

Transitional Justice in Taiwan

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Abstract

Transitional justice in post-authoritarian societies has been hailed as an important step in the consolidation of democratic rule. The political and judicial process/setup adopted to cleanse society of past wrongs has been referred to as "lustration". It includes the screening of public officials who once served in the authoritarian regime, the investigation of state crimes committed during white terror, and the exposure of secret files which covered up corrupt and repressive practices. Lustration in many post-communist and post-authoritarian societies is deemed necessary to consolidate democracy and to create a just government for the future.

In this regard, the absence of lustration in Taiwan offers a noteworthy counter example. With the exception of the 228 Incident investigation, there have been few voices in Taiwan appealing for the investigation of the white terror period. There has been no scrutiny of the past records of long-serving public officials. This presentation attempts to look at the reasons behind the absence of lustration and, more importantly, the implication of such absence for Taiwan's democratic administration.

Tak-Wing Ngo is Lecturer in Chinese Politics at Leiden University. More recent publications include "Asian States: Beyond the Developmental Perspective" (2005) and "Political Conflict and Development in East Asia and Latin America" (2006).

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