



WHERE MIGHT MEETS DUTY

The United League of Arakan:
Beyond Governance and Territorial Control

September 2026





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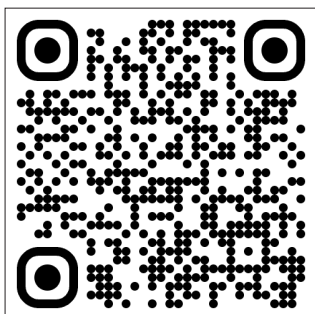


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Executive Summary

The United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) is gradually building an administrative apparatus. Rather than following a typical, rigid, one-size-fits-all blueprint, it exhibits an “incremental experimental approach” based on available resources and political givens. After establishing administrative functions in rural areas, it formed the Arakan People’s Authority to transform territorial dominance into administrative authority. By strategically using temporary ceasefires from November 2022 to November 2023, it has strengthened the establishment of local administrative, security, and judicial mechanisms. Subsequently, it established a government structure and assumed responsibility for public service delivery,

thereby enhancing its political legitimacy. Within a short period, the ULA has expanded its operations to cover eight newly-formed administrative districts.

Currently, it is in a period of institutional consolidation. It operates as a single-party state in which the party serves as the central hub for military, political, and administrative affairs. Operating under the party’s political line, it implements a model in which “party decisions become state orders.” Although institutional strengthening is clearly visible in certain areas, substantial challenges persist. These include the unpredictability of warfare, resource scarcity, and limited operational capacity. The immediate challenge is to bridge the emerging gap between the administrators’ actual service delivery capabilities and the high expectations of the Rakhine public. Failure to resolve these issues in a timely manner could prompt questions regarding the ULA/AA’s political ambitions and current efforts, potentially fracturing the social contract between the organization and the public. For future transition into a true government, though, it needs to further strengthen security provision, effective governance, and public service delivery.



Introduction

Examining the state-building of the United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) reveals an approach of “incremental experimental state-building” grounded in resources, political circumstances, and conflict givens. Starting around 2018–2019, the ULA/AA began establishing administration, security, and judicial functions across numerous rural areas of Rakhine State. In 2019, the Arakan People’s Authority was established to manage basic administration and security operations.

Following the temporary ceasefire with the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) in November 2020 and the following 2021 military coup period, administrative structures were significantly expanded. Through the ULA’s political leadership, the Arakan People’s Revolutionary Government (APRG)¹ was formed, institutionalizing the administrative apparatus along with public service delivery. Following the Three Brotherhood Alliance’s (3BHA) Operation 1027, the AA’s territorial control expanded dramatically.² Military victories led to the control of 15 townships, including Paletwa Township in Chin State. Concurrently, the ULA/AA established and operated administrative mechanisms and social services in these regions. Against this backdrop, a central analytical question is how effectively the ULA/AA can translate its military achievements into its envisioned political goals. Consequently, analyzing the institutional strength and service-delivery capacity of the current APRG administrative machinery becomes essential.

1 In late 2024, the ULA/AA began to use the term “Arakan People’s Revolutionary Government.” See the ULA/AA statement at: https://www.arakanarmy.net/post/statement-11?utm_source

2 Even as it took a leading role in Operation 1027, its subsequent offensives in Rakhine from November 2023 were carefully decoupled from the branding of Operation 1027 and distanced itself from the broader narratives of the Spring Revolution. [<https://ispmyanmar.com/op-26/>]

Objective and Methodology

This study examined the ULA/AA's state-building and governance structure development from 2021 through February 2026. It analyzed the ULA/AA's governance model, governance effectiveness, and institutionalization. The study also assessed whether the group could transition from a resistance actor into a sovereign governing entity over the long term, and how the broader Myanmar political landscape supports or impedes this path.

The study employed a qualitative approach. It utilized “documents as data”³ alongside qualitative data collection through interviews with relevant key stakeholders and local residents. Data collection relied on three primary sources:

- reports from Rakhine-based news agencies and domestic media outlets;
- official ULA/AA statements, international media coverage, reports, and academic papers; and
- ISP-Myanmar's ongoing research data on conflict and governance.

Primary data was gathered through interviews with 10 key figures (including local administrators, personnel affiliated with the ULA/AA, and serving civil servants in the APRG) and 13 local residents (including civil society members).

However, the ULA/AA rarely releases detailed public information on its administrative affairs, and security risks severely restrict field access; therefore, certain data limitations exist. For data triangulation, data were cross-verified in collaboration with a local researcher. Despite these efforts to ensure high-quality data, due to methodological and data-access constraints, minor discrepancies between the presented discussion and ground realities may exist.

3 Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.



Institutional Structure and Governance Model of the ULA/AA

Modeled after the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the ULA/AA's institutional framework can be characterized as adopting a "party-state supremacy" system.⁴ Across the three major pillars—party, military, and government—the party remains central. This design aims to prevent fragmentation of political leadership during the resistance and to manage resources efficiently. Consequently, the ULA/AA is building a centralized single-party state system.⁵

Although military and administrative functions operate separately in practice, they function under the party's overarching political line, embodying a framework where "the party's decisions are the state's commands."

The ULA/AA places supreme emphasis on the security of its resistance leadership and maintains the group's policy-making as an internal affair. To avoid undesirable disputes and friction, its policy-making process and organizational structures are strategically left ambiguous. Administrative structures are built pragmatically based on empirical realities. Although the Central Politburo Committee is the highest authority, its exact role has not been publicly detailed.⁶ The Central Committee and the Central Executive Committee lead and manage operations, serving as the main driving forces for ground-level administration. The Central Committee consists of military officers, party members, and prominent figures from the civilian education, healthcare, and business sectors, selected and nominated by the Central Executive Committee.

4 Interview with an individual working within the ULA/AA.

5 Frequent indications have been made on the intention of establishing a single-party system similar to China in the long run.

6 It is widely understood that the Central Politburo Committee has already been formed. Because members of the Executive Committee are also included in this committee, these individuals likely make decisions and act for both committees.

Policy formulation and implementation for both party and government affairs are handled by the Central Executive Committee. The 21-member Central Committee⁷ establishes long-term strategic policies on party affairs, politics, economics, and party matters.

While the military initially dominated the on-the-ground administrative machinery, there has been a gradual transition from military prioritization toward “civilian political leadership.” Moving away from direct control by military region commanders, party committees have been established at district, township, circle (sub-district village cluster), and village levels to practice collective decision-making and implementation. Currently, efforts focus on consolidating the single-party governance system from the central to local levels.

Under this single-party governance system, the district committee serves as the highest military, political, and administrative authority on the ground. The party’s district committee chair holds a status equivalent to a chief minister of a region or state in Myanmar’s governance system. Currently, all district and township committees are fully formed, while the formation and strength of circle and village committees vary by locality. District committees typically consist of a military representative, a political officer, an administrator, and a district-level police officer.⁸ In most cases, military representatives serve as

district committee chairs, though political officers also lead in some instances. Township committee members are appointed directly by the Central Executive Committee upon the recommendation and endorsement of district committees. At the most foundational levels, in circle and village levels, appointments are made either directly or through a consensus or electoral selection of resistance supporters and local people. Graduates of the Arakan School of Public Policy and Administration (ASPPA) are also assigned to administrative roles.

2.1. Arakan People’s Revolutionary Government (APRG)

The Arakan People’s Revolutionary Government (APRG) was established to formulate and implement social services and policy affairs.⁹ Its development followed an incremental expansion determined by regional conflict dynamics and resource availability rather than a fixed blueprint, reflecting sectoral, localized, and urgency-based considerations. The Arakan People’s Authority (APA) was initially formed in 2018, marking the early transformation of territorial dominance into administrative authority. After November 2020, the temporary ceasefire with the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) was strategically used to consolidate local administration, security, and judicial mechanisms, establishing a firm presence. ►

7 The Central Committee is said to have 21 members; however, the number of members may change based on operational needs. Read the brief ULA organizational structure at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20180905010929/https://ula.today/organization/>

8 Interview with an individual working within the ULA/AA.

9 In late 2024, the term “Arakan People’s Revolutionary Government” began to be used.

▶ particularly in rural areas. In 2021, the ULA expanded its role in public service provision to enhance its political legitimacy and formally rebranded itself as the Arakan People's Revolutionary Government. Following Operation 1027, momentum accelerated, resulting in the establishment of control over Paletwa Township and extensive areas of northern and southern Rakhine State. Since late 2024, the group has firmly established itself on the ground as a de facto government, evolving beyond a resistance group. In May 2025, the administration transitioned from operational code-named military region governance (Alpha, Beta, Nova) to a district-based administrative system. Currently, the administrative mechanism operates across eight districts.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Min Aung Hlaing's government has declared martial law over nearly the entirety of Rakhine State (See ISP-M2026-023).

The APRG intends to operate a separation of powers across executive, legislative, and judicial branches.¹¹ The party chairman concurrently serves as the head of the government, reflecting a centralization of power. The judicial sector operates under a civilian chief justice and deputy chief justices. A separate legislative branch has not been established; legislative power remains under the jurisdiction of the Central Executive Committee. The executive machinery comprises at least 15 departments.¹² Structural design emphasizes pragmatic necessity over rigid bureaucracy. Initially, core pillars of state-building

mechanisms such as administration, security, and judiciary were consolidated. Subsequently, to enhance political legitimacy, public services such as education and healthcare were gradually expanded through humanitarian assistance frameworks, and tax collection was formalized. As territorial control broadened to urban centers, urban management mechanisms, including water supply, sewage, waste disposal, and traffic regulation, were introduced. Efforts have also been directed toward stimulating the local economy and prioritizing cross-border trade.

The administrative workforce combines technical experts, educated youth, Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) activists, former civil servants, and local residents. Notably, rather than dismantling existing public service mechanisms and starting anew, the ULA/AA implemented a strategy of "strategic co-option," persuading existing civil servants to remain in their positions. For example, at the onset of the 2021 coup, Rakhine civil servants were urged not to join the CDM movement but to continue delivering services while reporting to the ULA/AA. Non-local CDM staff were also recruited and appointed.

2.2. Administration

The institutionalized administration operates through eight districts. Although there has been a transition from military rule to civilian governance, military rule is still practiced in high security risk areas.

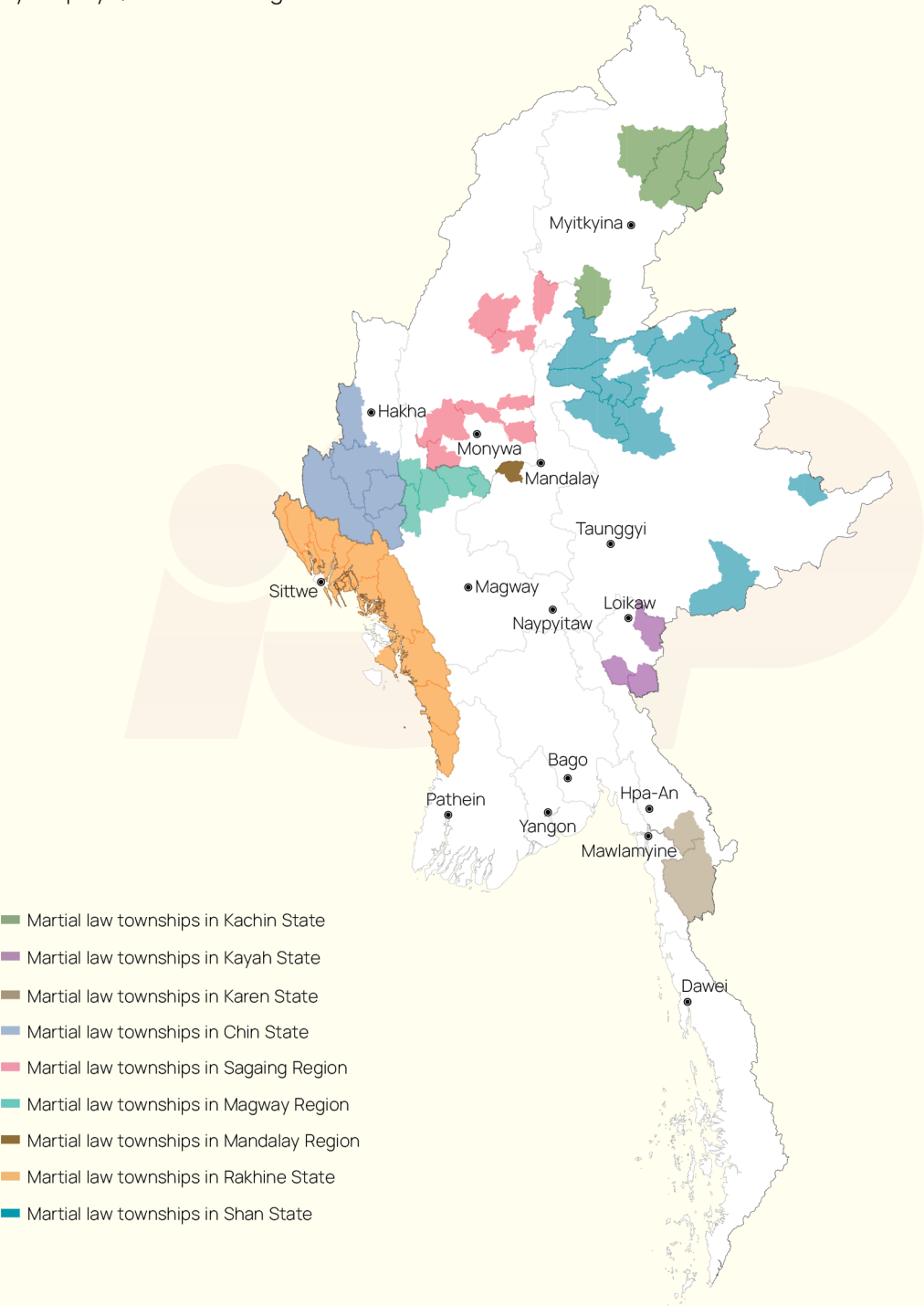
10 The districts include Maungdaw, Sittwe, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Kyaukphyu, Toungup, Thandwe, and Paletwa.

11 Interview with an individual working within the ULA/AA.

12 Due to data limitations, the actual number of departments may differ or be subject to change.

Regime Declares Martial Law Status across Rakhine State

On April 23, 2026, the Min Aung Hlaing administration declared martial law across 14 of Rakhine State's 17 townships, placing all townships under martial law except Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Munaung.



Data collected from January 1 to August 10, 2026, is the result of research conducted by ISP-Myanmar's Conflict Peace and Security Studies and is based entirely on open-source data. Results may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology or data availability.



The Rohingya Challenge

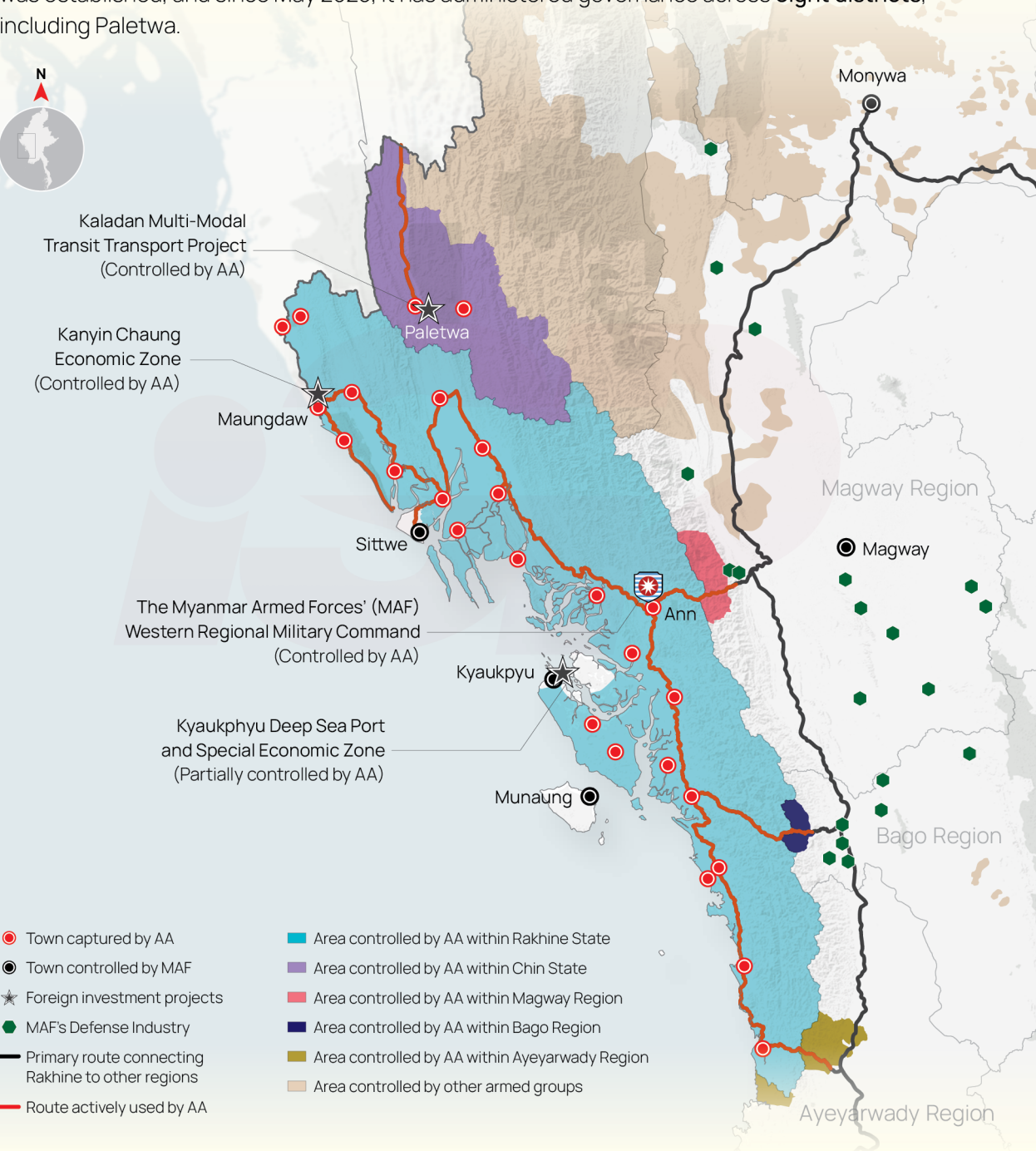
The Rohingya issue represents a major challenge for the ULA/AA's governance endeavors. ULA/AA leadership views the Rohingya issue as an unavoidable issue that must be resolved. The ULA/AA's approach to the Rohingya issue also directly affects its international legitimacy and recognition. ULA/AA leaders have publicly stated an intent to practice non-discriminatory governance regardless of race or religion. Efforts to include Rohingya populations in administrative domains have been observed, including appointments in education, health, and administration, alongside equal service provision. However, during the 2024 conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Arakan Army in the Buthidaung and Maungdaw areas, allegations of harm to Rohingya civilians were raised. Rohingya resettlement policies and trust-building between Rakhine and Rohingya communities remain primary benchmarks measuring the long-term sustainability and democratic nature of ULA/AA governance.

In border areas with Bangladesh, given the acute military sensitivity, administration is directly managed via regional military commanders under central military rule, rather than civilian governance. The administrative structure mirrors the party hierarchy, organized sequentially into central, district, township, circle, and village levels. Administrators are accountable to the party. The Central Administrative Department serves as the central operational engine coordinating the entire apparatus. Currently, district and township-level administrations are in the process of establishing and beginning to operate offices. Strategically, the ULA/AA aims to build a "hybrid governance model" balancing central control with community participation. District, township, and circle

administrators are directly appointed by the party. Circle administrators report vertically to the party, maintaining central control. At the village level, local consensus and elections are permitted in an effort to gain legitimacy and public support, though critics note that nepotistic practices persist.

ULA/AA's Territory under Control in Rakhine State

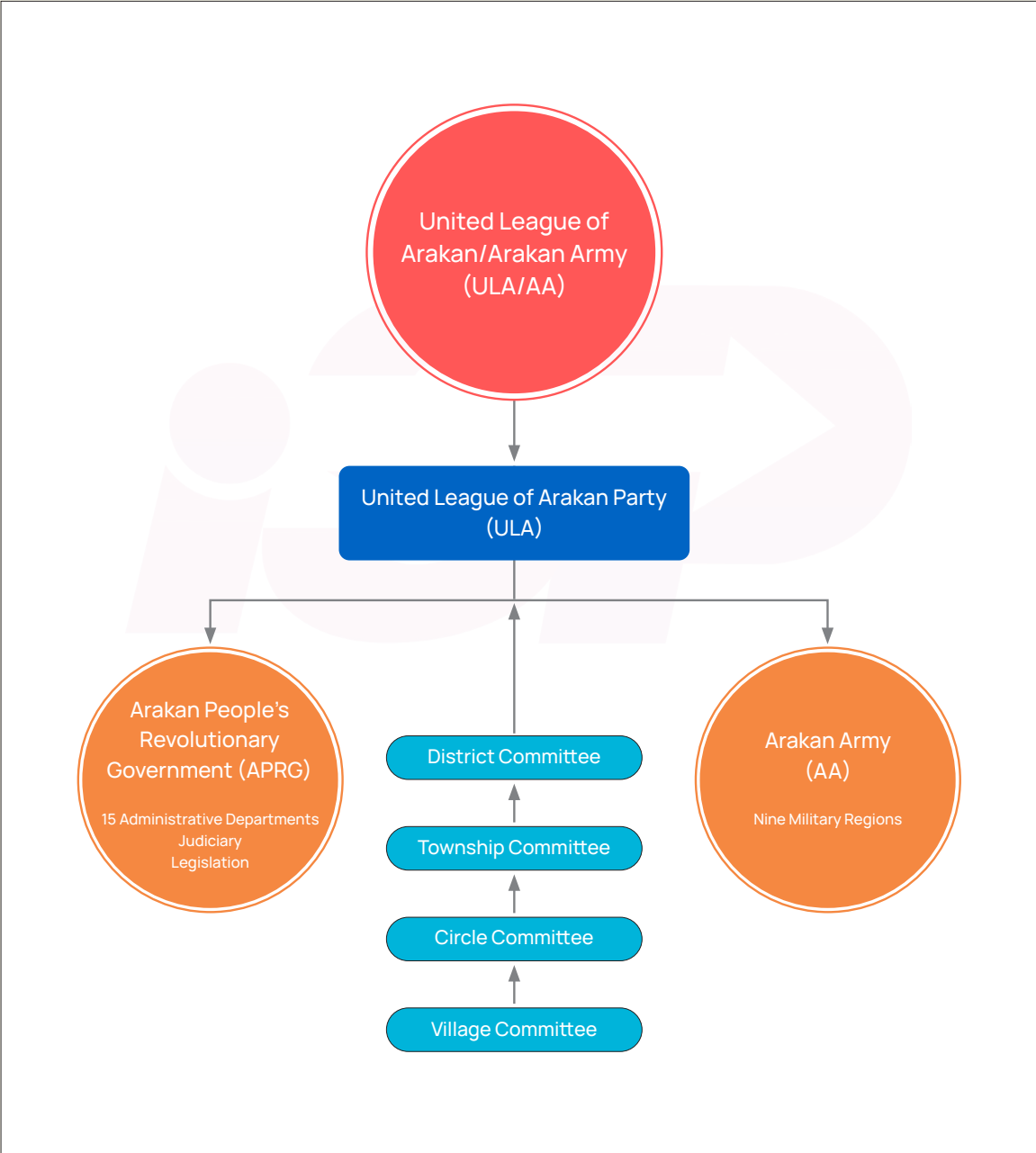
The United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) launched its offensive in Rakhine State on November 13, 2023. It currently controls **92.6 percent** of Rakhine State, along with the Paletwa township. To govern these territories, the **Arakan People's Revolutionary Government (APRG)** was established, and since May 2025, it has administered governance across **eight districts**, including Paletwa.



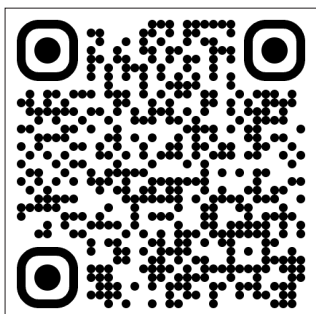
Data as of May 26, 2026, is the result of research conducted by ISP-Myanmar's Conflict Peace and Security Studies and is based entirely on open-source data. Results may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology or data availability.

United League of Arakan/Arakan Army Organizational Structure

The United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) operates a centralized, single-party system that integrates its party, military, and administrative bodies. While structured around executive, judicial, and legislative branches, governance currently relies on executive orders and directives as needed.



This ULA/AA organizational structure was constructed using data gathered through research interviews. Results may vary from other sources due to differences in methodology or data availability.





Security Operations and Judicial Operations

3.1. Security

Initially using a military security model, the ULA/AA transitioned toward a joint military-civilian security model in the Myanmar post-coup period to foster institutionalization. From around 2018, AA soldiers and village administrators provided security within controlled villages. After 2021, the People Police Force was formed from AA members and later renamed the Department of Law Enforcement and Public Security (DLEPS). Reinforcements were drawn by training local youth, integrating former

police personnel, and transitioning military personnel. A former police officer, who had served in the Myanmar Police Force before the coup, was appointed the Police Chief. As of now, the police force has reached approximately 3,700 personnel.¹³ At the village level, local residents and military-trained youth form reserve units for local security. Transferring security power from military to civilian structures can be regarded as a positive shift toward systematic governance.

However, rapid human resource expansion has created capacity gaps. Appointing young personnel who have not completed their education, following only brief police training, has resulted in widespread limited understanding of legal and police procedures, as well as instances of power abuse. Consequently, capabilities are largely restricted to petty offenses, such as theft and burglary, and traffic control, with minimal capacity for major crimes. The ULA/AA's interference has also been observed in high-profile criminal cases.¹⁴ These issues demonstrate inadequate public safety provision, threatening long-term public trust.

13 Myat Hnin Wai. (2025, August 25). Is the department of law enforcement and public security (DLEPS) living up to its promise of public safety and justice? Border News Agency. [<https://bna.news/articles/6247/>]

14 Development Media Group. (2025, July 3). Re-arrest of Attempted Rape Suspect Released on Bail in Rakhine; Judge Who Granted Bail Under Investigation. [<https://www.dmgburmese.com/news/rakap.html>]

3.2. Judiciary

The ULA/AA judicial mechanism has served as a key vehicle for legitimacy-building, similar to the security sector. In the early stages, around 2018–2019, village administrators handled cases, operating under a merged administrative and judicial structure. During that period, the system built up a certain level of public trust: cases were even submitted from regions where the ULA/AA had not yet established territorial control. Following the 2021 coup, a formal judicial department was established, mirroring Myanmar's existing judicial system with central, district, and township levels.

Staffing includes retired judges, CDM personnel, local lawyers, and law graduates. While formal salaries are not provided, stipends in provisions and family welfare support (education, healthcare) are allocated. Courts utilize community-built structures and renovated government buildings. At present, for security reasons, mobile courts are mainly used. Online access platforms such as “Justice for Arakan” were launched to facilitate public reporting.

As public reliance grew, systemic deficiencies emerged. Increased case volumes generated backlogs and delays; for instance, out of over 1,800 cases submitted to the ULA/AA in 2022, only about half were resolved.¹⁵ Limited technical expertise, such as in forensic science, poses significant challenges

in the investigation and handling of serious criminal cases. Heavy reliance on customary and informal mediation at the village level have also resulted in cases of bias. Transportation barriers and security risks force frequent court relocations, which in turn impairs public access to justice. If left unresolved, these challenges risk turning initial public trust into disillusionment.

3.3. Legislation

Currently, the ULA/AA has not formed an independent legislative branch. Executive bodies issue orders and directives as needed, operating an executive-dominated legal system. For case adjudication, the Penal Code and Evidence Act from the colonial era serve as core laws, while special laws such as the Limitation Act and the Law on the Practice of Monogamy have been repealed.¹⁶ However, because repeals vary by location and are not formally publicized, uniformity in legal interpretation and application remains weak.

Although interim legal arrangements have existed since 2021, they have not been transparently disclosed, resulting in judicial inconsistencies. For example, the repeal of the Law on the Practice of Monogamy in March 2025 caused widespread discontent among local residents, particularly women. Infrastructure constraints in detention facilities and prisons have also led to sentence reductions; priority being given to accommodating prisoners of war ▶

¹⁵ Border News Agency (2025, April 30). Rule of Law in Arakan: A Comprehensive Approach with Short-Term and Long-Term Vision. [<https://bnanews.net/articles/4889/>]

¹⁶ Interview with a former judicial employee of the ULA/AA.

- has resulted in reduced prison terms for serious crimes, including rape.¹⁷ The inconsistent application of laws and legal processes across regions have undermined the law's deterrent capability, and have compromised the judicial mechanism, and consequently regional stability and social cohesion, threatening the social contract.

3.4. Public Perception of the Judiciary

The ULA/AA judiciary already gained political legitimacy well before full territorial control was established. Even residents in non-controlled areas relied on the system, resulting in the operation of a successful parallel judiciary due to its affordability and speed. Criminal cases were adjudicated free of charge, while civil disputes incurred a tax fee of

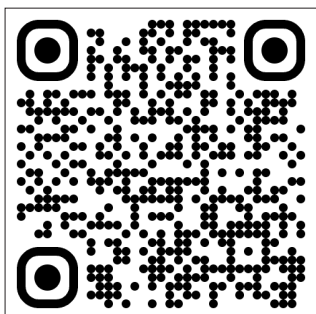
five percent of the disputed value. Procedural delays were minimized, prompting common public remarks that “the judicial process is faster than under previous governments.”¹⁸

However, the system faced resource limitations during the transition to a formal government. Prioritizing high-profile cases has drawn public criticism. Furthermore, despite having judicial independence to a certain degree, the shadow of military bureaucracy persists. In terms of staffing, the preference for appointing relatives and close associates points to ongoing nepotism.¹⁹ Consequently, there is a widespread perception of institutional bias in court rulings, reflecting the key challenges faced during this transitional phase of institutionalization.

17 Interview with an individual working within the ULA/AA.

18 Interviews with local residents.

19 Interview with a person close to ULA/AA judicial affairs in Mrauk-U District.





Finance

4.1. Taxation

As the ULA/AA solidified its administrative presence, the ULA/AA shifted from wartime fundraising to systematic state-like revenue collection. A separate Revenue Department was established, which integrated taxation into the administration's framework. Alongside a voluntary "National Fund" where contributions were previously collected for military rations, the ULA implemented a mandatory taxation system, supplemented by funding from the Rakhine diaspora community. Systematic taxation has served both as a means of fiscal extraction and as a mechanism for strengthening political legitimacy.

The ULA's Revenue Department operates hierarchically across central, district, and township levels. The central level formulates policy and exercises oversight, while township levels collect municipal, commercial, and trade taxes.

Tax categories include municipal fees (water, fire safety), urban service fees (property, shop tax), and commercial or trade taxes. Tax is also levied on Starlink internet agents, bringing regional communications and technology under administrative management.

Although tax rates and frameworks are set centrally, on-the-ground implementation varies regionally. The public perceives that non-revenue departments also collect taxes separately.²⁰ While some areas use standardized tax receipts, some townships collect taxes above the prescribed rates. Reducing rate disparities, eliminating non-transparent tax collection under security pretexts, and achieving uniform taxation and fiscal transparency remain critical priorities.

4.2. Economy

Agriculture, livestock, and fisheries constitute the backbone of the Rakhine State economy. However, under ULA/AA administration, these sectors face severe production and market constraints.

20 Myat Hnin Wai. (2024, July 14). Are public tax revenues actually making it into the government's budget? Border News Agency. [<https://bna.news/articles/5825/>]

United League of Arakan (ULA) Tax Rate Schedules

Estimates indicate that the United League of Arakan (ULA) generates **approximately 500 million Kyat** (approximately USD 238,000) monthly from water, electricity, municipal, and fire safety taxes, alongside **roughly 1 billion Kyat** (approximately USD 476,000) from internet usage fees. While tax revenues are predominantly directed toward military expenditures, a portion is allocated to healthcare and road maintenance.

Tax Type	Rate
Home Tax	2,000 Kyat - 6,000 Kyat (Monthly)
Water Tax	3,000 Kyat (Monthly)
Municipal Tax	3,000 Kyat - 6,000 Kyat (Monthly)
Fire Safety Tax	1,500 Kyat (Monthly)
Shop Tax	10,000 Kyat - 50,000 Kyat (Monthly)
Trade Tax	Three percent of total value
Export of timber and timber-use furniture, buffalo, pigs, and cattle to neighboring countries	10 percent - 30 percent
Starlink Agent	450,000 Kyat (Monthly)
National Fund	Fixed rate donation (Monthly)

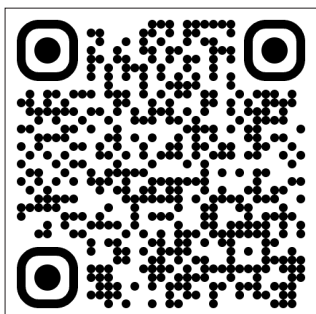
Source: Myat Hnin Wai (2024, July 14). Are public tax revenues actually making it into the government's budget? Border News Agency. [<https://bnanews.net/articles/5825/>]
USD conversions are calculated based on the Central Bank of Myanmar's reference exchange rate of 1 USD = 2,100 MMK

Climate volatility and flooding severely disrupt paddy production. Blocked trade routes have also caused acute input shortages, driving up prices for fertilizer, machinery, and fuel, as well as shortages of high-yield seed. Paddy production remains limited to local subsistence farming because farmers cannot export to broader domestic or international markets. To help secure greater market access, the ULA/AA established a Chamber of Commerce, attempting to export local goods to neighboring countries. However, export efforts failed because paddy quality did not meet buyer specifications, and local farmers failed to adopt quality-based pricing structures. Current ULA/AA interventions include distributing seeds, providing flood disaster relief, and encouraging alternative crop cultivation, such as for beans, watermelons, potatoes, maize, and cucumbers. Without firm market linkages, agricultural stagnation remains a major hurdle.

Livestock development faces similar constraints and remains limited to small-scale household poultry, pig, goat, and duck farming. Poultry farming relies heavily on imported chicks, feed, and medicine; scarcity forces the use of homemade feed substitutes, driving up local egg production costs. Imported eggs from India sell for around 500 MMK (~USD 0.24) each—half the price of local eggs, which average 1,000 MMK (~USD 0.48). Coastal aquaculture, such as prawn, fish, and crab farming, has largely halted and only remains active for local consumption. Fisheries exports to Bangladesh are disrupted by unstable bilateral relations and volatile border trade. Tourism and hotel industries in coastal towns, namely Thandwe, Gwa, Kyaukpyu, and Sittwe, remain suspended due to security risks, while persistent power outages have halted the operations of many small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

International Relations

The ULA/AA adopts a pragmatic, interest-based approach toward neighboring countries including China, India, and Bangladesh. It has publicly voiced its security guarantee over Chinese investments located in territory under its control at least twice. In relations with India, the ULA/AA seems to desire formal recognition as the governing authority over infrastructure projects such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and Sittwe Port. In relations with Bangladesh, the ULA/AA seems to pursue a practical approach, with regular contacts for border trade and security issues. Bangladesh also needs to engage directly with the ULA/AA for border control management, Rohingya repatriation, and security management, as since the 2024 capture of Maungdaw Township, the ULA/AA now exercises control over the entire border with Bangladesh. In April 2025, the ULA/AA sent a congratulatory letter to newly appointed Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Dr. Khalilur Rahman. The former Adviser of Foreign Affairs to the Interim government of Bangladesh proposed for direct engagement with the AA, and the AA responded by welcoming his proposal.





Public Services

5.1. Educational Services in Controlled Areas

Following the November 2020 ceasefire, the Arakkha National Department of Education was formed and expanded significantly after Operation 1027. Human resources rely on community-based recruitment, employing local teachers, high school graduates, and university graduates. Teacher training programs were introduced for the 2025–2026 academic year to enhance teaching quality. Families with financial means often hire private tutors

because of quality concerns about educators under the new system.

Socioeconomic hardship severely hinders access to basic education. Soaring prices for stationery and school supplies, combined with cost-sharing models where students pay teacher stipends, have forced many children out of school. High living costs and job scarcity force poor families to prioritize daily survival over education, driving up primary school dropout rates. Basic education enrollment dropped from over 530,000 students prior to the 2021 coup to approximately 370,000 in 2023, and fell further to around 300,000 in 2025.²¹

Efforts to expand higher education in the region have also been observed. Initiatives to fill the regional resource gaps include opening vocational schools, medical schools, business schools, and an education college under the Arakkha National Department of Education. However, severe resource constraints and quality deficits still persist. Without free public education, high primary students' dropout rates risk widening long-term skilled human resource gaps.

21 Lin Khine. (2024, June 23). For every child to bloom freely: Rebuilding education in Arakan. Border News Agency. [<https://bnanews.net/articles/5682/>]

5.2. Healthcare Services

The Arakkha Health Department is structured to mirror the wider administration, with central, district, township, circle, and village levels; however, circle and village health centers are not yet functional. Free medical care is extended to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), but implementation varies regionally. Staffing comprises local health workers, doctors previously working under the Myanmar healthcare system, and CDM medical personnel from other areas. To address shortages, midwifery, pharmacy, and medicine training programs were set up, with plans to upgrade them into a School of Medicine. Existing hospital structures are reoccupied, supplemented by mobile clinics to mitigate airstrike risks. However, the bombing of Mrauk-U General Hospital by the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) in December 2025 inflicted catastrophic damage on the Arakkha Health Department's healthcare capacity.

Despite administrative structuring, material support is acutely inadequate. Health personnel receive basic food rations (rice, oil, salt, chili) instead of regular salaries. Profit margins from importing and selling essential medicines are distributed among health staff as stipends, averaging approximately 200,000 MMK (approximately USD 46 per September 2026 market rates) per month per worker,²² though rates vary by township. Essential medicines and vaccines are imported across the Indian border. While child immunizations and malaria vaccines are distributed, coverage and accessibility remain limited.

"People who work here are driven by personal dedication and a spirit of nationalist commitment," said a nurse currently serving in the Healthcare Department. Although basic living allowances are managed collectively as best as possible, compensation remains insufficient to cover basic living expenses, and personal security cannot be guaranteed. Consequently, a number of healthcare workers have chosen to work in the private healthcare sector instead. There is also a critical shortage of medical specialists capable of managing severe health issues. Furthermore, high transportation costs, medicine shortages, and soaring prices continue to hinder public access to healthcare services.

22 Interview with a healthcare worker currently in service.

6

Impact on Women

Women in Rakhine State have limited opportunities to participate in peace and governance processes. From a security standpoint, protection and prevention mechanisms remain deficient. Especially, judicial weaknesses leave women vulnerable to sexual violence and physical insecurity. Food and shelter difficulties have led to lenient sentencing or bail for rape perpetrators. Human resource shortages cause the judiciary to prioritize high-profile cases. Instances where rape suspects have escaped from the detention center after being clearly indicted encourage impunity

and trivialize sexual violence.²³

As instances of rape, sexual violence, and criminal offenses continue to proliferate, they are becoming normalized within society.

Another factor heavily impacting women's daily lives is mandatory military service. In March 2025, the ULA/AA issued the "National Defense Emergency Provision," mandating that at least one person per household serve in the military. When men, who typically serve as primary breadwinners, are conscripted, women are left to shoulder overwhelming household burdens. There have been cases where young women or married women have taken military conscription training to replace their brothers or husbands, who can earn more money for the household.

Consequently, military conscription provisions have significantly impacted women's overall socioeconomic conditions. Furthermore, the humanitarian crisis affects women disproportionately. In Rakhine State, there are around 550,000 IDPs, 57 percent of whom are women. In IDP camps, the lack of separate latrines and bathing facilities for women compromises their safety.

²³ Western News. (2025, July 7). Village Administrator Allegedly Gave Good Character Recommendation for Suspect in Attempted Rape of Young Woman in Myebon. [<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/18iiJC9dyy/>]

Peace Process

The ULA/AA strategically avoids explicit statements regarding its ultimate political goal, maintaining a similar posture toward the peace process. Controlling vast territory and commanding public trust provides significant leverage in future ceasefire negotiations. Should Naypyitaw propose peace talks, the ULA/AA will likely demand formal recognition of its controlled territories and an autonomous administrative structure exceeding a state police force. Nonetheless, the local population faces worsening socio-economic challenges. Historical failures of previous bilateral agreements continue to breed mistrust towards Naypyitaw. Additionally, while operating under different circumstances than EAOs in northern Shan State, the ULA/AA potentially faces Chinese diplomatic pressure that could open doors to Beijing-mediated talks.

Additionally, due to inadequate healthcare, women suffer from poor personal hygiene, while pregnant and lactating mothers face malnutrition. Access to contraceptives and family planning services is also severely limited.

As a result of these security and judicial shortcomings, combined with the humanitarian crisis and socio-economic impacts, women in Rakhine State endure severe physical and

psychological strains. Although the ULA/AA has consolidated its territorial control and institutionalized its administrative system, critical gaps and challenges remain regarding women's safety and decision-making authority. Moreover, harsh measures taken against women who criticize the administration not only erode freedom of expression but also create conditions that regress women's participation in peace and political processes.²⁴

24 Development Media Group. (2025, July 30). ULA/AA Files Charges Against 11 Locals Under 4 Penal Sections Including 505 in Minbya Land Dispute. [<https://www.dmgburmese.com/news/modws.html>]



Public Assessment of Administration Mechanisms



The operational status of administration mechanisms was assessed through interviews with local people and found to be “regionally disproportionate institutionalization.” In most districts, the security and judicial sectors remain relatively strong. Civil administration can be regarded as operational in six of eight districts. Specifically, administration, security, judiciary, taxation, finance, and healthcare are stronger in the Mrauk-U districts. However, basic social services, particularly healthcare and education, remain weak across most districts.

Furthermore, citizens face significant practical obstacles in accessing administrative mechanisms. Frequent relocations of administrative offices due to Myanmar Armed Forces’ (MAF) airstrikes leave these offices without fixed locations, creating a major barrier for public service access. Widespread disruptions to telecommunication networks and internet access have effectively left the population “blind and deaf.”²⁵ Beyond direct physical proximity, appointments cannot be scheduled by phone, and exorbitant travel costs prevent necessary movement. Inability to verify office locations by phone, prohibitive travel costs, and administrative runarounds waste people’s time and financial resources. As a result, these issues exacerbate fear and psychological insecurity among the public. As the ULA/AA expands its controlled territories, enhancing service delivery will require not only equitable institutionalization across regions, but also deliberate planning to ensure public access to information and services.

²⁵ Interview with a local resident.

United League of Arakan Institutionalization Status Across Regions

The ULA's institutionalization in various regions across **five key sectors**—administration, security and judiciary, taxation, health, and education—was evaluated on a five-tier scale: Level 1 (Absent), Level 2 (Present but Very Weak), Level 3 (Present but Weak), Level 4 (Present and Slightly Strong), and Level 5 (Very Strong). The assessment reveals notable regional disparities: while the security and judiciary sector remains strong across most districts, civil administration has achieved established functionality in **six of the eight districts**. Mrauk-U District stands out as the most developed, providing near-comprehensive service delivery across four core sectors: administration, security and judiciary, finance, and health.



8

Conclusion

Over time, the ULA/AA has incrementally transformed military achievements into an administrative apparatus capable of delivering basic governance, security, judicial, and social services. Despite persistent challenges, a solid institutional framework is emerging. Notably, “The Way of *Rakkhita*” upheld by the ULA/AA serves as a foundational pillar that commands strong public trust and reliance. Consequently, governance is understood beyond standard metrics of service delivery and law enforcement, incorporating a process of “shared meaning-making” between rulers and the ruled. This process is establishing new political and social orders in Arakan, reinforced by a strong social contract.

Furthermore, the “robust social contract” between the ULA/AA and the local populace significantly reinforces this ongoing administrative construction.

Structurally, the governance framework relies on a centralized single-party system, practicing a “party-based state-building model” that tightly integrates party, military, and administrative apparatuses into a single entity. However, in practice, the system is gradually transitioning from a military-dominated administrative structure to a hybrid civil-military mechanism. At local levels, this combines the mechanics of governance with community participation, strategically integrating former civil servants and CDM personnel, as well as mobilizing educated youth, prominent public figures, and accomplished professionals across various fields, demonstrating a “pragmatic bureaucratic approach.”

When analyzing its institutional framework, the current phase of the ULA/AA can be characterized as a “state of transition.” While administrative and security mechanisms are relatively strong, notable gaps remain in legislative and judicial capacities. Particularly within the judicial sector, limited transparency, the absence of multi-tiered trial and appeal processes, and restricted

- ▶ ability to prevent interference from security apparatuses pose substantial hurdles to institutional consolidation.

In its institution-building, “Arakanese Nationalism” serves as the foundational bedrock. As the ULA/AA pursues its political goals, building political legitimacy rests on mutual trust and accountability between the governors and the governed. From there, it initially succeeded in balancing the delivery of both public security and basic services. Following the rapid expansion of territorial control, a significant “performance gap” has emerged between high public expectations and the administration’s practical delivery capacity. In particular, limited capacity within the judicial and administrative pillars, weak deterrence and responses to sexual violence, an inability to guarantee security for women, and compounding crises in social service sectors pose long-term threats to the developing administrative apparatus’s “performance legitimacy.” If social service and socio-economic crises are not addressed in a timely manner, declining operational performance may lead the public to question the ULA/AA’s broader resistance and political objectives. This risks breaching the social contract and pulling the administration into the vortex of a “legitimacy crisis.” In conclusion, within the context of the current political conflict, the ULA/AA has rapidly consolidated territorial control and established its administrative apparatus. However, ongoing military instability, resource scarcity, and limitations in capacity and operational capability present formidable challenges to establishing itself as a firm, sustainable government.

Therefore, during this transition from a resistance movement to a de facto government, strong institutionalization, secure and effective governance, and public service delivery remain indispensable foundational pillars for the ULA/AA’s long-term state-building agenda. ■



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