

The Cost of 'Green' Growth: Neoliberal Externalities and Environmental Degradation in Myanmar's Rare Earth Hubs

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Abstract

The global transition toward renewable energy is often framed as a triumph of neoliberal innovation, yet it relies on "invisible" environmental costs in the Global South. This article investigates the environmental consequences of Chinese rare earth extraction in Myanmar's Kachin State since 2021. Utilizing the concept of "externalities," the study explores how the market fails to account for the catastrophic soil acidification and water contamination caused by in-situ leaching techniques. It argues that northern Myanmar has been transformed into a "sacrifice zone"—a space where environmental and social protections are dismantled to ensure the global competitiveness of clean energy technologies. Through an analysis of satellite imagery and local environmental reports, the paper highlights the paradox of the neoliberal "Green Revolution": the decarbonization of the Global North is being subsidized by the ecological destruction and "resource curse" of a deregulated Myanmar.