

The Tea Party And Defense Spending

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Over at Cato, a [sobering](#) assessment:

Since the tea party took off last year, pundits have predicted that its anti-spending zealots would eventually target the Pentagon... The evidence that the new Republicans will challenge defense spending is slight... There is no "isolationist" wing of the GOP. Of the Republicans' 47 senators and 242 representatives, only 5 percent (15 members) expressed support for cutting defense spending. Adding those in the "ambiguously for" category makes it 13 percent. Forty-one percent are against cutting defense spending; with those ambiguously against, it's 60 percent.

The tea party is not mellowing Republican militarism. If it were, freshman Republicans, who mostly proclaim allegiance to the movement, should be more dovish than the rest. That's not the case. Five of the 101 Republican freshmen and 10 of the 184 who aren't newcomers support cutting defense spending. That's about 5 percent of each group.

Skepticism about foreign wars and current defense spending is much more pronounced among voting Republicans than the representatives they elect. But the conservative movement seems cool with this particular elite, Inside-the-Beltway consensus. To be fair, the ideological market for bellicosity in foreign affairs subsidizes some top-notch magazine features at *The Weekly Standard*. Stripped of foreign policy and Palin it's one of my favorite publications! It seems like *National Review* could differentiate itself and justify its position as flagship publication of conservatism by hosting the strongest voices on all sides of this question.

Why hasn't that happened? Or have I missed some NR coverage on the subject? It would be rivetting to see Daniel Larison, Michael Brendan Dougherty and Andrew Bacevitch square off against Victor Davis Hanson and Andy McCarthy. I honestly think NR's readership would enjoy that debate, and although I assume I'm being naive in not understanding why it won't happen, I don't actually understand why it won't.