

Understanding the Shifting of the Wa Self-Administration System in Hopang, Panlong, and Tanyang after Operation 1027

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Abstract

Following Burma's 2021 military coup and the October 2023 Operation 1027, major shifts have occurred in governance across Northern Shan State. Since the operation, the United Wa State Army (UWSA) significantly expanded its territorial and administrative control, especially in Hopang and Panglong, while Tangyan remained under a more complex, contested system involving the SAC, ethnic armed groups, and local militias. This study aims to examine the transition and dispersion of administrative systems in Wa-controlled areas after Operation 1027, analyze the competing governance structures established by armed actors, and understand how civilians experience and respond to these shifts.

The main research question that this study asks is "How are local people coping with administrative changes under UWSA/UWSP governance in Hopang, Panglong, and Tangyan Townships following Operation 1027?" The research adopts a qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews with ten civilians, including religious leaders, teachers, housewives, a media worker, and a student, complemented by field observations.

The findings reveal declining trust in government, political fear, economic vulnerability, and deepening human insecurity with fragmented education systems and unreliable health services. The militarization of everyday life, driven by overlapping authorities, has weakened civil administration and public service provision, while creating widespread fear and anxiety among local communities. The research further shows that following Operation 1027, the UWSA has expanded de facto state-like authority without corresponding growth in civilian accountability or service delivery. The study contributes to debates on rebel governance and de facto statehood, showing how armed-group administration reshapes everyday life under conflict conditions.