



**WEDNESDAY,
JAN 25, 2023
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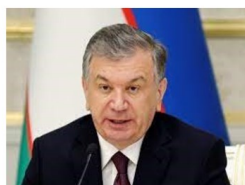
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CERES Brown Bag Talk:

Peaceful transitions of presidential power: Post-transition press rights violations in Central Asia

**ERIC FREEDMAN, PROFESSOR OF JOURNALISM AND
KNIGHT CHAIR IN ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM**

There have been nonviolent presidential transfers of power between 2016 and 2021 in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, all characterized as “consolidated authoritarian regimes.” Those governments continued to constrain press freedom after the transitions, despite constitutional provisions nominally guaranteeing that right. Thus, a hoped-for liberalization of individual rights, in particular press freedom, failed to materialize, a situation consistent with anti-press rights and anti-freedom-of-expression policies and practices in all five Central Asia countries since independence from the Soviet Union. Interviews with human rights activists and journalists, as well as documentary sources such as reports, correspondence, public statements and petitions from international press rights defender groups, strongly suggest that even with a peaceful transition of power after some form of election, mere regime change in authoritarian and semi-authoritarian post-Soviet countries is unlikely to generate increased protection for press freedom. Based on that record, it is also unlikely to occur in uber-authoritarian Turkmenistan, where a peaceful but preordained – rigged – transition in presidential power occurred in March 2022.



2016



2019



2021