

# PERSPECTIVE

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## **Myanmar's Ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) Party's Online and Offline Campaigns**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The official campaign period for Myanmar's 8 November 2020 general elections began on 8 September.
- The ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party is determined to win again, as it did in 2015.
- However, a steady increase in Covid-19 cases since mid-August and resultant restrictions on holding public events are posing logistical challenges for the party's campaign activities.
- The NLD has launched an unprecedented Facebook campaign online, in close coordination with its offline activities.
- Digital democracy and popular culture are key to how the NLD aims to overcome the logistical challenges posed by the pandemic.
- Though very popular on Facebook now, State Counsellor of Myanmar and NLD Chairwoman Daw Aung San Suu Kyi may not want to continue Facebooking out of concern about constant public scrutiny of her on the platform after the elections.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Myanmar will hold general elections on 8 November 2020, and the official campaign period began on 8 September. Yangon, the former capital and most important commercial centre in the country, along with several other areas, remain under lockdown, stay-at-home orders and quarantine to varying degrees, due to the steady increase in Covid-19 cases since mid-August. By 14 October Myanmar had recorded 31,325 coronavirus cases and 732 deaths.

The electoral season now bears the hallmarks of a social media campaign. Campaigning on Facebook, the most popular social media platform in Myanmar, is now more important than ever. Online campaigning has intensified in recent weeks, at a time of high election fever. To be sure, Facebook is not the only realm in which the popular ruling party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), campaigns. The party has judiciously and innovatively combined campaigning in the virtual, online realm and campaigning in the real-life, offline realm. The two realms are, in the party's approach, not distinct: what the party and supporters do and say offline comes online, and vice versa.

Online, the party relies heavily on the electoral Facebooking of NLD Chairwoman and State Counsellor of Myanmar Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Her NLD comrades also occupy their own spaces on Facebook and reinforce the popular leader's e-campaign. Offline, NLD partisans carry the online campaign forward, wave party flags and display party merchandise including stickers and pictures of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her late father Aung San.

Offline too, partisans feverishly campaign in parades and motorcades and publicly play campaign songs released on Facebook, encouraging others to dance with them. Colourful pictures and videos of NLD partisans taking to the streets instantly go online to energize the online campaign. This coordinated online-offline campaign has resulted in a synergized march towards the polls.

## **PANDEMIC DEMOCRACY, DIGITAL DEMOCRACY AND POPULAR CULTURE**

The Covid-19 pandemic poses enormous public health, political, social and economic challenges to most countries in the world. Concerns have grown over whether electoral democracy, especially in countries undergoing democratic transitions such as Myanmar, will stagnate, backslide<sup>1</sup> or regress.<sup>2</sup> There are academic risk assessments of 'pandemic democracy'<sup>3</sup> and technical advice on how to preserve democracy<sup>4</sup> and conduct elections as safely, legally and inclusively as possible.<sup>5</sup>

These political, legal and technical considerations and recommendations may be well-meaning, reasonable and evidence-based, but they overlook the roles played by digital democracy and popular culture. These are two facets of contemporary democratic politics, and are no less important than the holding of safe and legal elections. In all probability, they will have a big role to play in the preservation of democracy.

Globally and macro-sociologically, views about the impact of the widespread use of digital and information technologies on individuals and societies are mixed. Positive views hold

that democracy has gone digital, and that digital democracy further democratizes already democratic societies and liberalizes (semi)-authoritarian and transitioning societies.<sup>6</sup> Others warn, more negatively, that digital democracy is a myth,<sup>7</sup> and posit that the internet even entrenches and worsens existing political, social and economic inequalities.<sup>8</sup>

Micro-sociologically, electoral campaigning and lobbying on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are increasingly prevalent,<sup>9</sup> although the adverse effects of intensely partisan e-campaigns in creating filter bubbles and echo chambers are well known.<sup>10</sup> Digital electioneering, regardless of whether its impact is positive, negative, or mixed, is undeniably creating and sustaining a form of digital democracy. Aware of the benefits of an increased online presence, parties have gone digital, especially during elections.<sup>11</sup>

Usually free from legal oversight, popular culture is also an important facet of democracy and elections. Democratic elections are rules-based. Electoral management bodies such as the Union Election Commission (UEC) of Myanmar are supposed to hold elections according to written electoral laws, rules and regulations. Electoral rules create a level playing field, and mostly comprise explicit “dos” and “don’ts” for political parties and candidates. But parties and candidates are just one side of elections; voters and their behaviour before and during campaigns are the other side. Admittedly, Myanmar’s electoral rules do address some aspects of voter behaviour. They tell voters, for example, what not to do on cooling-off day, the day before election day, and on election day itself. For example, voters must not wear a political party’s T-shirts or hats to polling stations.

Rules aside, elections are deeply cultural. Many voters are susceptible to candidates’ and canvassers’ grassroots campaigning.<sup>12</sup> But voters are not always passive, and they actively engage and participate in elections as either rational voters<sup>13</sup> or socially responsible voters,<sup>14</sup> or as both.<sup>15</sup> Voters also come under the influence of their social networks.<sup>16</sup> Many also see election campaigns as platforms for performing and ritualizing their democratic citizenship.<sup>17</sup> Popular cultural performances and public participation in electoral activities include but are not limited to waving flags, dancing, singing, performing, parading and motorcading.<sup>18</sup> To allow voters to participate and perform, parties heavily rely on celebrities who sing and perform in campaigns. Supporters and voters typically sing along to and dance with songs sung by celebrities,<sup>19</sup> a campaign tactic of the NLD in 2015 elections that is impossible to use this time around.

## **THE ONLINE REALM: AMAY SU AND E-PARTISANS’ FACEBOOK DOMINATION**

Despite the often-difficult relationships between the NLD government and the media, the party has had recourse to conventional electronic and print media that also have a strong presence on Facebook. At least since May 2020, senior NLD leaders have become friendlier and closer to the media, though Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself has not talked to them. The media do not or may not sing the praises of the NLD alone all the time. They also cover criticisms of the NLD by analysts and observers and present the views of rival parties.

Myanmar is a politically polarized society in which the power and interests of the military and, by extension, of the formerly ruling party, now in opposition, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), are deeply entrenched. The NLD is in power but the party and its supporters still see themselves as the opposition to the military and the USDP. In this context the NLD seems to believe that partisanship will work for the party, at least for electoral purposes.

Facebook has served Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD heavyweights well in two ways. First, they have been able to cultivate a digital fanbase and accumulate political capital by means of the platform. Second, in spite of the unmatched popularity of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and by extension of the NLD, the dear leader is nevertheless not entirely immune from opposition and criticism, especially from supporters of the military and the USDP. But when those ‘green’ partisans dare to criticize Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, they usually find themselves at the receiving end of the wrath of ‘red’ NLD supporters.<sup>20</sup> The NLD fanbase<sup>21</sup> is noticeably larger than those of other parties such as the USDP. It is also increasingly partisan and aggressive. Therefore, the NLD has been quite successful in defanging a potentially large opposition, at least on Facebook.

#### *Network Facebooking: Aung Su is the Centre of the Red Realm*

Facebook does not only connect members of existing communities but also creates new communities of previously unrelated individuals. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi made her long-awaited but unexpected entry into the Facebook realm first for crisis communication concerning Covid-19 in April 2020 and then, in July 2020, in support of the NLD’s electoral campaign.<sup>22</sup>

The Chair NLD page attracted more than 1 million followers in two months,<sup>23</sup> and it has proved extremely influential in creating a networked fanbase for her old and new supporters to flock to. Mobilizing red fans seemed to go smoothly and instantaneously for her. Reds were already ready. They had been mobilized since the NLD sounded the trumpet for its imminent campaign on 31 May 2020. In the past few months the red crowd has flooded Myanmar Facebook, its members committing themselves to the NLD and urging others to vote for the party.<sup>24</sup> The NLD unveiled its line-up of candidates on 23 July.<sup>25</sup> The second Facebook handle Daw Aung San Suu Kyi uses under the name of ‘Chair NLD’ for campaigning came live on 31 July. All these developments fuelled the red campaign.

The Chair NLD page also uses a judicious mixture of textual, visual and video data, and it relies heavily on personal stories. These stories are touching, and a picture is worth a thousand words. It broadcasts gripping first-person, second-person and third-person narratives featuring Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. She talks about being under house arrest during military rule, her long political journey, and her late comrades, such as U Win Tin and U Kyi Maung. She interviews senior NLD officials. And she holds discussions with NLD campaign teams from regions and states, younger party members and first-time voters. On a daily basis, the page also posts quotations from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and extracts from the election manifesto of the NLD. It also posts charts, graphs, and statistics concerning developments since 2016 in areas such as education and health under the NLD administration. It often compares and contrasts them with that administration’s predecessor USDP regime (2011–16). The page also regularly, and often repeatedly, posts NLD

campaign songs and documentaries of (better) life in Myanmar under the NLD. All these posts on the Chair NLD page reverberate across the red Facebook sphere.

*Secondary Network Facebooking: Other NLD-Linked Accounts and Pages*

Undeniably, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is the preeminent face of the NLD campaign, both online and offline, but her Chair NLD page alone can neither do everything nor speak for everyone. Therefore, the party has employed three other platforms, all working in unison for the victory of the reds in November. The first platform is personal. Other NLD heavyweights including President U Win Myint<sup>26</sup> and NLD Vice Chairman and Mandalay Region Chief Minister Dr Zaw Myint Maung<sup>27</sup> have followed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's lead and opened their own pages. Several other well-known NLD officials and sitting members of parliament, such as Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein,<sup>28</sup> who has 1.1 million followers, and former blogger and incumbent member of the Yangon Region parliament Nay Phone Latt,<sup>29</sup> with 0.7 million followers, also have a regular presence on Facebook.

The second platform is institutional, and the NLD as a whole has gone Facebooking. The NLD's official page, with 2.87 million followers,<sup>30</sup> links with the pages of NLD branches in the seven regions and seven states,<sup>31</sup> and all of these pages campaign among their own networks and followers. They carry the message of the party chairwoman by sharing almost everything posted on her page. The third platform is the page of the D-Wave,<sup>32</sup> the official newsletter of the NLD. In addition to posting news, that page broadcasts two electoral programmes. In the first programme, one or more sitting NLD MPs introduce new candidates, whereas in the second programme, sitting MPs conduct dialogues about their experiences within and outside the parliament.

In addition to all these accounts, pages, and profiles internal to the NLD, the party commands a devoted but voluntary following of countless Buddhist monks,<sup>33</sup> celebrities,<sup>34</sup> social influencers,<sup>35</sup> writers,<sup>36</sup> social workers,<sup>37</sup> and other well-known Facebook users. Many of them command sizable followings, and their endorsements of the NLD and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi have exponentially increased awareness of the e-campaign of the party.

## **THE OFFLINE REALM: RED HOMES, RED SHOPS, RED PARADES AND RED MOTORCADES**

From a strategic point of view, Facebook is not and should not be the only platform for campaigning, whether or not there is an ongoing pandemic. Not every voter in Myanmar is on the internet, and not every one of those on Facebook is following Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD closely and regularly. Online and offline efforts have to work together.<sup>38</sup> Offline campaigning may be more important than its online counterpart in Myanmar, where some 70 per cent of the population live in rural areas with less access to the internet. Since the first Covid-19 case was found in Myanmar on 23 March 2020, the NLD seems to have planned well ahead for the forthcoming elections.

The offline campaign of the NLD set off with an explicit request by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the Chair NLD page for her supporters to start displaying the NLD flag at their

homes, offices and shops and on their vehicles on 8 September, the day that she herself hoisted the party flag at the NLD's temporary headquarters in Naypyidaw and declared, "Today, our victory campaign has begun."<sup>39</sup> Flags and NLD stickers have been quite ubiquitous since then, at least in bigger cities and towns, leading to a NLD merchandise boom in the market with queues of buyers.<sup>40</sup> Pictures and videos of waving flags and displayed stickers come back to Facebook, and reds like, love and share them, resulting in a synergistic campaign between offline and online platforms.

Parades of people and of cattle carts are not an entirely new practice in Myanmar's Buddhist popular culture. Rural people from nearby towns and villages still ride cattle carts to pagoda festivals in places like Bagan. Horse-drawn carriages remain in use in cities such as Pyin Oo Lwin as a public or private mode of transportation. Because of Covid-19 restrictions on crowds of more than 50 people, NLD candidates, members, canvassers, and supporters have been culturally innovative.

Offline campaigners across Myanmar take to the streets, riding horses, horse-drawn carriages, cattle carts, trishaws, bicycles, motorbikes, cars, tractors, trucks, and boats. The campaigners decorate their vehicles with pictures of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her father, NLD flags and stickers.<sup>41</sup> They also play NLD campaign songs, and partisan onlookers often dance, creating and developing quite an exciting electoral popular culture.<sup>42</sup> To draw further on that offline popular culture, the ruling party and its supporters hold NLD song, photo and fashion contests offline and online, in which children and adults alike participate.<sup>43</sup> Again, pictures and videos of these festive offline campaign events come online, and they energize the online campaign.

## CONCLUSION

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed logistical challenges to the NLD's election campaign. The party has in response launched and mobilized an unprecedented digital campaign on Facebook. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's personal aura and her Chair NLD page is the centre of the red universe. The pages and accounts of NLD branches and members, and countless other pages belonging to NLD partisans and supporters, energize the campaign. The online campaign also works very closely with its offline counterpart. This dual-track campaign draws upon and innovates Myanmar popular culture. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD comrades appear to be learning of dividends from the Facebooking that has become part of Myanmar popular culture, especially among city dwellers and politically interested citizens.

But a permanent online presence has both advantages and disadvantages. Now elections are a matter of urgency not just for NLD hyper-partisans but for more reasonable supporters. Most if not all of the latter are keeping silent about, or at least toning down, their criticisms of the party. But this unanimous e-support and digital democracy may not prove long-lasting. Neither may Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD want to expose themselves to noisy public scrutiny on Facebook after the elections.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding", *Journal of Democracy* 27, 1 (2016): 5–19.

- <sup>2</sup> Larry Diamond, “Democratic Regression in Comparative Perspective: Scope, Methods, and Causes”, *Democratization*, published online 15 September 2020 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2020.1807517>, downloaded 16 September 2020).
- <sup>3</sup> Todd Landman and Luca Di Gennaro Splendore, “Pandemic Democracy: Elections and COVID-19”, *Journal of Risk Research*, published online 13 May 2020 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2020.1765003>, downloaded 17 September 2020).
- <sup>4</sup> Erica Shein and Alexandra Brown, “Preserving Independent and Accountable Institutions”, *IFES COVID-19 Briefing Series* ([https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_covid-19\\_briefing\\_series\\_preserving\\_independent\\_and\\_accountable\\_institutions\\_september\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_covid-19_briefing_series_preserving_independent_and_accountable_institutions_september_2020.pdf), downloaded 1 October 2020).
- <sup>5</sup> “Elections and Covid 19”, *International IDEA Technical Paper 1/2020* (<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/elections-and-covid-19.pdf>, downloaded 18 September 2020); Katherine Ellena, “Legal Considerations When Delaying or Adapting Elections”, *IFES COVID-19 Briefing Series* ([https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_covid-19\\_briefing\\_series\\_legal\\_considerations\\_when\\_delaying\\_or\\_adapting\\_elections\\_june\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_covid-19_briefing_series_legal_considerations_when_delaying_or_adapting_elections_june_2020.pdf), downloaded 18 September 2020); and Virginia Atkinson, Meredith Applegate and Rebecca Aaberg, “Inclusion and Meaningful Political Participation”, *IFES COVID-19 Briefing Series* ([https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes\\_covid19\\_briefing\\_series\\_inclusion\\_and\\_meaningful\\_political\\_participation\\_july\\_2020.pdf](https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/ifes_covid19_briefing_series_inclusion_and_meaningful_political_participation_july_2020.pdf), downloaded 28 September 2020).
- <sup>6</sup> For example, Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Aaron Veenstra, Emily Vraga and Dhavan Shah, “Digital Democracy: Reimagining Pathways to Political Participation”, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* 7, 1 (2010): 36–51, and Stephen Coleman and Jay G. Blumler, *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- <sup>7</sup> Matthew Hindman, *The Myth of Digital Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
- <sup>8</sup> Matthew Hindman, *The Internet Trap: How the Digital Economy Builds Monopolies and Undermines Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), and Pippa Norris, *Digital Divide: Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- <sup>9</sup> Gunn Enli and Hallvard Moe, eds., *Social Media and Election Campaigns: Key Tendencies and Ways Forward* (London: Routledge, 2015).
- <sup>10</sup> Jacob Groshek and Karolina Koc-Michalska, “Helping Populism Win? Social Media Use, Filter Bubbles, and Support for Populist Presidential Candidates in the 2016 US Election Campaign”, *Information, Communication & Society*, 20, 9 (2017): 1389–1407, and Shelley Boulianne, “Right-Wing Populism, Social Media and Echo chambers in Western Democracies”, *New Media & Society*, 22, 4 (2020): 683–699.
- <sup>11</sup> Paolo Gerbaudo, *The Digital Party: Political Organisation and Online Democracy* (London: Pluto Press, 2019); and John H. Aldrich, Rachel K Gibson, Marta Cantijoch and Tobias Konitzer, “Getting out the Vote in the Social Media Era: Are Digital Tools Changing the Extent, Nature and Impact of Party Contacting in Elections?” *Party Politics* 22, 2 (2016): 165–178.
- <sup>12</sup> Betsy Sinclair, Margaret McConnell and Melissa R. Michelson, “Local Canvassing: The Efficacy of Grassroots Voter Mobilization”, *Political Communication* 30, 1 (2013): 42–57, and Donald P. Green, Alan S. Gerber and David W. Nickerson, “Getting Out the Vote in Local Elections: Results from Six Door-to-Door Canvassing Experiments”, *Journal of Politics* 65, 4 (2003): 1083–1096.
- <sup>13</sup> William H. Riker and Peter C. Ordeshook, “A Theory of the Calculus of Voting”, *American Political Science Review* 62, 1 (1968): 25–42.
- <sup>14</sup> Stephen Knack, “Civic Norms, Social Sanctions, and Voter Turnout”, *Rationality and Society* 4, 2 (1992): 133–156.
- <sup>15</sup> Morris P. Fiorina, “The Voting Decision: Instrumental and Expressive Aspects”, *Journal of Politics* 38, 2 (1976): 390–413.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Abrams, Torben Iversen and David Soskice, “Informal Social Networks and Rational Voting”, *British Journal of Political Science* 41, 2 (2011): 229–257.

<sup>17</sup> Chua Beng Huat, ed., *Elections as Popular Culture in Asia* (Abingdon Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> For example, Yu-fen Ko, “The Festive machine: Taiwan’s 2004 Elections as Popular Culture”, pp. 22–37 in *Elections as Popular Culture in Asia*, edited by Chua Beng Huat (Abingdon Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2007), and Amiya Kumar Das, “The Magic Called Elections: Polls, Performance and Citizenship”, pp. 136–151 in *Culture and Politics in South Asia: Performative Communication*, edited by Dev Nath Pathak and Sasanka Perera (London: Routledge, 2018),

<sup>19</sup> Philip Drake and Michael Higgins, “Lights, Camera, Election: Celebrity, Performance and the 2010 UK General Election Leadership Debates”, *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 14, 3 (2012): 375–391.

<sup>20</sup> Red is the colour of the background of the NLD’s flag, and green the background colour of the standard of the USDP. So NLD partisans and USDP supporters are known as ‘red’ and ‘green’, respectively.

<sup>21</sup> For different types of NLD supporters, see Nyi Nyi Kyaw, “Elections in November: A Profile of Supporters of Myanmar’s Ruling NLD”, *ISEAS Perspective* 94/2020, 28 August 2020 ([https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2020\\_94.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_94.pdf), downloaded 29 August 2020).

<sup>22</sup> She tested the waters first by opening a Facebook account under the name ‘Aung San Suu Kyi’ on 1 April 2020 in her capacity as State Counsellor and/or Chairwoman of the National-Level Central Committee on Prevention, Control and Treatment of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19). She asserted that she would only use that account for crisis Facebooking, to deliver much-needed information to the people of Myanmar. She kept her promise, and opened a page for electoral Facebooking on 31 July in her capacity as Chairwoman of the NLD, apparently aiming to use it to campaign for the November elections. For Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s crisis Facebooking, see Nyi Nyi Kyaw, “Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s Crisis Facebooking During Covid-19 in Myanmar”, *ISEAS Perspective* 53/2020, 27 May 2020 ([https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2020\\_53.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_53.pdf), downloaded 28 May 2020).

<sup>23</sup> Opened three months earlier than the Chair NLD page, the original Facebook account used by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had 2.7 million followers as of 1 October 2020. But in terms of traffic, the Chair NLD page has been more dynamic than that first account.

<sup>24</sup> On that day the NLD announced that it would finish selecting the party’s candidates for the forthcoming general elections by the end of June. See, Nyan Hlaing Lin, “NLD Candidate Selection Begins for 2020 Elections”, *Myanmar Now*, 2 June 2020 (<https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/nld-candidate-selection-begins-for-2020-elections>, downloaded 29 September 2020).

<sup>25</sup> San Yamin Aung, “Myanmar’s NLD Unveils Election Candidate Lineup with More Women, Muslims”, *Irrawaddy*, 23 July 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmars-nld-unveils-election-candidate-lineup-women-muslims.html>, downloaded 1 September 2020).

<sup>26</sup> The URL for U Win Myint’s Facebook account, created on 9 September 2020, is <https://www.facebook.com/U-Win-Myint-111419997365988>. It had 360,000 followers as of 1 October 2020.

<sup>27</sup> The URL for Dr Zaw Myint Maung’s Facebook account, created on 4 September 2020, is <https://www.facebook.com/DoctorZawMyintMaung>. It had 250,000 followers as of 1 October 2020.

<sup>28</sup> The URL for U Phyo Min Thein’s page is <https://www.facebook.com/ChiefMinisterOffice.YangonRegionGovernment>.

<sup>29</sup> The URL for Nay Phone Latt’s page is <https://www.facebook.com/blogger.nayphonelatt>.

<sup>30</sup> The URL for the page of the NLD is: <https://www.facebook.com/nldparty>.



<sup>31</sup> The URLs for the fourteen pages are National League for Democracy - Kachin State (<https://www.facebook.com/nldkcnstate>); National League for Democracy - Kayah State (<https://www.facebook.com/nldkyhstate>); National League for Democracy - Kayin State (<https://www.facebook.com/nldkynstate>); National League for Democracy - Chin State (<https://www.facebook.com/nldchnstate>); National League for Democracy - Sagaing Region (<https://www.facebook.com/nldsggregion/>); National League for Democracy - Tanintharyi Region (<https://www.facebook.com/nldtniregion/>); National League for Democracy - Bago Region (<https://www.facebook.com/nldbfgoregion/>); National League for Democracy - Magway Region (<https://www.facebook.com/nldmgwregion/>); National League for Democracy - Mandalay Region (<https://www.facebook.com/nldmdyregion/>); National League for Democracy - Mon State (<https://www.facebook.com/monstatenld/>); National League for Democracy - Rakhine State (<https://www.facebook.com/nldrkestate/>); National League for Democracy - Yangon Region (<https://www.facebook.com/nldygnregion/>); National League for Democracy - Shan State (<https://www.facebook.com/nldshnstate/>); National League for Democracy - Ayeyarwady Region (<https://www.facebook.com/nldayyregion/>). There are 330 townships in Myanmar, and NLD branches in a hundred or more of them have their own Facebook pages. Those pages further carry the top-down online campaign from the Chair NLD page.

<sup>32</sup> The URL for the D-Wave's page is <https://www.facebook.com/d.wave.newsletter>.

<sup>33</sup> For example, Ashin Sobhita (Alinkarkyal) (<https://www.facebook.com/alinkar.kyal.564>).

<sup>34</sup> For example, actor Daung (<https://www.facebook.com/daung.actor>).

<sup>35</sup> For example, writer, social influencer, and digital marketer Pencilo (<https://www.facebook.com/pencilolady>).

<sup>36</sup> For example, writer and satirist Britisha Ko Ko Maung@Kyaw Swa Naing (<https://www.facebook.com/koko.maung.3557>).

<sup>37</sup> See the pages of actor and social worker Kyaw Thu (<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100028684084103>) and his wife and fellow social worker Myint Myint Khin Pe (<https://www.facebook.com/ShweZeeKwet>).

<sup>38</sup> Aldrich et al., "Getting out the Vote in the Social Media Era".

<sup>39</sup> "Myanmar's Suu Kyi Vows Victory in Election as Campaign Starts Despite Virus Surge", *Reuters*, 8 September 2020 (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-election/myanmars-suu-kyi-vows-victory-in-election-as-campaign-starts-despite-virus-surge-idUSKBN25Z0S6>, downloaded 28 September 2020).

<sup>40</sup> Myo Min Soe, "Myanmar's Election Merchandise Vendors Do a Brisk Trade as Vote Looms", *Irrawaddy*, 24 August 2020 (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/photo-essay/myanmars-election-merchandise-vendors-brisk-trade-vote-looms.html>, downloaded 15 September 2020), and Phoe Wa, "Pre-election Boom for Yangon's Printing Shops", *Myanmar Times*, 21 September 2020 (<https://www.mmmtimes.com/news/pre-election-boom-yangons-printing-shops.html>, downloaded 28 September 2020).

<sup>41</sup> Author's observation of NLD partisans' accounts, September 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

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