

Kazi Mohammad Mahbobor Rahman¹

Economic Development under the Authoritarian Military Rule in Thailand and Myanmar: A Survey of Literature²

The literature has been checked in this paper to understand how the contemporary research has answered the questions: How have the military regimes impacted economic development in Thailand and Myanmar, and why has Thailand achieved better economic development than Myanmar under military rule? By surveying major works, this systematic literature review argues that there seems to be limited research focusing on the comparative study of economic development in these two neighbouring countries during the authoritarian military rule. Therefore, an endeavour of a comparative study of these two most similar cases should be initiated to fill this research gap. It will facilitate a new understanding of the impact of military rule as a Cold War and post-Cold War phenomenon on better economic development in Thailand than in Myanmar, along with the causes of this variation.

Keywords: economic development, authoritarian military rule, Myanmar, Thailand, literature survey

Introduction

Thailand and Myanmar are neighbouring countries with a shared experience of long military authoritarian rule. Despite the similarities between these two countries in experiencing frequent military intervention and governing by military leaders during the Cold World and the post-Cold War periods, they are different in achieving the level of economic development in most of the criteria used to explain the economic performance of a nation. Therefore, a research question has been posed: *How have the military regimes impacted economic development in Thailand and Myanmar, and why has Thailand achieved better economic development than Myanmar under military rule? In order to get the answer to this significant research question, this research initiative surveyed major academic works published since the Second World War.*

To this end, it studies existing literature available on platforms, including Jstor and Google Scholar. Keywords in the phrases as ‘economic development under military rule in Thailand and Myanmar’, ‘economic development under military rule in Thailand’, and ‘economic development under military rule in Myanmar’ have been searched in these platforms and checked in the title of the articles manually. The title of an article that matches one of the phrases of these keywords has been selected for this study. Furthermore,

¹ Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka.

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the works that focus on the issues related to the economic development of Thailand and Myanmar during the military rule have also been chosen to review in this endeavour. Due to the limited works available in these two academic platforms on the proposed topic, the above phrasal words have also been searched on other platforms. Based on the theoretical framework of the literature review explained in Aacha and Chetty,³ this paper is primarily a systematic literature survey and methodologically, it is a most similar case study research based on secondary sources of data.

Many contemporary works have focused on the analysis and assessment of the miracle economic achievement of Thailand. Some works also assess the economic performance of Myanmar as an independent case. However, only a few researchers have taken a comparative study of economic development in Thailand and Myanmar into consideration. Therefore, this research enterprise argues that new research should be initiated to fill up the deficiency in the existing literature.

The primary purpose of this literature survey is to identify the existing literature that focuses on the economic development in Thailand and Myanmar during the military rule and outline the causes of less economic development in Myanmar than the level of economic development in Thailand to find out the research gap in this specific field. A comparative study of economic development in Thailand and Myanmar is significant due to the unique nature of military intervention in this region as both Cold War and post-Cold War phenomena. The objective of this literature review is not to serve as a foundation of a theoretical framework and therefore, the conceptualisations of the key ideas presented in this paper and the theories of existing literature in the stated field of military studies to examine the economic development in the military authoritarian rule have not been analysed.⁴ Due to the long period of military reign in both of these countries as a Cold War and the post-Cold War phenomena, a comparative study of these two most similar cases will facilitate a new understanding of the impact of military rule on better economic development in Thailand than in Myanmar and the causes of this variation between these two neighbours.

The first section of this paper analyses the articles that discuss the various issues of both Thailand and Myanmar. The second section analyses the papers that compare the economic development of Thailand with the economic development of Myanmar. In this section, the articles analysing the economic development in Thailand or Myanmar have been explicated. The third section outlines the drivers for Thailand's economic development and underdevelopment in Myanmar. In the fourth section, the economic progress in Thailand and Myanmar during the non-authoritarian regimes has been studied. In the final section, the research gap and the urgency of an initiative of

³ Aacha, Kinjal – Chetty, Priya: *Different Types of Literature Review Techniques Followed in a Research*. [online], Project Guru, 15.12.2021. Source: projectguru.in [24.10.2022].

⁴ The author of this paper has written another article to propose a theoretical framework to study the offered research questions that has already presented in the 27th World Congress of Political Science 2023 (Buenos Aires, Argentina). The conceptual clarification of the phenomenon required to explore these research questions and the existing theories and the debate to study economic development during the authoritarian rule has been analysed in that article.

a project to compare the economic development during military rule in Thailand and Myanmar have been discussed.

Areas of academic interest in studying Thailand and Myanmar

Researchers have been interested in studying various areas of academic importance to study Thailand and Myanmar. The literature that focuses on different issues of academic interest in studying Thailand and Myanmar has been explained in this section. One of the earliest works that pays attention to this comparative study is Badgley (1969).⁵ Badgley studies the nature of public policies during military rule and finds sharp variation between these countries. According to him, Thai leaders showed their skills in the development process while Myanmar's integration issue and economic problem were irrelevant to Thai development. The leaders of both countries had been concerned with political systems because statehood was at the emerging stage, and the political infrastructure was immature.⁶ He explains a comparative scenario of the policymaking process in Thailand and Myanmar during the period of the Cold War of military rule and it does not link the nature of the policymaking process with the economic development of an authoritarian setting.

Table 1: Major thematic issues of study between Thailand and Myanmar

List of the works	Thematic issues
Badgley (1969)	The nature of public policies
Hyndman (2002)	Refugee protection and transnational economic integration
Jirattikorn (2016)	Impact of mobile media to transmute the practice of holy men
Gruß (2017)	The financial burden on the migrants
Mizuno (2020)	Labour migration and shift in the garment production

Source: Compiled by the author.

In addition to Badgley,⁷ some researchers focus on the issues related to Thailand and Myanmar, including the protection of Burmese refugees in Thailand and economic integration between Thailand and Myanmar,⁸ the impact of mobile media to recast the practice of holy men migrated from Myanmar to Thailand,⁹ financial burden on the migrants from Myanmar to Thailand¹⁰ and labour migration and the shift in the garment production.¹¹ Hyndman studies the link between the bargaining of the protection

⁵ Badgley, John H. (1969): Two Styles of Military Rule: Thailand and Burma. *Government and Opposition*, 4(1), 100–117.

⁶ Badgley 1969.

⁷ Badgley 1969.

⁸ Hyndman, Jennifer (2002): Business and Bludgeon at the Border: A Transnational Political Economy of Human Displacement in Thailand and Burma. *GeoJournal*, 56(1), 39–46.

⁹ Jirattikorn, Amporn (2016): Buddhist Holy Man Khruba Bunchum: The Shift in a Millenarian Movement at the Thailand–Myanmar Border. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 31(2), 377–412.

¹⁰ Gruß, Inga (2017): The Emergence of the Temporary Migrant: Bureaucracies, Legality and Myanmar Migrants in Thailand. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, 32(1), 1–35.

¹¹ Mizuno, Atsuko (2020): Labour Migration and Relocation of Apparel Production between Thailand and Myanmar. *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies*, 37(2), 181–198.

of Burmese refugees in Thailand and the economic integration between Thailand and Myanmar.¹² According to him, thousands of Burmese people migrated to Thailand due to the oppressive policy of Myanmar's military junta. The economic integration between Thailand and Myanmar depends on bargaining for the protection of these Burmese migrants in Thailand. Jirattikorn studies a holy man who migrated from Myanmar to Thailand.¹³ The holy man case explains the impact of mobile media in transfiguring the practice of the holy men, which suggests the necessity of a new approach to studying religious movements. Größ explains the financial burden on the migrant workers from Myanmar to Thailand due to the policies that regulate the national verification process in Thailand.¹⁴ This policy creates an opportunity for migrants to stay in the area of provisional reality that creates an additional financial burden on the migrants from Myanmar in Thailand. Mizuno evaluates the contribution of migrant labourers from Myanmar to Thailand to thrive in the labour-intensive garment industry in Thailand.¹⁵ The increased cost in the labour-intensive garment industry caused the shift of this industry to the neighbouring countries of Thailand.¹⁶

The above studies are significant in contemporary research that adds value to the existing knowledge to understand the issues of these two countries. They primarily focus on the various aspects of the field of migration study. However, the previous studies do not reflect Thailand and Myanmar's economic development from the perspective of my research question.

Economic development in Thailand and Myanmar during the authoritarian military rule

This paper finds that scholars and researchers have shown their interest in the political-economy issues of Thailand and Myanmar during military rule. However, few comparative research works analyses the economic development of these two political systems focusing on military rule despite the region's unique nature of being a coup-prone area for several decades during the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. The following table shows that no article has been available on the Jstor and Google scholar platforms that directly sketch a comparative study of economic development during military rule in Thailand and Myanmar. More specifically, there has not been any article's title that matches the keywords ('economic development under military rule in Thailand and Myanmar') selected for this comparative research. Only two works have been available on the Google Scholar platform that discusses the issues related to the economic development of both countries. Additionally, there has not been any article on the Jstor platform discussing Thailand's economic development. Seventeen articles have been found in Google Scholar

¹² Hyndman 2002.

¹³ Jirattikorn 2016.

¹⁴ Größ 2017.

¹⁵ Mizuno 2020.

¹⁶ Mizuno 2020.

that study economic development in Thailand, and seven articles focus on the issues related to the economic development of the Thai nation.

Table 2: Economic development under the military rule in Thailand and Myanmar: A survey of literature

Keywords for search	Name of the online platform	Number of literature (out of first 200 articles)
Economic development under military rule in Thailand and Myanmar	Jstor	Nil
		Nil (articles related to economic development)
	Google Scholar	Nil
		2 (articles related to economic development)
Economic development under military rule in Thailand	Jstor	Nil
	Google Scholar	17 (articles match at least with the keywords 'economic development' and 'Thailand')
		7 (articles related to the issues of economic development in Thailand)
Economic development under military rule in Myanmar	Jstor	2
	Google Scholar	24 (articles match at least with the keywords 'economic development' and 'Myanmar')
		15 (articles are on issues related to economic development)

Source: Compiled by the author.

Two articles by the Jstor and twenty-four articles by Google scholar have directly studied economic development in Myanmar. Additionally, fifteen articles discuss issues related to economic development in Myanmar. These articles have paid limited attention to specifying the period of military rule to discuss economic development.

The table drawn above has been generated to substantiate the necessity of opening a discussion on the economic development of Thailand and Myanmar during the military rule due to the limited number of works in this area of research interest. In the following sub-sections, some works have been reviewed that study the economic development or the issues related to the economic development during the military rule in Thailand and Myanmar from comparative or specific country perspectives.

Economic development in Thailand and Myanmar: Comparative perspective

The research works that have studied the issues related to the economic development of Thailand and Myanmar from a comparative perspective have been explained in this section. In this context, one significant work is James (2010).¹⁷ Helen James explores “the economics-politics nexus in Thailand and Myanmar in the context of rent-seeking, revenues from oil and gas resources, and possible political reform.”¹⁸ She finds a more open and participatory society in Thailand than in Myanmar and argues that the emergence of

¹⁷ James, Helen (2010): Resources, Rent-Seeking, and Reform in Thailand and Myanmar (Burma): The Economics-Politics Nexus. *Asian Survey*, 50(2), 426–448.

¹⁸ James 2010: 426.

civil society in Thailand works “toward more open politics and better forms of governance”.¹⁹ Rhoden and Unger study Burmese immigrants’ trend to return home due to the change in the scenario from “military authoritarian regime to civilian rule”.²⁰ They find “nothing that suggests that Burmese migrants have started to return home in any large numbers”.²¹ Instead, they assume a flow of high level of outmigration from Myanmar will continue on the border of Myanmar–Thailand due to the lack of “labor absorbing economic growth” and a deficiency of “a stable political accommodation among the Burmese and the many important ethnic minorities”.²² Pollock and Aung focus on economic issues to compare Thailand and Myanmar.²³ They study the “economic crisis of migrant workers from Myanmar in Thailand”.

Table 3: Major thematic issues in comparing economic development in Thailand and Myanmar in the existing literature

List of the works	Thematic issues
James (2010)	The relationship between economics and politics
Pollock and Aung (2010)	The economic crisis of migrated workers
Rhoden and Unger (2015)	Economics across Myanmar–Thailand Border to explain Burmese return to home

Source: Compiled by the author.

The above works do not directly portray any scenario of comparing the economic progress of Thailand and Myanmar during the military rule and the causes of the higher economic advancement in Thailand than in Myanmar despite the frequent military coups in these neighbours. Let us check what has been happened in the literature regarding the analysis of economic development in the specific cases of Thailand or Myanmar.

Economic development in Thailand

The works that focus on the study of economic development or the topics related to the economic development of Thailand are Silcock (1967), Von der Mehden (1970), King (1997), Kaosa-ard (1998), Doner and Ramsay (2000), Pathmanand (2001), Sankaewthong (2002), Warr (2007), Doner (2009) Raquiza (2011), Chambers (2013) and Warr (2018, 2019). Silcock studies economic development in Thailand from 1945 to 1965 and finds the importance of introducing western techniques and institutions in the Thai society. He says: “Thais realise, probably more clearly than the people of most less developed countries, that economic progress may demand changes in their social

¹⁹ James 2010: 447.

²⁰ Rhoden, T. F. – Unger, Danny (2015): No Burmese Returning: Economics Across Myanmar–Thailand Border. *The International Journal of East Asian Studies*, 19(2), 51.

²¹ Rhode–Unger 2015.

²² Rhode–Unger 2015.

²³ Pollock, Jackie – Aung, Soe Lin (2010): Critical Times: Gendered Implications of the Economic Crisis for Migrant Workers from Burma/Myanmar in Thailand. *Gender and Development*, 18(2), 213–227.

customs and political structure...²⁴ Von der Mehden analyses the military's role in Thai development as a case study to understand "methodological difficulties in the study of military influence upon specific programs."²⁵ Kaosa-ard examines the policies related to industry, natural resources, tourism and the environment.²⁶ Additionally, he explores the underlying causes of the failure of institutional maintenance in Thailand. He finds that the failure of governing institutions in some sectors finally caused the sequential financial crises in Thailand. Doner and Ramsay examine the limitation of using the ideas of clientelism, corruption and rent-seeking to explain the transformation of rapid growth into negative growth in Thailand.²⁷ According to them, it is essential to study the shifting role of political power and the changes in the global economy to understand the role of clientelism, corruption and rent-seeking in the formation of Thai economic problems. They argue that the corruption and rent-seeking contributed to Thai economic difficulties by "hampering Thailand's efforts to improve educational and physical infrastructure" and "undermining the autonomy and oversight capacity of the central bank."²⁸

Table 4: Major thematic issues in the existing literature to study the economic development of Thailand

List of the work	Thematic issues
Silcock (1967)	Economic development in Thailand from 1945 to 1965
Von der Mehden (1970)	The role of the military in the development of Thailand
King (1997)	Economic slowdown
Kaosa-ard (1998)	Policies related to some sectors of the Thai economy
Doner and Ramsay (2000)	Transformation of rapid growth into negative growth
Pathmanand (2001)	Globalisation and democratic development
Sankaewthong (2002)	Thai's economic integration and military functions
Warr (2007)	Long-term economic performance
Doner (2009)	History of development in Thailand focusing on three sectors
Raquiza (2011)	The political economy of Thailand and the Philippines
Chambers (2013)	Examination of the economic models of Thailand
Warr (2018)	Causes of Thai economic growth and its distribution
Warr (2019)	The failure of Thai economic achievements to reduce poverty

Source: Compiled by the author.

Doner examines the history of development in Thailand, focusing on three sectors, including sugar, textiles and autos.²⁹ He argues that the upgrade of products depends on institutional capacities. He observes the "factionalised military and fragmented line

²⁴ Silcock, T. H. (1967): *Thailand, Social and Economic Studies in Development*. Canberra: Australian National University. 289.

²⁵ Von der Mehden, Fred R. (1970): *The Military and Development in Thailand*. *Administration and Society*, 2(3), 323.

²⁶ Kaosa-ard, Mingsarn (1998): *Economic Development and Institutional Failures in Thailand*. *TDRI Quarterly Review*, 13(1), 3–11.

²⁷ Doner, Richard F. – Ramsay, Ansil (2000): *Rent Seeking and Economic Development in Thailand*. In Khan, Mushtaq H. – Jomo, Kwame Sundaram (eds.): *Rents, Rent-Seeking and Economic Development. Theory and Evidence in Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 145–181.

²⁸ Doner–Ramsay 2000: 170–171.

²⁹ Doner, Richard F. (2009): *The Politics of Uneven Development. Thailand's Economic Growth in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

ministries [that] translated into pervasive clientelism”, and this clientelism facilitated to strengthen “the property rights” and “small corporatist veto power” served to finance industry in Thailand before the mid-1960s.³⁰ Antoinette Raquiza produces a historical analysis by comparing the political economy of Thailand and the Philippines to understand the reasons for industrialisation and non-industrialisation in some small developing countries.³¹ She argues that the economic consequences of a country is influenced by the institutional set-up of the ruling elites, and the military plays a decisive role in extending their regimes in Thailand. Chambers examines the various models of development applied in Thailand since 1932, focusing on the interactions among these models and the success levels of these models.³² He also studies the extent of the entrance of partnership in the debate on Thai economic development. Chambers points out that “Thailand’s current development strategy has enabled the country to achieve a relative degree of success in achieving economic growth”.³³ Warr describes various aspects of the economic achievements of Thailand, and based on the evidence, he argues that the Thai economic achievements have failed to reduce not only relative poverty but also absolute poverty.³⁴ Sankaewthong discusses the “effects of global economic conditions on Thai military function”.³⁵ His finding is that:

*Thailand’s economic integration into the international economy does not directly affect its military’s functions. Nevertheless, the export-led growth strategy for economic growth since the 1980s has created a middle class and resulted in a shift of political power among domestic actors from the military to the private sector. The role of the middle class in limiting the military’s role in the political arena has been evident since the people’s protest in 1992. According to the change in power of domestic actors, the thesis concludes that the Thai military’s functions in the near future will be less aggressive and involve more compromise with elected politicians. Additionally, the military will readjust its role and mission in Thai society in order to maintain its prerogative. In the author’s point of view, if and only if both serious political instability and a collapse of the Thai market economy are uncontrollable by the existing government, then the Thai people shall demand the Thai military to directly intervene.*³⁶

Moreover, there are some research works that focus on the economic issues in Thailand, including the economic decline in 1996,³⁷ the association between the globalisation and democratic advancement of the Thai nation focusing on the shifting role of armed forces,

³⁰ Doner 2009: 149.

³¹ Raquiza, Antoinette R. (2011): *The Political Economy of Thailand and the Philippines*. London: Routledge.

³² Chambers, Paul (2013): Economic Guidance and Contestation: An Analysis of Thailand’s Evolving Trajectory of Development. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 32(1), 81–109.

³³ Chambers 2013: 81.

³⁴ Warr, Peter (2019): Economic Development of Post-War Thailand. In Chachavalpongpan, Pavin (ed.): *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Thailand*. London: Routledge.

³⁵ Sankaewthong, Palagorn: *Effects of Global Economic Conditions on the Thai Military Functions (1980s to Present)*. Master Thesis. [online], Naval Postgraduate School, 2002. Source: calhoun.nps.edu [07.11.2022].

³⁶ Sankaewthong 2002.

³⁷ King, Daniel E. (1997): Thailand in 1996: Economic Slowdown Clouds Year. *Asian Survey*, 37(2), 160–166.

civic networks and private sector in the milieu of globalisation,³⁸ positive and negative impact of outstanding economic achievement of Thailand³⁹ and the causes of Thai economic growth, its distribution and origin of Asian financial crisis in Thailand.⁴⁰

This country-specific literature informed the researchers of various issues related to economic development in Thailand and the role of governing elites, especially military rulers. It also explains the economic development of Thailand from historical perspectives focusing on various sectors and actors, the military's influence in the development process, the causes and consequences of the economic growth, and the distribution of the economic outcome to reduce poverty. Despite a wider merit of the above-discussed literature, it is not enough to explain the economic development of a nation, especially the Thai nation, from a political economy perspective, i.e. explanation of the economic development of a specific country perspective that may apply to examine the same economy in a similar regime of other nation, as it is posed in the research question of this paper.

Economic development in Myanmar

There are some works that analyse the economic development in Myanmar, including Maung (1997), Thein (2004), Turnell (2007), Rieffel (2010), International Crisis Group (2012), Chalk (2013), Kikuchi and Masutomo (2019), Miklian (2019) and Oo (2019). Turnell assesses the economic situation of Myanmar after the banking crisis (2001–2002). He outlines that the cause of Myanmar's economic growth is the export of natural gas, and the decline of Burma's economic progress compared to other neighbours is "the excessive hand of the state".⁴¹ Rieffel studies Myanmar's economy considering the election of 2010.⁴² He states, "Burma's lagging economic performance – socioeconomic indicators placed it among the world's most impoverished in 2000 – is due to a simmering internal conflict based on ethnic and religious differences".⁴³ Kikuchi and Masutomo focus on Myanmar's initiative in building financial institutions during the Thein Sein regime since 2011 and Japan's leading role in this initiative.⁴⁴ They explore the characteristics of the Southeast Asian financial markets, single out the prerequisites for financial development in Myanmar, focusing on industrialisation and justify Japan's engagement.

³⁸ Pathmanand, Ukrist (2001): Globalisation and Democratic Development in Thailand: The New Path of the Military, Private Sector, and Civil Society. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 23(1), 24–42.

³⁹ Warr, Peter (2007): Long-term Economic Performance in Thailand. *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, 24(1), 138–163.

⁴⁰ Warr, Peter: *Economic Development in Post-war Thailand*. [online], Australian National University, July 2018. Source: crawford.anu.edu.au [07.11.2022].

⁴¹ Turnell, Sean (2007): Myanmar's Economy in 2006. In Skidmore, Monique – Wilson, Trevor (eds.): *Myanmar. The State, Community and the Environment*. Canberra: ANU Press. 109.

⁴² Rieffel, Lex *The Economy of Burma/Myanmar on the Eve of the 2010 Elections*. [online], U.S. Institute of Peace, May 2010. Source: usip.org [22.01.2022].

⁴³ Rieffel 2010: 1.

⁴⁴ Kikuchi, Tomoo – Masutomo, Takehiro: *Financial Development in Myanmar and the Role of Japan*. [online], Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2019. Source: rsis.edu.sg [07.11.2022].

Table 5: Major thematic issues to study the economic development of Myanmar

List of the works	Thematic issues
Turnell (2007)	The cause of Myanmar's economic growth and decline of economic progress compared to its neighbours
Rieffel (2010)	A study of Myanmar's economy considering the election of 2010
Kikuchi and Masutomo (2019)	The characteristics of the Southeast Asian financial markets to single out the prerequisites for financial development in Myanmar
Maung (1997)	Economic development under SLORC
Thein (2004)	The economic development during different military regimes from 1948 until 2000
International Crisis Group (2012)	Economic reconstruction
Chalk (2013)	Economic challenges
Miklian (2019)	Myanmar's economy after its opening in 2011
Oo (2019)	The relationship between fiscal policy and the economic growth

Source: Compiled by the author.

Thein analyses the economic development of Myanmar during different military regimes in the last fifty years, from 1948 until 2000.⁴⁵ Miklian studies the economy of Myanmar after its opening in 2011 and establishes a theory on “economic opening, development and conflict”.⁴⁶ He presents three arguments: 1. international initiative of regulatory reform has limited impact on the reduction of corruption; 2. development is a controversial topic that is not locally conceptualised as a growth of the whole society; and 3. business endeavours intensified ethnic conflict in a fragile state despite a liberal attitude to peacebuilding. Oo studies the economic progress in Myanmar, and he examines the impact of the fiscal deficit on the nominal GDP of Myanmar.⁴⁷ His research suggests a significant statistical relationship between the fiscal policy of Myanmar and its economic growth.

Moreover, there are some research works that focus on the challenges due to the reforms in the political, social and economic areas after the opening in 2011 and ASEAN and Australia's assistance in promoting these reforms,⁴⁸ the link between the economic and political reforms and the cooperation between the elites and international community to ensure the success of these reforms⁴⁹ and economic achievement under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) after the coup in 1988 through the reform initiative for opening the door to the rest of the world in Myanmar.⁵⁰

The above works primarily assess the economic progress in Myanmar during the military rule, underscoring the banking crisis, the excessive role of the state, causes of

⁴⁵ Thein, Myat (2004): *Economic Development of Myanmar*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

⁴⁶ Miklian, Jason (2019): Contextualising and Theorising Economic Development, Local Business and Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar. *Conflict, Security and Development*, 19(1), 55.

⁴⁷ Oo, Lin Tun (2019): The Effect of Fiscal Policy on Economic Growth in Myanmar. *East Asian Community Review*, 2, 101–124.

⁴⁸ Chalk, Peter (2013): *On the Path of Change: Political, Economic and Social Challenges for Myanmar*. Australian Strategic Policy Institute.

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group: *Myanmar: The Politics of Economic Reform*. [online], International Crisis Group, 2012. Source: crisisgroup.org [07.11.2022].

⁵⁰ Maung, Mya (1997): Burma's Economic Performance under Military Rule: An Assessment. *Asian Survey*, 37(6), 503–524.

economic growth and decline, building financial institutions, economic liberalisation, economic and political reforms, internal conflicts due to the ethnic variations and fiscal deficit. These issues are significant to understand the economic performance of Myanmar. However, they have provided a limited indication that may work to compare economic development in a similar nation under military rule, as the research question of this paper points out.

Driver for higher level of economic development in Thailand than in Myanmar

Due to the lack of the comparative research on the proposed field, the drivers for the better economic advancement in Thailand than in Myanmar have been identified by reviewing the contemporary literature on the economic development in Thailand or Myanmar. Some works that identify the causes of higher economic progress in Thailand have been explained in this section. OECD, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank review and assess the success story of economic development in Thailand and outline various causes of this success.⁵¹ OECD reviews Thai's economic development trajectory for sixty years and mentions several causes that historically affected the Thai success, including the foreign direct investment flow and its integration into the international trading arrangement.⁵² Like OECD, a World Bank report assesses the Thai economic success and finds participation in the global economy and the flow of foreign direct investment as the driver of this success.⁵³ However, this report adds structural transformation from agriculture to industry and the export-led industry as the causes of Thai's success. The report also suggests that the role of these factors has been diminishing in recent years. In a country diagnostic study, the Asian Development Bank observes the rapid economic growth of Thailand, and it argues that the Thai economy has successfully moved from agriculture to export-oriented manufacturing, and both manufacturing and service industries have shifted from lower end to higher end in the global value chain.⁵⁴ Kaosa-ard points out this issue of the Thai economic transformation during the 1980s and 1990s that causes remarkable economic progress.⁵⁵ Warr states that the market-oriented development strategy and opening trade and investment to foreigners have been behind the outstanding growth performance since the late 1950s.⁵⁶ Additionally, he argues that Thai growth is primarily due to the "investment in physical capital".⁵⁷

⁵¹ OECD: *OECD Investment Policy Reviews: Thailand*. [online], OECD Investment Policy Reviews, 2021. Source: oecd.org [07.11.2022]; World Bank: *The World Bank in Thailand*. [online], World Bank, September 2022b. Source: worldbank.org [11.10.2022]; Asian Development Bank: *Thailand, Industrialization and Economic Catch-up, Country Diagnostic Study*. [online], Asian Development Bank, 2015. Source: adb.org [11.11.2022].

⁵² OECD 2021.

⁵³ World Bank 2022b.

⁵⁴ Asian Development Bank 2015.

⁵⁵ Kaosa-ard 1998.

⁵⁶ Warr, Peter (2013): Thailand's Development Strategy and Growth Performance. In Fosu, Augustin K. (ed.): *Achieving Development Success. Strategies and Lessons from the Developing World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 72–98.

⁵⁷ Warr 2018: 9.

Despite being much lower than Thailand's economic development, Myanmar has achieved a substantial level of economic development. Scholars identify the causes that are primarily responsible for the less economic development in Myanmar. Wong identifies the causes of less economic development in Myanmar since 1948.⁵⁸ According to him, "Myanmar never sought to exploit the dynamic comparative advantage of international trade, it failed to encourage the domestic savings; and above all, it also neglected human resources development including entrepreneurship- the single most important factor of the East Asian economic success".⁵⁹ Dapice finds the causes of primary economic problems in Myanmar rooted in policy-related issues, including the policy of isolation started in 1962 and the inefficient and crude implementation of the central planning policy in an agrarian society.⁶⁰ A survey reports ten causes of economic decline in Myanmar after 2016.

*These are higher taxations and tariffs; restrictions in financing and banking; depreciation of the kyat; unstable economic rules and regulations; lack of market demand; delays in the import and export procedure; increases in local costs and inflation; competition from foreign companies; a lack of skilled human resources; and poor infrastructure.*⁶¹

Additionally, some authors also identify the regime-type relationship with economic development in the case of Myanmar. Kyi, Findlay, Sundrum, Maung, Nyunt and Oo state that Myanmar's underdevelopment is linked to capturing of political power by the military junta in 1962.⁶² Tang and Li focus on the decades-long civil war and the sanctions imposed by the western powers to explain the less economic progress in Myanmar.⁶³ Soe explains the less economic progress in Myanmar due to the flawed economic liberalisation policies, central planning and macroeconomic imbalances.⁶⁴

The causes of the miracle economic development of Thailand and less economic progress in Myanmar outlined above are the outcome of the scholars' observation from various perspectives to explain either Thailand or Myanmar that have not been used in the above studies as the unit of analysis to produce a comparison of economic progress and economic less progress in two similar military authoritarian settings as sought to explain in the presented research question of this paper. Therefore, it suggests a deficiency in

⁵⁸ Wong, John (1997): Why has Myanmar not Developed Like East Asia? *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, 13(3), 344–358.

⁵⁹ Wong 1997: 344.

⁶⁰ Dapice, David: *Current Economic Conditions in Myanmar and Options for Sustainable Growth*. [online], Global Development and Environment Institute, 2003. 2. Source: bu.edu [07.11.2022].

⁶¹ Lwin, Nan: *Ten Reasons behind Myanmar's Economic Slump*. [online], The Irrawaddy, 30.08.2018. Source: irrawaddy.com [07.11.2022].

⁶² Kyi, et al. (2000): *Economic Development of Burma. A Vision and a Strategy*. The Olaf Palme International Center. A study conducted under the auspices of the Center for Business Research and Development (CBRD), Faculty of Business Administration. Singapore: National University of Singapore.

⁶³ Tang, Qiming – Li, Meijuan (2021): Analysis of Myanmar's Macroeconomic Development. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 235.

⁶⁴ Soe, Tin (2008): Policy Dilemmas and Economic Development: A Case Study of Myanmar Economy in Transition. *Journal of International Cooperation Studies*, 15(3), 1–30.

the existing comparative political economy study literature focusing on the authoritarian settings of Thailand and Myanmar.

Economic development in non-authoritarian military regimes in Thailand and Myanmar

There has been a small segment of non-military authoritarian regimes in Thailand and Myanmar. Although through the democratic revolution in 1932, Thailand started the constitutional democratic monarchy, it has an experience of frequent and prolonged military regimes with the unstable period of democratic reign, including the Thaksin period (2001–2006). In Burma's history, there is almost no record of non-authoritarian regimes except from 1948 to 1958, 1960 to 1962 and 2016 to 2020. Therefore, there has been very little focus on the economic development during the democratic regimes in Thailand and Myanmar in the existing literature.

A World Bank report suggests that the average growth rate of the Thai economy during the boom years (1960–1996) was 7.5%.⁶⁵ However, the economy grew at an average rate of 5% during 1999–2005, which covers most of the Thaksin period. According to Dejthumrongwat,⁶⁶ 10% of the Thai poor people lost their wealth, while the elites did not lose anything during the Thaksin period. He argues that “Thaksinomics seems to be focusing on consumption – rather than sustainable growth”.⁶⁷ Chambers examines the outcomes of the two tracks of Thaksinomics.⁶⁸ He finds these tracks beneficial for society. The first track that was initiated to promote the flow of foreign direct investment and enhance the export-oriented labour-intensive industrialisation causes the continuity of boosting of GDP growth. The second track that prioritised the policies for the rural people expanded the economic security of the rural Thais, primarily peasants.

There were three phases of the democratic regime in Myanmar under the leadership of U Nu (1948–1958 and 1960–1962) and Aung San Suu Kyi (2016–2020). U Nu, “a man to whom history afforded a unique opportunity to lead his country to independence, democracy, peace, modernity and welfare”⁶⁹ has failed to solve economic problems during his second tenure⁷⁰ similar to his first tenure. However, during the last democratic regime (2015–2020) in Myanmar, the World Bank claims that economic growth has declined from 8.5% (2014–2015, democratic restoration) to 7% (2015–2016, after the election).⁷¹ Later, it grew more than 7% annually during the whole democratic period of the National League for Democracy (NLD).⁷² Stokke, Vakulchuk and Øverland also report a same

⁶⁵ World Bank 2022b.

⁶⁶ Dejthumrongwat, Panakorn (2014): *Does Thaksinomics Create Sustainable Economic Growth?* City University London, School of Social Science, International Politics Department.

⁶⁷ Dejthumrongwat 2014: 16.

⁶⁸ Chambers 2013: 81–109.

⁶⁹ Walinsky, Louis J. (1965–1966): The Rise and Fall of U Nu. *Pacific Affairs*, 38(3–4), 269–281.

⁷⁰ Butwell, Richard (1962): The Four Failures of U Nu's Second Premiership. *Asian Survey*, 2(1), 3–11.

⁷¹ World Bank: *Myanmar Growth Eases Slightly but Remains Robust in 2015–2016*. [online], World Bank, May 2016. Source: worldbank.org [14.11.2022].

⁷² Thein, Htwe Htwe – Gillan, Michael: *How the Coup Is Destroying Myanmar's Economy?* [online], East Asia Forum, 23.06.2021. Source: eastasiaforum.org [14.11.2022].

strong growth rate.⁷³ In another press release, the World Bank reports that the Myanmar economy has been 18% contracted in 2021 after the military intervention in 2021.⁷⁴

The above works have been limited to studying Thaksinomics in the case of Thailand. The works suggest an economic boom during the non-authoritarian period in Thailand. However, in the case of Myanmar, it shows a mixed reflection of the assessment of the economic performance of Myanmar during the authoritarian and non-authoritarian rule. The assessment in both cases is based on a short period of non-authoritarian rule compared to the longtime authoritarian regimes. Therefore, a study of economic development under non-authoritarian rule has little value compared to a comparative study of economic development during authoritarian rule.

Summing Up: Research gap, argument and the need for an urgent follow-up to understand the presented research questions

Despite the deficiency of this paper in presenting a critical analysis of the existing literature in the field of economic development that focuses on military regimes in Thailand and Myanmar, this literature survey has successfully identified the limitation of the state-of-the-art analysed in the stated field. Since the above discussion on the works based on comparative or single case study shows that the number of works in the various platforms have been limited, this survey substantiates an initial argument that there seems to be that the literature primarily is suffering with a deficiency of comparing the economic development of these two countries focusing on the authoritarian military rule both in the Cold War and post-Cold War periods and consequently, a greater critical analysis of the presented literature has been less significant to identify the research gap in answering the offered research question. The review of the existing works suggests that understanding economic development from a comparative perspective has received little attention from researchers in the military science and engineering field.

Therefore, a new research endeavour is urgent to fill this gap by answering the proposed research question of how the military's rule has impacted the two neighbouring Thai and Myanmar authoritarian settings. Due to the long period of military reign in both of these countries as a Cold War and the post-Cold War phenomena, a comparative study of these two most similar cases will facilitate a new understanding of the impact of military rule on the more economic development in Thailand than in Myanmar.

Additionally, the drivers for economic development outlined in the literature, to some extent, have been outcome based. If an outcome is due to a cause, simultaneously, an absence of this cause in a similar situation will lead to the opposite outcome. Comparing the causes of economic development in the Thai political system, does not necessarily cause the opposite outcome in the political system of Myanmar as it is explained and specified in the literature. Therefore, further research is required to answer the presented

⁷³ Stokke, Kristian et al. (2018): *Myanmar: A Political Economy Analysis*. Report commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

⁷⁴ World Bank: *Myanmar Economy Remains Fragile, with Reform Reversals Weakening the Outlook*. [online], World Bank, July 2022a. Source: [worldbank.org](https://www.worldbank.org) [14.11.2022.11].

question of why there is a variation between Thai and Myanmar settings in achieving economic development during the long military rule despite the idea that “every country’s development experience is unique, shaped by its specific history, culture, domestic conditions, and the prevailing international environment”.⁷⁵ Based on the Mills method of concomitant variation, one of the purposes of the future research initiative would be building a theory for causal relationships for the economic development in the same situation of authoritarian settings considering the variation in the other socioeconomic context of two political systems.

Finally, this paper’s deficiency in analysing the economic development during the non-military regimes is due to the insignificant period compared to the periods of military regimes in both cases. The present work pays less attention to studying the existing literature focusing on economic development during non-military regimes. There have been substantial periods of non-military regimes in Thailand. However, the history of Myanmar has not been almost beyond military rule. There is no non-authoritarian regime in Myanmar except the period 1948–1958, 1960–1962, and from 2016 to 2020. In the case of Thailand, there have been some segments of non-authoritarian regimes. In all regimes in both Thailand and Myanmar, there have been a substantial level of military influence in political decisions even during the non-military regimes. Therefore, in a limited number of works, the economic development in Myanmar and Thailand has been focused on non-authoritarian political regimes. Due to the long military authoritarian regimes and the influence of military actors in the non-military authoritarian regimes in both cases, it is difficult to clearly separate the economic development in non-authoritarian military regimes in Thailand and Myanmar for this study purpose. Therefore, future researchers should study economic development in Thailand and Myanmar during the authoritarian military rule as both Cold War and post-Cold War phenomena. The incumbent research should focus on authoritarian military rule as a Cold War and Post-Cold War phenomena due to the variations in the nature of the intervention and military governance during these two periods. The post-Cold War phenomenon of military rule is interested in opening the economy, absorbing some democratic values and liberal policies and establishing paralysed institutionalisation of human rights and anti-corruption bodies to mimic the democratic rule.

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