

20. Because I believe that this factor actually is already part of the deeper understanding of PTT and only needs to be brought to the forefront, I have named it the *forgotten variable* elsewhere. See Rauch, *Das Konzept*, 253.

21. Fordham, “Who Wants to Be a Major Power?,” 602.

22. Note, however, the bounded range of PTT. Indeed, high satisfaction with the status quo of the international order increases the probability of a peaceful *power transition* and decreases the probability of a *power transition* war. Apart from that (i.e., apart from the power transition context), however, other reasons, of course, might lead powers (and even declining and rising powers) into conflict and war. PTT can be used only to explain conflicts and wars emanating from a power transition situation; a low probability of such a conflict does not need to imply that no conflict will occur between the respective actors at all.

23. Rauch, *Das Konzept*, 154–55.

24. Organski and Kugler, *War Ledger*.

25. Tammen et al., *Power Transitions*, 9.

26. Rauch, *Das Konzept*, 278–80; and T. V. Paul and Manesh Shankar, “Status Accommodation through Institutional Means: India’s Rise and the Global Order,” in *Status in World Politics*, ed. T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 165–91.

27. Steve Chan, *China, the U.S., and the Power-Transition Theory: A Critique* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 40–41; and Rauch, *Das Konzept*, 230–33.

28. Lemke and Kugler, “Evolution of the Power Transition Perspective,” 8; and Tammen et al., *Power Transitions*, 9.

29. Martha Finnemore, “Legitimacy, Hypocrisy and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn’t All It’s Cracked Up to Be,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009): 70; and Rauch, *Das Konzept*, 231.

30. Chan, *China, the U.S.*, 40–41. Another form of dominant power dissatisfaction could be fueled by disagreement, not with the current but with the future international order that one expects the rising power to create. Rauch, *Das Konzept*, 232.

31. Stanley R. Sloan, “US Perspectives on NATO’s Future,” *International Affairs* 71, no. 2 (April 1995): 221. See also Michael Mandelbaum, *The Frugal Superpower: America’s Global Leadership in a Cash-Strapped Era*, 1st ed (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010).

32. Including power transitions in the broader sense would boost the total set of constellations to 16. I have decided, however, to focus on power transitions in the narrower sense for the rest of this article.