

PERSPECTIVE

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Why Myanmar's 2020 Elections Matter

*Moe Thuzar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Myanmar's 8 November general elections are proceeding as planned. Authorities are undeterred by concerns over the surge in Covid-19 cases and the ongoing conflict in several ethnic areas.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has produced socio-economic challenges across Myanmar that will linger on long after the 8 November polls.
- The ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) is widely expected to be given a second mandate in the polls, though with a smaller majority than in 2015.
- In 2020 the NLD faces more critical voters than in 2015. A combination of factors has dented the NLD's track record over the past five years, notwithstanding a few bright spots in the tackling of high-level corruption.
- With a returned mandate, the NLD could institute a 'second wave' of reforms focusing on land rights, education, healthcare, and labour law reforms, in addition to socio-economic reforms, over 2021 to 2025.
- Young people are showing a heightened interest in politics and national development issues, and are keen to participate.

* *Moe Thuzar is ISEAS Fellow and co-coordinator of the Myanmar Studies Programme at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute.*

INTRODUCTION

On 1 July 2020, the chair of Myanmar’s Union Election Commission (UEC) announced November 8 as the date for general elections, disseminating the information via its Facebook page. Myanmar thus joined the ranks of countries conducting elections during the Covid-19 pandemic. In July, the authorities were optimistic that Myanmar would be spared the worst of the pandemic. Be that as it may, analysts point out that Myanmar’s first brush with Covid-19 showed up weaknesses in its health and social welfare systems.¹

When election campaigning officially started on September 8, an exponential surge in Covid-19 infections and casualties compelled authorities to institute strict restrictions on movement and gatherings. These effectively moved campaigning and demonstrations of support online. Several parties – with the opposition Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) in the lead – are competing against the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD). The opposition parties had earlier called for postponing the elections in view of the Covid-19 resurgence, but nonetheless entered the online campaign fray.² Two new political parties – the People’s Pioneer Party led by former NLD member Dr Thet Thet Khine, and the People’s Party led by former student leader and prisoner of conscience U Ko Ko Gyi – are prominent among those hoping for seats and voice in the parliament and preparing for a post-2025 transition period.³

It appears that neither Covid-19 nor the No Vote campaign launched in August by the All Burma Federation of Student Unions⁴ will deter or affect the elections. Overseas and advance votes have been cast since the first half of October, at voting centres opened by Myanmar Embassies and Consulates across the globe. In Naypyitaw, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has overseen at least three demonstrations of safety measures for polling stations.⁵ With mask and gloves on, she cast her advance vote on October 29 under the government’s initiative to stagger voting dates and times for senior citizens.⁶

Safety measures are important – optically and logistically – as the Covid-19 surge over late August to mid-October,⁷ particularly in the commercial hub of Yangon, made the pandemic’s socio-economic consequences very real. The independent election observer People’s Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE), which has been tracking voter sentiments and the electoral environment since 2015, reported in its 2020 pre-election poll that potential voters view the Covid-19 situation as a concern, or even a barrier, to them casting their votes in November.⁸

The Covid-19 Economic Response Plan (CERP) launched in June, and the consistent messaging that State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has been providing via her Facebook page and her engagement with various stakeholders, have staved off strong criticism. The PACE pre-election poll reported that respondents largely view the country to be moving “in the right direction”, and rank “government services and infrastructure” as a priority over law and order issues and the economy.⁹

THE ECONOMY MATTERS

The NLD government’s predecessor, the USDP government, gained international attention with its economic reform moves starting in 2011.¹⁰ Its economic reforms had some immediate impact, and generated a wave of interest in the country from external investors.

The World Bank summarised these measures as: “unification of multiple exchange rates, initial liberalization of product and factor markets, integration into regional markets, and modernization of economic and financial institutions and systems”.¹¹ The relaxation of strict censorship rules and Internet access restrictions, coupled with the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector resulted in an information and expression explosion of sorts in Myanmar, even under the shadow of opaque defamation legislation.

The interest generated by Myanmar’s tentative economic opening translated to growth figures of above 7 percent per year in 2012-14¹², and a substantial decline in poverty incidence albeit with significant urban-rural differences.¹³

Thus, when the NLD won a landslide victory in 2015, enabling it to form a government in 2016, high anticipation accompanied its every move. The lag time in the announcement of the NLD’s economic policy – which was later issued as a twelve-point statement – provoked comments from the business community which sought more clarity. The NLD’s reluctance to continue with the USDP’s economic reform agenda; the preference to put together its own economic team, and the trial-and-error ministerial appointment for economic planning added to the general feeling of disappointment.

To be fair to the NLD government, it had practically no more “quick wins” with which to wow or woo investors and the international community. Instead, it had to take on the challenging task of tackling entrenched institutional mindsets and bureaucratic red-tape to deepen and broaden economic reforms. From 5.75 percent in 2016, Myanmar’s GDP growth did pick up to over 6 percent in 2017 and 2018. However, in 2019, GDP growth was down at 2.88 percent, a low not seen since 1990. The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 dashed all hopes for the economy to rebound.

The NLD government announced the Covid-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) in April 2020 as a key feature of its Covid-19 response, which had the objective to “flatten the curve without flattening the economy”.¹⁴ Dr Sean Turnell, Special Economic Consultant to the State Counsellor, observed in August 2020 that the CERP policies provided an opportunity for the government to put together “a programme of reform”, and to revisit earlier reform measures.¹⁵ This reorientation, taking place in an election year, is significant as it shows that the NLD is aware of where its performance legitimacy lies.

According to U Thaung Tun, the NLD’s Union Minister for Investment and Foreign Economic Relations, and chair of the working committee to address the Covid-19 impact on the economy, the NLD government has disbursed close to MMK 2 trillion (about USD 1.5 billion) within the CERP framework to manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, and services sectors, farmers, the microfinance sector and MSMEs, and even “small tea shops and street-stalls to ensure their survival”. A new Myanmar Economic Recovery and Reform Plan

would soon replace the CERP, to address the much larger economic fallout than had been earlier anticipated.¹⁶

Assistance to households appears to be slower and uneven; low-income families have received a maximum of two cash grants of about \$15 each.¹⁷ Social collective action to shore up the difference has been affected by lockdowns and the capacity of donors to reach all communities in need.

Workers and households in precarity thus may not immediately see the value of the government's macro-level policies, or how they relate to their personal experiences of the pandemic.

Myanmar has about 4 million migrant workers in countries around the globe, with the largest number in Thailand and Malaysia. This is according to International Labour Organisation estimates. In June 2020, Myanmar's Ministry for Labour, Immigration and Population listed the number of Myanmar workers who had lost their jobs domestically and internationally at 250,000, 110,000 of which were returnees, mainly from Thailand and China.¹⁸ There had been increasing numbers of migrant workers going overseas in 2019, adding to the estimated four million migrants already working abroad officially and unofficially.¹⁹ The Ministry's June update on job-matching and skills training (93,000 jobs created in April, but only 6,000 in May) indicated that supply outstripped demand. More workers risk being drawn into the informal economy, or falling through the cracks altogether. Recent news reports have provided details of households living in economic precarity in Yangon resorting to "eating rats and snakes to survive" during a second lockdown.²⁰

Amidst all these uncertainties, young people entering the job market may face more challenges than the workforce in general. Uncertainties in their education and employment prospects will affect their view of electoral politics and social change in 2020.

THE YOUTH MATTER

In 2020, political parties are going online more than ever before to court some 37 million eligible voters, including 5 million first-time voters.

Some feel that young people may become swing voters while others maintain that young people are in fact frustrated with the current state of governance in the country and concerned over curbs on the freedom of expression.²¹ Whether activist or politician, they have democratic ideals but are also dissatisfied with the NLD government for not having done enough to facilitate change.²²

Generally, Myanmar's millennials are politically aware and active, and they tend to share the same outlook irrespective of ethnic affiliation. Having come of age when the country's political transition began in 2011, and having enjoyed freedom of expression online and offline, the young are drawn to discussions about the quality of education and are concerned with getting decent jobs.²³ Covid-19 has heightened these expectations and anxieties.

Still, political parties in Myanmar tend to have broad national-level political agendas,²⁴ and take a dim view towards activism and protests. Engaging the young meaningfully should therefore be a feature of the cultural transition in Myanmar in the 21st century. In the 1990 elections, young people then were more inspired by the opposition's call for change, and by memories of the failed democracy protests in 1988 where many young people sacrificed their lives and futures. In 2010, young voters were apathetic, which was understandable given the limited opportunities for campaigning, the USDP's dominance, and the NLD's boycott of the elections. Civil society groups, rather than the political parties were the ones trying to engage voters – young and first-time voters included – to make their votes the voice for change.

These past experiences made a compelling case for greater efforts to engage young voters in 2015 and 2020, including encouraging younger (under-35) candidates to stand for election. Awareness and active interest in the political process are high in ethnic areas. Young people in these areas are campaigning for and supporting young candidates representing their interests and aspirations. These interests include heightening the possibility to hold the representatives themselves accountable.

LOCAL CONCERNS AND VOICES MATTER

Accountability for election promises has come up in many discussions regarding the NLD's performance. Similar to its 2015 manifesto²⁵, the NLD's 2020 commitments²⁶ focus on constitutional reform, national reconciliation via the peace process, and ensuring sustainable economic development as part of the country's democratisation. The work-in-progress nature of these commitments make for inevitable dissonance between macro-level policy directions issuing from Naypyitaw and micro-level lived realities.

The USDP's reforms, which had propelled Myanmar into the international spotlight, created higher expectations across the country for its successor. Continued conflict in several areas of the country with ethnic armed groups, the unresolved Rohingya issue and the military's role in causing an unprecedented exodus of that community in 2017 brought Myanmar under international scrutiny again, and hampered dialogue with the military. At the same time, the State Counsellor and the Commander-in-Chief both emphasised their commitment to the ceasefire negotiations with ethnic armed groups. Recasting the previous Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) process as the Union Peace Conference - 21st Century Panglong, the NLD took on the task of rebuilding trust and confidence anew with ethnic armed group leaders. The New Mon State Party and the Lahu Democratic Union may have joined the NCA in 2018, but the fragile trust from ethnic stakeholders seems more delicate in the balance than ever.

Since 2018, a “decreasing support for the NLD among minority ethnic voters” and a preference for supporting political parties along ethnic lines have been observed.²⁷ This development led to the merging of ethnic political party mergers in Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon States, with a view to greater electoral success in the 2020 polls, and a wish to attain ethnic equality with the Bamar majority and self-determination within a federal structure.²⁸ The non-Bamar ethnic view remains pessimistic whether elections can help bring about equality or whether the “results will further entrench the inequalities and

marginalisation that have been at the heart of state failure since 1948”²⁹. These feelings of inequality were evident when ethnic nationalities across the country objected to the way in which statues of Myanmar’s independence hero General Aung San were erected without locals being consulted.³⁰

One concern shared across lowland and hill areas alike, however, is the progress (or lack thereof) in land reforms. Though foregrounded in the 2015 campaign, little progress has been made on land rights and governance. There are continuing grievances over cases of land-grab by the military over several decades, and over the inefficacy of existing legislation on land rights and governance. This has compounded a “collective sense of desperation”.³¹

The NLD government has fared better in tackling corruption. An empowered Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), established in 2018 to investigate high-level corruption cases, saw to the sacking of the NLD-appointed Chief Minister for Tanintharyi Region, the arrest and detention of senior bureaucrats, and cabinet-level resignations.³² The continuing challenge for Myanmar’s ACC lies in the ‘untouchable’ status of military-owned enterprises, and the grey areas of donations and corporate social responsibility budgets in the business community’s interactions with the government. The Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business’ 2018 Pwint-Thit-Sa report – the fourth in the Centre’s annual series assessing transparency in business enterprises – reported that the Centre’s Mining Sector-Wide Impact Assessment had found “widespread use of Myanmar mining companies’ ‘CSR budget’ to make payments (‘donations’) to village elders and officials in return for signatures and support for mining projects”.³³

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In 2020, the NLD faces more critical voters and political participation than in 2015. While the NLD’s support-base remains strong, unhappiness over bread-and-butter issues further exacerbated by the pandemic, frustration over ongoing and emerging conflicts, the negative impact of a “conflict economy” on communities in conflict areas, and disillusionment in the electoral process in conflict areas (especially Rakhine State) may affect the number of votes the NLD can garner.

The UEC, in mid-October, cancelled polling in several townships, wards and village tracts in Rakhine State, Kachin State, Kayin State, Mon State, Shan State and Bago Region for security reasons. After civil society actors, Rakhine and Shan ethnic political parties, and election watchers pointed out potential disenfranchisement of many voters in these areas (where the NLD apparently had low support)³⁴, the UEC, on 27 October, reinstated polling in parts of Rakhine and Shan States, and cancelled voting in a large swathe of Paletwa township in Chin State.³⁵ There are observations, however, that this revision largely leaves the playing field unchanged.³⁶

The Rohingya crisis does not seem to be an obvious election issue among voters in Myanmar, although there are barriers for Rohingya parties and candidates to compete in the 2020 elections. Repatriating the Rohingya will continue to be a front-of-mind issue for the government since international attention is focused on how and when the repatriation process will be managed. Among voters, however, in inverse proportion to international

views on the Rohingya problem, domestic support runs high for Aung San Suu Kyi’s “defence of national interest” at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December 2019, and her response to the ICJ’s initial ruling in January 2020.³⁷

It may be too late for real debates before November 8 on specific topics of land reform, education reform, healthcare reform, and labour law reforms, in addition to economic reforms. But it is not too late for the government, after the elections, to take up a ‘second wave’ of these reforms from 2021 to 2025, to deepen its performance legitimacy. These are topics and concerns that matter for the people in Myanmar. Discussion of these topics will need to go beyond “big ideas” and address the growing needs and concerns of the various communities in the country.

¹ Dr Sean Turnell made this observation during a public webinar organised by ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute on 18 August 2020. Highlights of the webinar on “Myanmar’s Covid-19 Response: What Does a Resilient Recovery Mean” are available at: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/media/event-highlights/webinar-on-myanmars-covid-19-response-what-does-a-resilient-recovery-mean/>

² Pyae Sone Win. “Myanmar opposition party seeks polls delay due to Covid-19”, AP News, Associated Press, 15 September 2020

(<https://apnews.com/article/aung-san-suu-kyi-myanmar-health-general-elections-elections-061b7bd307ee790335eca6958a694029> – accessed 16 September 2020)

³ Yuichi Nitta and Thurein Hla Htway, 2020. “Myanmar opposition vows to break Suu Kyi’s spell over voters”, Nikkei Asia Interview, Nikkei Asia, 16 October 2020.

(<https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Myanmar-opposition-vows-to-break-Suu-Kyi-s-spell-over-voters> - accessed 29 October 2020)

⁴ Thet Zin Soe. “Parties in Myanmar slam ‘no vote’ campaign on social media”, Election 2020, Myanmar Times, 10 August 2020

(<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/parties-myanmar-slam-no-vote-campaign-social-media.html> - accessed 30 September 2020)

⁵ Myanmar News Agency. “State Counsellor inspects third voting demonstration in Naypyitaw”, State Counsellor Archives, Global New Light of Myanmar, 21 October 2020.

(<https://www.gnlm.com.mm/state-counsellor-inspects-third-voting-demonstration-in-nay-pyi-taw/> accessed 26 October 2020).

⁶ The Straits Times. “Aung San Suu Kyi kicks off advance voting for elderly in Myanmar election”, *The Straits Times*, Singapore, 29 October 2020. (<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/aung-san-suu-kyi-kicks-off-advance-voting-for-elderly-in-myanmar-election> - accessed 29 October 2020)

⁷ At the time of writing, Myanmar's Covid-19 infections stand at 52,706 cases and 1,237 fatalities (according to the World Health Organisation's Covid-19 dashboard). The surge occurred in late August 2020, prior to which Myanmar's Covid-19 numbers had been low; for example, on 18 August 2020, there were 375 cases and six fatalities.

⁸ People's Alliance for Credible Elections (PACE), 2020. "2020 General Elections: Preliminary Report of Pre-Election Survey", PACE, 5 October 2020. (<https://www.pacemyanmar.org/pre-election-2020/> – accessed 10 October 2020)

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 25-30.

¹⁰ It is now moot whether the USDP was stealing a march on the NLD in the knowledge that voter sentiments would be in the NLD's favour in 2015 or seeking performance legitimacy and a second term beyond 2015.

¹¹ World Bank, 2020. Myanmar Overview.

(<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/myanmar/overview#:~:text=Economic%20growth%20in%20a%20baseline,0.5%20percent%20in%20FY2019%2F20.&text=The%20slowing%20economic%20growth%20threatens,households%20that%20are%20already%20poor>. – accessed 15 October 2020)

¹² The World Bank Group 2020. GDP Growth (annual %) – Myanmar.

(<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2019&locations/MM&start=1961&view=chart> – accessed 15 October 2020)

¹³ UNDP(Myanmar), 2019. "Poverty in Myanmar has declined substantially, but one in four still poor, according to new report", 27 June 2019

(<https://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/presscenter/articles/2019/mlcs-poverty-report.html#:~:text=to%20new%20report-Poverty%20in%20Myanmar%20has%20declined%20substantially%2C%20but%20one%20in%20four,poor%2C%20according%20to%20new%20report&text=Nay%20Pyi%20Taw%2C%20June%202027,to%202024.8%20percent%20in%202017>. – accessed 15 October 2020)

¹⁴ Government of the Union of Myanmar, 2020. "Overcoming as One: Covid-19 Economic Relief Plan", 27 April 2020. [https://eurocham-myanmar.org/uploads/7a892-cerp---final-report-\(1\)5713756333092471786.pdf](https://eurocham-myanmar.org/uploads/7a892-cerp---final-report-(1)5713756333092471786.pdf) – Accessed 30 April 2020

¹⁵ ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020. Webinar on "Myanmar's Covid-19 Response: What Does a Resilient Recovery Mean", 18 August 2020. (<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/media/event-highlights/webinar-on-myanmars-covid-19-response-what-does-a-resilient-recovery-mean/> - accessed 1 September 2020)

¹⁶ Thaung Tun, 2020. "Covid-19 Crisis: We will recover and build back better!", Global New Light of Myanmar, 27 September 2020. (<https://www.gnlm.com.mm/covid-19-crisis-we-will-recover-and-build-back-better/> - accessed 27 October 2020)

¹⁷ Thant Myint-U, 2020. "Myanmar should use Covid-19 crisis to end 30 years of crony capitalism", Nikkei Asia, Opinion, 20 October 2020. (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Myanmar-should-use-COVID-crisis-to-end-30-years-of-crony-capitalism> - accessed 23 October 2020)

See also Htin Lynn Aung, 2020. "Millions of families receive first cash handouts under Covid-19 relief scheme", Frontier Myanmar, 1 August 2020 (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/millions-of-families-receive-first-cash-handouts-under-covid-19-relief-scheme/> - accessed 29 October 2020)

¹⁸ Zaw Zaw Htwe, 2020. "Quarter of a million Myanmar workers left jobless due to Covid-19" , The Irrawaddy, 26 June 2020. (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/quarter-million-myanmar-workers-left-jobless-due-covid-19.html> - accessed 1 September 2020)

ILO estimates for July-September 2020, placed the number of returning migrant workers at 150,000. See the ILO's Triangle in ASEAN Quarterly Briefing Note https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/-asia/-/-ro-bangkok/documents/genericdocument/wcms_735107.pdf (accessed 26 October 2020)

¹⁹ Yu Wai, 2020. “Myanmar migrant workers in 2019 exceed 300,000”, Myanmar Times, 14 January 2020. (<https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmar-migrant-workers-2019-exceed-300000.html> - accessed 1 September 2020)

²⁰ Shoon Naing. “‘Eating rats’: Myanmar’s second lockdown drives hunger in city slums”, Reuters, 23 October 2020. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-myanmar-slums/eating-rats-myanmars-second-lockdown-drives-hunger-in-city-slums-idUSKBN27818P> - accessed 23 October 2020)

²¹ ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020. Webinar on “Media and the 2020 Elections in Myanmar”, 6 October 2020. (<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/media/event-highlights/webinar-on-media-and-the-2020-elections-in-myanmar/> -accessed 14 October 2020)

²² Agence France Press. “Suu Kyi and old guard frustrate young Myanmar politicians”, Frontier Myanmar, 28 October 2020. (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/suu-kyi-and-old-guard-frustrate-young-myanmar-politicians/> - accessed 29 October 2020)

²³ Day Wi and Zoe Matthews have listed these interests and concerns for meaningful education and employment opportunities. See: Day Wi and Zoe Matthews, 2020. “Education, the Youth and the Elections”, TeaCircle Oxford, 27 October 2020.
(<https://teacircleoxford.com/2020/10/27/education-the-youth-and-the-elections/> - accessed 27 October 2020)

²⁴ Authors of the Transnational Institute’s report on “Myanmar: Ethnic Politics and the 2020 Elections” observe that despite some larger ethnic parties moving to field a higher percentage of younger candidates, “political insiders privately complain that “loyalty” is still regarded as the leading

requirement in candidate selection for the NLD, USDP and many other parties.” See: The Transnational Institute, 2020. “Myanmar: Ethnic Politics and the 2020 Elections”, Myanmar Policy Briefing 23, September 2020. p. 28

(https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/bpb23_def_26092020_highres.pdf - accessed 27 October 2020)

²⁵ National League for Democracy. “National League for Democracy, 2015 Election Manifesto Authorised Translation”.

(https://www.burmalibrary.org/sites/burmalibrary.org/files/obl/docs21/NLD_2015_Election_Manifesto-en.pdf - accessed 23 October 2020)

²⁶ အမြို့သား ဒီမိုကရေစီ အဖွဲ့ချုပ်၊ “အမြိုးသားဒီမိုကရေစီအဖွဲ့ချုပ် ရွေးကောက်ပွဲကြညာစာတမ်း (၂၀၂၀ ခုနှစ်)” ။

National League for Democracy. “National League for Democracy, Election Manifesto (2020)”.

²⁷ Khin Zaw Win, 2018. “Myanmar’s Mid-Term Crises and the Elections to Come”, ISEAS Perspective 2018/56, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 17 September 2018.

(https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/ISEAS_Perspective_2018_56@50.pdf - accessed 27 October 2020)

²⁸ Su Mon Thant, 2020. “Party Mergers in Myanmar: A New Development”, ISEAS Trends 8/2020, ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, 2 June 2020.

Available in both English and Burmese at: <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/trends-in-southeast-asia/party-mergers-in-myanmar-a-new-development-by-su-mon-thant/>

²⁹ Lahpai Seng Raw, 2020. “What Elections Really Mean for Us: 2020 Polls in Myanmar”, The Transnational Institute, 8 October 2020 <https://www.tni.org/en/article/what-elections-really-mean-for-us-the-2020-polls-in-myanmar?fbclid=IwAR1AFo9jsMR5e8zaLKeEaIxPbWX9mYoLvuAgx1oJo4hiicIbjZYJCbUedA0> – accessed 9 October 2020)

³⁰ Salai Za Uk Ling, 2019. “Statue-building spree tarnishes Aung San’s legacy”, Frontier Myanmar, 26 September 2019. (<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/statue-building-spree-tarnishes-aung-sans-legacy/>) - accessed 15 October 2020)

³¹ May Zin Thaw, 2020. “Peace and Prosperity in Myanmar Hinges on Land and the 2020 Candidates are Avoiding It”, ISEAS Perspective 2020/113, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 9 October 2020. (https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_113.pdf) - accessed 15 October 2020)

³² Thompson Chau, 2020. “Has Suu Kyi Made Myanmar Less Corrupt?”, Asia Times, 11 February 2020 (<https://asiatimes.com/2020/02/has-suу-kyi-made-myanmar-less-corrupt/>) - accessed 26 October 2020)

³³ Vicky Bowman et.al. 2018. “Pwint Thit Sa: Transparency in Myanmar Enterprises – Fourth Report, 2018”, Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business and Yever, March 2018. p. 18 (https://www.myanmar-responsiblebusiness.org/pdf/TiME/2018-Pwint-Thit-Sa_en.pdf - accessed 26 October 2020)

³⁴ Frontier Myanmar’s election coverage reports that “the cancellations in Rakhine disenfranchised 73 percent of the state’s 1,649,753 registered voters, but also wiped out the Rakhine nationalist Arakan National Party’s core constituencies in the north and centre of the state, while largely preserving the NLD’s stronghold in the southern townships.” Please see:

<https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-referee-is-taking-bribes-rakhine-candidates-fume-over-vote-cancellations/> - accessed 30 October 2020

³⁵ Nyein Nyein, 2020. “Voting Canceled in Parts of Paletwa in Myanmar’s Conflict-torn West”, The Irrawaddy, 28 October 2020. (<https://www.irrawaddy.com/elections/voting-canceled-parts-paletwa-myanmars-conflict-torn-west.html> - accessed 29 October 2020)

³⁶ Frontier Myanmar, “Frontier Fridays” weekly news update email to author, 30 October 2020. The analysis in the news update states that “While the commission did cancel nearly all village tracts and some urban wards in Paletwa, voting was cancelled in such a way that all five seats will still return candidates, the representatives will just be selected by less voters. Contrast this with Rakhine, where some voting was reinstated, but not enough to fill any more seats. So the revisions largely leave the playing field unchanged, and still tilted in the NLD’s favour.”

³⁷ Aung San Suu Kyi, 2020. “Give Myanmar time to deliver justices on war crimes”, Financial Times, Opinion, 23 January 2020. (<https://www.ft.com/content/dcc9bee6-3d03-11ea-b84f-a62c46f39bc2> - accessed 1 September 2020)

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