OPINION: GOODBYE FINMECCCANICA, HELLO LEONARDO

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Arrivederci Finmeccanica. Buongiorno Leonardo. Not long after the Italian group announced it was consolidating its businesses around a single corporate identity, it has revealed that new identity – a surprising choice, inspired by the country's greatest genius.

Safran, meanwhile, is to replace Snecma, Messier-Bugatti-Dowty and other venerable brands with a -monicker created 10 years ago from the French words for a spice and a rudder blade.

Foisting a fresh identity on legacy brands is never risk-free. Scrapping clunky EADS for the name of its most successful unit made sense – but it meant lumping tactical radios, satellites and helicopters under a label that described Europe's original A300 "air bus".

Exercises such as these have their benefits. It encourages employees to think as one family rather than competing, autonomous businesses. Externally, it brings the best values of all subsidiaries under one flag.

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But they can be unpopular. Many in Yeovil only refer to the town's helicopter plant as Westland, despite a 16-year old merger with Agusta. It is hard to see Leonardo Helicopters catching on fast down Somerset way.

So for brand resilience look perhaps to one company, still bearing its humble founder's family name, -despite a long history of mergers and acquisitions. -Boeing, the world's largest and most successful aerospace firm, celebrates its centenary this year.

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