

Abstract

Myanmar's economic freedom is ranked the lowest amongst ASEAN countries. Thus its GDP per capita is one of the lowest too. The low rank of the economic freedom highlights the fact that Myanmar's economy is interfered with by the military regime – also called Tatmadaw. The question “Why is Tatmadaw reluctant to fully liberalize Myanmar economy even though it is a *sine qua non* to achieving economic growth and prosperity?” needs to be analyzed in order to understand Tatmadaw's intervention in the economy. The research questions of this thesis are: “Are natural resources a barrier to an economic transition in Myanmar?” and “How does Tatmadaw control natural resources?” The hypotheses I test here are: (1) “The abundance of natural resources is a barrier and not an incentive to economic transition towards prosperous entrepreneurial society.” (2) “Natural resources are an important factor enabling Tatmadaw to demobilize ethnic armed groups by granting business concessions that become a part of a continued military power-game.” (3) “Natural resources partially trigger and fuel civil war between Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups due to contesting resource grabs.” And (4) “China's resource hunger is conducive to Tatmadaw to exploit natural resources”. In my analysis, all these hypotheses prove to be consistent with empirical observations.

Keywords

Myanmar, Tatmadaw, Economy, Free Market Economy, Economic Freedom, Natural Resources, China.