Democracy in Danger S7 E5: "Power Plays"

[THEME MUSIC]

[00:03] **Emily Burrill:** Hello, I'm Emily Burrill.

[00:04] **Siva Vaidhyanathan:** And I'm Siva Vaidhyanathan.

[00:06] **EB:** And from the University of Virginia's Karsh Institute, this is *Democracy in Danger*.

[00:10] **SV:** In August of 2020, while the United States was squarely focused on its own contentious election, the presidential contest in Belarus was stolen. I mean, *actually stolen*.

> [00:23] **News anchor 1:** *The opposition candidate and political observers both say the numbers have been blatantly falsified.*

> [00:29] **Charles Michel, president of the European Council (in a press conference):** *These elections were neither free nor fair and did not meet international standards.*

[00:37] **SV:** A former Soviet republic of 9 million people, Belarus has since played an outsized role in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It serves as the staging ground for much of Vladimir Putin's multiple assaults on Kyiv, just 50 miles south of the Belarusian border.

[MUSIC FADING OUT]

[00:52] **EB:** And the man who has made that role possible is the same man who stole those elections in 2020: the autocrat Alexander Lukashenko. Lukashenko has won the presidency in Belarus *every time* since 1994. All but one of those elections have been panned as fraudulent. He's a close ally, and some would say, a puppet of Putin's regime.

> [01:14] **Alexander Lukashenko, with translation voice-over:** *I'm ready to provide territory again, but I'm also ready to wage war, together with the Russians.*

[MUSICAL SCORING]

[01:25] **EB:** To many, though, it seemed like 2020 was going to be different. A broad coalition had rallied around the opposition candidate, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya. She decided to run for president after her husband, who had hoped to challenge Lukashenko, was arrested on bogus charges.

> [01:41] **News anchor 2:** *She told Euronews the government crackdown fired up her campaign.*

> [01:44] **Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya:** *You know, our people's eyes just opened, and they saw this… violence.*

[MUSIC FADING OUT]

[01:54] **EB:** Early indications following the August 9th election were that Tsikhanouskaya was going to pull off an upset victory despite the official numbers.

> [02:02] ***Volya Vysotskaia:*** *People were sure that Tsikhanouskaya is winning, but the results differed. So, people started protesting against the falsification of the results.*

[02:09] **EB:** This is Volya Vysotskaia.

> [02:12] ***VV:*** *And the authorities reacted very harshly to the protests.*

> [02:18] *[Sounds of protest fading in.]* ***News anchor 3:*** *Never before have so many people in Belarus taken to the streets to protest… [fading under].*

> [02:23] ***VV:*** *And the first night people started to disappear.*

[MUSICAL SCORING]

> [02:27] ***News anchor 3:*** *… of Minsk, to demand President Lukashenko to step down… [fading under].*

> [02:29] ***Protestor, speaking to news organization:*** *We are protesting here against the violence which is happening… [fading under].*

> [02:32] ***VV:*** *They went to the protest, and then their relatives lost them. So we started to look for them in detention facilities… [fading under].*

> [02:37] ***Protestor:*** *But under no conditions can people be beaten up and raped in the police station. [Sounds of protest fading under.]*

[02:44] **SV:** The dreaded riot police in Belarus, known as Omon, were carrying out many of these disappearances. This was when, for the first time, Vysotskaia got political. She started taking real risks. Having watched the election from abroad, she returned to the Belarusian capital to get involved.

> [03:07] ***VV:*** *In mid-August, I arrived to Minsk. I started observing the trials, absolutely unfair trials, and I realized that we need to do something more than just observing and promoting the human rights defense. And it was the moment when me and my team started to identify the state actors involved in the human rights violations in Belarus.*

> [03:26] ***Michel:*** *The people of Belarus deserve better. They deserve the democratic right to choose their leaders and shape the future.*

[MUSIC FADING OUT]

[03:45] **SV:** Now, our colleagues Steve Parks and Srdja Popovich caught up recently with Vysotskaia. They interviewed her to talk about her activism for the first installment of an occasional segment we are calling "The Power of Many."

[03:59] **EB:** Steve and Srdja have been supporting, training and learning from pro-democracy advocates around the globe. In collaboration with our team, they're going to bring you some of their stories.

[04:08] **SV:** Right. So, a little more background. Srdja is a native of Serbia. As a young man, he stood up to the genocidal regime of Slobodan Milosevic back in the late 1990s. Steve is a UVa English professor and the director of the Democratic Futures Project. Now, we're going to pick up the conversation right where Steve was asking Srdja for some insight on Vysotskaia's movement in Belarus, and what was going on at the time…

[THE POWER OF MANY, CHAPTER 1]

[04:37] *[Interview fading in.]* **Steve Parks:** It might be useful to hear a little bit more about the context in which this moment happened in Belarus.

[04:42] **Srdja Popovich:** What Volya is saying is actually really interesting. Election fraud has two effects, normally, in societies. It was very similar in Serbia in 2000, very similar in Georgia, very similar in Ukraine. First, it shows everybody that the emperor is naked. So, it's like you don't really have legitimacy, people don't want you. And whatever you say on the TV, your own army, your own police, they know that. And the other one, it pisses everybody off. So people feel this personally, because now it becomes personal, somebody stole your vote, which is like somebody stealing your wallet. So, besides projecting himself as a strongman, this repression, this pressure, this new alliance with Putin putting his military inside Belarus, is actually a sign of weakness. This is where I will move to Volya and see what she thinks. Would you agree with that?

[05:36] **VV:** Yes, absolutely. I think Lukashenko had never been weaker than in 2020 and after 2020. And he remains very weak, even though he tries to pretend he's not, even though he tries to pretend he keeps his legitimacy internationally and nationally. People say he is the president of Omon.

[05:55] **StP:** Yeah. I mean, in some ways what we're witnessing is sort of the violence of Lukashenko's machine that he's built up through the years to keep himself in power and to keep people feeling that they don't have a sense of hope, that change is impossible. I know when the protests started and you saw that the police were acting in some sense with anonymity and without consequence, you tried to change that through starting a Telegram channel called the Black Book of Belarus. Can you tell us a little bit about that channel — what did it do and what was it successful at?

[06:27] **VV:** Yeah, the channel is the channel with the data of the police officers, the state actors, involved in human-rights violations in Belarus. We worked with open sources, with pictures posted by journalists, pictures sent to us by people who participated in protests, with documents sent to us, also by people who participated in protests, with the names of police officers and other state actors involved in unfair trials, involved in violence, involved in tortures, etc. We found their data also on open sources and then just posted it, just showing to people who were looking for those who brought that much violence to the society, which showed that they're not just the police in balaclavas, they're the ordinary people, they're our neighbors, friends, relatives. So, we humanized them.

[07:21] And it definitely worked. They felt very insecure. They discussed the channels between themselves. When they were bringing people from, like, from arrest to detention facility, they

were asking people if they're going to send their pictures to the Black Book of Belarus. And there was one police officer who reached to us and said, like, "Please delete my data because I did not participate in anything unlawful." And we said, like, "We have the document proving that you did." And he said, "But I participated only once, please delete my data." So yeah, it seems like committing a crime once is not committing a crime, for the regime.

[08:01] **SrP:** Yeah, Volya, it's like — let's come back to this particular moment. How did you feel? How did you pick this particular course of action? So, yes, you can try people, you can arrest people, but there will be a price tag, people will know who you are. So, it's like — and then what happens — you're becoming effective — and how come they come after you?

[08:21] **VV:** Yeah, it happened in October 2020, when the protests were still active. The information that we posted in Telegram, and the way information got spread, it reached the top. So they decided to stop, somehow, the organization or to understand, like, how do we operate, how to stop us. There was a person who said, like, "I'm a banker, I have the access to the data of people, so I want to help you." So, he reached us through the Telegram chat. And we made the greatest mistake, because first we took the information from him and later, because of the trust that he built with the team, we started giving him information as well. So we allowed him to get a bit closer to the team, to the information that we got, so the government successfully, let's say, put the spy into our team.

[09:12] **StP:** One of the impacts of that is that didn't they ground a Ryanair plane to try to get someone from your group?

[09:19] **VV:** Yeah. In May 2021, the civil society started to be absolutely destroyed in Belarus, and the greatest media outlet was destroyed as well. The protest still went on, but not that active. And the information that we published started to be used to bring it to real investigations. And probably the government felt very insecure because of that. And yeah, in May 2021, the Ryanair flight was landed in Minsk, forcefully with military airplanes, saying that there is a risk of terrorist attack. And one of our team members was arrested and another journalist was arrested with her.

[09:59] **StP:** I mean, what we're sort of hearing is, like, the toolkit of authoritarians, right. They infiltrate. They repress. And increasingly, it seems like they're also trying to revoke citizenship. And that's something I think that's happening in Belarus. How were you responding to that?

[10:16] **VV:** Well, first, I would like to say that the way they work is that they change the way the law works. So, it's not "the rule of law." It's "the rule by law." And that is what the government of Lukashenko does. They change the laws, gradually, constantly, just to rule by it. And what they did in 2022, they changed the law on citizenship. And now it's possible to deprive those people who were sentenced in absentia because of extremist articles. And how we are going to respond to it is the democratic powers now are advocating for the new passports of an independent Belarus. Nobody knows if it would work because the passports are not legitimate yet. But there is advocacy to support those people who can be deprived of citizenship. And what we are doing now is just advocating for our rights to stay in safety in those countries where we are now.

[11:15] **SrP:** Obviously, it's a wave of oppression both to the people inside the country and out. Which brings us to your own personal case. So, you are tried in absentia?

[11:27] **VV:** Yeah, it happened last year. In summer 2022, the government changed the law, the criminal legislation, and it started to allow the authorities to try people in absentia for committing some very serious crimes. Like, for instance, the "incitement of social hatred," which is the crime that the authorities said I committed. So, after the breakdown on our team, after the destruction of our team, we became the first five people to be tried in absentia in the history of Belarus. All of us were sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment. Some of us have the chance of being deprived of their possessions in Belarus, and all of us are supposed to be deprived of citizenship.

[12:12] **SrP:** So, because of your work, you were targeted, you were repressed, you were expelled. Now you are sentenced, and you cannot go back. But still you are carrying on from exile. So, what you are doing now, and what you are trying to achieve with your organization being outside of Belarus — and, by the way, where do you live now?

[12:32] **VV:** I live in Lithuania, which is a pretty safe place in the sense of the legal protection for Belarusians now. I continue working on the investigation of the violation of human rights in Belarus. I do advocacy campaigns for political prisoners in Belarus, for today there are more than 1,500 political prisoners in Belarus, and this is just the number of officially recognized political prisoners. In reality, at least there are two times more people imprisoned for political reasons. I believe in bringing accountability to those who violated human rights in Belarus and the advocacy campaigns to bring back the rule of law to Belarus. The legal researches, the legal campaigns.

[13:11] **SrP:** I'm wondering how the situation you've been describing for us in Belarus ties in with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which Belarus, at least its leadership, has supported. And many advocates in Belarus have been targeted for objecting to the invasion. Is there a sense of quiet consensus in Belarus, like sort of opposing the war, or is the Russian influence more dominant?

[13:35] **VV:** Well, first, we need to look back to in general the relations of Lukashenko with Putin and in particular to 2020 when Putin was going to support Lukashenko even with the help of his own police or even with military forces. So it allowed Lukashenko to stay in power. And for this reason, in 2022, Lukashenko provided Putin with the territory of Belarus to launch the invasion, to launch the missile rockets to Ukraine, and it resulted in mass protests in Belarus again. Even though the civil society was absolutely destroyed, even though thousands of people were imprisoned for political reasons, even though the protests were absolutely cracked down, people went to protest against the war in Ukraine just the day it started.

[14:20] And of course, thousands of people were arrested that day, thousands of people were arrested later. Later, the people started the protest and campaigns, like parties and actions on railways, for instance, or like on some military bases. And people are still being arrested for these actions. People are still being arrested for the comments on social media against the war in Ukraine. But it's hard to say what is the real mood of the society regarding the war in Ukraine, because, for instance, the most popular political analyst in Belarus among the youth is a Russian

one, and the older population is still listening to the Russian propaganda on the TV because the Belarusian TV is full propaganda TV. But at the same time, people still protest. So, I think it's important to mention both sides.

[15:11] **SrP:** Getting to the wider context Volya, you know, I'm in the business of trying to educate people who run the campaigns on unarmed struggle. What may be the lessons learned for other activists? So, if there is one advice you can give to the people, like, "let's do this because it worked in Belarus," or if there is the one thing we say, "oh, we screwed this up, don't do this."

[15:33] **VV:** Let's unite in solidarity. Definitely. Solidarity is one of the most effective ways to bring people together. It's is one of the strongest movements in general. So definitely unite in solidarity.

[15:49] **SrP:** That's a great point. Unity and solidarity. But how do you achieve this on the ground?

[15:54] **VV:** I would say through the actions showing the people that they can bring changes with tiny steps, with just going to help a person to get a ride from a detention facility and bring them back home. Or you can just help a person with medical assistance, or you can just support them mentally. So, there are the tiny steps that show to people that they can influence the situation and that's what worked in Belarus. People united against the violence in Belarus. People were standing not to allow it to happen anymore.

[16:29] **StP:** So Srdja, I'm just wondering, how do *you* go about building solidarity?

[16:33] **SrP:** Well, first of all, Belarusian example — and I think Volya's too modest on it — makes a lot of sense. Especially, how unity is achieved through use of symbol, specifically the old Belarusian flag, which was, A, easy for people to identify with; B, complicated for regime to ban, leading them to some ridiculous actions, like putting down the Christmas trees which were decorated in red and white. Most important, building the identity of the movement, so people can identify themselves, not through leaders because leaders will be arrested, but through wearing a color or a symbol, shows people that they can do something small. It gives them a meaningful course of action.

[17:14] But more importantly, for the people who pay the ultimate price — end in jail, end jobless and kicked out of the jail without chances to get work — it sends an important message that they won't be left behind. Supporting people who get in trouble really matters in the movement, and I can only applaud Volya being so persistent in raising attention and raising funds for those people who risk their life and freedom for Belarusian democracy, because this is also a message. "The movement will be there for you. We will take care of your family. We will try our best to take care of your family. You will not be forgotten." This is so important for these people rotting in Lukashenko's cells.

[17:55] **StP:** It strikes me that one of the stories we're hearing today is sort of a learning curve — leaders are learning from each other. You almost have this, like, little authoritarian university percolating across the globe. And so, I'm just wondering, how does the Belarusian experience, either in terms of what Lukashenko has learned in terms of maintaining power, perhaps Srdja, or

what you've learned, Volya, in terms of how you resist that power — how can Belarus teach us larger lessons about what's happening right now with authoritarian leaders?

[18:26] **VV:** Well, I would first say that the authoritarian leaders don't only learn from each other, but they do cooperate to remain in power. What we learned with our movement is that they definitely know how to work with the data. They definitely know how to identify people, because while we were taking pictures of theirs — of state actors — and identifying them, the same moment they were just calmly recording people protesting in the streets. And now they use these videos to identify the protesters, to arrest them and to imprison them. The Chinese developments of face-recognition are being used on the Russians as well, and they cooperate to share them.

[19:10] What we could learn from each other is to focus on the things crucial for justice, even though it's hard. But when the state declines to perform its functions, we should perform their functions. Like, either it's investigations or it's the provision of help to the victims or it's the political preparation of the new leaders. We should do that. And we should provide them with the space for their actions. I think it's very important for other activists not to forget that even when the state commits crimes, they are still crimes, and we need to investigate them.

[19:49] **SrP:** Obviously, autocrats learn from each other. Recently, it seems that they know also how to spread this virus to democracies. And unfortunately, the trends show that where democracy is in danger the most is in previous democracies. Places like Hungary, where government obviously is using some repressive tools and borrowing from autocratic arsenals. We've seen a pretty pro-Russian party winning elections in Slovakia a few weeks ago.

[MUSICAL SCORING]

[20:21] But once again, we always need to take a look at how democracy is fought for on the forefront. Whatever autocrats try to do, you need unity, you need solidarity, you need planning and you need small victories in order to prevail.

[MUSICAL BRIDGE]

[20:45] **SV:** That was Srdja Popovich speaking with Steve Parks and Belarusian activist Volya Vysotskaya. You're listening to *Democracy in Danger*. We're part of the Democracy Group podcast network. You can find it at *democracygroup.org*. We'll be right back.

[MUSIC FADING OUT]

[21:15] **SV:** Emily, you know, it's always simultaneously bracing for me and somewhat comforting to know that as complicated as things are here in the United States we are nowhere near as deep into the authoritarian moment as some other places that just 30 years ago seemed to be on the way to much better lives and times.

[21:42] **EB:** Yeah, I mean, '94 things really start to take a turn in Belarus. And this is at a moment where we see turns towards democratic formations in a lot of the former Soviet Union, not so much in Belarus.

[21:57] **SV:** Right, there's always the outlier.

[21:58] **EB:** That's right. That's right. And so what I was really struck by in listening to her is the bravery and the heroics of activists like her who are really working hard to call the Belarusian government responsible and holding them accountable for infiltrating groups on the ground, grassroots efforts to expand democratic discussion. So, her interview is a really stark reminder that democracy is in danger, right.

[22:24] **SV:** Yeah, and differently in different parts of the post-Soviet empire, right?

[22:29] **EB:** That's right.

[22:30] **SV:** We can look at Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and we can just be so, like, pleased with the level of stability and investment in peace and prosperity and in democracy in places like those, right, the Baltic states. And yet you look at Kazakhstan or you look at Belarus and you see nothing but horror. And many of these states — and, I mean, you have to include Chechnya in this now, right, Georgia, right — they seem to be once again under the Russian arm.

[22:59] **EB:** That's right. And Russian influence in parts of the world where I work, right — so West Africa — has become very powerful and arguably a sinister, dark, dark force. We sometimes look to what's happening now, with Putin consolidating power in the Global South, in the former colonized world, and say, "Oh, what's happening now, in the 21st century, is an extension of the Cold War, it's the Cold War all over again." No, it's not necessarily the Cold War all over again. There are some really important differences. One of those differences, I think, is in part the role that *Belarus* is playing, particularly for Africa.

[23:38] **SV:** Yeah, say more about that. Like, so what's the connection between the *Wagner Group*, which we think of as a Russian paramilitary force active in Ukraine, right — that's what we know most about it. But there's a lot more to the story, right?

[23:49] **EB:** Yeah. So, the Wagner Group (or the [pronounced with V-sound] *Wagner* Group), you know, they were able to really regroup and identify a new strategy and take a beat once they retreated to Belarus. Belarus provided them with safe harbor after the attempted, you could say, attacks on Putin's regime, in June. And, you know, it became really clear that from Belarus, using Belarus as a launching pad, that the Wagner group was able to build up new stores of power and focus in propping up autocratic regimes across the continent of Africa. Yevgeny Prigozhin, who was the leader of the Wagner Group, in a video that he recorded shortly before he was assassinated, he made it really clear that the Wagner Group's priority was operations in Africa, throughout Africa, and that the goal would be to use Libya as a launching pad and eastern Libya in particular as a place from which operations in Africa would be directed — almost like an Africom center for the Wagner group in eastern Libya.

[25:00] **SV:** Wow, that's fascinating. Tell me more about what's going on in sub-Saharan Africa. What is the Wagner Group doing specifically and where?

[25:06] **EB:** So, the origins of the Wagner Group are often tied to the aftermath of the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea, in 2014. At the time, though, they weren't seen as highly organized, but they quickly became so. And eventually, Prigozhin became their leader.

[25:26] **SV:** Former chef for Putin, right, or caterer.

[25:29] **EB:** Exactly. Former chef, confidant.

[26:00] **SV:** Yeah, old buddy.

[25:31] **EB:** It's a story you really can't make up. I mean, it's almost like a John le Carré story. So, Wagner became really powerful. They established operations in Central African Republic to prop up the autocratic president there. They continue to be active on the ground in Central African Republic and are often seen as one of the more powerful and influential military forces on the ground, rather than a C.A.R. state-sanctioned army. And it was really not that long after that that the Wagner forces were operating on the ground in Sudan and in Libya, almost as a mercenary force. They could operate in a way that was outside of the reach of the United Nations and international treaties.

[26:16] **SV:** With deniability, for the government, right?

[26:17] **EB:** Exactly.

[26:19] **SV:** So, Putin could, like, wink at what they were doing.

[26:21] **EB:** That's right. Make no mistake, the Wagner Group operates at Vladimir Putin's —

[26:25] **SV:** — It's like his private henchmen.

[26:27] **EB:** Exactly. And it allows the Russian government to make certain kinds of influential moves in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, but also North Africa, especially in the Sahel, where Russia wants to gain a foothold and an influence. Certain kinds of concessions, deals around mineral rights — this is oftentimes what's at the heart.

[26:48] **SV:** So, are they just, like, a mob group making threats, serving idle threats, or are they actually, like, killing people?

[26:56] **EB:** Well, so, that's a good question. That's a really good question, Siva. So, the Wagner group is really a dark force to be quite simple. I mean, they're guilty of committing human-rights abuses, executing civilians in villages. I mean, this is this has been a real problem in Mali, in particular. In Sudan, they're responsible for cracking down on protesters on the streets. The Wagner military forces are directly implicated and active in the suppression of democratic protests in a number of different African contexts, from Burkina Faso to Mali, Libya, and, you know, we'll see how much activity they really are able to organize in places like Niger.

[27:37] **SV:** Yeah. So, Emily, one of the things that I find really enlightening about the conversations that we've been recording for "The Power of Many" is the extent to which we see how autocratic regimes around the world learn from each other and actually actively coordinate. And I think it's super-important for us to grasp that while we're not seeing an international fascist or authoritarian movement per se, we are seeing a chorus of themes — a lot of xenophobia, a lot of fear of LGBTQ people, a lot of fear of the power and status of women improving in the world.

[28:21] **EB:** You know, one of the things that's really interesting is that there have been a number of interviews and surveys recently in African countries where democracy is on trial, and the overwhelming majority of respondents say that they want democracy, that they believe in what we would call core democratic values around representative government, free and fair elections, a free press, public education. This is what people are asking for and what they want on the ground. What's happening in places, however, like the Central African Republic, like the coup that just occurred in Gabon, we see autocrats — many of whom were democratically elected, we should remember — shoring up strongman power, you could say.

[29:05] **SV:** Right. So, we know that the strongman cult or phenomenon in Africa is not new. Right. We've seen Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. We've seen Idi Amin, of course, you know, notoriously, in Uganda. I think the difference we're seeing in the 21st century versus the 20th century is the influence of both Russia and China in their efforts, not necessarily to dominate these countries, but to sponsor them enough to be able to extract resources and develop markets. So, in other words, they're almost neo-mercantile relationships with China and Russia. And that's not to say that Europe and the United States are not playing similar games in similar ways!

[29:44] **EB:** Yes, I think that this is this is really true. In the 2000s, as a part of the war on terror, money shifted from the Department of State to the Department of Defense that typically had gone into, sort of, civilian grassroots capacity-building. And so the DOD was doing a lot of it. Fast-forward a bit further. You look at places like Mali, places like Niger, where there were very active, stable democracies — if you had told me in 2003 that Mali would have experienced a coup in 2012, I don't think I would have believed you.

[30:19] **SV:** Wow.

[30:20] **EB:** But who rises to power? Who steps in? It's actually Malian military who had received training from the American military in an effort to fight the war on terror, against Islamist regimes from the north. But what ends up happening is that these soldiers who've been trained by the United States end up toppling their own governments.

[30:41] **SV:** Wow, so it's almost like the shockwaves of colonialism are still rocking. The shockwaves of the Cold War are still rocking, and the shockwaves of the war on terror post-2001 are still echoing through the world.

[THEME MUSIC FADING IN]

And then layer on to that, the turmoil in Russia as Putin takes command and then gets nervous about his status. Right. So many of these things are now rocking their way across the world, and wave after wave after wave is shaking the foundations of democracy.

[MUSICAL BRIDGE]

[31:21] **SV:** That's all for this episode. We have much more coming your way this season, including a conversation about artifacts once stolen from their countries of origin and why they matter.

[31:32] **EB:** Are you a tireless activist in your own neck of the woods? We want to hear from you! You can tweet us your thoughts *@dindpodcast*. That's D-I-N-D podcast.

[31:42] **SV:** Or leave a comment on our web page, *dindanger.org*. Sign up for our newsletter and catch up on all our recent episodes, including two live shows we did recently from Texas and from here in Virginia.

[31:55] **EB:** *Democracy in Danger* is produced by Robert Armengol, Nicholas Scott and Steven Betts. Ariana Arenson handles our social media. Adin Yager engineers the show. Our interns are Charlie Burns, Leena Fraihat, Katie Pile, Makhdum Mourad Shah and Caroline Yu. And we have help from Ellie Salvatierra.

[32:15] **SV:** Support comes from the University of Virginia's College of Arts and Sciences. The show is a project of UVa's Karsh Institute of Democracy. We're distributed by the Virginia Audio Collective of WTJU Radio in Charlottesville.

I'm Siva Vaidhyanathan.

[32:29] **EB:** And I'm Emily Burrill. See you soon.

[MUSIC OUT]