

An African volk: the apartheid regime and its search for survival

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Abstrak

Opposition to apartheid was one of the great moments in postwar history. Its success remains a symbol of a progressive global community. An African volk looks at this phenomenon from the other side. It explores how the apartheid state in South Africa sought to maintain power as the world of white empire gave way to a new postcolonial environment that repudiated racial hierarchy. Drawing upon archival research across Southern Africa and beyond, as well as over fifty hours of interviews with leading figures from the apartheid order, An African volk shows how instead of simply resisting decolonization and African nationalism in the name of white supremacy, the white power structure looked to hijack and invert the norms of the new global era to relegitimize its rule, break out of isolation, and secure international acceptance. Situated at the nexus of African, decolonization, and cold war history, An African Volk tells the story of how the architects of apartheid used statecraft to redefine whiteness and promote a fresh ideological basis for their rule. In doing so, it offers new global and local perspectives on the apartheid state and illuminates the complexities and contradictions of the postcolonial project. Equally, it shows how the regimes outreach to Africa both reflected and fueled heated debates within Afrikaner society over the relationship between race, nation, and state, exposing a deeply divided polity in the midst of massive economic, cultural, and social change.