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Published on *The National Interest* (<http://nationalinterest.org>)

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## APSA Annual Meeting Highlights, September 2, 2010

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| [Justin Logan](#)<sup>[2]</sup>

As mentioned in this space previously, *Skeptics* authors are attending the APSA Annual Meeting that is taking place here in Washington. Also as promised, a few notes from the panels I attended yesterday.

First, the most policy-relevant panel I attended focused on the ongoing debate over Charles Kupchan and Peter Trubowitz's 2007 International Security article, "Dead Center."<sup>[3]</sup> [.pdf] In that piece, Kupchan and Trubowitz rue the demise of liberal internationalism in U.S. foreign policy and advocate in its place what they term "selective engagement," but I read it more as a significant withdrawal from international politics as compared with the past 20 years. In the current *International Security*, [Stephen Chaudoin](#), [Helen V. Milner](#), and [Dustin H. Tingley](#), all from Princeton University, respond<sup>[4]</sup> by saying that the patient is still alive and should not be buried.

CMT (as they have been referred to in this exchange) mention in their piece that there is a fundamental problem with the debate itself: namely, that "defining liberal internationalism is a difficult task." Understandably, they adopt as a definition John Ikenberry's most recent pronouncements on the subject, which entail "two features of a foreign policy: first, the country engages with others as opposed to being isolationist; and second, it pursues an agenda that involves promoting [in Ikenberry's words] 'open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, progressive change, collective problem solving, shared sovereignty, and the rule of law.'"

However, like the proverbial drunken man looking for his lost keys under the streetlamp because it is easier to see there, they proceed to accept Kupchan and Trubowitz's measure of liberal internationalism—bipartisanship in Congress—in part because it is easier to measure. Thus, by their own admission, "[t]he evidence does not directly test the degree of liberal internationalism involved in a policy. Instead, like the Kupchan and Trubowitz article, [their piece] focuses on bipartisanship in foreign policy."

Well. Then why not disavow the misleading term “liberal internationalism” if all that is being discussed is bipartisanship in Congress? (I would note as an aside that Congress itself is significantly less important in the formation of U.S. foreign policy than it was during the heyday of liberal internationalism to which all authors in the exchange frequently refer: the tenures of FDR and Harry Truman.)

So I found that panel to be a bit ethereal, or even surreal, considering the rather frivolously defined independent variable.

On a brighter “research question that I wish I’d thought of asking” note, my own paper was presented on [a panel yesterday](#) <sup>[5]</sup> alongside Rachel M. Stein of Stanford University, whose paper was titled “Values and Violence: Are Southerners More Likely to Support War?” She answered in the affirmative, in an excellent and provocative paper. Sure to pique interest.

More to come

More by

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