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Anti-Gender Discourse in South Korea

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Abstract

In this paper, I examine discursive formation of anti-gender speeches in contemporary South Korea that newly formed over the last decade. While women's movement and gender policy have become integral to Korean social policy and public discourse, it is notable that conservative backlash against feminism also has gained public support and political currency. Such anti-feminist backlash, notably, does not so much originate from traditional patriarchal sentiment such as male superiority but rather stems from a noble combination of conservatism which ranges from the neoliberal ideology of individualism, competition, and fairness, to conservative Christian anti-queer movement and trans exclusionary radical feminist rhetoric and practice against transgender rights. Though each stripe of anti-gender discourses draws from its own distinctive rhetorical and ideological sources such as neoliberal ideology of "fair" competition, Christian creed against same-sex relations, and trans-exclusionary radical feminist attachment to "woman-born-woman", they nevertheless converge upon "anti-gender" politics. In this paper, I attend to the underlying historical conditions of anti-gender politics which manifest in novel and strange terms in the present days and offer an alternative framework to understand contemporary Korean gender politics.

Keywords: anti-gender discourse, neoliberal alt-right, conservative Christian movement, TERF, Korean feminism