

An extract from the French Loi de programmation militaire 2015 also sets a context for the UK's SDSR, currently under way. The update of the military planning law takes into account developments in the strategic context since 2013. However, these developments do not call into question the big strategic defence and national security principles which were announced in the White Book, as well as the balance of the military programme. If the analysis of this reference work has been generally corroborated, the recent crises show a definite deterioration of the international situation and a sustained increase in the risks and threats identified. These require the consolidation of our defence effort.

The January 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris also showed that France, like other European states, is directly exposed to a terrorist threat which has taken on unprecedented size, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. Because this threat does not stop at national borders, these attacks illustrate the growing interconnectedness between the security of the population resident in France and the actions of the country outside its borders.

Faced with militarily armed groups taking control of territory, which constitutes a continuing and serious threat, our forces will, from now on, be widely engaged in challenging military counter-terrorism operations on the ground, in the air and at sea. This militarised terrorist threat constitutes a considerable challenge in the Sahel-Sahara, an area which is as large as our continent, and in Iraq against Daesh. As a result, it requires particular efforts in the areas of intelligence, mobility and the responsiveness of forces.

At the same time, the Ukrainian crisis has re-opened the issue of international security and the integrity of borders on the European continent itself, in a way that has been unprecedented for many years. As part of the reassertion of the collective defence mission of NATO, French forces are participating in insurance measures for the benefit of our eastern allies. The armed forces must therefore maintain their capabilities at a high level, in order to confront the resurgence of "threats of force".

The sudden and simultaneous nature of these developments has meant France's early warning systems have been deployed to a very high level. It has also put its force structure[1] under pressure. The 'operational contracts' ("contrats opérationnels"), which prescribe the capabilities the armed forces may deploy to complete the missions which are assigned to them, have also been reached and even surpassed in several areas.

The priorities, objectives, and balance between the strategic functions are still relevant because they correspond to the future challenges envisaged by the current Loi de programmation militaire (LPM). The triad of "deterrence, intervention, protection" continues to give structure to the actions of the armed forces. These three components must come together to reinforce each other. In addition, the worsening of the strategic situation proves that it would be illusory and dangerous to reduce even the smallest element of our force structure. This is why the defence effort, which has become a priority in the current context, is being increased to take into account the intensity of current commitments and new operational needs. The updating of the LPM also allows adaptations necessitated by the new strategic challenges, in terms of troops and equipment, to be put into place.

[1] The term in the original text is "système de forces". According to the French Ministry of Defence, a "système de forces" brings together homogenous groups of military resources or capabilities, working together to fulfil the same operational objective. The Ministry of Defence states that this approach enables unnecessary duplication to be avoided, the standardisation of systems to be reinforced and the interfaces between programmes to be better specified (Ministère de la Défense, 'Les systèmes de forces', 23 July 2010).