Known Unknowns: Power shift, Uncertainty, and War

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Presentation Outline

-Argument overview and thesis

-Theory behind the research model

-Research Findings and conclusions

-Article Interpretation and questions

Argument Overview

- Power shifts is "the result of a state's investment in military capabilities that have delayed return and then determine when they trigger preventative wars" (Debs and Monterio, 2).
- There are two main problems in power shift studies
    a. Scholarship conceptualizes them are exogenous, but large rapid shifts are endogenous
    b. Studies looking at endogenous power shifts fail to acknowledge time lag in state decision making

Argument Overview: Wars and Investments

- Preventative wars do not occur when
  - When military capabilities are transparent
  - Small shifts in power occur
- Large shifts could but the threat of war usually acts as a deterrent against them.
- War is produced when endrogenous power shifts produce have uncertainty about "military investment decisions" (Debs and Monterio, 2).

Argument Overview

Their Thesis:

- Endogenous cases results in preventative wars only if there is uncertainty involved
- When power shifts are endogenous commitment and information problems lead to war
- Preventative wars can occur against targets even when they're not investing in military power
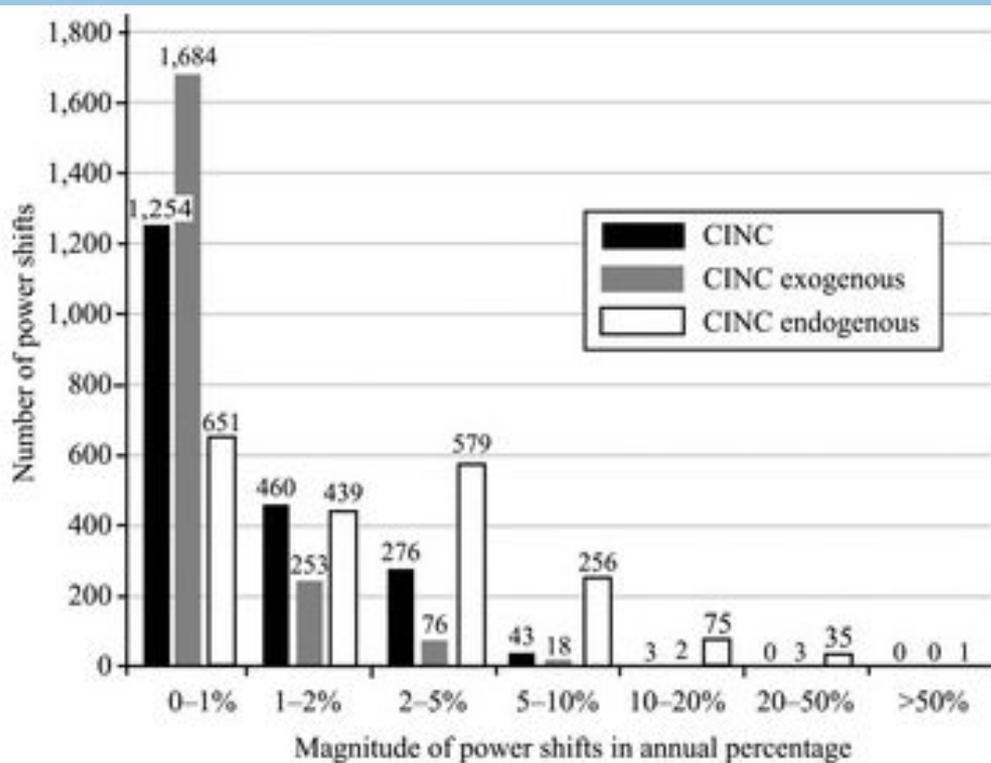
Theory and Literature

-Power theorists argue that power shifts result from differential rates of economic growth (Debs and Monterio, 3).

-Desires of the rising state clash with those of the declining state and this transition is what power theorists argue that produces war.

However, power transition theorists have reached a stalemate and left several unanswered questions in their findings.

Theory and Literature

-It is not exogenous changes that produce power shifts but changes in relative military power

- States become a target of preventative war between the moment it is suspected of making a military investment and the moment that investment comes to fruition

-The main focus of their theory is the strategic interaction between a state determining whether to invest in their military capabilities and a deterring state considering whether to halt that investment.

Number of power shifts (y-axis) vs. Magnitude of power shifts in annual percentage (x-axis)

Legend:
- CINC (black)
- CINC exogenous (gray)
- CINC endogenous (white)

Magnitude	CINC	CINC exogenous	CINC endogenous
0–1%	1,254	1,684	651
1–2%	460	253	439
2–5%	276	76	579
5–10%	43	18	256
10–20%	3	2	75
20–50%	0	3	35
>50%	0	0	1

Research Model

- Their model looks are the interactions between states T "target" and D "deterrer"
  - T decides to militarize
  - D decides to launch preventative war
- Both states face two problems in their decision making
  - Commitment problems
  - Information problems
- After signals are sent D decides where to declare war or come to a peaceful division solution
  - T can then either decide to accept or reject their offer.
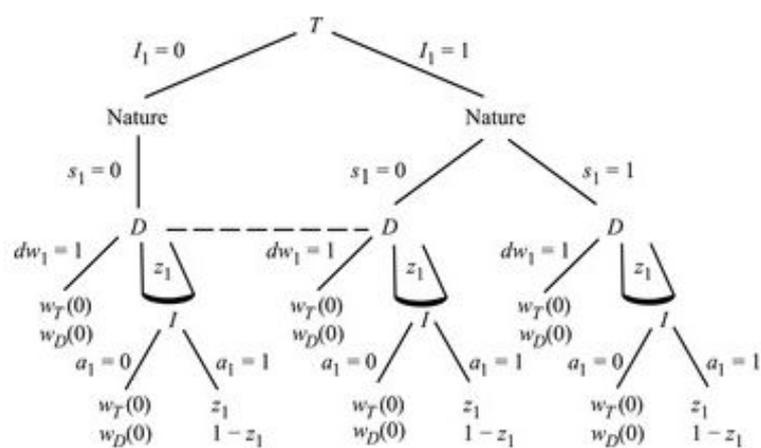 - If T rejects the process enters a second round phase

FIGURE 2. Game tree, period 1

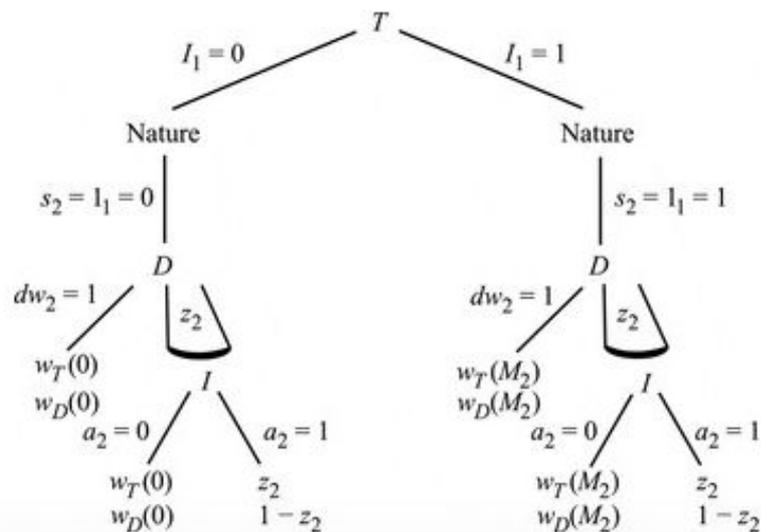**FIGURE 3.** Game tree, period 2

Solving the game

Proposition 1: in period 2 there is always peace when D offers $Z2^*=Wt(M2)$ and T accepts any $Z2 \geq Wt(M2)$

Proposition 2: In period 1, there is always peace if the effect of militarization is smaller than the cost of preventative war or smaller than the cost of investment

Proposition 3: Consider period 1 and assume that the effect of militarization is greater than the cost of a preventive war and greater than the cost of investment

- ● Theorem 1: when shifts in the balance of power are endogenous, commitment problems may cause war only if information problems are present

If the signal is sufficiently informative, that is,

$$(1 - p_s)\delta[w_T(1) - w_T(0)] \leq k$$

then peace prevails.

If the signal is not sufficiently informative, that is, condition (2) fails, then T militarizes with the following probability:

$$q^* = \frac{1}{p_s + (1 - p_s)\dfrac{\delta[w_T(1) - w_T(0)]}{1 - w_T(0) - w_D(0)}}$$

After $s_1 = 1$, preventive war occurs. After $s_1 = 0$, peace prevails with the following probability:

$$r^* = \frac{k}{(1 - p_s)\delta[w_T(1) - w_T(0)]}$$

and preventive war occurs with probability $1 - r^*$.

Model Cont.

- Due to the impact that information problems have on the model they've concluded that
  - The greater the informativeness of the signal is
    - The more stringent become the conditions under which these wars occur with + probability
      - And if these such conditions are met
        - The smaller is the probability for preventative war
        - The smaller is the share of preventative wars that are mistaken

Information Horizon Game

Investigates

1. Is war avoidable when states are engaged in an ongoing relationship?
2. How does the likelihood of war depend on its effectiveness?

Conclusion: the greater the effectiveness of a preventative war is

The more stringent become the conditions under which these wars occur with + probability

- And if these such conditions are met
  - The smaller is the probability for preventative war
  - The greater is the share of preventative wars that are mistaken

2003 US Invasion of Iraq

How does this apply to real life events and not just a model?

- What it illuminates in the US Iraq invasion:
    - The smaller magnitude of fighting a preventative war instead of deposing Saddam Husssein
    - 9/11 terrorist attacks role on the wars timing
    - The inability to eradicate uncertainty on Iraq's nuclear program status was essential to the breakdown of peace
    - Accounts for why the US set its sights on Iraq and not North Korea

Research Cont.: Conculsions

-militarization efforts can go undetected

-information problems play a crucial role in providing a rationalist explaination for war

-large and rapid power shifts typically result from a state's decision to militarize

-Mistaken preventative wars are more likely under conditions of power preponderance, such as unpopular international systems

-A state, democratic or not, is more likely to launce a preventative war when the net effect of militarization is high

Article Questions and Concerns

- What happens when a deterring states knows the military capabilities of another country but still decides to launch a preventative war
  - Done so to obtain what resources the target state may already have if they're weak enough to be taken by the deterrer
- How does the actions of additional actors involved in the conflict affect these results?
  - Aka intervention from ally nations or the UN
- How do these findings change if both states are rising or declining? Do the findings still hold true in these such instances?