

## BOOK REVIEW

Coker, C., **South Africa's Security Dilemmas**, Washington D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1987. 122 pages.

Coker's monogram on the South African Defense Force (SADF) is a useful assessment of the strengths of this body. This is a topical question, given the current role of the military in enforcing a "Pax Pretoriana" on the Frontline states surrounding South Africa, and the deployment of the army to contain the upheaval in the black urban centers of the country. There have been many books published recently about the ability of the South African state to withstand sanctions, and the appraisal of the role of the contemporary South African military machine (see for example Spence's The Political and Military Framework, and Fitzsimon's & Bloch's Arms for Apartheid). Coker's work draws all these strands together.

Coker argues that unless there is a paring of military spending, as well as a return to the priorities set in the days when the armed forces were expected to maintain order at home, myths that have hidden a true understanding of the country's security dilemmas will continue to be held. Coker criticizes, for example, the widely-held belief that the SADF is invincible, believing that its military strength has been eroding for some years. He does not deny that the SADF has a qualitative and quantitative advantage over its African counterparts, but argues that "these elements are beginning to represent diminishing returns." (p. 6)

Coker believes that part of the problem facing the SADF is that the military is fighting on two fronts: helping the police maintain law and-order inside the country, and fighting a guerilla war, the so-called "total onslaught", on the borders of South Africa. The problem of defense against external attack cannot be sustained, Coker believes, because the SADF has insufficient forces to man a defense perimeter permanently. Thus he questions whether the military has been effective in taking the war to the Frontline states, especially Angola and Mozambique. The result has been "not a 'Pax Pretoriana' but a permanent cycle of instability" (p. 35). South African and United States support for the UNITA faction in Southern Angola, and South African aid to Renamo in Mozambique, with the attendant loss of civilian life in these areas, testify to this.

Unlike the majority of recent literature on South Africa, this monograph largely ignores the aspirations of the black majority. The unsympathetic view of black South Africans can be deduced from the tone, and the entitling of the chapter on revolt in the townships and the role of the African National Congress as "The Enemy Within". And

indeed the theme: how the SADF can be made a more efficient fighting machine.

The work, however, is a useful one. It will be found interesting, especially to those who wish to read an introductory account of the activities of the SADF inside and outside the country, the loss of morale this has had on contingents, the crisis facing the defense industry, the cooperation of Israel and the Apartheid state, and the importance of South Africa to Western security. For those familiar with the South African scene there are few surprises, because this is not the definitive work on the SADF, nor does it claim to be. But Coker's book will succeed in stimulating debate on how the military is to be used as "South Africa awaits the end of white supremacy" (p. 96)

**Melvyn D. November**