

Auslandsinformationen 3/2006

Chile nach den Präsidentschaftswahlen Steht das Land vor einem Politikwechsel?

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Executive Summary

For the first time in their history, the Chileans elected a woman president. Michelle Bachelet, a socialist, won the run-off election against her opponent Sebastián Piñera, an entrepreneur. Mrs Bachelet's supporters have been pinning high hopes on her election. The daughter of a man who was tortured by the military and a woman who was sent into exile for opposing the Pinochet regime is regarded by many as a symbol of their desire for reconciliation and for coming to terms with the past.

However, as almost half the country voted against her, she will need to integrate, although her coalition holds a majority in both houses of parliament. Speaking on the evening of the election, Mrs Bachelet stated that she wished to be a 'president for all Chileans'. In addition, she promised to continue on the successful path of economic and financial policy. This announcement was a signal intended to boost the confidence of entrepreneurs and investors. The same holds true for her cabinet, the first ever in which every other member is a woman. Many of the ministers appointed, including the minister of finance (a man) and the minister of economics (a woman), belong to the liberal left wing of the ruling centre-left coalition, trusting to market liberalization and the advantages of globalization.

It is not to be expected that the Bachelet government will change to a socialist order concept. On the contrary, Mrs Bachelet is much more likely to continue with the pragmatic policies of her predecessors. The new head of state announced that she would follow a more dialogue-oriented, participative style of government, laying great emphasis on social security. Mrs Bachelet stated that in the four years of her term she would strive for the ambitious goal of establishing in Chile a 'grand system of social protection'. In addition to her popularity, she will have to prove her ability to lead. Ominous rumblings are heard in the government coalition, particularly from the strife-riven Christian Democrats. In view of the difficulties some segments of the party had with supporting a socialist in the presidential elections, it remains to be seen what those Christian Democratic groups will do whose political influence in the new government is almost nil.