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[ARES #9] “TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION, THE US THIRD OFFSET STRATEGY AND THE FUTURE TRANSATLANTIC DEFENSE”

[ARES #10] “TODAY’S TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS FOR TOMORROW’S DEFENCE”

Technological innovation is at the heart of defence companies’ performance, as well as future equipment superiority. Defence has been hit by the digital revolution. Innovation has come from the civil industry. It has been characterised by a much quicker pace of technology renewal than that of military equipment. Today, the technologies developed in the civil sector are not simply components of the weapon system anymore; they are now at the very heart of these systems. This evolution is likely to transform simultaneously the models of technological innovation in defence, the acquisition procedures of ministries and agencies in charge of providing military materiel to armed forces, and finally the structuring of defence industries.

On account of this, the member States of the European Union and the European Union itself are engaged in these technological evolutions. ARES has already devoted its first publication to the preparatory action on defence research, the first initiative the European Union has introduced concerning the funding of defence. In the perspective of the European Defence Research Programme (EDRP) in 2021, it felt appropriate for us to publish two essays addressing this issue.

The first one, written by Christian Moelling and John Louth, deals with the Defence Innovation Initiative also named Third Offset Strategy advanced by the United-States in 2014. The purpose of this strategy is to give Americans a significant strategic advantage as a result of a substantial financial effort focused on breakthrough technologies. It is worth noting the call for the Silicon Valley, made up of start ups or or major players in the fields of information and communication technologies. The scope of this initiative catches Europeans’ attention. How will they respond to it? What are its implications in terms of interoperability in military operations and for European defence companies? What will be the consequences of the election of the new American president Donald Trump?

The second one, written by Christophe Alexandre Paillard and Nick Butler, focuses more specifically on national defence innovation models in Europe, in particular the ones of France, Germany and the United-Kingdom. Are these models compatible? Does the financial effort for defence and security research produced by these European countries enable them to cooperate between each other? What could be the role of European Union in the field of defence research? According to Christophe Alexandre Paillard and Nick Butler, defence innovation is still mostly dependent on national defence budgets and on the defence industries that European countries have been able to develop. According to the authors, although Germany is attempting to catch up, France and the United-Kingdom are dominating the field. This leads them to believe that the research

pooling in Europe will thus remain for a while contingent upon cooperation between States, and especially between France and the United-Kingdom.

In any case, these two essays do not end the recently introduced debate. The Third Offset Strategy is only at its very beginning and it is still too early for Europeans to be able to draw lessons from it, especially since the initiative still awaits the confirmation of the new President. However, this should encourage us to think about the innovation model for European defence that can be established. Before considering cooperating with the United-Nations on the Third Offset Strategy it is necessary to communicate with them in order to define a European innovation model for defence, to develop our national models in order to make them as efficient and permeable to new technologies developed in the civil world as possible, and to promote cooperation at a European level.

BY JEAN-PIERRE MAULNY / DEPUTY DIRECTOR, IRIS

ARES GROUP

The Armament Industry European Research Group (Ares Group) was created in 2016 by The French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (Iris), who coordinates the Group. The aim of the Ares Group, a high-level network of security and defence specialists across Europe, is to provide a forum to the European armament community, bringing together top defence industrial policy specialists, to encourage fresh strategic thinking in the field, develop innovative policy proposals and conduct studies for public and private actors.

CONTACT [Pilots]:

Jean-Pierre Maulny, Olivier de France, Sylvie Matelly, Sophie Lefeez

ares@iris-france.org

+33 (0)1 53 27 60 60

www.iris-france.org/ares

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