

In Myanmar, Opposition Concedes in Vote The New York Times 9 November 2010 The main military-backed party won an overwhelming victory in the first election in 20 years in Myanmar, according to international news agency reports from inside the country, in a vote that was carefully engineered by the military to assure its continued grip on power.

Although there has been no government announcement, officials of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party claimed victory with 80 percent of the vote, according to the reports from Myanmar, and the leaders of the two main opposition parties conceded defeat.

The outcome had been a foregone conclusion, with the election rules slanted to favor two military-backed parties and with opposition parties each contesting only a small fraction of the seats (...)

(...) As many as 20,000 refugees have fled across a river into Thailand since the fighting broke out Sunday, but the violence appeared to have died down Tuesday and the refugees were returning home (...)

(...) The election was widely seen as an attempt to legitimize military rule behind a mask of civilian government, after a half century of unambiguous military rule in the former Burma. The National League for Democracy, headed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, declined to take part, saying campaign rules were undemocratic and unfair.

Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi's party won the last election, in 1990, but the military annulled the result and clung to power. She has been held under house arrest for most of the last 20 year s (...)

(...) International reaction was sharply split between Myanmar's big neighbor and supporter, China, and Western nations that have pursued a policy of isolation and sanctions against Myanmar (...)

(...) On Monday, President Obama said, "It is unacceptable to steal elections, as the regime in Burma has done again for all the world to see." In a statement, the secretary general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, said the vote was "insufficiently inclusive, participatory and transparent." The fighting on the border was a reminder of a civil war with a number of ethnic groups that has raged in remote mountains and jungles, far from the politics that consume the cities, since Burma won independence from Britain in 1948. Continuing unrest in parts of the minority ethnic areas led the government to exclude about 1.5 million people from the election (...)

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