

Pakistan's Governing Elite and CPEC: An Elitist Perspective

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Abstract

This paper seeks to dissect the trajectory of Pakistan's elite responses on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a lynchpin of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It is argued that CPEC has created frictions within the Pakistani elite, which historically has been more aligned to the US. Using Elite theory, the paper attempts to ascertain why an influential segment of the country's ruling class opposes Beijing's increasing role in the country's strategic, economic, and cultural spheres. Apparently, Pakistan's polity seems euphoric on the rise of China, but a deeply entrenched colonial legacy and a long history of association with the United States still holds sway in Pakistan's governing elite, media houses and civil society organizations. This could possibly hinder Chinese long-term ambitions in Pakistan.

Key Words: Elite theory, Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC, China-Pakistan relations, Elitism.

Introduction

The existing body of literature on CPEC is broad and multi-dimensional. Scholars have covered the topic from multiple angles including its impacts on economy,¹ inter-provincial harmony,

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¹ E. Hussain and M. F. Rao, "China-Pakistan Economic Cooperation: The Case of Special Economic Zones (SEZs)," *Fudan J. Hum. Soc. Sci.* Vol. 13 (2020): 453-472.