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Why Don't Voters Make Foreign Policy?

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Benjamin Friedman [puzzles](#) over the gap between public opinion and policy: In the latest edition of *Political Science Quarterly*, Joshua Busby and Jonathan Monten [show](#) that Republican elites have long been more prone than Republican voters to favor high defense spending and long-term alliances. One explanation for this democracy deficit is what Busby and Monten call “dual slack,” the absence of restraint that either voters or international politics put on U.S. defense policy. Foreign-policy issues tend to rank low among voters’ concerns and to contribute little to their voting decisions. So politicians have little incentive to cater to voters’ foreign-policy views. They are relatively free to adopt principled (undemocratic) stances. And with few rivals restricting U.S. military deployments, foreign-policy makers can [indulge](#) ideological ambition and fancy.