

## Democracy in Danger S3E12 Hot Spots Pt3 – Burma

**Will Hitchcock** [00:00:03] Hello, I'm Will Hitchcock.

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

**Will Hitchcock** [00:00:06] And from the University of Virginia's Deliberative Media Lab. This is Democracy in Danger.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:00:12] Over the past 10 years, an unlikely experiment unfolded in the Southeast Asian country of Myanmar, or Burma, where a repressive military dictatorship has been in power since 1962.

**Unknown** [00:00:26] The crowd of people that I was standing with a few minutes ago outside the party headquarters of the National League for Democracy.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:00:32] In 2010, Aung San Suu Kyi, the prominent Burmese pro-democracy activist and Nobel Peace laureate, was released after years of house arrest.

**News reporter** [00:00:41] A huge crowd of noisy supporters had waited hours for this moment. I think we're so glad now that she's released, said this woman, "It's like the Moon came out and we saw the light."

**Will Hitchcock** [00:00:52] Under international pressure, the military initiated reforms and allowed parliamentary elections. Suu Kyi returned to the political stage. Though she was barred from the presidency, she was chosen as state councilor, essentially the prime minister, in 2016.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:01:08] But last February, the military struck back and overthrew Aung San Suu Kyi in a coup after her party, the National League for Democracy, won a resounding electoral victory. The streets erupted in mass protests. By some estimates, soldiers have killed more than 800 Burmese citizens and detained as many as 4000. Just this week, several protesters were struck and killed when an army truck sped into a crowd.

**News reporter** [00:01:38] Banging pots and pans from their windows in Yangon. Residents paid tribute to those killed.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:01:45] Now, a once peaceful movement has turned to paramilitary operations against the regime. The United Nations is warning of a brewing civil war, even as a new and more ethnically diverse shadow government is operating in exile. Aung San Suu Kyi, now 76 and frail, has been sentenced to four years in prison. In a closed trial this week, a special court convicted her of incitement and of COVID violations. She still faces other trumped up charges of corruption and fraud so she could be sentenced to more than 100 years in prison. Still, protesters and activists remain committed to restoring democracy in Burma.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:02:31] Well, today we're honored to have with us in our studio one of those activists, Myo Yan Naung Thein. Myo Yan Has been a leader in Burma's struggle for democracy for a quarter century and recently served as a chief research officer in Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. He had to be smuggled out of Myanmar

earlier this year and is now here at the University of Virginia, where he's a visiting researcher and member of the Democratic Futures Working Group

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:03:00] Myo Yan thank you so much for joining us today on Democracy in Danger.

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:03:04] And thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk as well.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:03:08] So you have a gripping, haunting story to tell us about your escape from Myanmar just this past spring. Would you please recount that story? Tell us what you went through.

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:03:19] So I was in hiding for three months. The military, on the day of the coup, came in search for me at home, but fortunately I was away for my mother's funeral, so I escaped. So every day of my hiding there was risk that me been found and killed. I mean, military, they like to give public the message of fear. When they find somebody, they not simply kill, they torture. They open up chest and take off the interiors, send back to that body's home. The situation was very bad. At that point, a group at the border call Free Burma Rangers, the American veterans, I got in touch with these guys and they smothered me out of Burma from capital city. It was two days travel. It was a very dangerous trip. If they find me, they would kill me on the spot and fortunately the Ranger Group sent a very good ranger. He could find ways in the jungle to get to the border area. Nevertheless, I was caught two times by the soldiers and fortunately they couldn't recognize me. I was disguised, me with my wife, you know? So we escaped.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:04:37] So this Rangers group tell us more about them.

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:04:40] They are veteran soldiers for the United States, and they are like missions. They are like Christian missionaries there and they are saving people. They saved me. They got the news from me, from my friend, from Thailand. Then he said that I was in danger. I was about to be found and killed. So they made that very dangerous trip.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:04:59] Myo Yan, can you tell us our listeners a little bit about your role in Burma in the National League for Democracy? What were you doing and how close were you to that political organization?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:05:11] Actually, you know, in 1988 there was national uprising, national protest against the military coup military agenda, and they made election in 1990, in which National League for Democracy won landslide victory. However, they never hand over power, saying that the Constitution needed to be drafted and military drafted Constitution unilaterally, and there was complete oppression within Myanmar. In 1996, I was a student. I led a student demonstration against the military regime, and for that I was arrested and put in prison for seven years. It was my first time in prison. I was out of prison in 2003, then resumed my struggle for democracy. In 2007, I was arrested again and put in prison for two years. At the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010, I was released. Then months later, Aung San Suu Kyi was released and I got in contact with her and she asked me to work for her, and I became the secretary for research and strategic studies. In that position, I'm in charge of information research and strategy of the party. There was the central committee, I'm like the the boss of the Central Committee.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:06:29] OK, so it's astounding your commitment to democracy after so much pain and pressure, so many close calls. When we met earlier, we had met at the statue of Thomas Jefferson and as we walked by the buildings that Thomas Jefferson had designed. You told me that you had originally thought you would be an architect, that you had taken a degree in architecture and that Thomas Jefferson was an inspiration to you. Can you tell us, where did you get this commitment to democracy? How was that influential for you?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:07:06] My journey of democracy began when I was like 12 or 13 years old. Then I started English. I went to the America Center in Yangon. I liked the place because it is very tidy and air-conditioned, so you can imagine a boy 12-year-old being at the library reading, you know, books, and I feel it very good. So I began to read America History, Constitution, and the founders of the nation. So I got fascination of all the founders, especially Thomas Jefferson, because I, you know, I love art, I love languages, I love art. I found that he is a great time because he loved art and he is a politician at the same time. I learned that he did thirty-three different jobs in his lifetime. So I'm a Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, these are the guys who inspired me a lot. And the first thing is the Constitution of the United States of America. Yeah. Well, I just thinking, what is different? They find that if we can change the Constitution, we can make a country like the United States and be great. That's my very first talks about politics and constitution and change in the country. Yeah. And Thomas Jefferson is fascination. He drafted the Declaration of Independence and signed, you know, so I don't know whether there is destiny in life, but I always in my childhood thought about University of Virginia and Thomas Jefferson. Hoping that I would one day be in University of Virginia near the statue of Thomas Jefferson and the Rotunda.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:08:37] Well, let me invite you to come back to your story of leaving Burma. So you were in Thailand for a while? Is that right? And then what did you do there and how did you come to University of Virginia?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:08:49] You know, I, there was a moment when we cross the border. I mean, it was the moment that we knew that we would live. Before that point, we never knew what time we would be caught and arrested and killed. Then we were in Thailand, boarder city and said we are not safe there because the military sent about 15 intelligence assassins. So our friends in Bangkok suggested us to leave boarder area. Then the United States Embassy help us to get here on parole visa.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:09:25] So do you still have family in Burma? Do you and your wife worry about their conditions, or are you worried that being known as an activist puts them in danger?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:09:38] Yes, we have our, you know, my wife have her parents and have siblings there. I have my sister in Rangoon. Of course we worry because the military regime, they are killing, they arresting and killing relatives if they cannot find the one they want. So we are very worried about our family back home.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:10:01] Can you tell us a little bit thinking about our audience who has read about the Burma crisis in the newspapers, but we don't know much about Burma? What are the things that we should know? What are the basic characteristics of the country? Why has democracy struggled for so long, really? Since independence from Britain and despite military rule for many, many years, there is this spirit of resistance. Can

you just try to illuminate paint a picture of Burma, both its military forces, but also this this democracy movement that seems to be many, many years long?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:10:38] Yeah, Burma got independence from Britain in 1948. At that period, we have two primary issues facing Myanmar. One is federal issue because in Burma, where we have majority bombings at the minority, because we trying in a rush to get independence, we did not prepare properly, declare independence. That was the very origin of all the issues we are facing. And in 1948, of course, there was the Cold War period. So the ideological crisis also happened in Myanmar. So with independence we have two issues. One is at the minority issue. That's a federal issue, an ideological issue. There's the communist revolution. Then would that military got stronger action on communism? There were some insurgents, an insurgency, but it was not very strong. So the main problem is the ethnic minorities problem and federal problem. And the military said the junior would be would be disintegrated. Yeah. So in the name of saving that union, they may coup in 1962, it was the fourth reason they're making there was no proper reason the union would break up.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:11:53] I see. So the military was was saying that the country was going to break apart because of ethnic differences. That was their excuse. Yes. For taking. And at the time, wasn't the president the father of Aung San Suu Kyi?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:12:07] Yeah, actually, the father, Aung San Suu Kyi, he was the independence hero. He was assassinated before independence, just before independence. But he arranged everything. Yeah, he arranged everything, and he made sure that Burma got independence. So no, the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, generally I'll say he, you know, everybody in Myanmar, we love him, is our hero. Actually, he's the one who founded the Myanmar army, but he was assassinated. So after the assassination, there were new commander in chief for the army. So they made a coup if they just want power, they generally win then their commander in chief of the army, he'd rule the country, in to the name of socialism. He founded the party, got Burmese way to do socialism. And he ruled the country for 26 years. And after Tunisia, Burma became one of the least developed countries. So 1988, the whole country revolted against the Burmese Socialist Party, the military party. Then there was another military takeover. The new generation of military leaders they ruled the country from 1988 to 2010, during which they drafted the Constitution. So they drafted constitution for more than 15 years. Then 2010, they transfer power to civilian government. But all these civilian are recently retired generals. So they make their own party junior solidarity body, and they make election 2010. And the election was very fraudulent and they won. In 2015 Aung San Suu Kyi competed and won landslide victory and that he made fundamental changes like fighting against corruption and democratic changes. So the military was a very afraid. In 2020 there was another election, NLD won landslide victory bigger than 2015. That time military, they made another coup and the more people they went and the military rule for more than 50 years. They could not stand, you know, the oppression anymore. So they started to fight back for more than 50 years. The struggle was always peaceful, this time at the very first stage of the revolution of the protest. We call it the spring revolution and the very first teach very first weeks of the Supreme Revolution. The revolution was very peaceful, and everybody, every citizen of Myanmar, hoping that UN and U.S. would come in Burma and save people. But when military started killing, they started killing hundreds of people. Burmese people, they said, OK, this is not time to protest peacefully, but to fight back. So they they fight back with makeshift weapons. So now we have fighting everywhere, Myanmar, in every township. They are public defense forces. They are with their own rifles, fighting back the military.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:15:12] Let me ask a question about the military. So we've looked at a number of countries, a number of regimes that have undemocratic forms of government. One typical model is sort of autocratic individual who comes to power and then tries to secure more power and creates a cult of personality around him. These figures are all over the world right now, from Putin and Russia to Bolsonaro in Brazil to Erdogan in Turkey. That doesn't seem to be the case in Burma. There's not a cult of personality around one person. But at the same time, there is no longer an ideology. The ideology of socialism is gone with the Cold War. What is holding this regime together? What are the sources of its power?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:16:00] The military? Of course, there was a personal cult. General Ne Win in the very beginning. What is what is making you know, military in power is they shared the resources of Burma within the top generals, so they act as if they own the country. They own the country and they share the country together. Our top generals. And they put fear in lower levels. Like in army fear is everywhere. So they put fear not only in military but also in the civilians. So they ruled by fear and also, you know, their self interest, the greed.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:16:39] The corruption is really the glue that holds this military together.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:16:43] But the original justification for the coup was to hold the country together, despite its ethnic differences and ethnic diversity, right? But in recent years, 2016, 2017, we've seen the military reinvigorate that fear, right? With its crackdown, its genocide against the Rohingya people in Rakhine state. So is this a continuation of the same idea, or is it some new set of issues?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:17:13] You know, after all these years, people don't believe anymore the country will be disintegrated. So now they make another fear that Buddhism would disappear from Burma, right? You know, Burma is majority Buddhist. With 911, they are giving a message to the Buddhist population in Myanmar that Muslim infiltrators into Burma, making Burma into a Muslim country, so they make a story. Not many people believe them, but a certain portion, like one percent of population, and they can truly make their soldiers believe they can make some of the Buddhist monks believe, right? Although they are making a big lie. There are still some people who believe these stories.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:17:55] So it's just an effort to create an internal enemy to to create cohesion in the country.

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:18:02] Exactly.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:18:02] And fear.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:18:03] But Aung San Suu Kyi stood in front of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and she defended the soldiers and the military leaders who had carried out the atrocities against the Rohingya and driven so many people into Bangladesh, into India and into misery. So how could she have done this? I mean, this is a woman who had stood for human rights for so long. How does she justify her actions?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:18:30] Well, as a person working close to her, I think her real intention is, you know, she'd like to solve the problem. Piece by piece. Step by step. She seemed to have decided to make reconciliation with the military first and that would solve a

big part of the problem in Myanmar. So I think she made a mistake in that she never should have trusted military should be tamed. So you make a huge mistake.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:18:57] I see. I see.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:18:58] Well, you're been here in the United States for a little while. And I wonder what you think about what role the United States could play or should play in supporting democracy in Burma. Is it doing enough? Could it do more? Or is sometimes American participation a problem because it fulfills the fears of the military that outsiders are interfering

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:19:21] In our military, they are always playing with the international community. The military, they play with the Cold War during the Cold War period. That's when they make them serve socialist party. And I think that they make alliance with the United States. By showing the United States that they fought the communist rebellion. So they play very well with international politics. But I think the United States is doing enough or not. It's a big question. You know, everybody is saying that they would attack Burma like the they attack Iraq. So it is like everybody's hope in Myanmar. It would be very great if that could happen. But of course, there are a lot of challenges. You know? So in prison, we are in a small cell about eight feet and 10 feet in which we have almost nothing. One blanket and the floor that it's all concrete. So we tried to smuggle in a radio that can cost me at least 20 years more in prison. Why I put the radio, because I want to listen to news every day. What we listen is international pressure. So I mean international reaction is very important for Burma. And I want people in United States to know that when we suffer, we shout, "U.S. please help!" We never shout you know, "China, please help!" We never shout, you know, "Japan please". Most of the time we shout, "U.S. please help!". That shows that the US is playing a good role in saving human right and justice, and United States should live up to the standard of people. So I think, you know, democracy is really in danger in some Asian and some Asian countries. We need more, more effort to uphold democracy in these countries as well.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:21:15] What are you doing with yourself now? I understand you are doing some writing, some teaching. Does this give you an opportunity? To think through your ideas, to try to reach a broader audience in the United States.

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:21:28] Yeah, we at UVA University of Virginia, we founded a group called Burmese Democratic Futures Working Group. So that group is making research analysis on other politicians around the globe to understand Burma better. So we hope that we can explain to the international community more about what happened in Burma and we can clarify some misunderstanding about what happened in Burma.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:21:57] Where do you take hope? When you look at Burma and you look at the next few years, what gives you hope about the chances of Burma returning to some version of democracy?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:22:08] So now the public response is very huge. Of course, there was now a sort of armed struggle against the military, and I personally am struggling because of course, there more possibility that the we win in a short term compared to peaceful protests because peaceful protest, they can kill easily. But I'm struck that they cannot kill easily and move us. So we have that whole nation fighting against one person of population in Burma. So we have high tendency that we win. But the risk is aftermath of the revolution. So what we have in Myanmar, we have all townships, we have military

groups that, you know, the first groups with the MS. So after the struggle, there would be high possibility that it will be very difficult to control them. So it is a big question how we can start our initiative. We can make our attempt, you know, to make these forces in Myanmar and ask them, what about human rights, justice and all these, you know, things they should know? I think it is very important for international community to right away to engage in that effort. So we have high opportunity because the whole country is fighting back. So of course, the military is well equipped. In the long run, it will be very difficult for the military to control the whole nation. Oversaw the national unity government, not the government. It was the government out of the NLD and other the minorities group formation links so that national unity government is widely supported by all the population, so they heighten and see that we are winning. But the aftermath of the struggle is very challenging.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:24:01] An armed struggle can make matters more difficult. After the initial victory than putting the country back together might be more difficult than if you pursued your struggle through peaceful means. That's true. But at the same time, you need to engage with this powerful military regime. And so that's a real dilemma. Do you feel that there is some breaking away of perhaps young people inside the armed forces or different factions in the military that might start to fall away? And that would be the beginning of a collapse?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:24:34] Oh, it's very hard. Fear is the crutch of the Myanmar military, and that's the main reason why they are losing the war. You know they dare not make any initiative. They are afraid of everything. So it is very hard. The military will disintegrate. Of course, the soldiers are not very happy. Not at all happy. But at the same time, they dare not even speak out that they don't like the military.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:25:02] Simply out of fear of reprisals?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:25:04] Yeah.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:25:05] Myo, you seem comfortable in the United States. Clearly, you're grateful that you are safe. You've been through hardships. You and your wife faced almost death and torture in the process of getting here. And yet your love for your country is so deep and so clear. How does it feel for you to be in exile? What does it mean to do your job in exile?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:25:34] Actually, I never thought in my life that I would leave my country. It is very hard, and the last moment I decided not to leave my country. But my friend suggested me to leave the border area. OK, I said border area that is still in my country. Then at the border area, you know what, the military came in bombarded the area so that the people in the area said, Of course you are here. So they came bombarded. So villages were destroyed because of my presence. Of course, I have to leave the area again and into Thailand. In Thailand. I try to install myself. But again, the military intelligence, they send people to kill me so that the embassy suggested me not to stay there. So finally, I have to decide to leave. If Thailand is closer to Burma it's better for me. So while I'm OK now, frankly speaking, I'm a very happy. There's not a single moment I do not think of my country. Every moment I am free, I read the news and writing about my country. So I mean, I hope that I could return back to my country one day.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:26:40] So I have one other question that speaks to my personal interest. What do you think of the role of Facebook in Myanmar these days?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:26:47] There are many pros and cons about Facebook that both sides are using and abuse on Facebook. Of course, you know a lot of excitement a mate, a drain, you know, Rohingya crisis. Yeah. You know, like, you know, military extreme is the spread rumors about, you know, a villager being raped by Muslim guys, right? That make people angry. So we are using, you know, the same Facebook to spread information. So Facebook in Myanmar is both pros and cons, right?

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:27:22] Of course. But you can't live without it. Right?

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:27:25] Yeah, it's the main social media in Myanmar. So because we are far from official media, we have only one outlet left that is social media. But we are trying to make people the good information. I forget who tells you that you know, one of the reason we make Burma Democratic Futures Working Group is about social media, because military is spreading lots of rumors in social media that it is important that we give people the right information. So we need a lot of effort. And I think we are successful working at it because people across Burma are very united. And at the same time, we need to make Facebook very clear of misinformation.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:28:09] Well, Myo Yan Naung Thein, thank you so much for joining us today on Democracy in Danger.

**Myo Yan Naung Thein** [00:28:16] Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to talk about my country and introduce my country to the audience.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:28:23] Well, we wish you the best in your struggle.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:28:37] Myo Yan Naung Thein is a visiting researcher in the University of Virginia's English department, and he also has support from our parent organization, the Democracy Initiative. He's a leader in Myanmar's National League for Democracy and a founder of the Baida Institute, which trains newly elected Burmese leaders in good governance.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:28:54] Democracy in Danger is part of the Democracy Group Podcast Network Visit [DemocracyGroup.org](http://DemocracyGroup.org) to find all of our sister shows. We'll be right back.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:29:14] Will, I'm overwhelmed by that story. You know, Myo Yan is one of the people we have been so fortunate to speak to, who has lived democracy, bled democracy. You know, he's put his body on the line. He has taken every risk imaginable to support this ephemeral idea, but also to support a better life for his family and his country.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:29:46] There's no question being in his presence today was moving and powerful, and I think you just get a sense, both of his courage, but also his optimism. Right? And you have to ask yourself, how can you maintain optimism in the face of such long odds? He even said, You know, the military is losing the war. I mean, that's not the way that it looks, or at least that it's reported outside in the wider world. Yet he sees the future. And this is the great thing that I think links democracy activists is their lack of cynicism, their belief that the future can become better through struggle, whether nonviolent one hopes at times maybe it becomes violent because the regimes are so committed to using violence. But I'm reminded of the fact that, you know, this week I've



been lecturing on the end of the Cold War and because I'm coming to the end of our semester and it's a kind of a similar situation where those hundreds of thousands of people in East Germany or in the Baltic states or all the way across Hungary, Czechoslovakia, even down into the Balkans, they had no idea what the future would hold. They did not know the Cold War was going to end. They didn't know that Tiananmen Square would not happen in Eastern Europe, but they stood in front of tanks and they stood in front of barbed wire and they demanded democracy and it worked. And that's what I take from these, you know, forces of resistance is their belief that the future is going to be better.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:31:13] You know, one of the things that we, we learned from Myo Yan is that while he's an idealist, while he's a true believer, he's also a politician and he recognizes that Aung San Suu Kyi as a politician was likely to make some deep moral compromises in an effort to retain power. And he was blunt, I think, refreshingly blunt about the fact that she made a terrible mistake by pandering to the junta over its brutal repression of the Rohingya minority in western Burma. And you know, that showed me, here's a person who has been through all the real political battles and still understands right from wrong and can speak directly about someone he clearly admires.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:31:59] Yeah, I think that he brought a kind of, you know, honesty and an also a tactical savvy about what it means to take on a military junta. But I think the thing that I was really kind of inspired by is just this notion that a young person in Burma facing a terrible military oppression is imagining an American style democracy coming to his country, and he's literally putting his life on the line for it. And it's just a reminder to us because we are so critical of the United States and with good reason for the ways in which it is perverting its own democracy. That for decades the United States has in fact been a model and a beacon. Maybe everyone doesn't want to copy all of our difficulties as well. But it matters that many people around the world look to the United States for hope and for encouragement. So when the United States acts in the world to express solidarity with resistance movements, that matters. It makes a huge difference. It refuels the energy of resistance movements around the world. We play an outsized role in the world that sometimes because we're so critical of ourselves looking inward, we forget.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:33:14] Yeah, but it's also important to remember that there are so many different ways of building a democracy, building an indigenous democracy, building a democracy that actually supports the positive things about a social structure or resists the residual effects of colonialism, which is, you know, one of the big challenges for any former colony like Myanmar, like Indonesia, like, you know, like South Africa.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:33:42] Yeah, there's no doubt that the current political and economic setup is a legacy of decades of exploitation under British colonial rule. And there really was never a transition to democracy, not even much of an effort to make it work. The military swept in and has been exploiting that country ever since the late 40s. And this is a terrible legacy of colonization that so many nations in the developing world have had to confront over the last half century.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:34:13] And let's not forget that American and Western European companies have been deeply invested in the status quo in Myanmar ever since as well. I mean, you know, Royal Dutch Shell has been a real villain in that country and has pretty much stood up against any major international efforts to instill real, real democratic change in that country. And you know, and this is one of our big challenges when we talk about real politics and we talk about its connection to democracy is that, you know, sometimes

we do have to face where the power lies and call out the misapplication, the brutal application of power, often by non-state actors like big global corporations.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:34:59] That's all for today's show coming up before the winter break, we have one more installment in our series on hot spots around the world. It'll be all about that continuing struggle for democracy in Eastern Europe.

**News reporter** [00:35:12] Polish riot police fired tear gas and unleashed water cannon on migrants after they were pelted with stones, showering refugees already suffering in subfreezing temperatures.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:35:25] In the meantime, please catch up on anything you missed this season. We had some great episodes on the fallout from the war in Afghanistan and a bunch of stories from various fine states here at home. Check them out.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:35:37] And stay in touch. Shoot us a tweet @DinDpodcast that's d-i-n-d podcast. Share us on social media and find much more on our web page [DinDanger.org](http://DinDanger.org).

**Will Hitchcock** [00:35:50] Democracy in Danger is produced by Robert Armengol with help from Jennifer Ludovici. Sydney Halleman edits the show. Our interns are Denzel Mitchell, Jane Frankel, and Elie Bashkow. Special thanks this time to our UVA colleagues, Steve Parks and Eric Brown.

**Siva Vaidhyanathan** [00:36:06] Support comes from the University of Virginia's Democracy Initiative and from the College of Arts and Sciences. The show is a project of UVA's Deliberative Media Lab. We're distributed by the Virginia Audio Collective of WTJU Radio in Charlottesville. I'm Siva Vaidhyanathan.

**Will Hitchcock** [00:36:24] And I'm Will Hitchcock. Until next time.