

## **Will Central Asia Have Another “Second Chance?”**

With: Martha Brill Olcott, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Discussants: Robert Kaiser, *The Washington Post*, and Stephen Sestanovich, Council on Foreign Relations

Moderator: Jessica T. Mathews, President, Carnegie Endowment

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JESSICA MATHEWS: (In progress) – the publication event for Martha Olcott’s latest book, “Central Asia’s Second Chance.”

I am just going to introduce, Martha, the topic for today and our two wonderful commentators so that then the program can go. And I won’t interrupt the flow afterwards. Martha Olcott, I think everybody in the room knows I believe, is a Senior Associate here at Carnegie and a leading specialist in the United States, indeed in the West on Central Asia, the Caucasus and security issues in the Caspian region generally.

She has studied the region and traveled extensively there for 25 years. She also, in addition to her work here, directs the Program on Religion, Society, and Security at the Carnegie Moscow Center, and works on the issues of Islam and related tensions in the former Soviet space with her colleagues there in Moscow. Before coming to Carnegie she was a professor at Colgate and an advisor to Secretary Eagleburger on this region, among many other things.

This latest book is a very important look at the look-back at the first decade of Central Asian independence, and it’s disappointment for those who expected a smoother transition from Soviet republics to independent states with market economies and democratic systems. So far the Soviet-era leaders who are still in place have been far more interested in exploiting state resources and in political control than in either economic or political reform.

Martha Olcott has in this book offered a review of the developments in each country. And she argues that in the aftermath of 9/11, a very important opportunity to reshape the trajectory of development in the region was lost both by the states themselves and by the international community. She offers an analysis that concludes with a fairly I think grim warning of the prospect of new failed states in the region, and that that prospect is probably greater today than it was before 9/11.

And she highlights the deep contradiction that runs through U.S. policy in the region, where partnerships with anti-democratic regimes create long-term security risks for the United States. And certainly one of the issues that I would love to hear about is whether we are making the same mistake in the region as we made for many years in the Middle East.

I won’t take any more time because I will let Martha talk about the book. Let me just briefly introduce Steve Sestanovich and Bob Kaiser. Steve is Kennan Senior Fellow for Russian and Eurasian Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and professor in the practice of international diplomacy at Columbia University.

His career has encompassed work on Capitol Hill and in the administration in both the State Department and the National Security Council, including position as Ambassador-at-large and Special Advisor to the secretary for the newly independent states for four years at the end of the Clinton administration. He also, we’re very proud

to say, was Vice President for Russian-Eurasian Affairs at the Carnegie Endowment in the 1990s, and is a well-known expert on Russia and the region.

Bob Kaiser is an Associate Editor and Senior Correspondent at *The Washington Post*, where he has been since 1963. He has served as foreign correspondent in London and Saigon, as well as in Moscow in the early-'70s. He is the author or co-author of six books, many of them on Russia, and most recently, in 2002 of the *News About the News: American Journalism in Peril*. But he is, like Steve, a real expert on this region. And we are very thankful for both of them for being with us.

So, Martha, we look forward to –

MARTHA OLCOTT: Thank you. Thank you, Jessica, for your kind words. Thank you all for coming. And thank you especially Steve and Bob for agreeing to come today to talk on this panel with me.

I don't want to talk for too long. I want to leave plenty of time for questions, and I don't want to give up the juicy parts of the plot of my book. I'm just teasing – (laughs) – do want you people to read it because that was part of why I wrote it, was to get people like you to read it.

I think Jessica is right, you know, that the book has a sad ending. You know, I'll give you that – (laughs) – part of the plot away. And for me that is really – it's a very sad thing. I realized on my last trip to the region, which was in June, and I go back again in a few weeks, that some of the young Kazakhs that were guiding me around weren't born when I first started traveling to Central Asia.

So I have really spent my whole adult life working in this region and I think honestly care about the outcomes there as much as anybody who was born there. So for me it really is a – it's a sad book but I see things that are hopeful in it.

So I just want to give you kind of an introduction to the argument and to where I am today. And then we'll have I hope lots of time after the presentations for questions on specific things like Jessica is wanting me.

Really my argument in the book is that the Central Asia states in their short 15-year history of independence – and the leaders always tell us how little that was, reminding us that we have nearly 300 years of independence, but 200 change – that they face three waves of developmental crises, and that is really a lot to have to go through in 15 years. The book describes the first-two crises, first-two waves of crises or opportunities and sets the stage for understanding the third, which is where we are today. And that is really what I will share with you briefly.

Okay, let me briefly explain what these are. The first crisis is really obvious. It's the crisis of independence, the period of independence of these states. And the first part of the book really describes where the world was up until September 11<sup>th</sup>. I think that to

understand the period of independence and what went right or wrong in this period – that is really the period of 1991, '92, to about '95, '96, which is where I see there is a real opportunity for influencing developments and for these states to get it right.

This was really a period when their inexperience and the inexperience of the international community with this region I think really did lead to false starts and really a lack of ability of these states to get it right. I mean, I think that this was really the period in which we had the maximum opportunity for influencing political institution building and economic choices. Only two of the states in the region, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, engaged in ambitious macroeconomic reforms in this period. The rest opted not to.

I think that really the tragedy of this period, if there was one – and I'm not trying to build a model of doom and gloom about it – was that simply independence came very quickly to these states and it really wasn't a priority of anybody to cope with their independence. There were crises that were much greater, that preoccupied the West: the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. And the implosion that was still going on in the former Yugoslavia just took away intention that could have gone to the former states of the Soviet Union.

And by the time the West developed the expertise at the international-financial-institution level and the assistance-delivery level to begin to really understand what the conditions were on the ground and how you might begin to address it. By then I think the Central Asian states had already developed a lot of what I would call bad habits that they had institutionalized. They had made choices and it would have been very difficult to root them from these choices by the time we fully understood what was going on.

I mean, leaving aside something I talked about in the book, whether there was ever the actual – whether we ever spent enough money to deal with this. That really, this whole question of bad habits and trying to deal with them before they become institutionalized and what it takes to get these states, to incentivize these states, to change their policy is really the theme of not this book so much – I mean, I go through it, but it's really what *Kazakhstan's Unfulfilled Promise* is about. I sort of try to take the model I developed there and use it in the other states.

But what I argue in the book and what I argued in the Kazakh book is that there are times in which outside actors are potentially much more effective than others. And you really – you have moments of intervention where you're – you have moments in which your intervention is much more likely to be successful, where states are really much more suggestible to influence from outside actors. And I argue in Kazakhstan that was in the mid-'90s.

Now, that is really – the generating point of the book really was the belief that after September 11<sup>th</sup> there was a second chance. I mean, that is the second developmental moments, if you would like. And that is really what caused me to write the book. So by the time I get through chapter three, or when you get through chapter three, you'll see

that that is what the rest of the book really deals with, is how this was in fact another moment.

What September 11<sup>th</sup> seem to do – and argue that throughout the book – is it looked for a while like the international community would reengage in the region, would engage again with – hopefully with new ideas and with a lot more money, or with the best of all possible worlds, a combination of new ideas and more money.

And that what September 11<sup>th</sup> posed for the region was not a clean page, but at least the prospect that more resources would allow the region's leaders to reexamine some of their earlier policy choices in an atmosphere without them having to engage in mea culpa; that we wouldn't demand that they would say they were wrong; that we were offering we were offering them this new strategic partnership that allowed them in theory to begin to reexamine some of the choices that they had made.

So we weren't doing it with a club; we weren't doing it with a set of positive incentives, which in my mind, when you have already institutional choices made, is a maximum – is the maximum opportunity for successful engagement.

I argue in the book, and I will argue until I'm blue in the face, that Uzbekistan was really at the center of the – both of the crises and of the opportunity, that this was the state in which we had the – this was the state in which it was most important to get the region to begin to reconsider its economic and political decisionmaking models, which I think by 2001, it was already clear we're pushing the regime into crisis.

But I also argue in the book that this was an opportunity for more aggressive engagement with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, more aggressive – I mean, that they were receptive to it and that there was more that could have been gained from the way we engaged with these two states, especially if security interests were not the driver.

And, again, I talk – anybody interested in Kyrgyzstan, we can go talk about it here. I talk about – in both Uzbekistan and in Kyrgyzstan I am pretty explicit about how it might have been done more successfully. To say it could have been done better means I'm being critical. I mean, the U.S. – the driver of the U.S. was a series of choices

I mean, U.S. policymakers, of whom Steve was one, had a whole host of complicated agendas when they approached this region. He didn't have to approach it in this period but he did approach it before. And one of the things that I think we lose side of is the way you throw all of the balls up in the air. And Central Asia is not the driver for deciding how you throw them up.

But I still feel fairly strongly, and I argue in the book that the lack – because of the lack of imagination of policymakers – and I'm really much more talking about at the developmental level – and the fact that substantial new resources were not brought to bear in the region, we really did not succeed in changing the vectors of development in these three states.

I would think that Turkmenistan was hopeless and that we just didn't have leavers and in Kazakhstan we had already lost the prime opportunity for most effective engagement. I mean, that doesn't mean you can't shape it but this wasn't the same opportunity in those three states, in those two states.

What we did instead – and when you make this argument in front of U.S. – you know, people who make decisions about foreign policy allocation, they talk about how many dollars they increased. But in putting together my notes today, I mean, it's like our increases were evolutionary and not revolutionary. And this is a pun how Nazarbayev always defends democratic change, and Kazakhstan has to be evolutionary and not revolutionary.

But in fact, we made that same kind of mistake that we make fun of. We went about trying to get big changes in how these regimes made choices using what really were small increments of increases in financial assistance. Partly the region suffered from a view in the developmental community that more money thrown into corrupt regimes just leads to more corrupt outcomes.

My view always is that there is a mediating point, that if you give people – that a percentage – you have environments in which a percentage is going to be skimmed off the top, not everything off the top. I mean, there are regimes in which everything is still and in those you can't put foreign assistance in.

But my view is in Central Asia there could have been strategies in which, yes, there would have been corruption, but there would have been not just trickle down but substantial allocation of project money for the projects they were supposed to go. And, again, this is something we can debate. But I think it's a kind of facile answer on the part of the IFA to say you can't put money into corrupt settings.

So the end result is by the time you get to the second Bush administration, there has been a considerable amount of backpedaling in the region. I mean, so instead of the region moving forward to move more democratic and more market-oriented, the market-oriented states became more market-oriented, but still more corrupt economically and the non-market oriented states just became more corrupt and less democratic.

The book sets up looking at the third wave, which is the third set of developmental crisis, which is really now, when these regimes face the crisis of transition. And I'll talk about that for a couple of minutes before I stop.

When the book was going to press Akayev was ousted. He was ousted when we were – prior to page proofs but when we were already through the final draft. (Laughs.) His ouster is fully integrated into the book because we were two weeks late producing it and I really should thank the publication staff for having done a terrific job coping with the instability of Central Asia – (laughter) – and allowing me through this crisis. I see

them in the back and they really do deserve, like, you know, without them it couldn't have happened.

So the Kyrgyz revolution is built it and Andijan really happened while we were in page proofs. And so it is referred to. But when you read the book, you will see that it is as if we knew what was happening, I mean, because it really does lay the – you know, it's kind of all there to build these crises.

That is why I think – and again, as we have all gone through this sort of euphoria of talking about these revolutions of color in the past year, I have more trouble being euphoric about anything. Anybody who has known me more than three weeks knows I have trouble being euphoric. But I have particular trouble being euphoric about these revolutions of color because to me they really are both incomplete and also marking the developmental crisis that we have all been talking about for years.

And that takes me – that really is this third crisis that we're on the verge of for this region. And that is really the time of transition that we have talked about. We have all, since I met Steve, you know, talking about these times of transitions that they independent states are going to have, these crisis of dealing with transition.

Transition is not simply a change of regime or bringing in a new elite or even bringing in young people. It is bringing – it is – it's a transformation of the Soviet-era mentality to a whole new way of viewing the world and doing business and that hasn't occurred anywhere. These revolutions of color are really critical as they are a signal that the population has been prepared for – it has become ready for political transition well before the elite is ready for them. I mean, you know, it's like the population is demanding transition and the elite isn't capable or competent of managing those transitions.

But the kind of – to say something about the kinds of crises, the reasons why these transition crises are so dangerous or stressful potentially for these states is for two reasons. First, because there is a lack of institutionalization for political change – I mean, you don't have in any place an institutionalization of how you transfer power. Even in Kyrgyzstan, which has now had a presidential election that has sort of met somebody's norms that you – it came about out of sequence because the president was forced to resign.

That is true with the other revolutions of color as well, and we have not institutionalized what will constitute success in any of these places. How will the population judge whether the leader has been successful? Because none of these political crises came through an institutionalized – because all of these transfers of power were done out of – were non-constitutional at least in their onset. The leaders may have behaved non-constitutionally, but the transfers of power also were created by outside-of-constitutional – an outside-of-constitutional beginning.

That means that there is no mechanism yet in place until these leaders that came to power through these revolutions of cover – until they have been succeeded by leaders through political – through normal political process, we will not have a population that has necessarily internalized how you transfer power, and I think that is really critical.

The other big danger is obviously the unresolved developmental crises in these regimes. So in all of these countries to a greater or lesser extent, the political, the economic and social crises that began with a period of development have not been resolved. As I detail in the book, you can't tar everybody with the same brush. Some of these regimes, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have gone way further to resolving some of the economic developmental crisis and some of the social crisis.

Just let me say in conclusion so I don't take up all of the time, this third crisis is going on in a changed international environment. One of the things that has both served as a catalyst for these crises and how they are being responded to is how – what U.S. foreign policy – what changes there are in U.S. foreign policy, that U.S. foreign policy has occurred in – I mean, U.S. foreign policy has entered a particularly ideological moment.

And it is – it has in – many times in its history of the U.S. ideology has been a driver in foreign policy, but right now it is a driver in foreign policy at the time that we are the single global superpower. So this whole atmosphere of freeing the world and having democratic change is a catalyst in Central Asia and it's pushing people in different ways.

And that takes me to my very final moment, which is one of the themes that the book argues is that there has not been a major geopolitical shift in Central Asia. And this was before the Shanghai corporation organization asked of the base to be removed. You know, I conclude very straightforwardly by saying we have not really changed the dynamics in the region. We have had a bigger presence, but China and Russia has used our bigger presence to more than compensate for it.

So here you have at the beginning of this third global – you know, developmental crises, that the reason you have U.S. foreign policy having change – having changed its priorities, but you don't have our capacity in the region for delivery having improved at all. If anything, we are less able to influence events in Central Asia today than we were prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>. And I will end there. Thank you.

(Applause.)

STEPHEN SESTANOVICH: I am ready. (Scattered laughter.)

Thank you, Jessica, for inviting me to be part of this event. Having persuaded Martha to join the Carnegie Endowment 10 years ago, I am proud to have played a small part in bringing this day to – well, to it's sort of happy successful moment.



I am a big enthusiast about this book. I'm especially enthusiastic about it if the title of our meeting today, "Will Central Asia Have Another 'Second Chance'?" means that Martha is going to write another one. (Scattered laughter.) It is a book that gives us a broad and rich picture of dynamics in the region.

I think it's an extremely important corrective to the, you know, sort of common simplifications about the region that this – you know, it's – everywhere you look it's just Soviet-era leaderships pursuing strategies of repression as a way of coping with radical Islamist opposition in which the Russians will be able to use to drive the United States out of the region. That I think is sort of the very crudest, most simple view of what is happening.

And while there is a lot of truth in it, as with many simplifications, Martha helps us to see the different possibilities, and the different paths that are being taken even as there are important trends that unite the different countries. So I think if you – there is no other place to turn for the kind of insight into what is going on. But that is not just to say that Martha is the only game in town. It is an extraordinarily kind of rich and important analysis.

I like the idea of a second chance because it reminds us that the countries have – as you have just said, Martha – have been wrestling with the same problems that they are wrestling with today for some time. But if it implies that they completely missed the first chance, I think I would disagree a little bit because I think the reason there was a second chance was in part because the first chance was not totally missed.

There was a lot going on in the '90s that prepared the ground for – or gave a reason to hope for some more successful outcomes than we have seen. I mean, I remember having a conversation with a president of a Central Asian state who said to me triumphantly after my patronizing lecture about the need for modern political and economic institutions.

And he said, well, I see you get along very well with Saudi Arabia. (Laughter.) And I said, well – (laughter) – you know, you have a good point, but your point will only go so far because Saudi Arabia is not a modern society and you, for better and worse, have experienced a certain kind of crude modernization in the course of being part of the Soviet Union and the Saudi formula isn't going to work for you.

I didn't think he was completely persuaded. (Laughter.) I know this for a fact. (Laughter.) But you could see in the region some signs that people understood that they had to be modern and couldn't just be Saudi.

You know, Kazakhstan created an oil fund that was modeled after Norway's. Kyrgyzstan was the first country in the whole former Soviet Union to get into the WTO. Even Uzbekistan – I say even – you know, repeatedly tiptoed up to the issue of convertibility of its currency and tried to figure out how this might – or at least we thought they were doing this – how it might be part of a strategy of economic progress.

Similarly, you know, I remember conversations with foreign ministers of the region who said – this was actually on my first trip out there as – when I was working for Madeline Albright. The foreign minister said to me we need your presence in this region. And I said what? You know, what are you talking about? 9/11 hasn't happened yet. (Laughter.) He said we don't – I don't necessarily mean military presence – as though to anticipate what I – (laughs) – what I thought he meant. He said we need your presence in every other way, and we need security cooperation with you.

And that is a message that we heard throughout the region in the late-'90s and I think there was a substantial response. Every leader of the region that I talked to understood that one of their big goals had to be to overcome the fact that they were Central Asian, meaning blocs. They had to get out of their region somehow and make connections to the outside world.

And they understood that, for example, Russian policy had as its goal to kind of exploit the danger of terrorism in order to create a special relationship between Russia and the Central Asian states, that would exclude and limit – certainly limit ties to the outside world. And they said we're not playing that game. We're going to be able to strike a balance, we're going to maintain a work – nobody is making a break with the Russians, but we have got a strategy for getting out of where we are.

I remember a conversation similarly with another Central Asian foreign minister at an OSCE ministerial, where a – the focus of that ministerial was on bad behavior by Belarus. And I said to them, look, I can foresee ministerials down the road where the focus is going to be on bad behavior by you. You don't think we talk this way in diplomacy but actually – and he said, yeah, I know what you mean. We have to avoid that.

And actually I think you can see plenty of ways in which – not as much as one would have liked, but with a surprising recognition of the geo-political value to them of doing this, and the internal modernization value. States in the region have tried to maintain connections with outside organizations to keep those – as part of a strategy of getting outside of a – transcending their location.

After all – I hope they don't get it because I don't think they can possibly deserve it. But you do have Kazakhstan aiming to chair the OSCE. I mean, I wish Kazakhstan well but I don't think they can be the chairman and office of the OSCE. But I think it's interesting that it's a goal still.

Now, these are what I would call somewhat promising, or at least ingredients for a second chance that one should not dismiss and that made the second chance worth trying. There – 9/11 definitely was, as Martha has described an opportunity to deepen cooperation. And I agree that we haven't made good use of it. Neither the West, especially the United States, nor the Central Asian states have really taken advantage of that moment.

But is it true that in failing to take advantage of that moment we have gotten to a situation where their prospect of new failed states is greater than it was in 2001. I mean, have we failed – has the second chance been failed – been missed in that extreme a way? I don't know that I would agree with that. I think that is going pretty far. And I like the fact that Martha has written a book that forces us to answer that question. But I'm not so sure that is right.

The indictment of American policy in particular that Martha makes is I think one that we need to talk about because I think there has been plenty wrong with American policy in trying to deal with this opportunity.

But I think there are things that one could answer back to Martha's indictment. She says the United States has been more interested in what Central Asian states can do for us than what we can do for them – you know, a rather predictable common diplomatic failing – that the United States has had no interest in investing to create reliable security partnerships, that the United States has been content to do business with the existing ruling elite no matter how grasping and insecure, and that regime change and democracy building have not been a priority.

Now, I think there is a good case to be made for all of these but I think one can overstate it. And you can sort of miss the ways in which the United States has actually tried to take advantage of the opportunity, and misstate what was done wrong. I mean, I wouldn't say that the real problem, for example, in dealing with Uzbekistan was lack of interest in these things. I would say it was overconfidence about how easily they could be achieved.

I think there was a lot of wishful thinking about how strong the impetus for modernization was within the elite in Uzbekistan, for example. And I think John Herbst, who was our ambassador at that point and thought he had just fallen into the Orange Revolution when 2001 took place – thought he had fallen into a geopolitical and internal democratic – internal political turnaround. And I think he would agree that the effort to bring the Uzbeks along involved a lot of over estimation of how ready that governmental elite was to participate in this process.

They pushed hard for a lot of incremental changes, as the Clinton administration did, and, you know, were disappointed by the result. They were unsuccessful I think with as much as overconfidence as for lack of interest. They really saw – they were interested in the goal of transformation.

Now, were they unsuccessful because they didn't spend enough? Was that the problem? I mean, at one point Martha says we spent too little on judicial and prison reform. Well, you know, I think that is probably right. But I wonder how big a difference more resources would have made in changing the direction of policy.

I think the deeper problem, which Martha also identifies, is that the government of Uzbekistan saw the rule of law and the tolerance of pluralism as a threat. And that – it became increasingly clear that that was going to be a problem. And frankly I think the U.S. government was right to draw the line and to say we're not going to keep pretending that there is more progress than there has been.

Sometimes, to be sure, resources are the key to making this kind of transformation work. And I think there is no good reason, for example, that the United States paid more for its base rights in Kyrgyzstan than in Uzbekistan. I mean, they had talked about, you know, something that could easily have been predicted to get a bad reaction out of President Karimov, and the fact that they are DOD regulation, which is – that produced this result – no defense. But I wouldn't exaggerate the significance of this in the broader break that took place.

Let me conclude by – with on other sort of difference of emphasis that I would have in mind in looking ahead to the next second chance, the third chance in Martha's next book. Is it true that the result we're now left with in 2005 is increased societal polarization in most of these states with the main line of conflict being between the elite and an angry population? I mean, especially in an angry population motivated by – often by religious extremism and populist resentment.

I think Martha has made a very provocative judgment about this situation, which we ought to talk about and think through, that we are going to have no more regimes falling because there is a division within the elite. We're going to have them falling because of popular outbursts and anger and opposition.

I think that there is no – she's identified the situation in many of these countries correctly. They are very, very, very brittle polities. And the edifice could collapse easily under popular pressure. And yet I'm not so sure that it is right to say this is all we're going to get because I think societal – the rising societal tensions, political tensions will divide the elite. They will divide them in – even in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

And I think that means that it is worth – and I think Martha advocates this – trying to identify and understand and reach out to what are now pro-reform elements within the precisely because they will be the opponent of the incumbent dictators when things go badly. And they will – these will be divided elites when things go bad, as they will.

And I think there is a reason to think of this in a kind of optimistic way. Instability is going to characterize the politics of a lot of these countries. And it can have good results as well as bad. I was, like, Martha, unnerved by what happened in Kyrgyzstan. It didn't have the most orderly, pretty quality to it. And yet I think the process was basically a positive one.

I think we are going to have a lot more differentiation among these states in the way in which they answer, in which they – in the kinds of answers that they find to the problems that Martha has set for them. And I like to divide the states of these – of this

region into – in fact, of the whole former Soviet Union to two categories: the ones where leaders who were deposed have to flee, and the ones where they don't.

And my dividing line among the colored revolutions would be, you know, Georgia and Ukraine – the leaders didn't have to flee. It was a very big difference from Kyrgyzstan where Akayev felt he did have to flee. And I would say right now today, September 2005, all of the states of Central Asia fall into that second category. But I'm not sure that that will necessarily continue, and I'm not sure that when they do it will necessarily be bad for the countries in question.

I wouldn't rule out progress after chaos. Instability is clearly ahead. The question is how it will be resolved both by the groups that rise out – rise up from an angry populous, and the groups within a frustrated and fearful elite, with some of them seeing an opportunity. I am sure, Martha, that we are going to have more opportunities to discuss this question. And I suspect we are going to discover that the answers vary across the region.

So here is to Central Asia's third chance. (Scattered laughter.) Thank you.

(Applause.)

ROBERT KAISER: Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to participate today, Ms. Mathews. I think I am invited here because of a trip I took in the summer of 2002 when I visited all five Stans, as I called them. I believe I'm still last American journalist to have been in Turkmenistan in that summer. And that is the basis for my expertise.

So I lived in Moscow 35 years ago. I tried to go repeatedly to Central Asia and never got permission. So that really was my first and only opportunity. And it was fascinating. And indeed Martha helped me enormously, first, to prepare for that trip and then to understand it when I came back.

She has written a really good book, and I want to congratulate her for that, and an extremely useful book particularly for journalists because it's a great way to catch up on all of that has happened. I have to say personally that it's a terribly downer because you read this book as I did over the last two weeks and you realize virtually nothing has gotten any better. A lot of things have gotten worse in three years.

The only candidate for a possibly hopeful new situation in the whole region is Kyrgyzstan and Steve and Martha have both said we should keep our hopes there under control. As I said to Martha when we were having lunch before the meeting began, I felt sorry for her and for these countries both when I finished reading the book because I realized how grim the news was.

I would like to be a little tougher than Steve, which I can afford to do because I have never had anything to do with it, on the question of American diplomacy. I think

that what has happened in the region is a wonderful monument to a failed American policy in two administrations, much more so this one than the previous. But it's a fiasco. It's a very bad outcome. And we should make excuses for it.

Ambassador Herbst, who was referred to, was, in my undiplomatic opinion, taken to the cleaners by President Karimov. As I tried to say to him when I talked to him while I was there, he was just willfully believing things that I thought were probably not true about Karimov's attitude toward democratization, institution building, and so on. It was a real embarrassment.

We signed these documents – go back and look at them if you want to have a giggle – the documents when Karimov came to Washington – when, June – March of '02 after – it was a few months after 9/11 and after he had become our ally and given us a base and so on. These are really silly documents about all of the commitments that Uzbekistan had made on that occasion to democratize Uzbek society, a kind of classic example of window-dressing diplomacy. It was ridiculous.

And any smart, attentive, good citizen of Uzbekistan and of a member of the intelligence in Tashkent who read those documents at the time and thinks about them today thinks quite accurately that the United States is a laughable superpower that signs documents and does things that mean nothing to us. And I fear that has been the lesson for a lot of these people.

Similarly, in Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev has every reason to think that he is cleverer than we are, that we insist on this and demand that and recommend the other and get none of them and then nothing happens. It is the common in diplomacy. There is lots of reasons for it; it's a complicated world. I understand all of that. But the basic upshot is that we look dumb. And that if you were a smart, young Uzbek or a Kazakh, or a Kyrgyz, and wondering what was the role of the United States in Central Asia, and how seriously we were about it and so on, your conclusions – your accurate conclusions would not be heartening from our point of view.

I think it's really important to remember now that we are in for a really bad period and a perhaps quite grim future, as Martha's book argue. That lumping these countries all together while geographically and historically convenient is wrong headed. There is one serious country in this group with a lot of oil and a lot of prospects and a big population, and that is Kazakhstan. The others are all relatively speaking insignificant countries and will be for a very long time. It doesn't mean they can't cause a hell of a lot of trouble.

I mean, one of the really tragic facts of the region is the Afghan opium trade. We write about it in *The Washington Post* every few months. People know, oh, yes, there is still a problem with opium coming out of Afghanistan. It is a huge problem. It has completely paralyzed Tajikistan. I think what happened to that wonderful guy who we put in charge of narcotics police? You know, who I am talking about? What is his name?

MS. OLCOTT: He is back. He has left, but he is back again. But that is another long story. (Laughs.)

MR. KAISER: Yeah, an attempt to create a clean police force, well paid – professional and well-trained police force to stop the movement of heroine and opium through out of Afghanistan through Tajikistan failed. Everything we have tried in the east realm has failed.

So I think it's silly to be at all optimistic about the future. At the same time let me rush to support Steve's point that these societies are more complicated than they seem. I don't know – it's hard for me to imagine, frankly, a situation in any of these places where the next loser is going to be able to stay in the country and enjoy his losses at home for the following reason: there is fascinating – this would be a good academic category; someone should write a Ph.D. on it – the conundrum of corruption in Central Asia, where even the good guys become bad guys, and they are always driven by their families.

I had the following really intriguing experience. I didn't interview Turkemenbashi, he wouldn't see me. He agreed to see me in principle, gave me a visa, and then chickened out I think, so I didn't interview him. I interview all four other presidents on this tour three years ago. And I cooked up this provocative question that I asked all of them.

I said, you know, I'm from America. The father of my country is George Washington. And a lot of our historians think that the greatest single gift George Washington gave to his country came at the end of his second term in office or the middle of his second term in office when he announced that that was going to be his last term. He was leaving voluntarily at the end of two terms. And that this was the single most valuable president in American politics and gave us some hope to establish a system based on the rule of law. And it was a huge moment in our history.

Are you going to have one like that in your history? (Laughter.) Are you, President Karimov, President Nazarbayev, President – are you going to do this. And that the three, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan just squirmed and dodged the question completely. One president said, yes, I'm going to do that. That was of course Askar Akayev. He did it in a different way. (Laughter.) He had in fact announced that he was going to resign right now, right. Wasn't this the moment when he was supposed to –

MS. OLCOTT: No, his term ended in October and he said he was going to –

MR. KAISER: Yeah, October, next month.

MS. OLCOTT: Right. Right now, yeah.

MR. KAISER: And he said he was going to leave. Now, was he going to leave? Probably not. That is probably why this thing came to an end when it did. But why did

all of this happen? Because Mrs. Akayev and the children got really rich and liked it and didn't want to give it up. And I – you know, this is – Nazarbayev has done the same, Karimov has done the same. We don't know enough about Rahmonov. I don't – (audio break, tape change) – but I have my suspicions – (laughter) – because it's a standard pattern.

And this is really painful, and I agree with Steve. These elites are not homogenous. Uzbekistan is a particularly intriguing clan society. My sense was that Herbst nor no one else in his embassy had a clue about how the clans worked or who was on first, or what was going on there. But it was clear to anybody, including me after a ten-day visit, that there a lot of intrigue and the supposedly geographically-based – these clans in Uzbekistan and there's a long history to them. But nobody that I found on the American side had a real grasp of it. But there's a lot going on there below the surface obviously.

But that there isn't unanimity is okay, but how is it going to play out? Nobody has any idea. My fear is that there is now a well established – you know, fifteen years is a long time, 20 years – there is a well established big man syndrome in all these cultures, which says either you got it or you don't. You're in or you're out. There's no middle ground. There's no sense of shared power or shared benefit really, and the prospects are really bad.

The best thing I know about the region is the thing that is often lost in the clichéd description that Steve so nicely encapsulated in his remarks about this being an area where we have to fear Islamic extremism. I mean, one of the great facts about Central Asia is that there really isn't any Islamic extremism to speak of. There have been little manifestations – the IMU, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Hizb ut Tahrir is some kind of Islamic organization nobody seems to understand very well.

But the idea that there is mass Islamic extremism, so far, isn't really defended. There are lots of people in the Ferghana Valley, particularly you understand that Islam is an organizing principle and a set of ideas that allows for some alternatives to state power and the state power looks pretty unattractive in those places. But there isn't yet any kind of, you know, Taliban movement in Central Asia that is going to haunt us in the next few years.

That said, looking ahead 10 or 15 years, baby, look out. I mean this is just a huge mess. These big populations; fast growing populations everywhere, very little sense of prospects for young people. The number Tajiks in Russia, I don't think we have any accurate idea, do we? How many millions of Tajiks are working in Russia?

MS. OLCOTT: (Inaudible, off mike.)

MR. KAISER: I was amazed. I spent a week in Petersburg and a week in Moscow in June and half the taxi drivers – who of course aren't taxi drivers, but *chastniki*



– entrepreneurs, literally half the guys who drove me around both cities from Tajikistan. It's just – they're just everywhere and it's kind of a labor colony for Russia now.

There is just so many potential sources of instability that at last there will be plenty of opportunity for the third and the fourth and maybe the fifth volume in this series, but there isn't much room for optimism or hope in my opinion. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MS. MATHEWS: Well, if I ever experienced the value of bringing together three smart, informed people from different sectors to look together – and different backgrounds – to look together at the same question, I think these three wonderful talks were it. Let me turn it over to you now and to our panel. Yes?

Q: Stan Crock, *Business Week*. What do your assessments suggest U.S. policy should be going forward in this region, especially in light of a presentation made here a few months ago by Robert Pape who was suggesting that U.S. presence is negatively correlated with suicide bombing?

MS. OLCOTT: In terms of how U.S. policy should unfold, it's really too complicated to do anything but to say that I think the question of whether it's a good or bad thing that the U.S. has been asked to leave Uzbekistan is worth a separate discussion. I don't think I can handle it in two minutes.

I don't think that the U.S. is – I'm trying to think of how to put it really quickly – that we can't provide answers to the region, which is one of the things I thought you were going to say too that it can't all come from us, that there has to be – the impetus for reform has to come from the region itself. And until there is a strong impetus in the region and until the U.S. has more energy and money to bring to this area – and human energy I think is really as important – then I see it kind of as tinkering.

I don't see the U.S. as providing the answer right now for what's going on in Central Asia. We're between acts if you like, and now that the drama is in their hands, and they have to figure out what to do for a while. And I don't know that I agree about the question – I mean Peyton's point is, again we can talk about on the side. I think when we go into these social manifestations, we have to be very cautious about drawing causal relationships.

MS. MATHEWS: Steve?

MR. SESTANOVICH: I would say if anybody has put a jacket on –

MS. MATHEWS: Turn the mike on.

MR. SESTANOVICH: If anybody has put a suicide bomb jacket on in the past few months, it's Karimov himself. I would say the outlook of other governments in the region so far – and I'll have to find a way to articulate this – is to think that a continuing connection with the United States is a good one. And I think they will be interested in developing that in whatever way they can.

I would point out to you that the foreign minister of Kazakhstan was here the very week of the CIS ministerial and summit. Why, I asked him? Why aren't you where all the CIS leaders are? He said, oh, I had a meeting with Condi. And that tells you a lot.

The interest in developing security connections with the United States is an important theme in Martha's book, and she talks about it as a goal that the Central Asian governments freely embrace, and I am not sure I agree that it has been for them what you describe in one place, which is a kind of instrument of social or political stabilization. I think they'll be disappointed if that's what they're counting on.

But I do think it has been an important part of their strategy of kind of getting outside their own region. And I would be surprised if the other big states, which shall remain nameless, that have been trying to dislodge the American presence will succeed.

MS. MATHEWS: Bob.

MR. KAISER: I would only add that one of the most successful American policies in the region in my opinion was the Partnership for Peace, where you guys really engaged the militaries in four of the five countries quite effectively. I don't know what's happened lately.

MR. SESTANOVICH: Tony Franks had to drink a lot of fermented mare's milk. (Chuckles.) It was all in good cause. I agree with you.

MS. MATHEWS: Let me ask sort of a follow-on to that. Not too many weeks ago, we had an event here like this one on the release of Husain Haqqani's book, *From Mosque to Military*, about Pakistan and the review of its history and attentions there and the U.S.-Pak relationship.

And one of his points has been that part of the – tragedy may be a little too strong but not much – of this relationship has been that the U.S. has always had something more on its mind in its relationship with Pakistan, something bigger than Pakistan that has shaped the relationship, and that thing has changed over time but the fact that is true has had a devastating effect on the country.

And I, again, I hear echoes here and wondered – I think Stan's question is a good one. I could push Martha especially further and maybe all of you. If you have big hopes and small tools or small will, does that do more harm than good?

MS. OLCOTT: I don't think we've done more harm in Central Asia than good. I just don't we've maximized our ability to do good, that we could have gotten more out of the – you know, we could have been more of a positive influence. But I think that what's going wrong there is not – I mean I don't think we've set the atmosphere that's made it go wrong.

I think what's going wrong in Kazakhstan can't be paralleled to what's going wrong in Uzbekistan. I mean it's a terrible – I mean Steve makes a point. It's harder and harder to compare these states so I don't think Kazakhstan is on its way into a huge crisis and I think I criticize some things that the U.S. has done in the book, giving Nazarbayev – not holding him to the same standards that they might have held him to if he didn't have so much oil and gas. But we have not been the instrument; we have not facilitated the corruption in Kazakhstan.

Similarly in Uzbekistan, again what I'm arguing is that we did not play as effective a role as I think we could have played, mostly through the IFIs, in getting them to do the economic reforms right, which I think was much the way to get to the political reforms.

So I don't see – in the U.S. case with Pakistan, I think that we were much more an instrument of the policy there. We gave Pakistan in the years of the Cold War way more than anyone has given the Central Asians at any point. In fact, that is one of the frustrations that the Uzbeks have with the U.S. They thought they were going to have a relationship with the U.S. like Pakistan had during the Cold War. And when that didn't come about, then they began to be really disappointed. So I'm a big critic of what we've done because it could be better, but I don't think we're an instrument of bad. I just really don't.

MR. KAISER: But at the same time, we always do have our mind on something else, and it's usually one something at a time, because that's all we're capable of. And that's really embarrassing, if you think about it. There just is no sustained energy of this policy, no high level attention. Sending out a Rumsfeld every six months to see these guys in fact sends the wrong signal. It's just really incompetent.

MS. OLCOTT: Can I throw something else in or Steve, you wanted to go first.

MR. SESTANOVICH: Go ahead. I do have something to say though.

MS. OLCOTT: You know, your point about – Bob's point about the drugs – I mean I think that really part of the problem was that you had competing goals of U.S. foreign policy. Virtually everybody that I ran into who was involved with the drug policy in Central Asia understood it couldn't be a factor, that until we took on Afghanistan as the producer, there was no way you were going to have an effective policy.

But the priority with Afghanistan was not to handle them as a producer. I mean the whole model of how you stabilize Afghanistan that they adopted after September 11<sup>th</sup>

was not to engage in drug production, not to take it – to just do it tangentially. It's only in 2004, the end of 2004, that the administration came to view drug production as undercutting their policies in Afghanistan. So Bob is right that we only could concentrate on one thing at a time and this never got to the top of what we were trying to concentrate on. But I know Steve had something else.

MR. SESTANOVICH: Well, I hope nobody is using the American Cold War relationship with Pakistan as a positive model – (laughter) – for Uzbekistan. If our relations with Uzbekistan have not developed on that model, you know, hear, hear. I think it was very well understood on the part of the Uzbeks that we had something else on our mind, and that something else was security, which, by the way, they had on their mind too.

But it turned out that we were going to have a problem with internal developments in Uzbekistan, and despite those silly documents Bob and I, you know, may – you know, the State Department understood well that it was succumbing to a Soviet – (chuckles) – habit that the leaders in these countries were trying to, you know, get them hooked on. They were playing along.

But if Karimov thought that that meant he could – you know, that his practices would be taken at face value, he was wrong. And it turned out that there was a lot more criticism from the United States even when the stability of his regime turned out to be at stake. And I say great.

I think that has given a lot of creditability to American policy in the region and fortunately it hasn't been at a particularly heavy operational military cost because we made the – we took the good step of having some redundancy in our presence in the region and balancing it out so that we weren't dependent as we often were with Pakistan on, you know, one leg to our security presence in the region.

I think if the United States had pursued its relationship with Karimov, as Karimov expected and hoped, we would all be sitting here today saying something else about American policy, but I hope it would be plenty critical. I would be.

MS. MATHEWS: Right, yeah.

Q: Thank you. Martha, not having read your book, I'm not sure whether you address this. But as someone who was in and out of this area quite a bit, I must say – serious shortcoming of American engagement from my point of view was how much of the government engagement institutionally was done by the Department of Defense. And since I was part of that for several years, I'm well aware that DOD did some very positive things in Central Asia.

But even when we did, I think we were the wrong mechanism for doing it because it sent indubitably the wrong message, and because over on the other side of the river, the level of credulity about whom we were dealing with and how much we could influence

them was much higher than it was in Foggy Bottom. Whatever else you can stay about the State Department, it has an institutional culture of cynicism rather than of optimism. And that was not true on the other side of the river.

I would also say that a problem was – is that having so much of the relationship dominated by the Pentagon meant that you had various participants, geo-strategic agendas come into play. Initially that was anti-Iran and for many people it was anti-Russia, then it was anti-China, and anti-Taliban, and no of course it's anti-al-Qaeda.

But it was always aimed from Central Asia out towards part of Central Asia's periphery against some perceived challenge to American influence or American interest, rather than looking at this part of Asian culture in its own terms, as opposed to being sort of a platform for American policy and influence directed outwards to its periphery.

What I would like, Martha, to ask you to comment on, however, is one aspect of that periphery, and another external influence, which is what is your prognosis for the future role of China in these countries – and I recognize that it's different for each of the five – and specifically of the Shanghai cooperation organization as a mechanism?

MS. OLCOTT: I won't steal too much of my own thunder – just answer it a little bit. I actually do talk about the kinds of things you mentioned about the Defense Department and the different agents. And you'll see when you read the book that a lot of our conversations over the years had influence on my thinking.

But the SCO – I mean I talk a lot in the next-to-last chapter about China as the rising superpower. I mean, I really do believe that China is going to have enormous influence in Central Asia. And one of the things that I put forward as an argument is that what September 11<sup>th</sup> and the larger U.S. presence did was make the Chinese be more short-term oriented than they might have been otherwise, I mean, because they had a very long-term strategy, and the increased U.S. presence caused them to speed it up to some degree. And I do start – I think that is a really critical point.

I'm not sure what I think about the SCO. I think it's still not tested as an organization. It's not clear that it will be more important than the CIS, which serves an important function of when ministers show up at least, allowing for a lot of off-the-record discussions in multilateral rather than bilateral sessions. And I quote one foreign minister from a Central Asian country saying from his point of view the SCO is great because it means there is a balance there for Russia on a lot of these difficult questions. They use it for particularly that.

So it has a useful purpose. But whether it will become a real multilateral organization that provides security, protection, and economic cooperation, I think it's way too soon to know. But it's certainly more than balancing the CIS for these countries. And whether it will become OSC-like for good or bad is just hard to know. But that is book four of the sequel, and not even the third – (laughs).

MS. MATHEWS: Steve, Bob, do you want add anything on China?

MR. SESTANOVICH: Only that I think that the key word that Martha used is balancing. I don't think any of the states in the region want to let an organization like that, and certainly not that one, become the sort of – the single expression of regional cooperation or of their connections with the outside world. So that is not to say that they don't see advantages in it; they are just not going to let it acquire any sort of exclusivity.

MR. KAISER: It is interesting that we can have this long a discussion on this subject without the word, "Russia," being mentioned. And it is important for those of you here who aren't specialists to understand that partly because of the political fact that the leaders are mostly members of the nomenklatura KPSS of still, but also for just lots of cultural reasons, Moscow remains the reference point.

Tragically, if you're a smart, politically ambitious Uzbek or Kyrgyz or a Tajik or Kazakh, your first source of news about the larger world is the Russian news media. This is really bad. One criticism that I was going to make of Martha's book until I was just overwhelmed by its good qualities, it how little she write about the media, which is one of the many tragedies of Central Asia. There is absolutely no development of a real, thinking, independent news media in this region.

This has many bad effects, one of which is the increase dependence on the really bad Russian news media, so that the view of – it's really hard to be an intelligent citizen of the world if you live in Tashkent, even though there are lots of very bright people there who want to be intelligent citizens of the world. So there just isn't much access to good information, except on the Internet, and that is still pretty awkward in most of those places.

So it's – but the Russian overhang, psychology, culturally, instinctively is very powerful. And the most animated part of my conversation with Karimov was 10 minutes on Putin and Putin's gang, and politics in Moscow, which was for him a local subject. It was his guys; it was his crowd. And you can see it. His eyes lit up as he talked about it. He was really interested in it. And this was to me a powerful reminder of where I was and who I was dealing with.

MR. SESTANOVICH: I just want to add one thing to this. News media – about that, I think you're sure right, Bob. But I think when it comes to educating the sort of young elite, in fact, the ambition of somebody who really wants to be successful is always to go Russian now. You want to go to the Wharton School or Harvard Business School.

MR. KAISER: And in Kazakhstan you see the fruits of this now.

MR. SESTANOVICH: And it is – it is state policy. Nazarbayev is self-consciously training up the elite of the next-two generations and he doesn't want them to be educated in Russia.

MS. OLCOTT: Can I throw in one quick thing.

MS. MATHEWS: Well, you can work it in. Let me take one in the back and then Anders, and then we'll –

Q: Masha Rasner, Internews. Speaking of the media, I want to go back to the Uzbekistan question that a colleague asked right here. And I would like to ask whether you, the panelists, whether you are aware of any awareness in the U.S. government of the kinds of problems that the U.S. implementing partners – the U.S. NGOs working on the ground in Central Asia have experienced lately in Uzbekistan. I'm sure you're aware that Internews has been forced to leave Uzbekistan as has IRX and several other organizations.

I'm curious whether there is awareness here in this city of these problems. And more importantly whether you are aware of any integrated response that the U.S. government has. I'm sure there have been some discussions. I'm not aware of what this response has been. I'm sure there have been some discussions. I'm not aware of what this response has been. Maybe your area.

MS. OLCOTT: I'm not aware of what the response is. You know, obviously I'm aware of what is going on. And the way it relates to the book is – one of the themes that I talk about at great length is whether or whole strategy for the development of NGOs was appropriate in Uzbekistan, whether we have protected our long-term interests well enough through the strategy we have pursued with NGOs. But definitely, I mean, everybody's e-mail is filled with material on what has been going on.

Q: Anders Åslund, Carnegie Endowment. First, congratulations on an excellent book, Martha. And two years ago we hosted Tajik Minister of Foreign Affairs here. And in the talk he got the question, which organization is the most important the region. And he said without hesitation, the Shanghai Cooperation Agreement Organization because there you have the Chinese and you don't fool around with them. (Laughter.) The understated point that you do fool around with Russia.

And I would like to draw out on the U.S. role here. And if you take it a bit further than you went here, Martha, and say a few years ago before 9/11 there were two threats in the region: Russia always were the traditional threat, and the other threat was IMU, et cetera, coming from Afghanistan. Thanks to the good job of the United States in Afghanistan the terrorist threat is not there any longer, and the ambition is of course to maintain political stability, which is the main threat – indeed, Martha, as you point out, the population. And who supports the population actively? Only the United States. So why do you want to have the United States there? Better to get out with it? I pushed you too far. Thank you.

MS. OLCOTT: You pushed me where I don't want to go. I mean, I certainly think this is the argument that is being made in national capitals, that is – I think it's a

misreading of the local situation. I would like to say three things. And I'll end with this question of terrorist threat and stability. The one thing we haven't talked about – it was alluded to by Bob. We haven't talked about Russia. And I think one of the themes in the book that we haven't talked about that is very important is this notion that these states are no longer acted upon; that they are themselves actors.

And the relationship between Russia and these states are really evolving because of that. And I talk at great length about it. So, yes, it's true that Karimov wants to gossip about Putin, and yes, it's true that these people use Russian media. But I wouldn't only to have to use some of the things that I use for media on my TV either. So when we criticize the use of Russian media, we should look at the alternatives too, that the need to develop media internally is really critical.

And that is something – you're right, I could have talked more about it in the book, but it has been a real problem in the region. They need their own media, and that has been developing very slowly. But the whole notion of looking to the outside world is being transformed for most people even in remote areas. So even when they use Russian media they are much more critical to us than they have been before.

So those are the two points. The third – Anders' point about the threats in political stability, and that takes me back to something Steve said that I wanted to answer or at least speak to too. I do think – I don't think that the population is the only threat these regimes face. I think that there is this new crisis of political stability and it is a crisis that comes from the population. I don't dismiss the terrorist threat. I don't think it has been eliminated. I think that what we saw in Andijan was the remnants of a terrorist threat.

And when you have a very unstable situation on the ground, a very small number can make a lot of trouble. You don't need thousands of al-Qaeda-trained operatives to create a lot of chaos in Uzbekistan. And that really scares me. And, yes, I agree; I think the Karimov government is mistakenly seeing the U.S. as the encouragers of these revolutions. And he is not going to eliminate this problem by doing it.

But I do see – I mean, Steve's point about the elite, I think it is the relationship between the elite and population and it is the elite that gets people out there. I think one of the big changes is the elite now is playing with mobilizing populations, and that is fundamentally different in that, you know, that these elite splits exist throughout. And that is what is going to lead to change.

But I guess the thought I can leave people with is really one that Steve brought up and Bob too – is that these places – for all that is negative, it's has changed – these countries have changed an enormous amount in 15 years. And we can't any more talk about – that is one the points I make in the book. We can't talk about a single central Asia. We really have five countries, and the futures of these countries are going to be very different. And some are much sadder than others and others like Kazakhstan can be



enormous positive and Kyrgyzstan has real hope of being a success story. So lots, just lots out there.

MS. MATHEWS: Steve, did you want to –

MR. SESTANOVICH: I'll just pick up on what Martha says. The – because I think it's the best answer to Anders' question, which correctly describes the view of I would say right now one government in Central Asia and that is Uzbekistan. But the Kazakhs have not allowed themselves to be blown off course by this kind of calculus, even though they are a little bit unnerved by – if I could put it this way – the president's second inaugural.

They have got other reasons – they have got more than one thing on their mind too. And they are – for them to decide that because they don't like our democracy rhetoric they are going to orient themselves just towards Russia and China would be inconsistent with a whole sense of themselves and the whole strategy that they have had for improving their standing in the world they have perceived for years now. And I don't think they will do that. And I don't think for slightly different reasons that the Kyrgyzs will either.

So I think – as I said, the answers that these countries are going to give to the problems that Martha poses for them in the book are going to vary. But I don't think they are all going to be the answer that you described. And in fact, in a way, you could say that Karimov is rolling the dice in terms of deciding against his own strategy of the past 10 years to rely more exclusively on the Russians, and to a lesser extent the Chinese. I don't know what view the rest of the elite has. But if you – but I don't doubt that there are some who question the wisdom of that choice.

MS. MATHEWS: Yes, right behind you.

Q: Askar Tazhiyev, Embassy of Kazakhstan. Ambassador Sestanovich, you mentioned a distinction between Georgia, Ukraine, and Central Asian leadership – first ones, they didn't have to flee while the last ones they will have to. And in this regard, just, I was wondering if you could explore a little bit about the Kazakhstan case if such – I mean, what is the routes?

You just mentioned some distinctions, but still as many here, where the policy, consistent policy, during the several years – seven years a least – is that spendings for healthcare and education, increasingly going forward and approaching Eastern European country standards. And, as you know, these reforms now paying back. That is exactly what all of these countries wanted, including and Ukraine, and salaries – GDP, earnings, et cetera, three times during this time.

And now political of course modernization goals were declared in the same fashion as it was previously being – how to say reached consistently, comprehensively like was in the equalization policy, was economic reform, and all other things. And if in

this regard, such moves like Kazakhstan would invite by requests, which you had from Georgian and the Ukraine partners, and France, to teach them about reforms, about how to better serve their people.

I mean, about how government should serve their own populations. If such incitements will make – I mean, such things will make people uprising in Kazakhstan saying, no, we should not teach anybody, or Mr. Putin – he revealed, and not only expressed it. He sent his advisors also to pick up experiences from Kazakhs.

So it is the case for uprising? I mean, people – here is the perception in Kazakhstan. And funny jokes, which he sharing today about all of these bunch of dictators quite understandable in this culture, still – maybe unfortunately. Unfortunately for us it's not understandable for Central Asian nations.

MR. SESTANOVICH: I'll say two things very quickly. I asked one of my friends in the State Department who is one of the most knowledgeable people about Kazakhstan. And I said is there – I gave him my question – is there – pointing out the differences between countries when the leaders, when they leave office, have to flee the country. I said is there a Central Asian country where that would not be necessary? And he said absolutely Kazakhstan.

And I would admit it as a possibility. And incidentally, I'm not predicting an uprising in Kazakhstan. Don't misunderstanding. I'm just saying that if my question was if President Nazarbayev left office, would he feel comfortable enough about the rule of law and political stability and fair play to stay in the country? And I don't know the answer to that. But I think one can argue it in different ways. And certainly, of all of the countries in Central Asia, I think you can make the best case that there has been a system of – that it has been institutionalized enough that a leader could remain in the country after he leaves office. So I probably should have had an asterisk for Kazakhstan there.

MR. KAISER: On the other hand, because the Nazarbayev family has stolen so much money, he has many enemies, as you know better than we do, who would be happy to make it very uncomfortable for him to stay around. I would predict at the end of the day that they would not be living in the – whatever the name of that city you said – (laughter).

MS. OLCOTT: Astana.

MR. KAISER: Astana -- thank you -- after leaving office.

MS. MATHEWS: There are so many questions remaining, and I have several myself. But unfortunately we are out of time. I hope that you join me both in thanking Bob and Steve who were exemplary discussants, and congratulate Martha on another really important book, and go buy it.

(Applause.)

(END)