P169 / Beyond Green Colonialism and Green Window of Opportunity: Pathways of Latecomer Economies in the Global Energy Transition

Topic : State and Policy Capacity

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Recent debates in political economy offer contrasting assessments of how the current global conjuncture affects the developmental prospects of latecomer economies. That conjuncture is marked by intensifying US–China rivalry, the exhaustion of neoliberal development strategies, and accelerating energy transitions (Driscoll *et al*, 2026; Kuzemko *et al*, 2025; Meckling, 2025).

One camp argues that these dynamics reproduce dependency through new forms of “green colonialism.” On this view, latecomers are locked into extractive roles or subordinate positions within cleantech value chains. Another camp stresses that geopolitical fragmentation, supply-chain reorganization, and the strategic centrality of energy transitions open new developmental opportunities. These include a wider scope for industrial policy, state coordination, and industrial upgrading.

Both positions capture important dynamics. Yet both treat green industrialization as a coherent and generalizable process. This obscures the wide variation in how latecomer economies engage with energy transitions, and how these engagements interact with existing development strategies, state capacities, and class relations (Hochstetler, 2020). There may also be considerable unevenness across subsectors, with some areas achieving meaningful advancement while others remain marginal or excluded (Behuria *et al*, 2026).

These issues must also be studied from a policy-oriented perspective. To do so, this panel moves beyond the binary by disaggregating green transitions along two analytically distinct dimensions:

-Domestic energy system transformation, meaning the decarbonization of a country’s own power, industry, and transport systems.
-Integration into cleantech value chains, meaning participation in the production, processing, and export of green technologies and inputs.
These dimensions are neither coextensive nor causally linked. They generate four ideal-typical situations:

-Renewables-led transition without industrial upgrading
-Cleantech integration without domestic decarbonization
-Simultaneous green industrialization
-Fossil-locked marginalization

Rather than asking whether green transitions open or foreclose development, the panel asks through which pathways latecomer economies engage with them. It also asks what this means for state capacity (Collington, 2026), class coalitions, and modes of integration into global markets (Karas, 2026).

We welcome empirically grounded papers, single-case or comparative, that address questions such as:

-Which pathways do latecomer economies follow, and how do they fit, stretch, or challenge the four ideal-typical situations?
-How do existing development strategies, state capacities, and institutional legacies shape engagement with each transition dimension (Behuria, 2025; Larsen, 2025) ?
-How do class coalitions, business groups (Carrasco and Madariaga, 2025), labour, and political settlements shape, and get reshaped by, green transition strategies?
-What explains the decoupling, or the occasional coupling, of domestic decarbonization and cleantech industrialization (Allan and Nahm, 2025)?
-How do US–China rivalry, industrial policies in the Global North, trade and investment regimes, and critical minerals politics condition latecomers’ room for manoeuvre (Zylinski, 2026)?
-Under what conditions do states move between situations, whether through upgrading, lock-in, or reversal (Driscoll and Larsen, 2026)?
-How should the two dimensions be measured and compared across cases?

-What are the “strategic divergences” (Prontera and Passalacqua, 2026) and convergences between countries and what are their explaining factors?
Contributions can also tackle these issues at the subsectoral level, either in single-case or comparative.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite scholars working on Global South states from comparative political economy, international political economy and public policy. We particularly welcome contributions based on original fieldwork and case-based analysis, as well as early-career researchers and scholars based in the Global South.

The panel is part of a broader collaborative project designed to produce:

-**a coordinated article collection** (special issue or edited volume);
-**a comparative indicators framework** tracking the two transition dimensions across cases;
-**a policy brief** for the policy community;
-**the seed infrastructure for a larger follow-up research programme**.
Panelists will be encouraged to develop their papers in dialogue with the shared analytical framework, and the panel will serve as a structured space for peer review and synthesis.

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