

## Research Statement – Keston K. Perry

The end of the so-called commodity ‘super-cycle’ and growth decelerations in economies such as China and India have triggered economic contraction in resource extractive developing economies, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. This has had a domino effect on commodity-exporting states, which have consequently implemented austerity policies and reform efforts aimed at eliminating energy subsidies. In addition, the resurgence of the United States as a net exporter of natural gas and petroleum have transformed commodity markets and further weakened the erstwhile formidable role of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in the global political economy.

My research focuses on the political economy of development in resource producing economies in the Global South. It examines the changing socio-economic order and interplay of domestic and external forces on the state’s capacity in extractive economies to promote broad-based industrial development especially in Latin American and Caribbean countries. It challenges mainstream economic arguments namely the resource curse hypothesis, weak institutions associated with new institutional economics, and conventional innovation systems analysis to arrive a more empirically grounded, theoretically rigorous conclusions. Instead, I propose a political economy framework to understand these dynamics through incorporation of institutional, industrial, and firm-level analyses. I have published a relevant paper on this topic on the Trinidad and Tobago experience in the *Journal of Developing Societies*.

My research program is methodologically and theoretically heterodox utilizing a combination of archival sources, qualitative semi-structured interviews and content analysis of contemporary policy documents primarily in Trinidad and Tobago. It specifically challenges neoclassical economic theory that focuses on narrow interpretation of interests as rent-seeking elites, so-called market imperfections, selective historical evidence and institutional pre-conditions such as property rights for growth in developing countries. These standard analyses make faulty causal arguments and suggest that developing countries must adopt certain institutions such as democratic accountability, the rule of law and strong property like in advanced economies in order to advance economic development. This counters the historical evidence of industrialized countries. I critically review these arguments and sketch a political economy view in late-industrializing countries in a re-submitted article to the *Cambridge Journal of Economics*.

Instead, my work focuses on the simultaneous structural, technical and socio-political dimensions of development processes. First, the structural indicates that broader economic forces at the international level constrain or can enable the state – deemed a configuration of interests rather than an autonomous actor – to invest in productive upgrading of technological capabilities in new economic sectors. Second, I suggest that technical requirements of economic development processes involve analysis towards determination of skills needs, capability constraints, better managing of natural and other resources towards productive ends. Third, the socio-political dimensions takes into account the nature of the state and administrative structures, and the overall balance of power in the society and at an organizational level in which groups compete with each other to mobilize ideologies and gain a favored distribution of rents. These three aspects constitute the transformative rationale of development policy. Some of these aspects are considered in a paper submitted to the *Review of International Political Economy* that specifically examines a former public enterprise operating in the global steel industry.

### Future Research and Publication

I have begun a number of research projects that trail and elaborate the above-mentioned themes. I am currently working on a paper with a colleague at Providence College, Rhode Island, on the role of social movements in the industrial restructuring of Trinidad and Tobago targeted at *Development and Change*. This paper critiques the ‘developmental state’ literature which suggests that state must expressly take a

repressive and authoritarian stance towards labor and trade unions to successfully pursue industrial policy. I have also begun planning a Special Issue on 'The Future of resource-based industrialization' with colleagues at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, and King's College London to be submitted to *New Political Economy*. This Special Issue will explore the concept of new developmentalism and make the case that the possibilities and constraints for resource exporters in the Global South have fundamentally changed their prospects. Many of these countries are stymied in industrial upgrading strategies, and have further been relegated to generating backward linkages to low-technology sectors. For this Special Issue, I have submitted a political economy proposal to the American Political Science Association (APSA) to finance a workshop for contributors. As part of this broader project on resource-based industrialization, I will develop a database on oil, gas and mining corporations that operate in extractive economies in the Global South to determine the extent of their financialization and impacts since the 1980s, if any, on their business strategies and on economy policy of their host states. My postdoctoral work at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy also exposed me to climate policy issues in Haiti, because of which I have drafted a paper on the development implications of fossil fuel reform in addressing climate mitigation in the low-income Caribbean nation to be submitted soon for publication.

Moreover, I am extending my empirical work to the industrialization in Bolivia and Chile as well as Trinidad and Tobago. I will prepare an article comparing these patterns and dynamics especially since early 2000s for *Economy and Society*. These case studies constitute the main empirical work for my manuscript entitled 'Resource, booms, busts and the decline of state-led industrialization in Latin America: how global finance has transformed the development paradigm'. This work makes two main interrelated arguments:

1. The increased role of international economic institutions and globalized financial capital have 'crowded out' domestic resource mobilization and undermined the capability-building power of domestic coalitions and institutions to enforce industrial policy in extractive economies.
2. This development has led to the decoupling of broad-based industrialization, whereby socially inclusive policies are pursued exclusive of transforming productive and social structures. Yet long-term development strategy is stymied as a result.

I have held initial discussions with the Development Studies Association (DSA) Oxford University Press Book Series. Based on their advice, I am revising the proposal for submission in Spring 2020. In June 2018, a senior Editor at Palgrave MacMillan extended an invitation to submit a proposal for their Political Economy of Public Policy Series. Before I make a final decision, I would like to meet the editors of Cornell University Press and Edward Elgar Publishing.

Finally, my second project will investigate how domestic and international political-economic developments influence the financing of renewable energy projects in developing countries. This work adds a political economy analysis to renewable energy to understand the complex arrangements, constraints and the possibilities for Latin American countries. It innovates scientifically in two ways. First, by focusing on *developing* countries within the context of the geopolitics of renewables. Second, by laying bare how the *interplay* between domestic and international forces shapes renewable energy projects namely in Chile and Uruguay. Its practical relevance stems from contributing to a lasting growth of renewable energy in developing countries and providing governance recommendations in this regard.

The overarching theme of my research objectives is to offer analytically rigorous and policy-relevant work that make politics research more relevant to the lived experiences of countries and populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, that enable them to utilize natural resources more equitably, in an ecologically sustainable, and economically prosperous way. It is in this light I pursue my research career.