

ACTIVITY REPORT



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Association of Canadian Studies (ACSUS) Biennial Conference

Reflections from Attending ACSUS

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From November 13 until November 16, 2019, Dr. Andrew Chater attended the ACSUS Biennial Conference in Montreal, Quebec, as a NAADSN representative. This report does not present a thorough summary of ACSUS, but rather a account of events relevant to NAADSN members, as well as research directions.

ACSUS is a multidisciplinary academic organization of researchers examining the broad area of “Canadian studies,” from Canada, the United States and beyond. It publishes the journal *American Review of Canadian Studies* and organizes a biennial conference for researchers to share new projects. In 2019, the conference presented four panels in the area of Arctic studies: “Unique Voice of the Inuit in Policy Development,” “Managing Northern Opportunities: Challenges and Opportunities,” “Inuit Governance and Diplomacy” and “Northern Economies and International Relations,” along with numerous panels about Canadian security, defence and foreign policy. In this report, I summarize the Arctic panels and two other panels of note from the conference, including a keynote address from Kim Richard Nossal and a roundtable on a new publication titled *The Politics of War*.

Unique Voice of the Inuit in Policy Development

The goal of this session was to examine the voice of the Inuit in developing policy for the North. A theme was the right that Inuit and other Indigenous peoples have to participate in research that affects their interests. Their participation changes the focus of the research and influences the perspective that emerges. Sara Breitreutz (Concordia University) discussed a community radio program in Montreal called Nipivut that broadcasts in Inuktitut with information relevant to the Montreal Inuit community. Mark K. Watson (Concordia University) discussed the recent Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami *National Inuit Strategy on Research*, which conceptualizes the Inuit as rights holders in research, as opposed to stakeholders. Max Showalter (University of Washington) provided a critical analysis of the Inuit role in defining environmental security. I served as a chair for this session. A key question emerging from the session relevant to NAADSN to frame an array of potential research projects is: How can we, as researchers based in southern Canada, incorporate Inuit, Indigenous or Northern perspectives into research on topics such as NORAD modernization and defence?

Managing Northern Opportunities: Challenges and Opportunities

This session examined issues around border policy in the North. A theme was that the Arctic region presents unique challenges in terms of border control, personnel, access, purpose and function. Heather Nicol (Trent University) discussed the unique nature of Arctic border crossings as distinct from southern border crossings. Mike Perry (Trent University) argued that human trafficking is a very pressing human security issue in the Arctic. Karen Everett (Université Laval) advocated for enhanced border management in the Arctic. Two research questions relevant to NAADSN based on this session are: What measures are necessary to enhance the security of Canada's Arctic borders? What are the implications of current Arctic border security mechanisms?

Inuit Governance and Diplomacy

This session examined trends in Arctic governance with a special attention to Indigenous peoples. A common theme in this session was the recent breakdown of great power relations in the Arctic region. I participated as a contributor to this session, presenting research about the multi-faceted set of interests motivating Russian foreign policy in the Arctic. Thierry Rodon (Université Laval) discussed the Inuit as key diplomatic actors. Mark K. Watson (Concordia University), reading a paper by Barry Zellen (Center for Arctic Study and Policy, United States Coast Guard Academy) discussed Westphalian interest in the Arctic, backed by a new spirit of co-operation. Two research questions relevant to NAADSN based on this session is: What are the implications of Inuit diplomacy on Canada's military defence policy and NORAD modernization? Has the era of great power rivalry returned to the Arctic, or will co-operation defuse rivalry?

Northern Economies and International Relations

Lawrence D. Taylor (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte) presented a history of development of the hovercraft, which have existed since the 1960s. It appears that hovercraft have great potential to meet transportation needs with government support and investment, including in the Arctic region. A research question from this session is: Can hovercraft enhance Canada's defence capabilities in the Arctic region?

Keynote Address: "Back to the Past? Canada and a Not-So-New World"

Kim Richard Nossal (Queen's University) discussed the pressing great power security issues in the world today, such as the rise of China, Russia's antagonism, the rise of nationalism, Brexit, skepticism of multilateralism and general weariness of military engagement. He argued that the election of President Donald Trump is a symptom of these trends, not the cause. He re-asserted Lloyd Axworthy's thesis that we have entered a not-so new world order. President Trump is ceding the United States' leadership in world affairs, which affects Canada. The United States is increasingly willing to abandon its longstanding commitments. Canada cannot count on the United States as it did in the past. Canada may find itself to a similar situation that it found itself in during the interwar period, caught between an isolationist United States and a diminished Britain. He

predicted that, ultimately, Canada would remain deeply rooted in North America. He concluded, “We Canadians need to start having a conversation about how to navigate this not-so new world.” Two research questions relevant to NAADSN based on this session are: What does Canada need to do to address its security needs with a less-committed United States? Is it possible for Canada to “diversify” its security reliance and assert itself more on the world stage?

Roundtable: “The Politics of War”

The panelists (Jean-Francois Belanger, Yale University; Stéphane Roussel, École Nationale D’administration Publique; Kim Richard Nossal, Queen’s University; Jean-Christophe Boucher, University of Calgary) discussed a new book by Kim Richard Nossal and Jean-Francois Belanger, *The Politics of War: Canada’s Afghanistan Mission, 2001–14*. Canadians are less supportive of war compared today to moments in the past. A research question relevant to NAADSN based on this session is: What are the implications of public attitudes for war on defence spending, or the potential for future defence spending?

Conclusion

This report presents only a small sampling of panels and discussions at ACSUS. The conference’s security programming highlighted the increasing complexity of global affairs, marked by the return of Cold War rivalries yet impacted by factors such as Indigenous activism, public opinion, issues such as climate change and the contemporary rise of nationalism. The Trump Administration was a persistent theme, which seeks to assert American power on the world stage while simultaneously pulling back from enduring relationships. Here are three additional research questions to consider emerging from ACSUS workshops: What are the potential unintended consequences of NORAD modernization? How will it affect communities, peoples and Canada’s Arctic allies? How can Canada harness its cultural diplomacy to help reach its security and defence needs?