

Non-communist Parties in North Korea

History and Relevance of Democratic Parties in a Leader State

Friday, 8 November, 10:00 – 11:30

Room 2F-O1-27B (Vorgelege), Entry 2.3, AAKH Campus

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Despite the apparent absence of political and ideological diversity in North Korea, two parties remain alongside the ruling Workers' Party: the Korea Social Democratic Party and the Chondoist Young Friends' Party. Scholars have hitherto not asked the question why these smaller parties still exist and the role they might fulfil. Previous research on these two parties has disregarded important sources like party publications, contact with diplomats and diplomatic archives of former socialist countries, as well as simple facts like the number of parliamentary seats these parties hold. Thus, research on these parties, their leadership and changes, has not matched the level of interest in the organizations of the Workers' Party and the Kim family.

The available sources and known leadership changes within these parties allow us to draw a more complex picture of their history and give unparalleled insights into reforms and changes in the country. Despite the uniqueness of the North Korean system, surprising similarities exist to developments in China and even East Germany.

Martin Weiser received his MA from Korea University (Seoul) in 2014 with a thesis explaining North Korea's changing human rights policy. Since then, he has continued living in Seoul as an independent researcher and broadened his research to North Korean law, religion and the non-communist parties also looking to Vietnam and China for comparison.