

## **Abstract**

The political system in South Korea, with its current constitutional limitations, is the result of a long development. After the end of the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula there was a succession of different forms of government in the Republic of Korea, from semi-presidential and parliamentary democracy to long-lasting authoritarian rule. The latter was ended symbolically by adopting the 9<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution which re-introduced the direct election of the head of state and started the transition to democracy. Nevertheless, the new constitutional framework of “rationalized presidential system”, which was established with the aim to prevent any future authoritarian rule, paradoxically brings a number of negatives. Because the President often sees himself as the only representative of the state and because it is the system of “winner takes all”, it is possible (and Lee Myung-bak is its example) that the regime will be more rigid, will not be able to respond to new developments and flexibly change the implementation of government policies. In a situation when the President’s party gains an absolute majority in the legislative body and at the same time the President maintains a friendly relationship with this party, the President can ignore policy suggestions from the opposition and thus create a certain kind of authoritarian democracy or authoritarian rule with a democratic face. As the Constitution precludes the possibility of re-election, the President is not motivated to implement long-term policies and he tends to become corrupt and weaken his own institutional position at the end of the mandate. The first part of this thesis offers an outline of the theory of presidential systems and the benefits and drawbacks of this form of government. The second part briefly summarizes the presidential system in the Republic of Korea and the third part focuses on the policies and the style of government of Lee Myung-bak. The final part comprehensively evaluates the Lee Myung-bak government with the aim to place it into the general framework of presidential systems.