Wesseling's book contains vivid descriptions of the actions of those agents. They devoured the African interior. In their rush to grab territory, they lied, cheated, stole and brutalized the African people. Armed with the Maxim gun, they left behind a trail of blood wherever they went. This is, perhaps, the most significant contribution of Wesseling's book. Here the author does a fine job discussing the life and times of those adventurers, and the treaties they entered with the African people. Most of them were motivated by greed. Among them were Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza, Joseph Simon Gallieni, Cecil Rhodes, George Goldie, Frederick Lugard, and Herbert Kitchner. Their magnitude of deceit was boundless. Wesseling writes that the Royal Niger Company headed by Goldie, for example, entered into 389 treaties with African chiefs within a period of eight years. In South Africa, Rhodes dreamed of linking British South Africa with British colonies in North Africa. Despite the role played by those individuals, the author concludes his study by stating that colonialism hastened the pace of modernization in Africa and accelerated the process of economic and social development of the continent.

Wesseling's book is detailed in the treatment of the topic, yet adds little to the existing literature on colonialism. Biographies already exist on many of the individuals discussed in the book. His analyses of the role of those people in a single volume is important but does not advance the general understanding and implication of colonialism for the African people. How does this study inform our understanding of contemporary African nations? Some readers will quarrel with the role assigned to Africans in this book. With the exception of the Zulus and a few other cases, the African people are generally voiceless and passive. Recurring statements such as "Stanley returned to the civilized world [Europe]; Livingstone ...remained behind [in Africa]," in a book published in 1996, especially with all the advances made in the study of the various cultures of the world, are inexcusable. More thorough proofreading should have reduced the typographical errors in the book.

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The purpose of this book is to explain the evolution of a national security state in South Africa. Thus, the author has organized chapters chronologically, and each chapter reflects a specific phase of that evolution. The focus of the book is the state-directed security based reform program under P.W. Botha from 1978 to 1990. In this detailed and thoroughly-researched study, the author provides new insights into the dilemmas South Africa faced between security concerns for the maintenance of white control and reform imperatives, and demonstrates why the South African security state under Botha could neither maintain white control nor reform itself.

The introduction begins with a debate between Marxist-Leninist theory and modernization theory to provide theoretical frameworks, respectively, for the revolutionary strategy adopted by some of the nationalist movements and the new states in the Third World and for
the counter-revolutionary strategy adopted by colonialists and pro-West Third World states. Then, the discussion turns to the concept of the national security state, a state that adopts the two components of counter-revolutionary strategy (security and reform) as the guiding principle of national policy. The author states that South Africa under Botha exhibited the characteristics of a national security state (p. 10). In the book, he demonstrates how security and reform strategies of South Africa have changed in reaction to its internal and external environments. This involves some repetition of titles and subtitles because the author examines the same subjects for various temporal domains. Chapter 1 discusses the birth and the implementation of apartheid, and both external and internal reactions to apartheid, especially the black resistance in the mid-1970s that eventually led to the reassessment of the system. Chapter 2 focuses on multi-dimensional threats (the total onslaught) South Africa faced in the 1970s and its adoption of the Total National Strategy, which called for combating revolutionary warfare and the simultaneous pursuit of reform as response to these threats. This leads to Chapter 3 which deals with the reform side of the national strategy from 1978 to 1980. This chapter focuses on the roles committees and commissions of inquiry played, the restructuring of bureaucracies, and the birth of the Twelve Points Plan, known as a blueprint for national reform.

Chapter 4 addresses the Botha administration’s security strategies for dealing with the internal and the external environments, as well as socio-economic reform initiatives and reform, at the various vertical levels of government from 1979 to 1984. Chapter 5 begins with township unrest and the government response to this unrest from 1984 to 1986. The chapter flows well by explaining the factors of the unrest, anti-apartheid organizations that provided political direction to that unrest, phases of unrest, and the government’s response to this unrest. It also addresses South Africa’s continuing destabilization policies and cross-border raids against the neighboring states which offered sanctuaries to the African National Congress (ANC). It concludes with an analysis of the socio-economic and the political reforms during this period. Chapter 6 examines security and reform from 1986 to 1988. Specifically, the chapter initially focuses on the black-against-black violence that led black townships to near anarchy and the imposition of a state of emergency. The changing regional security environment and the impact of international sanctions received some attention. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the progress made, the untackled issues in the area of socio-economic reform, and the deadlock the Botha administration faced in the area of political reform.

The last chapter deals with the transition from the security state to a new South Africa by discussing the Botha administration’s effort to negotiate with the ANC, the internal and the external circumstances conducive to the negotiation between the two, and Botha’s resignation. The author ends the chapter with an assessment of the National Security State in South Africa. Despite his negative assessment, the author argues that the National Security State played a critical role in transforming the country to a new South Africa.

This book is an excellent overview of the committees, commissions, institutions, and legislation created or utilized for security and reform during the Botha years, although it is somewhat dry. It also explains well the reciprocal interactions between security and reform strategies and internal and external environments. This book is based on a wide array of sources including secondary sources, South African government documents, archives, newspapers and magazines, and interviews with such former key decision makers as P.W. Botha