

Asien aktuell

Die 20. Parlamentswahlen in Südkorea 2016

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Summary

The results of the 2016 general elections in South Korea were of surprise to most observers. Contrary to the expectation that the conservative ruling party, New Frontier Party (NFP), of President Park Geun Hye would again win the supermajority in parliament, it was in fact the main opposition party, the liberal Together Democratic Party (TDP), that won — beating the NFP by one seat, and in the process becoming the new majority party with 123 MPs in the 300 seat-strong national assembly. It is obvious that the voters did not suddenly favor the fairly incompetent TDP, but rather that the Korean people taught their government a lesson and showed through their voting their discontent with President Park's way of handling state affairs. In addition the very recently established Citizens' Party (CP), led by self-made IT businessman Ahn Cheol Soo, won 38 seats, and will now form an independent negotiation group in the national chamber. The CP markets itself as a moderate and rational conservative party. Its success is the result of voters' discontent with the TDP's shift to the right due to the recruitment as party leader of Kim Chong In, who previously worked for several of the country's authoritarian governments; regionalistic sentiment in the Honam region also translated into altered voting behavior. However it remains to be seen, at least until the upcoming presidential election in 2017, whether this constellation of a divided government will indeed continue or not.

Keywords: South Korea, 20th general elections 2016, ruling party's defeat, divided government, inner party conflict, three party system, regionalism, lame duck, presidential election 2017

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