

## The betrayal: the Nuremberg trials and German divergence

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### Abstrak

At the end of world war II the allies faced a threefold challenge: how to punish perpetrators of appalling crimes for which the categories of genocide and crimes against humanity had to be coined; how to explain that these had been committed by Germany, of all nations; and how to reform Germans. The answer to this triple conundrum was the application of historical reasoning to legal procedure. In the Nuremberg trials held between 1945 and 1949, a concerted effort was made to punish key perpetrators while at the same time analysing the Nazi state and recounting German history. Building on a long debate about Germanys divergence from a presumed Western path of development, Allied prosecutors sketched out how Germany had betrayed the Western model. The prosecutors laid out how private enterprise, academic science, the military, and the civil service, which looked ostensibly similar to their opposite numbers in the Allied nations, had been corrupted in Germany even before Hitlers rise to power. While the argument, depending on individual protagonists, subject matters, and contexts, met with uneven success in court, it offered a final twist against the backdrop of the Cold War: although Germany had lost its way, it could still be brought back into the Western fold. The first comprehensive study of the Nuremberg trials, *The Betrayal* explores this process and sheds light on how history underpins transitional trials as we encounter them in todays courtrooms from Arusha to The Hague.