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Republican Party Continues as Party of Foreign Intervention

[Brian Doherty](#) | January 24, 2011

There's been talk of hints of possible hopeful signs that just maybe perhaps the Republican Party could conceivably be ready to look the Pentagon and the foreign policy establishment square in the eyes in pursuit of fiscal sanity. Cato's Benjamin Friedman finds that doesn't seem likely:

The Cato Institute has scored the positions of House and Senate Republicans on the war in Afghanistan and defense spending, which are a good proxy for general foreign-policy views. We examined members' statements, websites, and votes....

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.

Only 10 Republicans, or 4 percent, are against the war in Afghanistan, and none are senators. Including the skeptical members, 10 percent are somewhat antiwar. Eighty percent support the war.

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.

No new Republican opposes the war in Afghanistan outright. Including skeptics, 9 percent of freshmen and 11 percent of the rest are against the war.

One possible silver lining: the newer Republicans are less likely to have any clear-cut position on these foreign policy matters:

Veteran Republicans are more likely to be in the clearly "against cuts" and "for the war"

categories; freshmen are more likely to be ambiguous or have no position. This ambiguity is a silver lining for advocates of military restraint: Many tea-party Republicans were elected without saying much about foreign policy and may yet emerge as non-interventionists.