

ASIEN 93 (Oktober 2004)

Abstract

Strukturdynamiken im Demokratisierungsprozess. Das Fallbeispiel Südkoreas

Thomas Kern

This article examines the impact of structural dynamics like "influencing" and "negotiating" on the process of democratization in South Korea in the 1980s. In the first part, the theoretical concepts of "structural dynamics" and "revolution" are introduced. In the second part the empirical results of the study are presented and discussed. For the most time the democratization process of South Korea was characterized by a structural dynamic of mutual influencing, which means, that the authoritarian regime and the democracy movement just interacted without communicating directly. But as it will be shown, this structural dynamic was interrupted by two sudden changes, which are crucial for the explanation of the transition in 1987: In early 1986, the government surprisingly altered from "influencing" to "negotiating", when it publicly announced direct talks with the dissident camp. In the spring of 1987, again a sudden change occurred, when the government broke off all negotiations in order to return to the path of "influencing". The article tries to explain, why these two changes occurred and what kinds of effects they had on the democratic transition in 1987. Following from this, future perspectives for the development of the research on democratization are discussed. The concept of structural dynamics promises to be a key instrument for the overcoming of the division between structural and voluntaristic approaches.