

Recent 'elite' studies in Europe and the United States

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Among the elite who occupy the top positions in authoritarian hierarchies, the economic elite are very important. Because, they have the power which William Domhoff, an American sociologist, calls 'structural power'. Structural power means that they can make decisions about the production and distribution of economic wealth through massive investments and the hiring, promotion and firing of workers and so on. Without understanding this economic elite, it is impossible to fully understand the modern capitalist society and its economy.

In Europe and the United States, there have been some noteworthy studies on the economic elite. Recent studies have tended to focus on the inner circle. This is the small group which pursues all the interests of the economic elite in the developed capitalist countries, and is supported by interlocking directorships, business associations, social networks, collective political activities, etc. As a result of the formation of the inner circle, the economic elite are able to protect and pursue their own interests against government policies and against various social groups in an effective manner.

Secondly, other recent studies have focused on the economic elite who are part of multinational corporations. The study on the European Roundtable of Industrialists, a very powerful business association in Europe, makes it clear that the rise of large European multinationals has led an increase in 'embedded neo-liberalism' in Europe. .

It is necessary to learn from such studies on the economic elite in both Europe and the United States. It can lead to progress in the study of the group who pursue all the interests of the economic elite in the transformation of the multinationalisation of large Japanese companies, and not just those whose perspectives have been confined to the nation state.