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Author(s)	古内, 洋平
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The Relationship Between Transitional Justice and Political Stability: Rethinking the South African Model

FURUUCHI, Yohei

This study aims to verify whether transitional justice strategies contributed to the political stability in post-apartheid South Africa. Most studies have suggested that the political stability in South Africa greatly depended on transitional justice strategies. One such strategy was the establishment of the truth commission as a method of seeking justice by the new government formed after the political transition, and this commission was empowered to selectively grant amnesty to apartheid perpetrators.

Unlike previous studies, this study shows that these strategies for dealing with the past became new sources of intergroup disputes in the post-apartheid era. There were radical factions within both anti- and pro-apartheid groups, which never accepted this approach of transitional justice, tried to obstruct the justice process, and instigated racial animosities. As a result, the intergroup disputes developed into a serious problem in the political transition. This study clarifies these disputes by analyzing the public hearing of the truth commission in South Africa. In addition, it explains how the government tried to reduce the intergroup tensions. It pays particular attention to the differences in the perceptions of Presidents Mandela and Mbeki on the relationship between transitional justice and political stability.