



The Eurasia Center – East Asia Program

## Current Issues in East Asia

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Chinese Aircraft Carrier near Taiwan Photo Credit: AFP

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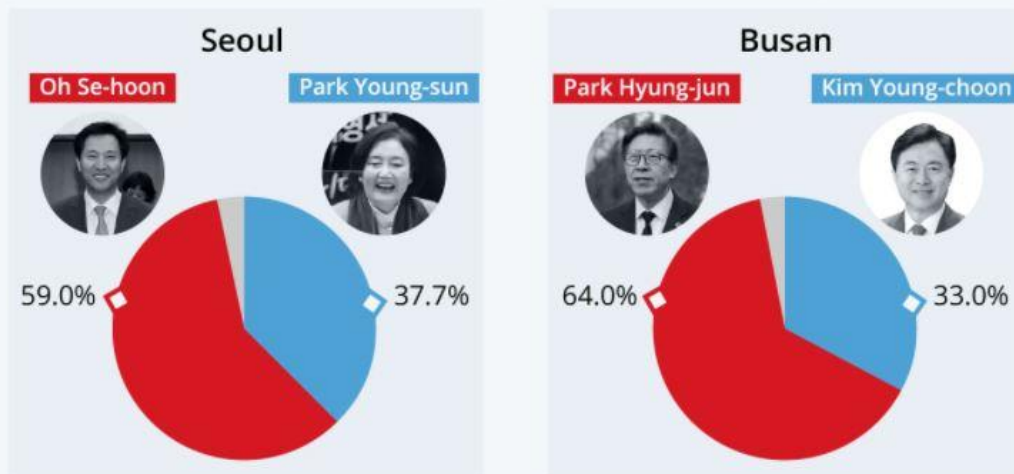
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# Conservatives Set to Win Seoul and Busan Mayoral Seats

Projected share of the vote for each mayoral candidate in the 2021 South Korean by-election

● People Power Party\* ● Democratic Party



\* also known as United Future Party  
Photos: Wikipedia, Hyung-jun campaign  
Source: KBS/MBC/SBS exit poll via Nikkei Asia



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Problems for the ruling party in South Korea – recent races in Seoul and Busan statista

## South Korean by-election and its impact on President Moon.

### South Korea's Ruling Party in Crisis

On April 7, 2021, a South Korean by-election was held to elect the mayors of the country's two largest cities, Seoul and Busan. President Moon's party suffered a defeat in the mayoral election; Oh Se-hoon won the Seoul Mayoral election, and Park Hyung-jun won the Busan Mayoral election. In Seoul, the main opposition People Power contender Oh Se-hoon secured 59% among

8.4 million voters.<sup>1</sup> In Busan, People Power's Park Hyung-jun also secured 64%, according to exit polls.<sup>2</sup> This election was an important indicator of the possibility of a change in President Moon's party with less than a year left before the next presidential election. Amid soaring housing prices, increasing inequality, allegations of sexual abuse, and deteriorating relations with North Korea, President Moon, and his party's approval ratings reached record lows.

President Moon took office in 2017, promising to create jobs, a crackdown on corruption, and build fair competition among the people in the wake of Park's alleged corruption. However, dissatisfaction with the president's economic policy failure has stopped the government's approval rating from rising due to the handling of the coronavirus pandemic. Also, the median home prices have surged more than 50% in Seoul since 2017, the fastest pace in the world and under any elected Korean leader.<sup>3</sup> According to an opinion poll with less than a year left before the presidential election on March 9, 2022, the housing scandal supports conservative opposition parties, which have been in turmoil since the impeachment of then-President Park Geun Hye in 2017. Political support for President Moon and the party collapsed, housing prices skyrocketed, inequality worsened, and relations with North Korea deteriorated. It is crucial for President Moon to act effectively and efficiently to gain back support before the next presidential election.

#### Works Cited

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<sup>1</sup> (Smith and Cha 2021)

<sup>2</sup> (Smith and Cha 2021)

<sup>3</sup> (Smith and Cha 2021)



Chinese Aircraft Carrier near Taiwan Photo Credit: AFP

## **Taiwan Issue with Chinese Aircraft**

On April 5, 2021, China's armed forces conducted simultaneous military training in western and eastern Taiwan. The analysts said this was a warning to the self-ruled island and its supporter, the United States.<sup>4</sup> The Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning and its convoy operated around Taiwan. China's statement said that the exercise was planned according to the annual plan to verify the effectiveness of military exercises and strengthen the national sovereignty's ability to protect national security development interests.<sup>5</sup> According to Taiwan's Ministry of Defense, at least 10 People's Liberation Army (PLA) warplanes entered Taiwan's self-declared Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). Taiwan's Ministry of Defense said it was fully aware of the situation and was responding appropriately. According to the Ministry of National Defense, the PLA

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<sup>4</sup> (Lendon 2021)

<sup>5</sup> (Lendon 2021)

continued to pressure Taiwan and sent 15 military aircraft to the Taiwan ADIZ on April 7, 2021.<sup>6</sup> The Chinese government claims full sovereignty over Taiwan, which has about 24 million people and is located off the southeast coast of mainland China. In recent months, tensions have been rising in Taiwan due to new military hardware support from the US and Taiwanese coast guards, and strong support from the U.S. government.

While Chinese aircraft carriers were training off the coast of Taiwan, U.S. Navy aircraft carrier attack groups were conducting their own operations in the South China Sea. According to the U.S. 7th Fleet, Theodore Roosevelt and the destroyer entered the South China Sea for normal operations.<sup>7</sup> This is Roosevelt's second visit to the area this year. Beijing claimed sovereignty over nearly 1.3 million square kilometers of the South China Sea and recently built military fortifications on several islands.<sup>8</sup> According to the Chinese, the presence of foreign forces, such as the U.S. carrier attack group, is raising tensions in the region.

### **Works Cited**

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<sup>6</sup> (Lendon 2021)

<sup>7</sup> (Lendon 2021)

<sup>8</sup> (Lendon 2021)

