

TRANSCRIPT

"RESTLESS VALLEY: REVOLUTION, MURDER, AND INTRIGUE IN THE HEART OF CENTRAL ASIA"

A Conversation With Philip Shishkin

Moderator: Alexander Cooley

ANNOUNCER:

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DAN SERSHEN:

I'm Dan Sershen (PH). I direct the Central Eurasia project here at the Open Society Foundations. I just wanted to welcome-- Philip Shishkin who-- has recently written-- a book on-- our beloved region, *Restless Valley*. And Alex Cooley (PH) has kindly agreed to moderate a discussion with Philip. So-- without further ado we'll head right in. So Alex.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Great. Thank you, Dan. And it's (CLEARS THROAT) a pleasure to be here-- with you today with-- with Philip Shishkin who has-- written this very intriguing and-- and-- and compelling read-- *Restless Valley*. So-- the format we agreed upon today was I would-- have a conversation with Philip, try and hit some o' the highlights or what I consider to be the highlights of the book. And we'll go back and forth.

And then-- after a few round we'll throw it open to your-- comments, questions and so forth that you might have for the author. So-- Phil-- a lot of us in this room--

know something about Central Asia or think that we know something about Central Asia. But there's also a lot of generalists in the audience. So perhaps you could just set the stage for us in terms of-- what this valley is-- geographically-- politically, culturally. Set the scene for us. What is the *Restless Valley*?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Well, thank you all for coming and thank you Alex for-- for moderating. The valley is obviously restless to-- to state the obvious. But to-- you know, to move beyond-- beyond jokes it's-- the-- so the title of the book refers to Fergana Valley which as-- as-- as many of you know-- a (UNINTEL) of tortured-- piece of-- land-- of northern Afghanistan where several countries come together in this jagged confluence of borders, and where a lot of conflicts has-- taken place over the past-- you know, few centuries-- related to-- ethnic clashes-- and (NOISE) all-- all sorts of other-- all-- all sorts of other conflicts.

So I use the title-- *Restless Valley* to talk about the valley itself and its history, but more broadly to talk about the countries that have-- that have gone through this-- really incredible sequence of events over the past-- decade. As you know they became independent after the fall of the Soviet Union. And the book focuses most on Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and on this-- you know, not to mince words, this-- essentially very-- wild-- stretch of-- of-- of political upheaval that both countries have-- have gone through.

Most of the book-- takes place in-- in Kyrgyzstan-- which-- quite unusually has gone through not one but two-- revolutions in the space of-- in the space of five years. And the book also talks about Uzbekistan which-- unlike Kyrgyzstan has retreated deeper and deeper into a dictatorship while maintaining a very vibrant security alliance with the-- with the-- with the-- United States because of the war in Afghanistan.

And just one final-- one final-- thing about the book and about my approach. There is-- a great amount of-- of-- of-- of very serious-- scholarship and-- and political science and-- and general knowledge related to the region including from Alex and from-- from-- from many of you in-- in the audience. So-- and I-- I-- I-- I stand on the shoulders of-- of people who have done serious research in the region. But most of my book is based on first-hand-- reporting in those-- in those countries.

And my approach was to take-- this context that I've just given you, this incredibly restless-- again pardon the adjective, I haven't been able to find a better synonym-- this very restless-- stretch of history and to-- to look at it through the eyes of the people as they-- as they live through these events, including both presidents, opposition leaders-- mafia kingpins and-- and-- and regular people caught up in this-- flow of-- of events. So that's-- that's basically the idea.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Great. One of the striking things about the book in terms of recent history and recent political history is-- I think the-- the picture you paint about-- really the darkness that befell Kyrgyzstan in the later Bakiyev years. And-- and to me this is really one of the most compelling parts of your narrative, that you-- you really map out how bad things had gotten and-- and a kind of-- a sinister political atmosphere that was there.

Could you talk a little bit about those years, some of the episodes that you witnessed? What-- what-- what happened? Was Bakiyev always like this? Is this something he came across? Is this something he was advised to do? How do you see that trajectory?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Thanks. Wanna just-- just back up-- by way of background. So Kyrgyzstan had-- a revolution. It was called the Tulip Revolution, very romantically-- named in 2005. It's sort of similar to the Arab spring revolutions that happened later.

And so-- there was this incredible outpouring of-- of optimism and of this feeling. So we got rid of-- a corrupt, inept regime. And now we're going to build, well maybe if not a democracy, then a more equitable society where-- where the government goes not do-- nasty things to its citizens. Quite the opposite happened. The-- you know, the government that came to power on the-- on-- on the back of this upsurge of optimism that followed the Tulip Revolution quickly descended into-- a pretty evil, pretty cartoonish, just-- dictatorship.

They-- and started doin' things that would be-- that would look-- far-fetched if-- if they were written about in-- in-- in a novel-- including political-- political-- very grisly political assassinations including-- money laundering-- on-- on-- on-- on a scale that-- surprised me even though I-- I wrote for *The Wall Street Journal* for a number of years. So I have a very high tolerance-- for the-- you know, for-- for financial crime-- not tolerance but very high threshold of-- of being impressed by financial crime.

And it's-- more broadly I think what interested me and I think probably interests many of you is the nature of-- of-- of revolutions and-- and regime changes. I think we all think, and I think it's a human nature to-- to think that once you overthrow a bad regime something better will inevitably follow. I think it's something similar happened in the Arab spring in Egypt. You don't have to look very far for the examples.

But I think in life and in politics and also in life the opposite quite ha-- the opposite thing often happens is you go from-- from bad to worse essentially. And this is what-- this is what happened in Kyrgyzstan after 2005. And in the book I-- I-- I-- I decide to write about that-- period of history by focusing on a few key individuals who were

caught up in this, including--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah, tell us about 'em. These are really compelling figures?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Well, one of them is-- one of the main characters in the book is this person named-- Med-- Medet Sadrykulov. He incredibly was the-- chief of staff to the first Kyrgyz (PH) president. And then after the revolution managed to-- get reincarnated as the chief of staff to the guy who overthrew the first president. Again at that time he sort of personafied the-- you know, he was very optimistic about this-- this new era of Kyrgyz history.

And he essentially became-- you know, a conduit for the new regime to assert its power in Kyrgyzstan. And as the years went by he became disillusioned. He just saw-- I mean, he saw-- not only did he see but he participated in the-- in the very sort of Mercurial, evil-- acts of the new government.

And eventually he resigned and started-- enjoying the opposition and became this very formidable figure because he was-- he was an insider. He had a lot of connections. A lot of people knew him. He was this just incredible-- you know-- organizer and had a very sharp mind. And so he was murdered-- in a very-- elaborately planned-- contract hit that was-- disguised as a car crash-- and that was hushed up-- for years, and years and years even though people of course have followed this closely, suspected that he had been killed. They knew that he had been killed.

But there is no-- n-- never any official acknowledgment of this. It would take another revolution for the-- for the truth of-- of-- of-- of the exact details of how the murder was planned and carried out to come out. And so-- there-- you know, I-- I spend quite a lot of time talking about it. Because to me he-- I mean, in journalism w-- we often find people w-- where you feel very lucky when we find the person on whom you can hang-- history essentially.

It's much easier to talk about big events when you-- when you find people who-- who represent them well. And this-- this guy just happens to-- carry a lot of my narrative for me-- in-- in-- in that part o' the book. There's also-- another-- an-- another person who was involved in-- in a lot of the money laundering schemes of the-- of the-- of the old regime.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah, yeah. We'll-- we'll-- we'll-- we'll get to he-- he'll have his own separate chapter

given his antics in-- in a little while. Also can you talk a little bit about-- Gennadi Pavlyuk and-- and what you found out about him, who he was-- what fate awaited him and how that came to symbolize-- again the Bakiyev years?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Well, G-- Gennadi Pavlyuk was-- was an opposition journalist. Again he's one of the-- one of the-- one of the characters in the book. He was a freelancer-- in (COUGH) (UNINTEL). But he (UNINTEL)-- he allied himself with one of the major sort of opposition figures. And-- and he-- started writing-- very critical articles about the-- about the-- about the regime, about the government. He was of the very few journalists who-- who kept writing-- such things. He was killed.

He was killed-- again in a very elaborate contract-- assassination. So he was-- and this is-- this rang very true to me and to anyone who ever freelanced. You're always-- and to maybe to anyone who's ever worked in the non-profit world. There is always the competition for money and grants. It drove journalism. It drove academia. It drove think tanks. So Gennadi-- wanted to start-- a news portal. And he had-- he had no money. So he-- you know, went around as many of us have done trying to convince people to fund his project.

And all of a sudden-- he's-- he almost gives up. And all of a sudden months later he gets this email in his in box from this-- think tank with a very, very long name, the com-- the-- the Union for the-- for the Betterment of Relations Between the Common Good. It had a lot of names. Sounded very official. And he was told, "Look, you're one of the finalists for-- for this \$100,000 grant-- we're about to give for the development of independent media in-- in Central Asia. You are one of the finalists."

"Would you come to Omati-- it's the cap-- it's the commercial hub of Kazakhstan-- for a final interview." Well, the guy is a journalist so he gets suspicious. So he puts the name of the organization into Google. Nothing comes up. He wants the money but he thinks it's a prank. So he-- he emails the woman, and it's the woman who's emailing him, and tells her that he's a little concerned, that this seems like a joke. And she tells him, "Well, you know, the--" she ignores his question and she tells him the final-- you know, the-- the pool of applicants has shrunk now from 100 to three and you're still in the running. You're one of the three."

"So why don't you come to Omati and all your questions will be answered. We've already reserved a room for you," in this swanky hotel downtown. And so he needs the money. He thinks how bad can it get. And so he calls the hotel. There is indeed a room in his name. So he goes over there. And the next day he gets thrown out of a fifth floor window and he dies. Again the truth of who killed him will have to wait for-- for another revolution.

And it's-- so it was-- it was bas-- it-- it later came out that it was planned by-- a kind of-- I call 'em in the book a sort of a Kyrgyz-- Jason Bourne. He was one of these kind of rogue operative on the payroll of-- of the-- of-- of one of the intelligence-- you

know, agencies-- who's done-- a lot of-- shady things-- on behalf of the-- of the regime. And so he was-- impersonating this grant-giving woman and-- and brought him over. And then-- and then-- and then-- killed him. So, yeah--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah, yeah. It's-- it's-- (CLEARS THROAT) it's-- it's fascinating stuff. One of the things that strikes me about the book is that I think a lot of the stories that you draw out, the-- the-- the pictures you paint aren't so much about the valley itself but rather about some of-- the figures outside coming into the valley, creating these networks, advising people, setting up these money-laundering schemes.

And I think candidate number one is--Gourevitch. So perhaps-- you can-- introduce us to this gentleman and tell us a little bit about-- what exactly he did-- for the Bakiyev regime and-- and-- and why was he so important?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Yeah. He was-- was a fascinating character. I think now he's somewhere in-- in Italy. But he's-- he's-- a Russian-- he's of Russian Jewish-- background, emigrated-- to San Francisco when he was a little kid with his mother. Went to business school at Berkeley I believe. And then-- because he's so ambitious-- and crafty-- launched himself-- onto this career of-- doing incredibly arcane financial stuff-- in different parts of the world.

He started out in Africa setting up a shop involved in-- helping Ethiopian companies launder money essentially. Then he moved onto Italy where he-- he was one of the associates of the Ndrangheta. Ndrangheta is the Colombian-- mafia-- that engaged in this pretty blatant-- fraud. It's called carousel fraud.

They basically managed to-- bilk the Italian treasury out of I think half a million dollars is a conservative figure-- I think it was closer to a billion dollars-- by claiming a fraudulent-- value-added tax refunds from the treasury. And he was the guy-- he was not the mastermind. But he was-- engaged by the-- by the masterminds to basically be able to do this financially and to then very importantly hide-- hide the profits.

He got indicted in Italy. But before that happened-- he moved to Kyrgyzstan-- because he had been connected to a banker who-- set-- set up this-- very small bank in Kyrgyzstan that after the first revolution under the Bakiyevs blossomed into this-- money-laundering-- juggernaut essentially.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

This is Asia Universal?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Asia Universal Bank. Interesting because it-- it had-- at its-- at its-- heyday-- in its heyday it had Bob Dole-- on its board. They-- they-- they've-- invested-- a lot of money into-- PR essentially. So they presented this-- very polished-- picture to the world. They have all these-- big names on the board while at the same time they were engaged in a very-- elaborate m-- money-- money-laundering-- scheme.

They basically set up a bank in the country where-- money would come in from-- from all sorts of shady outfits overseas and then get laundered, transferred out, and they earned massive-- commissions on that. Again we're talking about millions and hundreds of millions of dollars. And that bank was operating under the protection of the president's son. And so Eugene-- Eugene Gourevitch, one of the characters, after his Italian-- entanglement-- before-- he was indicted he moved to Kyrgyzstan and sort of used his expertise in financial flows to-- essentially become-- the guy in Kyrgyzstan who helped set up these-- money-laundering operations.

He of course denies that he-- laundered money. Anyways after the revolution he-- was smuggle out of the country by these Chechen operatives-- who actually come from the same village, the same-- oddly enough in the same enclave that the Tsarnaev brothers, the-- marathon bombers come from. It's this-- enclave. It's not not an enclave. It's just a part of-- Kyrgyzstan near the-- Kazakh border where a lot of the-- Chechen-- diaspora lives.

So because Gourevitch after the revolution became this public enemy number one, he was this Russian Jewish financier, almost like a caricature-- the people were-- the-- the Italian indictment became public. And so the new government, they-- you know, their big-- thing after the revolution was-- you know, the-- you know, the Bakiyev government ripped us off, stole millions and millions of dollars. And all of a sudden they have this boogeyman, sort of this, you know--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

So-- so he's-- he's lying low in Bishkek after the revolution. The Bakiyevs have already gotten out. And presumably he's one of public enemies (SIC) number one. And yeah, tell us a little bit about the plot he hatches with the-- the Chechen group to get out?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

So yeah. So he's-- you know, people are lookin' for him because-- they-- you know, because-- because they think he has a lot of money and has a lot of answer for where the money might be. The owner of the bank and the president's son, they're all out of the country. He is the only one. And so he manages to get his wife and daughter out of the country because-- you know, they're not-- people are not looking for them.

But he at that point has-- a Interpol warrant, Interpor (SIC)-- Interpol red alert because the Italian indictment had just come out. So he's been-- so the Italians are looking for him. And the Kyrgyz government is looking for him. He he can't go anywhere.

So he sit in this apartment-- in Bish-- in Bishkek by himself with a fever. Not-- but doesn't know what to do. And eventually these Chechen guys find him, or he thinks that, you know, his former colleagues just basically-- ratted him out. These Chechen guys just tell him, "We'll get you out. It's going to cost you." He has no choice. They put him in the car. And-- and they drive off through Tokmok which is this Chechen-- you know, settlement-- close to Kazakhstan.

So they drive into Kazakhstan. And then they present him with a bill, \$20 million. He says he has no money. They eventually, you know, take about \$400,000 or \$500,000 of his savings. He says they take his passport. And then so he's in Omati with no money, with no passport. He-- you know, he's under Italian indictment. The Kyrgyz are looking for him.

So he goes U.S.-- U.S. Consulate. And-- and-- and-- and he thinks-- so he plot he hatches is he decides that it's much better to be arrested by the Italians than by the Kyrgyz. And so you go to Italy, you know. You know, they're probably not gonna lynch you or (UNINTEL)--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

So (UNINTEL) shopping for, you know, crooked financiers? (LAUGHTER)

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

So he goes to the U.S. Consulate. And he says-- and of the-- he has a lawyer in-- in-- in New York who's talking to the State Department there. And so he goes-- he goes, "I wanna surrender. I wanna surrender to you so that you can deliver me to the Italians. And, you know, I don't-- I don't wanna go to Kyrgyzstan 'cause they'll kill me," which is-- which is probably true.

And the U.S. Embassy (UNINTEL PHRASE). The U.S. Embassy wouldn't comment on any of this-- of them to confirm that he did go to the embassy. The U.S. Embassy says, "No. You're on your own." So they issue him a new passport. And then-- at that time most of the Bakiyev family had resettled in-- in Belarus in Minsk, another fascinating country, subject for another book that I hope someone will write.

And-- at that point as Gourevitch is getting desperate he gets a call from-- Maxim Bakiyev who's the-- the son of the ousted president, very wealthy guy, the guy on whose behalf Gourevitch had been essentially doing all sorts of-- financial-- sleights of hand. And Maxim gets him out. He puts him on a plane-- that flies him to-- to-- to Minsk, to Belarus. And Gourevitch and-- I talked to a lot o' people about him. And finally-- he-- after I sent him a lot of emails he finally agreed to meet with me.

And we actually met not far from here in Central Park South-- where he used to rent an apartment.

And-- we talked for a while. And so-- and so he-- he tells me, you know, "Maxim got me out because I had-- you know, I was essentially his banker. I had helped him with a lot of things." And so-- he thought that Maxim had-- had a business idea in mind and that's why he helped him. And so-- at that time I sort of wrote him down and-- and forgot about-- forgot about that until-- actually about-- probably about a year later it turns out that there had been-- an-- an American case against-- against Gourevitch for extortion related to Kyrgyzstan.

So to cut a long story short Gourevitch turned-- an F.B.I. informant. And at that time Gourevitch and Maxim were engaged in the-- insider trading and-- in-- in-- in the U.S. So there-- there's an SEC case. So Gourevitch to escape to-- to seek leniency because of the U.S. investigation into him basically agreed to wear a wire.

I don't think he wore a wire. But he-- recorded a lot of stuff on Skype. Gave the F.B.I. this money-laundering conspiracy essential-- enough mon-- sorry-- insider trading conspiracy-- involving the-- the son of the-- of the former president and-- and this other guy in London with pretty-- you know, with details about companies, classic-- classic insider trading, trading ahead of-- IPLs and mergers-- and all that-- including big companies.

So Maxim then was-- there was an-- U.S. warrant for his arrest. Maxim lived in London-- based on the evidence that Gourevitch presented. The U.S. decided not to pursue charges against Maxim. I do not know why. This just happened basically two weeks ago. I-- I don't-- I don't know why the U.S. dropped the charges. So-- and Maxim is in-- is in London now. Gourevitch I think is in Italy. He has kind of fallen off the-- off-- off the grid a little bit.

But last I heard from him he was-- on his way to Italy. And I think he was-- talking to the Italian investigators about, like, a settlement or Italian authorities about a settlement. I-- I had emailed him just shortly before-- the book came out. I-- I'd emailed him-- to see if we could talk again after all the stuff about his work for the F.B.I. surfaced. And then he wrote back to say the timing is terrible. (LAUGHTER) And I-- And I haven't heard-- haven't heard from him-- again. So-- that's-- that's the story.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah. It-- reminds me of another high-profile case of-- the James Giffen case in-- in Kazakhstan, sort of the intrigue, the trial and then-- you know, oh, oops. All these things come up in the last week before the trial. And then--

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Yeah--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

--and then (UNINTEL)--

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

--all-- all sorts of conspiracy theories. Some--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah, yeah--

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

--of them have-- a foothold in reality actually.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Tell us a little bit about-- so you-- you paint this, you know, wonderful portrait-- wonderful but very vivid portrait of-- Kyrgyzstan. What's the U.S. reaction to all of these developments? And, you know, what is the U.S.-- principally concerned with or engaged with in Kyrgyzstan at this time?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

So another-- sort of layer of-- of-- of-- of intrigue in the book is the fact that the U.S. has been heavily engaged in the region through all of it. Because-- because of the war in Afghanistan the U.S. has used, you know, Kyrgyzstan and-- and-- and Uzbekistan as-- as-- as a place to put up big military bases and for trans-shipment rights.

So U.S.-- the U.S. was-- and still is-- very much engaged in the region. In Kyrgyzstan-- interestingly enough the-- in the run up to the first revolution the U.S. at the time-- was very much involved in democracy promotion. It's-- so-- the-- the-- the U.S. played a role in the-- in the Tulip Revolution in-- just in terms of supporting the civil society. The Tulip Revolution was, you know, carried out by the local opposition. But the U.S. support, financial and moral, did help.

I mean, it was the-- the time when democracy promotion was very high on the-- U.S. agenda. When an interesting thing happened after the revolution when the Bakiyev-- when the Bakiyev government came to power and became obviously very corrupt and-- and-- and-- and bad not to mince words, and-- all of a sudden the U.S.-- you know, tamped down its-- democracy promotion rhetoric.

And the-- the thinking was that the U.S. maintain and still maintains this very large

military base there. Alex has written about this in-- intrigue much better than I. But-- you know, if faced with the evidence of-- you know, the abuses of the-- of the new government the U.S. basically kept silent because they wanted to maintain the base. And they did not wanna rock the boat. And it's-- ironically it's the Russians-- who-- supported the-- the opposition the second time around.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

The Russians were-- angry and disappointed because they've been plotting Bakiyev to kick out the American military base. The Russians also have a base there. Actually here I should say that Alex has written a great book, *Great Games, Local Rules*, that deal-- that talks a lot about the-- base politics in-- in Kyrgyzstan and in Central Asia.

But basically-- Bakiyev promised the Russians that he was gonna kick the Americans out. The same day-- all happens during the press conference in Moscow-- the Russians promise him this multibillion dollar package of loans and-- and-- and-- and grants. And-- the Americans are concerned. And we know part of this through WikiLeaks. So the ambassador in Bishkek starts writing cables to Washington saying, "We need to pay more. We need to-- we need to raise the rent for the base. Because otherwise he's gonna take the Russian money and kick us out."

I mean, (UNINTEL) basically wrote that. I'm-- I'm paraphrasing. But it's-- it was-- was very close. The essence of the cable was that. And the U.S. raises the rent. Bakiyev takes the money, tells the Russians-- I don't know what he tells the Russians. But the upshot is it seems like he tells the Russians, "I'm not gonna kick out the Americans."

And then what happens is-- a series of scathing news reports and documentaries airs on Russian television about the-- about the Bakiyev government. The Russian state televisions of course a staple in-- in Kyrgyz homes and across the former Soviet Union. So-- so this B-- anti-Bakiyev PR campaign take-- takes place a few months before the revolutions.

So you have the first revolution that was supported by the Americans while the Russians were sort of silent. The second revolution was supported by the Russians while the Americans were silent. I'm-- I'm simplifying and exaggerating. But the essence is-- you know, not far from the truth--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah. And-- and I think what-- what-- complicates it even further, that there're

actors on the ground who actively wanna take credit for that, right? Both in-- there's-- a U.S.A. (UNINTEL) contracts on one end but then, you know, Russian intelligence operatives sort of saying, "Yeah, you know, that was all our doing." So it's-- very difficult to sort out who's doing what and who's really to blame and-- and in (UNINTEL) this-- this part of the world.

You know, I-- I-- I-- I mean, you know-- you know, hey, th-- thanks for the reference to-- to my-- basically (UNINTEL). The-- the only thing I would add is I-- I-- it was a really interesting time in terms of how a lot of not just U.S. western operatives-- interpreted a lot of the violence that you're describing. That for some reason a lot o' people say, "Well, this is almost a sign of political stability." You know, reporters going off of windows and so forth, just that Bakiyev regime, it's so stable.

It was just-- a bizarre kind of reasoning that the authoritarianism in and of itself was proof that-- the regime was gonna last which-- which I thought was a fundamental misreading of recent Kyrgyz history as you s-- sort of-- sort of put out.

Let's switch countries for a sec. Because one of the most poignant-- chapters of the book is what you find after the-- events of Andijan in that city. So-- a lot of us here are familiar with the events of Andijan. But maybe you can just provide a capsule summary and then tell us-- how you got in and then what you found those days that you were doing your reporting there?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Yeah. And so-- as many of you know Islam Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan-- in power uninterrupted since-- the early-- '90s. A textbook case of-- very-- sort of brutal-- dictatorship and has been-- from day one and also our ally-- because of the trans-shipment-- rights for-- for Afghanistan.

So he has been-- one of his-- big campaigns has been against (UNINTEL) Islam-- ever since he came to power. Ironically his first name is Islam. But, you know, it's-- as I write in the book, never has a man wore his first name with more irony. I mean, he is engaged in-- in-- in a very brutal, elaborate campaign against-- you know, Muslims of all stripes. And there have been Islamists in Uzbekistan. They're-- they're not all-- you know, peaceful-- believers as they will have you believe.

There have been violent ex-- you know, Islamist-- Islamists seeking to overthrow the government of-- of Uzbekistan. But-- Karimov has largely used that-- that threat or that perceived threat to crack-- to crack down across the board. I mean, we've seen something similar in Egypt too. So he's in no way unique. He's used a kernel of-- of truth to then launch the massive-- to run with the matter for Jihad essentially against-- against Islamists but also against any sort of (UNINTEL)(NOISE) organized opposition.

And so coming back to Andijan, this is-- 2005. He-- as part of his-- campaign against Islamists he jails or his courts, his prosecutors-- put-- a dozen-- businessmen in the t-- in the town of Andijan on trial. Now they ran like a very successful small

businesses, small and medium-sized businesses. And quite a lot of people-- they were accused of belonging to this very obscure heretofore unknown Islamist sect called Path to Faith.

So they're facing trial in-- in Uzbekistan. And in a lot of the countries in that part of the world if there's-- a case against you there's, you know, pretty close to 100% conviction rate. And in Uzbek jails there's a lot of torture. So that's the context. So these guys are on trial in-- in Andijan. And they're (UNINTEL) to go to jail.

A jailbreak happens. So their friends, their allies, their families, they put together-- a jailbreak. Some of them are armed. So they're by no m-- means-- completely innocent or Boy Scouts. They storm the prison. Some people have com-- compared to storm the Bastille day in-- in France where they stormed the prisons, the bastion of oppression. Others have said what is generously that they are armed thugs maybe with terrorist connections that stormed this jail. Think the truth lies somewhere in between.

I think it was mostly-- a desperate act by a few thugs because they knew if they don't do this these guys are gonna disappear into prison-- forever. So-- the jail is stormed. On one side the-- the-- all but 15 people-- from that-- from-- jail, everyone else escapes from prison. And then something else happens. There is-- a massive rally in-- in Andijan that day attended by people who had-- nothing at all to do with this business-- of the jailbreak. There was this commotion in town. A lot of people were dissatisfied about the government as it is. So people (UNINTEL)--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Just a rally in the central square of-- yeah--

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

It's a very small town. It's a rally in the central square. People start pouring in or they're coming home from work. Or-- and-- and they see something's happening. They go. So hundreds and hundreds of people congregate on that square. So 90% of them have nothing to do with the jailbreak or these people in prison. They're either gawkers, or just passersby or people who happen to be in the area.

So they go in there. And there's a loudspeaker that's-- being passed around the crowd. There's-- there's some talk by the local officials maybe (UNINTEL) himself might be-- might come to town to-- to address the rally. The rally mostly talks about just the daily problems of-- you know, of Andijan (UNINTEL).

Something else happens (UNINTEL PHRASE) (COUGH) dispatches the military. And-- and a massacre takes place. It has been said that this-- you know, the-- the-- the bloodiest-- crackdown on peaceful protestors since-- (UNINTEL) since-- Tiananmen in China in '89. There is no figure of how many people died that day. I mean, estimates range from a few hundred to over a thousand-- most of them

innocent-- innocent-- civilians, kids-- a lot o' kids.

Well, so-- I at the time when this happened I was-- I was actually in Brussels when-- when the massacre was happening. But I kept traveling back and forth to the region. I had been in Uzbekistan just a month before-- Andijan. So-- and I obviously I wanted to get in. And so I flew into Dashkan. I had a Russian passport so I can travel easily in the-- in those places.

And-- and I got a car in-- in the airport. And I decided to drive to Andijan. Of course there's-- a police-- siege. They were not letting anyone in because they're cleaning up essentially a massacre (UNINTEL) and-- getting ready to present-- an alternative story for public consumption that is was a terrorist uprising that was dealt with swiftly and-- and-- and justly. Which-- wasn't true.

So they don't let me in. And the next day I-- you know, I go to the local airline. And turns out there are direct flights. So as-- I say in the book, "In-- in-- in a dictatorship incompetence is a virtue." So then they'd cut off traffic to Andijan. But they forgot to cancel flights over their own-- siege. So I flew in-- to a neighboring town and then drove in.

And then-- I was just-- with a very-- a brave-- local colleagues, Abdul Malig Baboyev (PH), Abdul (UNINTEL) was in exile-- in-- in-- in Germany-- helped me a lot. So we-- we flew in together. And we were able for two days to-- to report there-- talking to survivors. And this is before. So I was there probably two days after the-- after the massacre, maybe a little sooner. About a few days later-- the Uzbek government started silencing another who spoke out. There's a human rights defender that we spoke to who has been in jail for seven years a few days later.

And a lot of the victims of the families and the victims were not yet fully intimidated. There were mostly dazed-- and-- and-- and-- and in mourning. And so they talked-- very freely about what had happened. And so we spent a few days-- reporting there. Yeah.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah. And tell us a little bit about just the atmospheric and the scenes of-- of-- of what you found, I mean, just some o' the physical evidence of-- of what has transpired. Like what-- what-- what did it look like?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Well, when I-- when I got there most of the bodies had been already-- had been already-- cleaned up. But you could still see some-- but not many. But there's story-- there's one story I talk about in the book is about this guy who just turned 16. And it was-- the-- the-- massacre took place and it was actually-- Friday the 13th, May 13th-- 2005.

And his mother-- his name was Yogder Bek (PH), his mother wanted to cook-- a meal the next day and have-- a late birthday party. So-- and she realized she didn't have enough meat. And so she sent him-- she asked him to go and buy more-- buy more meat. And so he-- picked up a friend. They're both 16 years old. And they walked off to the market. Well, as they were walking to the market this uprising happened and saw the rally. So they got onto the square. And he never came home. He never came home.

And-- and his mother-- his mother and older brother spent the next day-- you know, looking for him. And they-- so they were basically walking through Andijan. And at that point it's-- you know, it's-- it's a massacre so bodies everywhere. And they're, like, stopping by the side of the road lifting-- you know, sheets looking at faces, going to hospitals and morgues and-- and-- and finally they find him in a morgue. He's dead. The friend is dead too.

And so in the-- there are a lot of stories like that there. So-- the-- the Uzbek government later-- you know, kept saying that those are just terrorists and it's their fault and, you know, they're-- you know, very few innocent victims. But this is-- patently un-- untrue. You know, the-- the-- the follow-up to that is-- you know, so the-- U.S. had a military base there. And so after the-- massacre-- there was a debate-- actually within the administration about how to respond.

So to make it black or white do we keep silent and-- and probably keep the base. Or do we speak out and probably face-- the consequences. Some of this is detailed in Donald Rumsfeld's memoir actually which is fascinating. So he of course says that we should have kept silent. Because if we take the approach that we criticize every dictator for what he does at home then we won't be able to do business with other country whose-- whose help we need.

And that's hard and cold. But that's also true. I mean, we do need countries that are not democracies. We deal with them all the time. Anyways but at the time they kind of-- the-- the (UNINTEL) prevail. And-- the U.S. did criticize Karimov. And he-- kicked out the base. So-- a few years later the U.S. is back there. There is no base. But there are-- all sorts of trans-shipment agreements for Afghanistan.

Of course now the U.S. (UNINTEL PHRASE) the troops. Uzbekistan will play-- a big role again. So-- five years after Andijan the U.S. essentially quietly-- you know, resuscitated its alliance with-- with the guy-- for the pure expediency of-- of-- of Afghanistan. That's sort of the story here--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Right. Of course-- NATO has just opened an office in-- in Tashkent formally. And-- and the U.S., Germany and the U.K., they'll all be reverse transiting out of Uzbekistan. The U.S. can also use Pakistan routes. But-- but-- the Brits and the Germans don't have a choice. I mean, given where they are they have to go through-- through there and do those deals.

One-- one final segment before we throw it out-- regarding what happened again in the valley in-- June of 2010. And-- and you document these violent episodes between-- ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. And-- and here you probably know what's coming on-- on my end 'cause-- I-- I-- I flagged this-- a little bit. But you refer to the events that happened as a civil war. And I just wanted to give you a chance to tell us what do you mean by using this term? Why is this a civil war for you? How do you see the dynamics of the conflict, the aftermath of the conflict? You know, what did you find when you were there?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

It's-- it's a good question. So just briefly to back up. So after the second revolution-- in Kyrgyzstan these ethnic clashes broke out in-- in the south of Kyrgyzstan between the Kyrgyz and the Uzbeks who-- you know, constitute-- a very-- big-- ethnic minority in the south of Kyrgyzstan which borders on Uzbekistan.

So-- about 400 people died. Most of them were Uzbeks. And so the-- the-- the clashes-- so the Kyrgyz state-- could fall back on friendly police and prosecutors and later judges. When investigations took place the Uzbeks basically had only themselves. And so there was fighting-- between armed gangs, skirmishes here and there. And most of the victims were Uzbeks.

Yeah, I-- I called this-- the-- the civil war. And I know others have criticized me for using-- for using that term because it-- it implies-- almost a clash between equally-- well-armed combatants. But I-- I covered the civil war in Iraq. And there was also a debate-- whether you can call it the civil war because it didn't look like our civil war-- or any other civil wars. I-- I-- I think I use it sort of more-- loosely. And maybe it's not 100% it's correct.

But it's-- it basically implies-- just that, civil clashes-- between-- various armed groups. Some may have state support. Some may not. In the book I-- I spend-- and my approach-- is oftentimes to focus on individual cases. And sometimes maybe that sort of kind of messes the (UNINTEL) of context. But it-- I think it makes for-- a better, like, a more visceral understanding of-- of-- of what happened.

I focus on one case-- where-- a curious policeman was brutally murdered-- in the middle of a rally. And the person who was jailed-- for his-- for organizing his-- his murder is this Uzbek human rights activists. Many of you know the name. And people have-- you know, kind of adopted his cause now. He's still in prison and-- serving out a life sentence, Azimjan Askarov.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Who you also interviewed?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

I've-- I've interviewed him before the government kind of-- stopped allowing people to inter-- I interview-- I interviewed him-- in prison. So that kind of followed the pattern-- of-- of the after the civil war or the c-- whatever-- whatever term of art one may want to use, after the violence-- so there are all these investigations.

And even though most of the victims were-- of the-- of the clashes were Uzbek, well, in those investigations, prosecutions, the Uzbeks turned out to be also the perpetrators-- disproportionately so. And Askarov was one of them. He-- from the available evidence it seems that he was framed by-- by the Kyrgyz police who did not like him for reasons of-- of-- of him having been a human rights defender who accused the police of all sorts of-- crimes before the clashes-- by friendly Kyrg-- Kyrgyz judges.

So he was-- there is-- you know, he was tortured and beaten up. And-- so I-- I kind of use his case and-- and also the-- the case of the-- of that-- of that policeman to talk about the-- kinda the broader dynamics of the-- of the civil war. Anyways-- he's still in-- he's still in jail. Yeah.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

And that I guess just-- just one more-- now that you've written the book, and it's out there and-- and-- and it is remarkable that everything is this compressed sort of five-year period-- has your thinking about the region changed at all? I mean, how do you view this five years? This is an exceptional five years?

Looking forward I would never ask you to go on the record and predict what's gonna happen, but is this-- is this sort of-- these bouts of instability, are these likely to recur? Or is this sort of-- a unique time where you had sort of, you know, call it revolutions and this geopolitical intrigue and so forth? With your perspective now sitting in Beijing what do you-- what do you make of this period that you spent in Central Asia and that you've documented so compellingly in this book?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Thank you. I-- (CLEARS THROAT) it's-- as you say it's-- it's hard to predict. Sort of one thing that has given me-- I mean, when I started reporting in the-- in the region in-- 2003-- and the first revolution in Kyrgyzstan I-- I, along with probably a few other people, kinda fell for this fallacy of-- democracy that will follow-- a revolution. People kinda use those words liberally after the-- the first revolution, democracy. So, you know, freedom-- and all that.

So I-- I-- I've-- I've become-- very skeptical. And I've stopped using those terms when it comes to Kyrgyzstan. I mean, there is still constant-- one of the chapters is called *The Land of Perpetual Revolution*. So there is constant-- tumult-- in that-- in-- in-- in--

- in that country. Will there be another revolution. I hope not. The government now is ineffectual and weak. But it's by no means-- as-- as corrupt or as-- as consciously evil-- pardon the loaded term-- as its-- predecessor. Now the-- the interesting part is-- what happens in Uzbekistan.

I mean-- Kyrgyzstan for all the intrigue it managed to pack in-- into its very small territory-- is still that, it's-- it's very small. Uzbekistan is a big place, like almost 30 million people. When Karimov goes and-- and even though it seems like he'll never go-- natural causes will take effect eventually. They have to, right. And so he will go. And that's unclear what will happen there.

And there are all sorts of stress factors. I mean, there are-- there are Islamists. There are all sorts of opposition groups many of them abroad and not very effectual. So what happens when that shoe drops is-- is-- is-- is unclear. It's-- it's hard to predict. But I think we'll-- we'll see a lot more unrest there. And so-- maybe they'll be a restless valley too.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Valley stays restless. Okay, great. Well, so let's-- let's-- take some comments and some questions from the audience. Just let us know who you are-- for and then-- and we'll-- we'll start here. And?

AUDIENCE ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yes. (UNINTEL PHRASE) Democracy Initiative. And this is a question specific to the-- Maxim Bakiyev situation and-- the attempts, and the feeble as I think attempts-- of the-- the tum-- you know, the atumbayabah (PH) government-- to go after and try to find-- you know, the-- the money that the family, the clan was said to have stashed away. My-- my feeling is that they n-- they-- they-- haven't really pursued it in good faith though they do say to the public that they're still after it. It doesn't seem like they're really earnestly trying to--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

You mean the new Kyrgyz government?

AUDIENCE ALEXANDER COOLEY:

The new Kyrgyz-- money in the-- try to find the money and what happened to it. What is your sense about what is going on there?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

No, it's a good question. And it's true they have-- launched-- a number of investigations. I think-- quite a few of them are-- are-- are open. And they-- they have not yet come up with a massive-- haul of-- of money. And maybe if they have maybe they have pocketed it. I-- I-- I don't know. I mean, we saw that after the first revolution too is investigations were open. And it's-- great-- great fanfare. And then people realize that there is actually money to be made using the same-- corrupt schemes.

I'm not saying the current government is doing that. But, you know, there's-- you know, we have to remember that-- some of the same characters are involved from revolution to revolution. So after the first one-- the-- a good example would be the-- the-- something I talk about in the book, the corruption involving the fuel contracts for the American-- military base, multi-million dollar-- contracts, very lucrative.

So the after-- you know-- during the Akayev governments before the first revolution his son-in-law controlled those deliveries. And so the Americans were kind of in business with him. And then after the revolution the Kyrgyz government started investigating corruption, made all these noises. And all of a sudden-- this is fascinating to talk about it to the former Kyrgyz ambassador who was involved in this-- in Washington. And all of a sudden-- so she was pressing all the-- because the F.B.I. was involved.

And all of a sudden she gets a signal from the government just cool it. 'Cause they-- they've seen how it's done. And they're, like, "Great, we'll do the same thing." 'Cause there's so much money at stake. And so-- so-- you know, I-- I will wait. You-- I don't know what the state of those investigations in terms of finding money is. But given the prior history of-- of such investigation I wouldn't be too optimistic. And also there are some people who knew how to hide money. So. (LAUGH)

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Shocked. Shocked. Yes, sir?

PETER POLLEY:

Peter Polley, long-term volunteer in the area. (CLEARS THROAT) My question is-- if it can be answered will be probably by both of you. A wonderful-- apotheosis of money-laundering, the Asia Universal-- Bank in-- (CLEARS THROAT) in Bishkek had-- three directors, three U.S. senators. Bob Dole is one of them. Does anybody have any idea whether those senators were actually paid as directors?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Yes. They were paid. So there was-- Bob Dole and there was.

OFF-MIC MALE SPEAKER:

(UNINTEL) Louisiana.

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Yeah, Johnston I think his last name is. They were paid. And this was-- someone told me this who was familiar with their hiring. They were paid \$175,000 a year-- for-- I try to reach Bob Dole. He wouldn't speak to me. But Joh-- Senator Johnston-- did speak to me. He didn't confirm-- or deny compensation level. They were paid a lot of money for very little work. But-- but they were paid for just one reason, to provide legitimacy to this operation. They had a few board meetings.

They were also promised stock options 'cause Asia Universal Bank was on the cusp of an IPO-- when the revolution happened. They had-- they had established links with-- major financial institutions that you-- in the area. (LAUGH) All the big ones, Citibank and-- and-- and others. I'm actually not sure about Citibank. So I won't-- I won't-- I won't-- probably shouldn't throw out names if I'm not sure. But-- big financial-- international financial institutions were involved.

And so-- they were also promised stock options which they never got because there was never an IPO. But they were paid. Gourevitch interestingly enough-- contributed \$4,000 or \$5,000 to the re-election campaign of Bob Dole's-- wife-- who was-- I think running for Senate or Congress. I don't remember. She was seeking re-election. And she-- she eventually lost. But-- it was some funny nugget.

Bef-- you know, so-- so he gave her \$5,000. And she at the time ran this-- ad on television against her opponent-- accusing her opponent of taking money from godless Americans. It was-- she took money from some-- NGO that, you know, was not religious enough in her-- anyway. So-- so yes, they were paid-- as far as I know.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yes, sir?

JOHN BELUSHI:

(UNINTEL PHRASE) Central Asian country--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Who are you?

JOHN BELUSHI:

Oh, John Belushi, unaffiliated. These Central Asian countries are-- belong to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. What-- to what extent has China penetrated this region? And for what-- for what purpose are they doing it?

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yes. Good question. You're in Beijing. What's-- what's the view in Beijing about Beijing?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Would you-- would you like to take that (UNINTEL)?

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

You first. You first, yeah--

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Okay. Well, Beijing-- a few things there. The Chinese are very worried about American military presence in-- in the region. And so we say that our bases in-- in Afghanistan but also in-- in-- in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere in the region are for-- for those purposes. For-- the Chinese see differently. They're worried about being encircled. In this climate of tensions between these two countries-- you know, they've-- you know, the Chinese have-- have basically tried to get the Americans out of the region.

And they've used the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to issue-- you know, a declaration a few years ago asking the Central Asian governments to set a date for the withdrawal of American forces. Be-- beyond the bases the Chinese have also used-- so the-- the Chinese have this Three Evils Doctrine. So the things that they consider very dangerous to the-- stability of-- of the state, it's extremism, terrorism and separatism. So they place them equal-- they-- they consider them-- they rate them equally-- as equally great risks.

And so they've used that to-- you know, to crack down on weaker separatism. Because some of these guys are based in-- in-- in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. So

they've-- they've essentially exported their dome-- have tried to export their domestic-- way of dealing with-- with dissent and-- and-- and opposition to-- to-- to-- to Central Asia. And the Central Asians have been very receptive to this. Because their systems are similar, especially in Uzbekistan.

They have-- you know, put a lot of-- the Uzbeks, for instance, security services put a lot of pressure on the neighboring countries to extradite-- you know-- all sorts of opponents back to Uzbekistan. Or failing that they would just go across the border and kill them which also happened. But-- yeah. So that's-- it's-- you know, it's an interesting organization.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah. And I think the-- your point you make about exporting this internal doctrine that-- that very much frames a lot of the types of engagement that China has with the region. Economically-- you know, China's providing a lot of development assistance, building a lot of infrastructure. But they're doing it-- from the perspective of wanting to different the Western promise-- province of Xinjiang. So it's this sort of, you know, inside-out type of strategy.

And the-- and-- and the reasoning is very much, you know, if Xinjiang develops then it will become more politically stable. And how do we get it developed. We try and connect it and so forth and build greater links to the outside world.

JOHN BELUSHI:

One follow up. Is-- are they putting pressure on the government of Pakistan which they're allies right-- to-- clamp down on the-- Islamic-- movement of Uzbekistan? They're putting pressure on-- Pakistan to-- you know, they're-- they're operating in to Fatah areas of Pakistan. So I would think they would put some pressure on Pakistan to try to get them out.

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

The Islamic movement in Uzbekistan is-- (UNINTEL) you know-- so a lot of them before-- you a lot of them died. They-- they were fighting with the Taliban-- you know-- right after the 2011-- two-- 2001-- U.S. invasion. And so a lot of them were killed. The question of how effective they are and how much of a threat they pose is-- is an open question.

I mean, you have the government of Uzbekistan who exaggerates their threat. There is no doubt there are some die hard-- IMU operatives in-- in those areas. I-- I-- I do think the-- sort of the Islamist factor is a little bit overplayed. And I'm sure they're-- you know, the Uzbeks are putting a lot of pressure on-- on Afghanistan and on Pakistan to deal with that, yeah. What do you-- what's your sense, Alex?

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah. I mean, I-- I think the-- there's very high-level dialogues between China and Pakistan. But a lot of it from the Pakistani perspective is to try and posture to a domestic audience that they have an alternative to The States, right. So yes, there are links. There are discussions. There's concern about-- I-- I think a few months ago that-- some violence in Xinjiang-- was inspired by a group that was sort of-- nurtured in Pakistan and so forth.

But I think a lot of it is to sort of-- signal domestically that there are sort of other alternatives to just being sort of the U.S. security partner. And the economic relationship is really taking off as it is with, you know, China and-- and a number of these countries.

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

That's another important point if I just may add there-- very-- very briefly. I mean, both-- the U.S. and Russia have engaged in all sorts of intrigue in the region, have meddled incredibly-- in-- in-- in the internal affairs of those kind. So China actually has not, not that we know of.

Their-- their foreign policy is obviously not as transparent as-- as ours, or at least not publicly discussed. But in the region there is not a perception-- at least not yet that-- that the Chinese are tryin' to overthrow governments, or-- or get a base in there or make sure that another base gets-- kicked out, even though there were indications that they're obviously doing that.

And so-- but they are exporting a lot-- I mean, they're-- they've used Central Asia as a place that has a lot of gas and oil that China needs. So they've been very active in building pipelines, negotiating export agreements. So their role has not been all negative by-- by-- by no means. You know, very positively developing cooperation and all that. But people are afraid of China because people are afraid of China because it's big, and-- and-- and big and very big, and with a lot of ambitions. So there is that old mis-- you know-- you know, nebulous fear. But, you know.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah, no. Very much so. Yes, sir?

MALCOLM ARNOLD:

Malcolm Arnold. You know, Elizabeth Dole was-- you know, president of the Red-- Red Cross-- American Red Cross and also-- a senator. In that area is-- are you seeing the money laundering being used with NGOs-- and-- you know, policies of USAID? How is that coming to-- together in that region?

You know, the State Department makes no-- bones about it. Foundations make no bones about it that they work together as far as projecting, you know, American interest. Were you see-- how are you seeing that-- that money-laundering and-- et cetera, how is that working in that-- in that space, the-- the foundations with-- you know, government interests, with corporate interests, et cetera?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

You know, mean the aid being misused or being red-- diverted?

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Well, or concern with money-laundering so that we launch anti money-laundering projects? Do you mean that--

MALCOLM ARNOLD:

Right. So you can take the money-laundering and then donate it back to foundations, right--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Oh, I see--

MALCOLM ARNOLD:

--you-- you know. And-- and money's being laundered in-- in-- in a way that's going back to the foundations that then are then propagating-- a certain agenda that helps the-- the-- the regime that's in power or in combination with U-- U.S. interests?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Yeah. I'm-- well, Kyrgyzstan is-- just to back up, I mean-- in-- in-- in a region that has basically stamped out NGOs-- you know, Kyrgyzstan is-- you know, stands apart because they've-- they've had the incredible amount of NGOs involved in all sorts of-- activities. A lot of them are funded by-- you know, by-- from-- from-- from U.S. source and from Europe too. And-- Akayev-- joked that if-- you know, if Kyr-- if the Netherlands is-- is a land of tulips then Kyrgyzstan is a land of NGOs.

And so he created this sort of climate of-- this very permissive climate for-- for these non-governmental organizations to come in. They were not all involved in politics. They were involved, like, in rural health care and-- and agriculture, but also in

politics. And so in that sort of the-- the-- the seeds of that, sort of the civil society, you know-- kind of planned in a Akayev days.

The irony is of course he-- he was overthrown in large part because he allowed the civil society to take root. And then it-- it essentially outgrew him and created this infrastructure-- and this culture of-- of-- of-- of-- of protest that-- that helped-- overthrow him. So-- I'm not sure how much-- money-laundering there has been with-- with-- with the NGOs. I think from I've seen it's mostly been-- done with-- with businesses. Because there's just-- the pot of money is so much bigger (UNINTEL)--

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah, exactly. Exactly? Yeah, and-- and-- and I-- I think actually this is a little bit of-- growing issue that's of concern to the activist community that-- NGOs are being stifled under the pretext of combatting money-laundering, that these Financial Action Task Force recommendations-- against anti-terrorism and money-laundering are being wielded to change domestic legislation to make it much easier to clamp down on the activities of a lot of NGOs.

So I-- I think there's a potential for abuse there-- in the name of anti-money-laundering. But I think it's focused as, you know, the-- the-- the big players here are the untraceable correspondent accounts, right, that-- that pl-- places like Asia Universal had. And, you know, the report that you also site, the Global Witness report-- in grave secrecy does a wonderful job of just pointing out all of the hundreds of different correspondent accounts and offshore vehicles-- that were routed through this-- those institutions--

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Yeah, for to interested in-- in the region or in money-laundering or just in plain old-- investigative reporting, that report is really worth reading, Global Witness-- Grave Secrecy. They spend months if not years just using forensic, you know, accounting and-- and-- and-- and investigative-- reporting to just trace in-- in elaborate detail paths of single money transfer.

It's very, very hard to do. Because there are people who get paid a lot of money to make sure that this is untraceable. And so-- they haven't got all the answers. But they have come closer than anyone else to basically giving you a map of how it worked. And so yeah. I site it in the book, yeah.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

And-- one more here. Yes, sir?

JOHN TOWNSEND:

I'm-- I'm John Townsend. I'm a family friend, Philip, of your in-laws.

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

I know who you are. (LAUGHTER)

JOHN TOWNSEND:

That's my (UNINTEL PHRASE). Not my only reason for being here. As I read the book I found it terrific and fascinating, a lot of it new to me. I-- I was particularly interested, something I didn't know, that Stalin-- sort of in the style of the British in the Middle East had taken out his red pencil and drawn the borders of the-- stans, I guess in the '30s.

Was it-- what-- what do we know about his own Georgian background-- ethnicity-- influencing that particular decision and his-- perception of how the various ethnics groups would-- get along or not get along-- within the new Soviet-- empire?

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah. And if I just-- is a really good place I think also to end. And-- and-- and-- and just to get your take on how much of the restlessness in a valley stems from that? How much of it is perhaps opportunistically attributed to that-- and-- and so forth being between these different actors-- pursuing their own agendas? Does it all come back to Stalin?

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

A lot o' Russian stories do come back to Stalin-- sooner or later. But-- I'm not-- I'm not an expert on-- on Stalin. I-- I'm sure there are people in the room who know more about it than I do. But my sense of it is that, you know, his overriding goal was unity, unity of the country-- and he was not going to stop at anything-- to-- to-- to assure that. And so his ethnic-- ethnic policies-- were basically designed to weaken any-- any-- any potential challenge to-- to the central state.

And he did that in part well-- well, one thing he did, he was just-- uprooted entire ethnicities that he felt were unreliable and tossed them into Siberia including the Chechens-- and-- and-- and the Germans and the Turks-- many of whom lived within the Soviet Union. In Central Asia, I mean, at the time in the-- in the '20s in the beginning of the century there was-- a significant sort of pan-Turk-- pan-Turkism (PH). I mean, they-- so the-- these-- these peoples-- Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz, and Kazaks and-- and Turkmen-- they did not necessarily they-- saw themselves as such.

They had those identities. But they had to sort of a super-identity of being this-- pan-Turkic you know, identity. Stalin was-- and-- and other Soviet-- you know-- ethnicities-- alchemists were very-- afraid of that. Because, you know, all of a sudden you-- you would have not like four or five little countries, but you would have, like, a lot of coun-- a lot of people united under this umbrella of-- of, you know, pan-Turkism perhaps. And they have Islam.

And so if you-- you join-- you know, you can sort of-- you know, you sit there with, like, enough, you know, Georgian wine you can just sort of see how this could become a problem. And so his-- his idea was to just-- sort of div-- divide and conquer-- the-- the-- the-- you know, there's a historian I think, (UNINTEL) Susak (PH). He-- he-- he has a book on-- on Central Asia.

He-- he talks a lot ab-- about this. And it's the best description I've found. So it's-- those-- those are not fake-- boundaries. They're not fake. They're not just randomly drawn. And the-- they're not-- fake ethnicities. But they were-- the lines were drawn in such a way-- that-- that divided people-- divided clans, divided families, divided ethnicities. And-- and-- and-- and coming back-- to-- to your question, Alex. So in this-- in the sort of-- in the Soviet Union it didn't really matter that much. 'Cause they're sort of lines on the map.

But it began to matter with-- with-- with independents when the-- you know, especially in the-- in the-- in the valley, in the Fergana Valley where, as you say, those jagged border lines-- came into being. And a lot of-- you know, so-- so Fergana Valley is-- is a fairly crowded-- piece of land. And the competition for resources and for the land is-- is pretty intense.

So when the independents in those countries became independent there were clashes-- over the land. And then obviously-- in 2010-- ethnic clashes between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Ethnicity does play a role. But I think-- I think the underlying reason is sort of the lack of development-- and the poverty-- and-- and-- sometimes very sort of exclusionary policies of the governments.

Like in Kyrgyzstan's case-- obviously there's no real-- attempt-- well, there are attempts but there's no real successful way of integrating these-- these (UNINTEL). So-- so-- it doesn't all go back to Stalin. But there are certainly-- things that he did that-- that we still see-- you consequences of today.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Great. All righty. Well, Philip, thank you so much. Will you be around to sign some of the books? (APPLAUSE) (UNINTEL PHRASE)

PHILIP SHISHKIN:

Thank you. I should also say if-- if I may is a big thanks to the-- the Central Eurasia Project-- EurasiaNet.org. They didn't have to host me. And-- and, you know-- you--

you sit in a silo writing your book for two years. And then-- and then all of the sudden people come out and-- and-- and support you including you who come here. So I'm very grateful. (UNINTEL) thank you.

ALEXANDER COOLEY:

Yeah, yeah, thanks to everyone.

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *