

Fellow's Presentation- MAKAIAS

Topic: **From Geopolitics of Frozen Conflicts to Geo-Narcotics of 'Poppy-Dollar' Crime: Grey Zones, Shadow Economies and Narco-Trafficking in Post-Soviet Eurasian Security Complex**

Presenter: **Antara Mitra**, Fellow, MAKAIAS

External Expert: **Prof. Hari Vasudevan**, University of Calcutta

Date: **22.06.2012** Time: **3.30 pm**

Venue: **Azad Bhavan, Salt Lake**

Rapporteur: **Anwasha Ghosh**, Researcher, MAKAIAS

Antara Mitra's presentation addressed the 'new security reality' in the post Communist Eurasian and trans-Caucasus 'space' which she sees as a result of interplay between internal and external, 'soft' and 'hard' threats arising out of an increasingly indivisible, diffused and convergent security order of import-export cycle of transversal threats across national borders. She used the term 'Eurasian security complex' encompassing a vast political sphere with numerous convergent and overlapping concentric cycles of power in the region and mini-complexes as opposed to a strictly geographical area. Mitra also attempted to evaluate threat dimensions of narcotics-trafficking within the region and identified a threat continuum between ethno-territorial conflicts, transnational criminal activities and terrorism. The presenter began by highlighting the convergent strategic space and security concerns of the Caucasus and Eurasian region, most of which have been inherited as a part of a common Soviet legacy. Mitra identified regions like Kyrgyz-Tajik, Tajik-Afghan or Kyrgyz-Kazakh cross-border zones as 'grey zones' or 'no go zones' having virtually slipped under illegal tutelage of warlords, mafia clans and self-proclaimed, unregistered authorities accountable to no one. Contextualizing the Eurasian and Caucasian security complex with it, the presentation probed into the evolving dynamics of narcotics-trafficking - one of the most serious security concerns in the region. It elaborated how narco-trafficking intimately relates, in terms of security continuum, with other existential threats of regional conflicts, illegal migration, terrorism and armed violence. She also dealt with conceptually non-traditional, 'soft' security issues which are increasingly assuming a 'hard' dimension as a result of regular deployment of violence and armed forces. By analyzing the emerging linkages between organized crime and terrorist insurgency in the post 9/11 environment, she spoke on the shift from state-sponsored to state-induced ideological mobilization of radicalism to armed mobilization of radicalism by the private-interest driven non-state actors in the post Cold War world. She hinted at some structural realignment that occurred in the narcotics trafficking in this post-Soviet space which have structurally induced greater narco activity in and through the Caucasus and the Central Asian region.

Discussion Session

Prof Hari Vasudevan was particularly interested in the conclusion of the presenter's study. She said that she intends to draw a diagram, which shows points of convergence between sub mafia and terrorist organizations in the region and points at how they communicate, cooperate and merge with each other to create the larger concept of "narco-terrorism". He wanted the presenter to identify the location of the 'frozen conflict zones' like Sukhumi and others, which she had repeatedly mentioned in her presentation. Since the presentation extensively dealt with the problems of narcotics in the Caucasus and the Russian side of the region, Prof. Vasudevan wanted to know about the arrangements made or steps taken in order to address the problems. To which the presenter replied that there has been hardly any involvement of the State and even if there had been any attempts, those were essentially on paper and not implemented in a practical sense. Following her response he wanted to know about the official arrangements of the 'states' in the region and also enquired about how Moscow was dealing with the problems of control in the region. Identifying three regions - *Qadiri Gorge, Pankisi Gorge and South Ossetia* as 'Proto-Colombian Areas' and essentially as dumping ground of narcotics in the region, Prof. Vasudevan was interested to know about the drug lords in the region. Finally he questioned if there had been any follow up on the 2002 Report on Caucasus Region, which was mentioned in the paper circulated for this presentation.

A few pertinent questions and observations came up during the extended discussion session of Ms. Antara Mitra's presentation, some of which are as follows:

- Questions were raised about the literature which the Mujahideen groups in the region produced.
- Questions about the structure of the organizations and the networks active in the region also came up.
- The 'ideologies' these groups adhere to was also discussed and questions were raised about whether Friday Sermons played any role in propagating ideas and if so, what was the pattern of these preachings.
- Discussion took place on terms like 'crime economy'.
- Questions were raised on the basic argument of the paper circulated for presentation.
- Terms used during the presentation like 'post cold war containment' on the part of anti Russian elements were questioned including how far it was a uni-polar concept or one way traffic.
- How far the covert actions are capable of breaking a defined system of containment was also discussed.

To end, Professor Vasudevan elaborated on the efforts under taken by United States in the form of *Trialism, SU(U)AM* and *Community of Black Sea States*, which attempted to limit Russian presence in Central Asian Region.