

RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY

NO FREEDOM WITHOUT MEDIA FREEDOM

**INTRODUCTION:
KURT VOLKER,
SENIOR FELLOW AND MANAGING DIRECTOR,
CENTER FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS
AT JOHNS HOPKINS SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**WALTER ISAACSON,
CHAIRMAN,
US BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**THOMAS A. DINE
PRESIDENT,
AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

**REMARKS BY:
H.E. KAREL SCHWARZENBERG,
FOREIGN MINISTER,
CZECH REPUBLIC**

**PANEL:
GOLNAZ ESFANDIARI,
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT,
EDITOR, PERSIAN LETTERS BLOG
RFE/RL**

**CARL GERSHMAN
PRESIDENT,
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY**

**DAVID KRAMER,
PRESIDENT,
FREEDOM HOUSE**

**AMBASSADOR HUSAIN HAQQANI,
PAKISTAN**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 2011
TIME 4:30 P.M.
JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY**

*Transcript by
Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.*

KURT VOLKER: I think that's it and I think that video deserves a round of applause. (Applause.) The video was prepared by RFE but I was asked on behalf of RFE also to express thanks to the Czech tourism industry, to the Czech tourism ministry and the Security Services Archive in Prague for making available materials for the production of that video.

Welcome. My name is Kurt Volker. I'm senior fellow and managing director here at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins School of International Studies. I'm also a managing director of BGR Group and I also had served in our diplomatic service for some 23 years, including as ambassador to NATO and had a chance to visit the new headquarters in Prague at RFE. And it is a very special day that we have here today.

And I was delighted when RFE and the Czech embassy came to us to ask if we would be willing to host this 60th anniversary event. It's a special day because the 60th anniversary is a time, of course, to commemorate the role that RFE played in the past, including the work that it did in Central and Eastern Europe, but also to pay attention to what RFE is doing today. And we saw the mention of the broadcast to Pakistan.

When I visited the RFE headquarters, I was extremely impressed with the broadcasting they are doing in Afghanistan, and not so much for the broadcasts themselves. You can do quality broadcasting. People do. I was really impressed at the outpouring of support for RFE that came from Afghan people themselves – bags and bags and bags of letters, most of them hand-decorated, expressing thanks and support for the broadcasting that was coming to them out of RFE.

So while this was something that was created at the time of the Cold War and with the view towards supporting freedom and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, it plays today still a very vital role – an extremely vital role – in providing that support in other parts of the world.

We have an outstanding program today. I want to acknowledge some of the distinguished visitors that are here. I've seen a few in the audience. But we have – for example, I saw our ambassador from Hungary, who is currently the rotating chairman of the European Union, Ambassador Szapáry.

We have members of the boards of governors. I saw Victor Ashe here. I saw Ross Johnson I know is here, is a former executive of RFE. Michael Marchetti, Jeff Trimble, Tom Dine, Kevin Klose, all having been directors of RFE.

We have Walter Isaacson, the chairman of the board of governors right now who will speak in a moment. Dennis Mulhaupt I saw here as well. And I did not see Dana Perino although she is here. You're very welcome, of course.

We have several other ambassadors who we anticipate to be here today from countries where RFE is broadcast. I see Ambassador Peter Burian from Slovakia just there. So it is a distinguished audience but it is also a very distinguished group of speakers.

I would like to turn the podium over first to Walter Isaacson who is the chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Then we'll come back and we'll introduce our featured speaker, the foreign minister of the Czech Republic, Karel Schwarzenberg, and then we'll have a

panel discussion about the role of RFE today. So if I may turn it over first to Walter Isaacson. (Applause.)

WALTER ISAACSON: Thank you very much, Ambassador Volker. I've been a huge fan of Kurt's ever since his days as ambassador to NATO, at the NSC and now what he's done here at the Nitze Building, including building a podium so tall I can't see him. (Laughter.) But I assume he's there somewhere.

And I also want to thank all of you all for coming. It's a real honor to welcome you to this celebration of the 60th anniversary of RFE and the broadcast to Czechoslovakia. Much has changed in the world over these six decades, but in some ways the Prague Spring of '68, then the events of 1989 and RFE's role in it serves as a great template for what we're doing to push the free flow of information.

Those of us on the Broadcasting Board of Governors including my – and by the way, Pavel is here. You saw Pavel in the film. Pavel, stand up. You're the one who broke the – (applause). You look taller on film than in person. Isn't that what they always say to movie stars?

But we just came back – our Broadcasting Board of Governors meeting, meeting with Secretary Clinton, who is on the board of governors. But Secretary Clinton, you'll remember, was the person who helped – who I think cut the ribbon to open the RFE headquarters in Prague and that was in 1995 when she was First Lady but also went over there in 2009.

To me, the events in Prague and its role that it's played in helping the spread of democracy is very near and dear to my heart. I was actually a Time Magazine correspondent in 1989 in Bratislava and in Prague watching the events of that period. And I remember first going into my hotel and one of the people who worked there said, can we use your room in the afternoon because the young people like to come to the rooms in the hotel because it's the only place they can get outside satellite T.V. This was a foreign hotel where they put foreigners. And they liked to watch the music videos. And I said, sure.

And then when I went back to – I came early that afternoon to get back to my hotel and there were a bunch of students there but they weren't watching music videos. They were watching the news channels and what was happening in Berlin and what was happening in the Gdańsk shipyards. And I realized that the free flow of information is something in the digital and satellite age that cannot be stopped at borders and that's what the subject of our panel is about, which is from Gutenberg to Zuckerberg, you know, from the printing press to Facebook.

Does the advent of information technology and the advance of the free flow of information tip the arc of history towards democracy of freedom?

There are two answers to that, one of which is obviously yes, that arc bends towards freedom because of the free flow of information. But let us remember another lesson of the Prague Spring of 1968, which is, that spring was quelled. It took another generation, almost another 21 years, before the true flow of freedom could happen.

We are going to hear later from Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg. He comes from a very distinguished family. I'll say this because he's not here. I'm not sure if I would have told this

story if he were, which is he has a great ancestor – Prince Schwarzenberg – who was also in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the great minister. And at one time there was a revolt, a people's revolt, a people's spring in Hungary. And the Russians sent in troops to put down that revolt and later Prince Schwarzenberg said to the Russian minister at the time in 1848: some day we will astonish the world with the depths of our ingratitude. And I do think that that is true, that the repression will always be – come back and haunt you with the depths of ingratitude.

Let me give a shout-out to Husain Haqqani, an old friend of mine and of course the ambassador of Pakistan to the United States. In the struggle for information and for the free flow of information, I must say Ambassador Haqqani, working with our mutual dear late friend Richard Holbrooke, has always been a great help in supporting the free flow of information. One of the most complex relationships I think is the one you have to deal with which is between this town and Pakistan. And thank you very much for being here, Husain.

Now, we see the Arab world has been turned upside down by what's called the Arab Spring. Obviously by even being called the Arab Spring, it hearkens back to the Prague Spring that we're talking about today, whether it's Tunisia or Egypt. And many do credit the free flow of information, the freedom of media, the freedom of press and the freedom of thought and ideas for pushing that ahead.

We do have to remember that always the idea of information and credible information is on the side of individual liberty and democracy. That's what Radio Free Europe has stood for, for 60 years, thanks to Tom Dine and so many others here, and that's what we hope to uphold in the future.

And we have to remind ourselves – Reporters Without Borders keeps telling us about the enemies of the Internet and that's true from Syria to Iran to Saudi Arabia. We're having to use new technologies, including with China, to break down the firewalls to keep that struggle for the free flow of information. And once again, the number according to Freedom House of people with access to free and independent media, believe it or not, has declined over the past few years. And that's why I say that the arc of history may bend towards freedom with the free flow of information, but it's not inevitable. We have to keep pushing and pushing.

So we're going to be treated to a wonderful panel here. The question is whether this Arab Spring is the beginning of a monumental shift in the Middle East or whether it will be short-lived. My view is that even if it seems to be short-lived, even if there's some backsliding, it will be like the Prague Spring: something that will inevitably lead to freedoms. These are the questions we'll consider this afternoon as we move forward and with that, I'd love to turn it back, if I can find him, to the great Ambassador Volker. Thank you. Paul Nitze would be proud. I saw his wonderful portrait back there.

MR. VOLKER: Thank you very much. (Applause.) Thank you. Thank you, Walter. And thank you for those very kind words as well. And I know all of us are avid readers of the biographies that you've done which are just wonderful books. I'd like to turn now to Tom Dine, if I could. We're still waiting on Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg's arrival from Capitol Hill. So we're going to switch this in the program. But as the director of RFE after it moved to Prague, Tom played a particular role in securing the future of that broadcast. And I'd like to invite him to say a few words. Thank you. (Applause.)

THOMAS DINE: Thank you, Kurt. Thank you, Walter. Excellencies and board members, good to have you all here. I come this afternoon as president of the American Friends of the Czech Republic, a nationwide nonprofit American organization that is devoted to improving the relationship between the United States and the Czech Republic. This organization is in the process of rebuilding the statue of Woodrow Wilson, the 28th president of the United States.

Tomáš Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia – democratic Czechoslovakia – and Woodrow Wilson were buddies. They were friends. And down the street on Mass Avenue on the other side of DuPont Circle is a statue of Tomáš Masaryk, which the American Friends of the Czech Republic put up.

And we're doing the twin in Prague and that will be dedicated on October 5th, and it will be located in the park opposite the main train station – railroad station – in Prague at that time. And it isn't by chance that it's on the street called Wilsonova.

So I come here today in that capacity and in co-sponsorship of this event but also, as indicated, as former president of the great organization, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. In that regard, I want to recognize former presidents. Walter has named them; let me do it again. Former presidents and CEOs of RFE/RL – Kevin Klose, Ross Johnson, Michael Marchetti, Jeff Trimble and three others – Jim Buckley, Gene Pell, Jeff Gedmin have RSVP'd their regrets but they certainly wanted to be here.

And Walter has also pointed out a particular person who personifies Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's role in and around the Czech lands and that's Pavel Pechacek, the centerpiece of the video we saw earlier. In the three phases of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's broadcast to Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic during the Communist occupation, during the transition period of the 1980s through the Velvet Revolution and the Velvet Divorce and during the phasing out of the broadcasts as free media emerged in the mid to late 1990s, father and son Pechacek, two heads of the Czech's language service of Radio Free Europe, were the preeminent on-air voices.

Now, I'm going to tell you a little bit about Pavel. First of all, he and I used to go to hockey games in Prague as often as we could, cheering on Praha Sparta.

Pavel applied for and received a six-day visa to enter the country from Munich to cover in the Czech language firsthand happenings in the Czechoslovakian uprising, particularly, the demonstrations in Wenceslaus Square. During that time, it was thought by the security services – that's why they gave the visa – that he would put the best face on the uprisings. To them, that meant just a few expressions. But Pavel, on the other hand, did something different in reporting firsthand: In reporting on the ground, his voice was mesmerizing. It caught on and, as one person in Bratislava said, it caught on like fire across the whole country.

And in the words of a dissident prisoner who later became police chief in the democratic – newly revised democratic Republic of Czechoslovakia, he is quoted as saying, while a political prisoner, "Pechacek in Prague means the political prisoners will be home by Christmas." And they were. Another rise, Pavel, and let us salute you. (Applause.)

Two stories about the Czech language service of Radio Free Europe that I've told a thousand times here in this city, particularly to senators and congressmen, I think are worth sharing here. President Václav Havel recommended that with – recounted that without RFE in Munich broadcasting about each of his political imprisonments and the location of his actual incarcerations, he would have been killed. With modesty and a sense of humor, he remembered hearing a news broadcast one day while he was in prison, his most recent essay being read over the air.

The other is a Havel story as well. He valued the radios enormously. It was his vision to move the operation from Munich to Prague, which was part of his strategy to return the Czech people westward, as part of Europe and then eventually to join NATO and the European Union. In the process of closing the Czech service at the end of the 1990s and early 2000, the president said to me, at the end of each day, when I come here, when I come home, I listen to your Czech services to find out if what I had learned during the course of my activities during the day were correct.

Now, to all the RFE people here, to all of the international broadcasters here, to all those who believe in truth and justice, nothing could be a better story to reinforce reliability and credibility, the essence of our operations and our many listeners. The radios have come a long way since that first broadcast 60 years ago.

But the Czech influence – the Czech role – Czech input, the fact that the Czech and Slovak services were radios of and for the dissidents and eventually future democratic decision-makers has always been a constant. It is no coincidence that President Havel lobbied and convinced President Clinton to move the headquarters to Prague in 1995.

And it is no coincidence that, as our broadcast production increased to meet the need for free media in the former Soviet space, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and now Pakistan, the radios, with the approval of Congress, decided on the organization's continuing role and the building of a modern sophisticated broadcast center in the Hagibor neighborhood of Prague.

So I say thank you to the Czech peoples, the Slovak peoples for being such avid and good listeners and now partners for bringing freedom and democracy to much of the world. Happy birthday, Radio Free Europe. (Applause.)

MR. VOLKER: Thank you very much, Tom. That was really inspiring. I appreciate your giving us those remarks. I want to welcome the foreign minister of the Czech Republic, Karel Schwarzenberg, who was just arrived.

And I went through a list of dignitaries earlier in the introductions, but one who I left out, I left out on purpose. And that is to provide a special note of welcome to the newly arrived ambassador of the Czech Republic here in Washington, Ambassador Gandalovič, former member of the Czech Senate, and if I did my math correctly, presented his credentials exactly 10 days ago. So we're delighted –

AMBASSADOR PETR GANDALOVIČ: Just come.

MR. VOLKER: Just come, so we're delighted that you're here. Thank you. (Applause.) Walter Isaacson, thank you and I know you need to go. But Walter said a few words about

Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg already about his family, his ancestors, Prince Schwarzenberg. But I just wanted to say a couple words about the man himself. In addition to his impeccable sense of timing, arriving just in time for his speech, he also had an impeccable sense of timing in his career.

He was exiled from the Czech Republic – or from Czechoslovakia at the time, but was a staunch supporter of human rights in the East, including his native Czechoslovakia, and from 1994 to 1991, served as the president of the International Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. And then that happened to be the time period when the Berlin Wall came down and it became possible to see those human rights realized. He returned to the Czech Republic, served in the Czech Senate, served as an advisor to President Václav Havel and is now serving – I believe it's your second tour as foreign minister and also as deputy prime minister in the Czech Republic now. So I'd like to welcome you and offer you the podium to hear some of your remarks. So, Minister, welcome and thank you. (Applause.)

MINISTER KAREL SCHWARZENBERG: Ladies and gentleman, I must say I'm especially moved to be here at this jubilee session, jubilee meeting and seminar, for two reasons. First of all, of course in olden times, I was listening to Radio Free Europe myself and it was a good source of information and some information we ourselves applied to it too. So it was a very good cooperation in the '80s. And of course I listened to it before that.

Second, looking here, I'm at the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. I had the great pleasure to host Paul Nitze when he was in Vienna for the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe and we often had a late drink or a late supper together. And he was of course much older than I and I enjoyed his wisdom and learned a lot from him. And so to be here at this place is of particular importance to me, brings very nice memory.

You have already spoken about the cooperation between the Czech Republic and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. And I think it was a natural thing we had to do because we had to thank so many for Radio Free Europe, for decades of information for many people whose only source of information, only connection to the free world was to listen in the evening or in the night to Radio Free Europe.

So it was, I think, the only thing to do to offer Radio Free Europe to come to Prague. And we are, of course, not only hosting Radio Free Europe but we are glad to prepare some common projects and especially between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Radio Free Europe.

We are now working – and I'm happy to announce this year on the idea of a fellowship program for journalists from the Radio Free Europe broadcast region who are under pressure or in danger due to their chosen profession. Specific focus will be on the Czech Republic's Eastern neighborhood, that is, Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and the Balkans. The program funding comes from the Czech and the United States, including the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the U.S. Department of State and other NGOs or EU sources.

So I'm very happy to announce this here today. I think we can't sleep on the laurels of the past. We have to do something today.

And of course, new challenges appear again. We have this uprising development in North Africa and in the Middle East and I think we have to think about this region too. We, of course,

in Prague naturally are following with great interest what's happening there, but we will concentrate more on our region where we have the experience, where we have the knowledge. And during the last year, we built some solid friendships between those who are fighting for freedom in the mentioned countries. And they are not so few. And so I do think that is the most important thing. And there are projects aimed at the development of civic journalism – blogging and Internet implemented in Georgia, the Western Balkans, Transnistria region and so on – is important part of our work too.

We have to adapt to the new medias whereupon, when Radio Free Europe was founded, it was on wireless only. In the meantime, maybe more important than the wireless are the Internet, is Facebook, all of these new medias we have to support. We have to adapt our work to it and we have to fight 100 percent where it is possible and where people are ready and have the possibility of access. That's important. And we have to adapt to each country's specific problems.

After all, we should be optimistic, not only that those countries for whom Radio Free Europe worked in its beginning, in the first decades of existing, are now mostly enjoying freedom. But if we see that in new countries the spread of freedom, the spread of democracy is rising too. Our job is to support them, to show our thanks to the founding fathers of Radio Free Europe and to show that we are worthy successors to them. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. VOLKER: Thank you. And if I could invite our logistics support here to come to the stage and help us with the chairs and I'll invite our panelist to come and take seats on the stage as well. And while we're doing that, I'll say a few words in introduction as to who is going to be speaking on this panel.

Not in any particular order, mind you, but I wanted to start with a story. And so I'll start with that, which is I happened to be in Tallinn for the Lennart Meri Conference about a month ago. This is, I think, the fifth year in a row they've sponsored this, and it is a great gathering of people who support freedom and democracy in Central and Eastern Europe.

What was interesting about attending that conference, among other things – and I see friends and colleagues who were there at the same time – is that RFE meant something to a lot of the people who gathered there. Most of all, I think it meant something to the president of Estonia, Tom Ilves, since he happened to have worked at RFE in Munich in the basement doing broadcasting for some time.

AUDIENCE: And so did my mother.

MR. VOLKER: And so did his mother. We also paid tribute to a mutual friend who died recently – Ron Asmus. Ron was an East German analyst in RFE Munich, went on to be a deputy assistant secretary of State and one of the real architects in this country, not only NATO enlargement, of which of course he did do that through his work at the RAND Corporation and in government, but also the broader concept of a unified Europe, a Europe whole and free as something that can really be achieved. And Ron was a tireless advocate for that.

Also there were a few others who had worked in the same basement at RFE – Janusz Bugajski was there, Vladimir Socor – and what that reminds me of, in introducing one of our panelists here, is that the people who have worked at RFE as journalists or as analysts are not

merely journalists or analysts but in fact become important personages in their own right because of the role they play in bringing information to other societies to their home societies.

And certainly that is true of our first panelist, Golnaz Esfandiari, who works at the Persian service, is the editor of the Persian Letters blog and is carrying on in that tradition as RFE moves to new markets and new places. Please have a seat, Golnaz.

The second person I would introduce actually needs very little introduction at all. He is the president of the National Endowment for Democracy, Carl Gershman. He has been a pillar of the community here in the United States working to support freedom and democracy for years and years and we're delighted that you're here.

The third is a colleague of mine. We worked together in the State Department as deputy assistant secretaries and in spite of that we're still friends. (Chuckles.) He has graduated from those days now to become the president of Freedom House, David Kramer.

And finally, he was shouted out already by Walter Isaacson, but I'd like to pay a special welcome and ask you to join the stage here, the ambassador of Pakistan, Husain Haqqani.

So that will be our group for the discussion here. Thank you and please have a seat and I'll join you in the group here. Hopefully we'll get the microphone switched on. Are we there yet? Can you hear?

AUDIENCE: You're on.

MR. VOLKER: Am I? Yes, if I move back – maybe I'll move this down a little bit. Well, this was a terrific opening and what I'd like to use this panel discussion for is to bring out the future. I'd like to talk about the relevance of broadcasting, the relevance of free media and the role that it can and is playing in markets today. I'd like to start then with a question that Minister Schwarzenberg raised. But I want to ask you to explore it a little bit more.

And maybe I'll turn, Carl, to you first and then David. RFE, of course, was founded as old media. It was radio and played a very important role at the time as the means of communication. When you read in the media today about events happening in the world, it's not radio that gets attention. It's Twitter. It's Facebook. It's the Internet. What is the role of external broadcasting today, given the societies that we're dealing with? Is it still relevant? How important is it? How important is the notion of free media?

CARL GERSHMAN: Well, thanks very much, Kurt. I want to take advantage of leading off here to welcome Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg, who is an old friend. Just two weeks ago I got a letter from Vilém Prečan telling me that the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre for independent literature, which is something we supported back in the 1980s, is going to be having a big exhibit in Prague on September of this year sort of to commemorate the cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the United States going back to then.

And I think it's important that we gave grant support to this – to Vilém's organization – and he was asking our permission to publish some documents. But it turns out, you know, I think it should also be noted that Foreign Minister – that he worked out of Schloss – the Schloss Schwarzenberg in Scheinfeld, Germany.

That's where this center was based and, in effect, we were working together back in the '80s before we even knew each other. I also want to – one person – a lot of people were mentioned who are here with us. But one person I'd like to mention who hasn't been mentioned yet is Martin Palouš, who was ambassador here in Washington, ambassador to the U.N. from the Czech Republic, but, more importantly, we were together at the end of October 1989. That's where I first met him in Prague. Little did we know – this was right after everybody was in hiding because National Day was October 28th and you didn't think the revolution was coming. I didn't know that it was coming. I was certainly informed by Ambassador Black – Shirley Temple Black – that it was not coming.

But here we are – here we are today and it's wonderful to see Martin Palouš with us today, who, I should note, by the way, is now head of the Havel Library – president of the Havel Library, which is terrific. He's moved from New York back to Prague. We live in a different world today with the new media.

But frankly, it's not all that different. I was struck – in the film, we saw a quote that – it began, "We have the word, they have the power." You know, it's still that way. The media has changed. I think the broadcasting is changing with it. It's not just broadcasting anymore. We're using podcasts; you're using Twitter. You're using Facebook, all sorts of things are you using. But in the end it comes down to, we have the word, they have the power. And they're doing an awful lot and we should be aware of this. These regimes are doing an awful lot to control the Internet.

We're also here today with Mark Plattner, who is the editor of the Journal of Democracy and in the current issue in the Journal of Democracy, there are two articles on the whole phenomenon of networked authoritarianism the dictatorial regimes are adapting, as well with malware attacks, with attacking websites. There was an article just this week in The Wall Street Journal about how Iran is nationalizing the Internet. They're going to have a two-tiered system – people who do business will be on one tier and they can have the international Internet.

But Iranians are only going to be able to access the national system. They're well into surveillance using the Internet to find out information about people. If you go into a cybercafé, they're going to know who you are, what you're doing. And you know, if the dissidents are clever enough to get around all the filtering and all of these other tactics, you know, they resort to the old-fashioned way: You know, put them in prison or kill them.

This is the world we're in today and I think we should – one of the articles in the journal warned against cyber utopianism. I do think that there is a crisis of these regimes today. There is a crisis of the political order when you have networked and informed populations. And you do have networked and informed populations and that's why – one of the key reasons you had the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, and you have closed authoritarian oppressive political systems. There's a crisis.

But these regimes, especially China but also Iran: They are adapting to this and it's going to be a long struggle. We live in a period where information and the access to information is contested. This is going to be a struggle, just like it was in the old days. And I think to win the struggle you're going to need some of the old-fashioned virtues like courage,

resourcefulness, intelligence, all of those things and not just think that, you know, technology is going to make us free.

MR. VOLKER: David, do you want to comment on the same question about the role of broadcasting today and its importance and free media?

DAVID KRAMER: Sure, sure. Thanks very much, Kurt, and thanks to you and SAIS for hosting this and to RFE/RL for including me in, I think, a terrific event just marked by such an enormous turnout here in the auditorium and a distinguished audience as well. So it's a real privilege for me to be a part of this and also be part of such a distinguished panel.

I think the broadcasts – in what RFE/RL, VOA, all these organizations do, they are morphing into other kinds of media, which is extremely important to do so that they don't simply reflect old media but they stay up-to-date with how people are getting their news and information these days. But the fact that governments try to block the broadcasts is an indication that these broadcasts are very important.

That the Russian government pressures local outlets to no longer transmit the broadcasts from foreign news organizations, that in Azerbaijan they don't allow foreign broadcasts in: This is I think proof that the broadcasts remain very important because it's those kinds of regimes that view the news and information and analysis that RFE/RL, VOA and others provide as a threat because what we are trying to do is to provide objective news, respectable analysis.

And these things are very important in these countries, where all too often the governments try to control the media, whether it's old or new, putting restrictions on new media, trying to impose regulations against Internet providers and other things. So broadcasting, I think, remains very important, as Carl mentioned, all the other kinds of media that these organizations are moving into. It's a very important source for people in countries where there are questions about the objectivity and reliability and credibility of the news that they are otherwise getting from their own governments.

One of the most devious but brilliant things that Vladimir Putin did in Russia was to take over nationwide TV in 2000-2001, first from Gusinsky and Berezovsky, because he understood that whoever controls that medium is going to control power and be able to stay in power. And so it's very important, I think, that we provide an alternative, more objective, more fact-based kind of reporting that otherwise people in these countries don't get.

MR. VOLKER: Yeah, and Golnaz, I wonder if I could turn to you next. If you could talk about it – we have two very different cases here of Iran and Pakistan where, you know, Iran really being actively restricting the media and trying to prevent information from coming in. What is the impact that you hear in your feedback from Iran about the work that you do and the work that RFE does?

GOLNAZ ESFANDIARI: Well I think if you want to know about impact, it's easy. You just have to look at the time and resources the Iranian government is putting in jamming our programming and blocking our website and hacking. Our Facebook page was hacked a few weeks ago. It's clearly having an impact. That's why they are so into blocking us, so into trying to stop people from listening to our news and information we provide.

And one of the reasons – it's not just because we give them objective news. It's also because we provide a platform for citizens inside Iran. They don't have one. They don't have a way to express themselves. We give them that. We give them the mic and we let them speak their mind, and the government clearly doesn't like that. So I think in short that's my answer.

MR. VOLKER: Ambassador, to turn to Pakistan, you have the opposite. You have free-wheeling media of all stripes in Pakistan. And it's almost a challenge for the government to deal with the issue of extremism and extremist use of media and Internet and other things. What role does this kind of broadcasting play on the one hand, and on the other, how do you assess the responsibilities of government in trying to assure the media is fair and transparent and competitive?

AMBASSADOR HUSAIN HAQQANI: First of all, let me thank you for having me as part of this panel and not only is this a distinguished panel that I am very proud of being on with friends and people that I've worked with in my previous incarnation as somebody campaigning for democracy in Pakistan and now representing the democratic government here.

Pakistan is a country in transition and we see that in every aspect, including in the media. You have an elected component of the government, not necessarily according to many people – people would say that we are not fully in charge because there are still areas where the old national security apparatus holds sway, according to people. And then we have a free media, which is a very interesting situation.

That free media was actually permitted under the authoritarian regime of General Musharraf and what General Musharraf had expected was that through the means of licensing – giving the licenses for television and radio to different players who will have major economic and business stakes in the survival of his regime – he will be able to have kind of overall influence. It didn't work out that way, of course. General Musharraf had to leave and the elected government came in. But then because of the nature of who owns the media – I mean, Pakistan started out with freeing the airwaves without any limits on cross-ownership, for example. So you have the same guy owns the biggest newspaper in Urdu, the biggest newspaper in English and then the most popular television channel.

And that has created sort of these very powerful media oligarchs who did not necessarily like the elected government as soon as it came into office, and the government had to make a choice: Do we fight them by sort of invoking that they're the products of authoritarianism, even though it's a free media? But it's a free media that was crafted and created under an authoritarian regime to serve certain purposes of creative purpose of the state as they saw it – the authoritarians – which is basically – it was essentially very negative towards the United States.

It was very strong on the question of India-Pakistan relations, skewed towards continued hostility rather than promoting cooperation. It did not – it was not very supportive of the smaller ethnic groups which ended up being the major force in the new political government, in the new political order. They tended to be more sympathetic to Islamic and Islamist orientation, were more tolerant of extremist opinions. And President Zardari took a very interesting position.

I know that, you know, if you're a regular reader of The New York Times, unfortunately you don't get a very positive view of our president. But he has many redeeming qualities and one of them is a very earthy sort of sense of what it means to be Pakistani. And he said, you

know, we could try and regulate this and intervene with this, but immediately we will be sort of described as trying to curtail freedom of the press.

So let's look it as if we are allowing a bunch of kids to learn how to play soccer, not by telling them the rules but by throwing a ball into the arena and letting them kick it around. And as far as I'm concerned, I'm not going to worry about the headlines. I'm going to worry about history. And so he's kind of just stopped paying attention, you know. And those of us who do pay attention, we try to fight back by making and presenting a better argument. Now, of course for the first two years, you constantly heard and read, the government's about to fall, the military's about to topple the government again, et cetera, et cetera.

Well, it didn't happen. So people stopped paying attention and some of the guys who were the biggest noisemakers were proven wrong. Now we have the second phase in which the conspiracy theories that they have peddled, which have become a big issue, have now become an issue in terms of, you know, are these conspiracy theories really right?

So we do have a big and huge problem in the short-term, you know, having 67 percent of Pakistanis not willing to believe that the Osama bin Laden raid that took place on May 1 took place the way it has been described. I mean, you know, people have various variations of conspiracy theories, including the fact that he wasn't even there. This was just – this was just done, sort of, you know – it's like the landing on the moon. You know, I mean, "It never took place; a Hollywood enactment, et cetera, et cetera" and, you know, "Somebody just came in in trucks and probably threw the rubble of a helicopter at the site to make it plausible for the next day, and then asked for it back when the Americans came and pressured our leaders."

So there's these conspiracy theories. You know, there's conspiracy theories about me. Every time, you know, I'm supposed to have given – according to one media group 700, according to another 4,000, according to another 7,000, and according to another 9,000 – visas to CIA operatives to operate in Pakistan and kill people at sort of pleasure. So the conspiracy theories drive you crazy.

I mean, there are days when I sort of – when I'm about to go to bed and I'm going through the Pakistani media, sort of, you know, summaries and television clips that have been posted online, et cetera, and I sort of tear out what little hair I have left. And I say – but the – (inaudible, off mic) – but the position the government has taken is, we will let it play itself out and we will create the reality that will check this confusion. And I think it's kind of working. I mean, you know, there's in the marketplace, in the mix, other things are being thrown in.

Now, for example, in Pashto, Radio Mashaal has come in which is Radio Liberty – Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Pashto. Hopefully Walter Isaacson will sort of accept my suggestion of moving into Urdu and other languages in our country, Urdu being one of the languages – largest languages in the world by in terms of the number of people that speak it.

And so that will be another contender for public attention. So if there is somebody who is a true believer in the concept of the marketplace of ideas, Pakistan is the place where there is really an absolutely crazily free market. (Laughter.) It's going south in some areas and it's going to come all right in the other. But it's totally unregulated.

And we think at least just – and maybe this is just a belief, very deep-rooted belief and may be proven wrong over time, who knows – we believe that that is the way it will work itself out, that actually people do have – if the basic premise of democracy is that people have an innate wisdom, then yes, there will be rabble-rousing and yes there will be a lot of noise and yes, there will be a lot of burning of flags and effigies, et cetera, et cetera. That all takes place in our country. But that at the end of the day, people will come around to understanding – as has – I shouldn't be speaking about other countries because I represent Pakistan, but I'm going to do it anyway.

The Middle East, what we are seeing in the Middle East – the Middle East for the first time – what's really special about the Arab Spring to me is not it being Arab or it being spring. It's about the fact that a region that has spent the last – the previous century obsessing about outsiders and about conspiracy theories, for the first time has had a major change that had nothing to do with outsiders and nothing to do with conspiracy theories.

There were no government strikes, although Mubarak tried at one point to introduce the element of Hawa, the foreign hand. Others have tried to do that. But there was no burning of foreign flags. There was no chanting of, sort of, you know, accusing the other of working at the behest of a foreign force, et cetera. And that is the success of that and that is what we hope we will come to after all the ranting and raving about CIA conspiracies because of the war in Afghanistan and about the Indian hand and the famous Indo-Zionist conspiracy. After all of that is over – after all of that is over, we will have both a free media and a reasonably stable democratic Pakistani nation.

MR. VOLKER: Yeah. Well, let's all hope so. Let's all hope so we can get to that. (Applause.) Let me ask – you mentioned Radio Mashaal and then you also mentioned the conspiracy theories. And underneath that is a very strong anti-Americanism in many parts in Pakistan. Does it hurt that something like Radio Mashaal or the Persian broadcasts that you do are supported by the U.S. government? Is that seen as a problem or is that helpful?

AMB. HAQQANI: Since Iran is the older as a nation, I'll let you answer first. (Laughter.)

MS. ESFANDIARI: I just would like to say that one of the best conspiracy theories about Osama bin Laden came from the Iranian president, who said that the Americans had him for a long time and they injected some kind of disease into him and killed him but then they said that he was killed in a raid. Like, I don't know why we had him for a long time –

AMB. HAQQANI: Maybe his remains were frozen on a Pakistan airbase – (cross talk).

MS. ESFANDIARI: (Chuckles.) Yeah, probably.

MR. VOLKER: Too many Austin Powers movies I think.

MS. ESFANDIARI: Well, we are being branded by the state media as CIA radio. You know, so, yeah, for some people – we call them in Iran and they always tell me, like, how can we trust you? You know, you are – and I say, look, we are funded by the U.S. Senate, but look at our news. Look at the kind of material we put out. Listen to our programs.

And they do that and they trust us, actually. They come to us. Families of political prisoners, they come to us. They contact us and they say, I want to be interviewed about my son because today, for example, there was this mother who went to jail. Her son was in jail. He was arrested in a post-election protest and he was beaten up in front of her.

She didn't contact the state media – they don't care. This is the kind of news they totally ignore. She contacted us; we immediately interviewed her and we aired the interview, put it on our website. So they trust us as a source of information and not just the people who are, say, from the opposition or critics of the government.

We also have people who support the government. They listen to us, you know. They criticize us but we give them a platform. So we have these people in our discussions and we let them speak their mind. And I think that's one of the reasons. I think our product is very important at the end of the day.

MR. VOLKER: Very interesting.

AMB. HAQQANI: And in our case, I think, very frankly, we think that as long as the counter-narrative is available, there will be people. There will be fewer buyers in the beginning but at the end of the day, the counter-narrative being available is much better than it not being available. So there will be people.

I mean, there are already – I mean, if the theories are believed, the CIA spends almost all of its budget in Pakistan. But there are others who start wondering. And then, you know, we – Pakistan is a very dangerous place for journalists these days because on the one hand, they have the absolute freedom, which many of them relish and sometimes abuse and use to – and then there are those who are trying to sort of get rid of people who they think are sort of undermining their greater cause.

Sometimes they misunderstand. Sometimes, for example, a journalist who was killed only two days ago – he actually was a friend of the Taliban in many ways, but he reported on them and then he reported on them but then he also reported on the other side and the effort to try and be an objective journalist – obviously there are only two possible theories that are being posited. One is that the militants and the extremists that he was in touch with, who occasionally kidnapped him in the past also because there are different factions, you know, who are at loggerheads with one another and don't – and are suspicious of one another because the problem is when you are an equal-opportunity conspiracy theorist, you don't trust anyone. And so that is in itself causing people to reflect on whether conspiracy theories are right.

So at least there's a debate about, "My conspiracy theories are right but yours are not," and that's good enough, I think. So to have – to have Radio Mashaal in other languages available to the people with a different perspective will only add to the debate. Pakistan is not going to curtail media freedom through government regulation, although several of our colleagues have proposed it. It's gone nowhere. I don't think the media and the journalists should stand for it and I for one am on the side of the journalists, despite the fact that many of them, in my opinion, are just cuckoo, at this moment, in Pakistan. But we'd rather have them as – sort of with their neuroses than not have them. (Laughter.)

And I think we will be able to have both freedom of the press and responsibility as we move along. We are not going to try and impose responsibility by curtailing freedom of the press because it has never really worked anywhere to my knowledge.

MR. VOLKER: Fascinating. Thank you. I'm going to turn to the audience in a moment to see whether there are questions you'd like to put to our panel here. And before I do that, let me just put one question – Ambassador, you already mentioned that your recommendation to Walter Isaacson is, don't just broadcast in Pashto but now turn to Urdu, which is so widely spoken.

Let me turn to others. Are there things that you would recommend looking ahead? Are we funding these things at the right level? Are there activities or areas where RFE or equivalent or its sister organizations should get into? Where should the future go? Carl, do you want to take that first?

MR. GERSHMAN: Well you know, I just think you have to keep your eye on the ball here, that all news is local. And you know, you've got to be able to reach the people on the ground. And I think the ambassador is absolutely right in having, you know, confidence in the people. I don't know what's changed so much. In the old days, you know, did the people in Czechoslovakia really believe the propaganda of the government? I don't think so.

And I think the strength of the radio was that it was connected to what Havel called the people who are living in truth. There is no greater strength than to be able to do that. And I think, you know, having confidence in people, reporting accurately and in a balanced way, people will basically listen.

And in the case of Iran, I would imagine, you know, that being associated with the United States is probably a good thing. I mean, you know, anybody who goes over there finds that Iranians love the Americans, except, you know, Ahmadinejad and a few of his cronies. But you know, when Iran becomes a free country – and it will, you know – we'll find great relations between the Iranian people and the United States.

MS. ESFANDIARI: Iran is the most pro-American country in the Middle East.

MR. GERSHMAN: Yeah, so what's the problem? (Laughter.)

MS. ESFANDIARI: Even Ahmadinejad, he loves to travel to New York.

MR. GERSHMAN: Well, he has an audience there – Columbia University. (Laughter.)

MR. VOLKER: I don't know, Golnaz, if it's fair to ask you your thoughts on if there were things additional that RFE should do. I don't know if it's fair to ask you that. You may get fired.

MS. ESFANDIARI: Well, if you ask me if we need more funding – (laughter).

MR. GERSHMAN: You know, that by the way raises a very important question: funding. You know, one of the great differences between, you know, the old days and today is that, you know, in 1989, the U.S. was buoyant and we had strong budgets. Today we don't and

the Europeans don't. That is a serious problem. And the Chinese do. They're setting up these Confucius institutes all over the world. They're setting up – the Russians, they have loads of money to spend on this and we don't.

That is an extremely serious problem and I think as we think about how to spend the limited dollars that we have – and I hope the Europeans are doing this as well – we look at the things that give us the biggest bang for the buck. And, you now, I think, you know, I'm not going to make an advertisement but I'll say that's – the radio certainly falls into that category.

MR. VOLKER: David?

MR. KRAMER: Actually, let me just take it in a slightly different direction and – picking up on the murder of the Pakistani journalist the other day. It is critically important that journalists everywhere, but also people who live in democracies, demand justice in these cases, demand accountability, demand that the people responsible for his murder – for the murder of journalists elsewhere – are brought to justice because one of the challenges that we all face is not just censorship but self-censorship, where certain journalists are made examples of and the other journalists get the message. They don't want to suffer the same fate.

And we see this in Russia, where, although there weren't murders of journalists last year, there certainly were bloggers and others who were beaten up and harassed. The latest arrest in the Anna Politkovskaya case doesn't point to the person or persons who ordered her murder in 2006. It's vitally important that everyone stand in solidarity when journalists are killed because of what they do, because of their efforts to shine a light on the situation in their countries.

And I think RFE/RL is very important in standing with the cause of journalism, the cause of a free press because, frankly, if free press were allowed in these countries, RFE/RL wouldn't have to exist. But it does have to exist because there are oppressive regimes around the world that try to keep the truth and objectivity and real news away from their populations.

MR. VOLKER: Here, here. Here, here. Are there questions from the audience? Is there someone who would like to bring up an issue we haven't brought up? Let me ask one further question, then, while they ponder their deep thoughts of the questions they're going to ask.

We have cut back. The BBC has cut back, for example, and they've cancelled all their Balkans broadcasts. I know that RFE has cut back from where it has broadcasts. Have we gone too far? Are there places where we should be present and we're not?

AMB. HAQQANI: May I answer that? I think that I'm very worried and this is because I have a particular affinity with journalism as a whole – I started out as a journalist. And I'm very concerned about the enhancement of the technical means of flow of information around the world, but the unavailability of the resources for quality information to be actually generated.

MR. VOLKER: Right.

MR. HAQQANI: And to put it simply, it's not just, you know, for example, the government broadcasters and the institutions like BBC and Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, et cetera, all having budget slashing. The commercial media is also slashing its international coverage and its quality coverage.

So what are we going to end up with? We are going to end up with loads of people sitting in front of computers just making it up. And that is not going to be very conducive to the flow of information around the world. So what we really need is a revisiting of this whole approach.

I think that people in the British Parliament and in the U.S. Congress need to reconsider some of the other areas of spending to keep investing in this effort and generating better flows of information because if you're not going to cover certain countries and The New York Times is not going to do it anymore and CBS and ABC and NBC are a shadow of what they were at one time and CNN and FOX and MSNBC are what they are, sort of primarily entertainment sprinkled with a little bit of information – (laughter) – then we will have a serious problem with what the world actually gets.

In an era of greater information flows, the quality of information is just going to continue to decline. So I would make a pitch here for greater investment in the flow of information through institutions such as these.

MR. VOLKER: That's an excellent point. It's the phenomenon we see with print newspapers here but on a global scale. Are there questions? Yes, sir?

Q: I have a question for –

MR. VOLKER: There's a microphone coming to you.

Q: Yeah, I have a question about Iran. As a person who is in daily contact with Iranians, do you get a sense that Iranians are mad as hell and aren't going to take it anymore, and they will go back to the administration and try to bring down the regime? Or that kind of they accepted what Tom Friedman once said, that bang-bang always beats tweet-tweet and that this is really how it is and they've resigned themselves to that? What's your sense about this?

MS. ESFANDIARI: I think from what the kind of information we get – and we talk to people almost on a daily basis and we monitor conversations that are going on, on Facebook, Twitter, because before – I mean, it was – I remember because I was growing up in Iran, it was in the taxis. You took the cab and you knew what people were talking about. And now, taxis are still important, cabs, but also Facebook. I always go to Facebook to see what people are discussing.

People are very unhappy. Some have resigned. It's – you know, the government used a lot of force. And when we speak about Arab Spring, we should not forget that it all started from Iran, as President Obama said in his recent Middle East speech. But it's very difficult – more difficult to bring down a dictatorship that is not supported by the West than to bring down one that is supported by the West because Iran doesn't feel itself responsible to – I mean, Russia or China are Iran allies. They're not going to ask Iran why are you killing your citizens? Why are you jailing women's rights activists? They don't care. They do the same in their countries.

So it's very difficult and, you know, Iranians – I don't know. It's very hard to predict. They are very unpredictable in their political decisions. We don't know. No one knows what's going to happen. But people are very, very unhappy. Young people are very unhappy. Many of

them – it's very sad – are still leaving the country. They're escaping the country because the crackdowns – it hasn't stopped since 2009.

People are still being arrested on a daily basis. Yesterday, it was the funeral for a very prominent opposition member, Ezzatollah Sahabi. There, at the funeral – his daughter had been released from jail to be able to attend the funeral. The security forces used force against her. She collapsed and she died there, and we don't know if it's as a result of the action of the security forces or if she had a heart attack. But the regime has been trying to say – it's all over on television – that she died of a heart arrest. And they buried her at night. It's a big scandal and that doesn't happen. In Iran, you never bury people at night. Did they force her family to do so?

So let's not forget human rights abuses are still taking place in Iran. People are still very unhappy. But the government is very, very repressive. They're using a lot of force and they're very good at it. So we really have to see. And the other thing is that the opposition doesn't seem to be able to organize itself and the leaders of the opposition – Mousavi and Karroubi – they've been under house arrest for now three months and no one seems to care. I mean, you don't even hear any criticism from the international community anymore.

MR. VOLKER: Exactly, exactly.

AMB. HAQQANI: I just have to do a very quick ambassador thing because I don't want my colleague in Tehran to be called into the foreign ministry. I am only a silent witness and spectator to all the conversations – (laughter, inaudible).

MR. VOLKER: Right. (Laughter.) As you wish. (Laughter.) If I could draw out a point that you just made, Golnaz, I think it's fascinating. It is easier to take on a dictatorship that had been supported by the West than it is to take on one that has – that isn't or hasn't been in part because they relied on that support and if it's taken away, they become weaker.

That should also give a special responsibility to the West to really speak up on behalf of the opposition groups where they have not been supporting a dictator and where that regime remains strong. That's a very interesting point.

Could I turn to the audience again? That was obviously a very well-developed question because it brought out a very interesting point. Yes, sir.

Q: My question is, what about a Radio Free China?

MR. VOLKER: What about a Radio Free China? Should – David?

AMB. HAQQANI: Another question the answer to which I will have to be just a silent spectator. (Laughter.)

MR. GERSHMAN: I mean, you do have Radio Free Asia and VOA, and they broadcast very actively into China. China is – you have a larger online population in China than you have anywhere else in the world. I think there's some 450 million people who are now connected and many more by cellphone. And, you know, look, if there are resources to do it – but there are people broadcasting in.

I know the trade unionist Han Dongfang has a regular weekly program where he's talking to workers throughout China. And a lot is being done there. You know, I hear what you're saying and I think you make a very good point about revolutions that, you know, they took place in countries that were tied to the West and in these other countries they haven't. And you have the experience before Iran of Burma in 2007 and China itself in 1989.

But my own feeling is that it's just a matter of time. I mean, the economic – you know, China – there are many people in China as an example – China is a very deeply divided country. There are some people who believe in, quote, “the China model,” and there's another whole section of the population – there's an active debate – that believe in what's called universal values. And it's a very deep debate. And there's an important Chinese political sociologist at the Academy of Sciences who worries and has spoken a great deal about this, that China has a kind of a rigid stability, not a resilient stability. He's contrasted rigid and resilient stability.

What happens when they don't get the 10 percent economic growth? This is a crisis that doesn't – this is a country that doesn't know how to make the adjustments. That's one of the things about democracy. You can make adjustments because you don't consider every criticism to be a threat to the system. So you make adjustments. You accommodate opposition, you know.

But they cannot accommodate peasants who have lost their land, minority groups, ethnic groups who feel that they – you know, they should be given linguistic or religious rights; people in the cities who are being forced out of their homes and so forth; workers who don't get paid. You know, if they cannot maintain this growth and they're raping a lot of the land in many different countries around the world in order to get the resources to maintain the growth, but it's not going to happen forever. And I think that's a country that could very easily – well experience a deep crisis.

And China is terribly important. Liu Xiaobo, the Nobel laureate – one of the reasons I think the Chinese put him in prison is that he called China a blood transfusion machine for the world's dictatorships. China supports all of these dictatorships and if China changes, it's going to have a profound effect on a lot of other countries.

MR. VOLKER: And that brings me back to the question because I hear what you're saying and it may be a matter of time, but maybe timelines can change. And are we doing enough, given the big ticket item that it is, to try to promote free media?

David, you mentioned earlier the question or the issue of governments using the Internet and online tools to actually track down people and dissidents so they know what they're going after and maybe broadcasting is a way where that is something you can't do as easily. But what would you say about China?

MR. KRAMER: Well, I guess the answer is, we can never do enough as long as a regime that is really cracking down on its population right now and on human rights activists engages in this kind of activity. On the surface, the regimes in China and Russia and Venezuela and Iran – and Carl is absolutely right – they support each other. They unite much more effectively than the democracies do.

So on the surface, they look strong. They look secure. They look powerful. They project. But if you scratch that surface, I think what you'll find are very paranoid, insecure regimes that are extraordinarily hypersensitive to criticism, who won't even allow words like "jasmine" to be spread throughout the Internet. A secure regime that feels pretty confident about its staying power doesn't worry about things like that, doesn't go in after Internet activists, bloggers and journalists. They understand that they are there because they are there with the confidence of the people. But when there are regimes in power that have no support from the population in terms of a real honest election and accountability, rule of law, those are the kind of regimes that try to crack down as much as possible to ensure that they stay in power.

So in the case of China, Radio Free Asia, I think, is extremely good. Can we do more? Sure, but the Chinese are pretty powerful in trying to push back. And the Internet has – it is a double-edged sword where it does open up new horizons for the spread of information and news and analysis. But if activists aren't careful with it, it can also put at risk a whole network of people, as the security services in these countries crack down and try to find out everyone's email addresses and contact information.

And that's why it's very important – in addition to breaking down the firewalls that these kind of regimes put up, it's equally important to provide the necessary security measures to bloggers and activists around the world so that they know what to do should the pressure really get very strong against them.

MR. VOLKER: Very good. Is there a final question?

MR. KRAMER: I've got to go to my niece's graduation.

MR. VOLKER: We have a niece's graduation to get to. (Chuckles.) I will – we'll do a quick question here and a quick answer. Yes, sir? If you could pass the microphone down, thank you.

Q: It's about the funding that you said. If I may ask, how exactly would you use extra funding that you are asking for? What exact areas would you use it?

MS. ESFANDIARI: I can speak for the Persian service. We are understaffed. You now, with more funding we could hire more people. It's very difficult. Some of us have to work 12 hours a day. During the 2009 protests to the election – reelection of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – we were spending our lives at the radios because we didn't have enough staff and we wanted to cover the events as best as we could. Even now, sometimes during the night shift we only have four people working. It's very difficult.

We need more funding for training. And I'm sure other services face the same problems, you know, of being understaffed, not getting enough training, enough resources. We don't have enough money for travel. It's very important, I think, for reporters to go and travel to see things on the ground, report on the ground. I've asked many times myself in recent months to go to Afghanistan, to go back to Afghanistan. We don't have any money.

MR. VOLKER: Okay. Well, thank you, and thank you to everyone on the panel. I'm going to close with one thought and I invite you to comment on it. But I take it from all of your remarks, in one way or another each of you is quite optimistic that when you look at all of the

huge problems we're dealing with, whether it's extremism or dictatorships or violent instability, not just peaceful change, nonetheless, you're all coming out of the side of belief that freedom and democracy are going to be the way things shake out. Do you have a comment on that or am I just calling it as you see it?

MR. GERSHMAN: Well, I think Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg said it in his remarks. You now, the fight for freedom is a global fight and, you know, it's human nature that people want freedom.

But I think we have to be realistic that these regimes are tough and you're going to have – I think we're entering a period, in part because of the Jasmine Revolution and what happened in Egypt – when it's going to get much sharper. The confrontation is going to get much sharper. In the long run, I'm optimistic but I think we have to be very realistic about what we're up against.

MR. KRAMER: Passivity is not what we can accept when you have repressive regimes going after human rights defenders and democracy advocates. In Europe itself, we have a dictator that's trying to hang on to power, who's on the thinnest ice he's ever been, in Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus. And I regret that the European foreign ministers have not moved forward with economic sanctions. Now is the time to apply greater pressure against somebody like Lukashenko. Now is not the time to step back and let the crisis play out and not support an IMF loan.

We need to be aggressive because these authoritarian regimes are very aggressive. If you look at the Chinese reaction to the Nobel Peace Prize decision, when they canceled high-level meetings with the Norwegian government, nobody stood with Norway. Norway stood all alone. We all applauded the decision of the committee to give the award to Liu Xiaobo but nobody cancelled meetings with the Chinese. And I dare say that that gave the Chinese the impression that they can get away with that kind of activity and behavior. And that kind of behavior should be deemed unacceptable and we need to stand together much more effectively as a union of democracies and push back against the threat from authoritarian regimes, whether it's on freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of religion.

MR. VOLKER: Final words? Ambassador? Golnaz?

MS. ESFANDIARI: I'm optimistic. But I think the international community should speak up about human rights abuses in these countries and they should say the same about its allies, whether it's Saudi Arabia, Bahrain or whether it's Iran. We hear a lot of criticism about Iran, but we don't hear enough about Bahrain, for example, or Saudi Arabia.

MR. VOLKER: Very good. Well, so, optimism, but no room for complacency or passivity. All right, that's a good note to end on. I want to welcome Kevin Klose, who arrived late but – a former director of RFE as well. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in thanking our panelists. (Applause.)

Thank you again. Thank you again to Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg for your presence here and your remarks, and to all the dignitaries who've come. And there will be a light reception outside in the hall. So thank you again. (Applause.)

(END)