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Dawood Azami

"Ideology versus Profit: Drugs and Insurgencies in Afghanistan and Colombia"

Monday, April 2, 2012

Noon

Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

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Dawood Azami is a visiting scholar and an award winning broadcast journalist working for the BBC World Service in London. He specializes in politics, security, and culture in Central and South Asia and the Middle East.

Until recently, Azami was the BBC World Service bureau chief and editor in Kabul, Afghanistan (2010-11). He has been working with the BBC in London since 1998: first as producer, then as senior producer/desk editor. He is also a visiting lecturer at the University of Westminster (London), and taught as a visiting scholar at The Ohio State University in 2006 and 2009.

Azami was selected as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2011. He has won numerous awards, including the BBC Global Reith Award for Outstanding Contribution in 2009 and the first Allama Tarzai Award (Father of journalism in Afghanistan) in 2010.

Azami holds three bachelor's and three master's degrees in science (zoology and parasitology), law and international relations, and diplomacy. He speaks five languages (Pashto, Dari/Persian, Urdu/Hindi, and English) and has a working knowledge of Arabic and Turkish. He writes poems and short stories in three languages.

Synopsis

Afghanistan and Colombia are two major drug-producing countries experiencing protracted and bloody armed conflicts which have claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people. Colombia's leftist



Dawood Azami
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rebels, FARC, and the Taliban in Afghanistan are sophisticated insurgency movements with ideologically dominated political agendas. However, there are signs that FARC's socialist ideology and the Taliban's ideology -- a mixture of nationalism and religious fundamentalism -- are in decline with both groups increasingly relying on narcotics to fund their violence.

Militant groups and organized crime live in symbiosis with each other in many parts of the world. FARC's links with drug trade are well established with profits from the drug trade and trafficking. Meanwhile, Taliban's links to the drug trade are increasingly becoming clear. Comparisons are now being drawn between the Taliban movement in Afghanistan and other belligerent groups with links to drug production and trafficking. Some Afghan officials and members of international community in Afghanistan have expressed their concerns about the possible "FARCification" of the Taliban.

While describing motivations, recruitment and mobilization of insurgents in Afghanistan and Colombia, Dawood Azami -- visiting scholar and award-winning broadcast journalist -- assesses the intensity of ideology and compares it with the groups' focus on power accumulation and profits. He analyzes the impact of the groups' involvement in the drug trade on their physical resources, political capital and ideology.

This event is sponsored by the [Middle East Studies Center](#) and the [Center for Latin American Studies](#). Please note that lunch will not be provided.

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