

DTIB and the question of arms production and control


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DTIB: arms design, production and control

Arms standardisation within a military alliance has a number of advantages. It enables armaments manufacture to be dispersed throughout the territories of the coalition, which, in the event of conflict, makes supply easier and limits the effects of bombing. It makes industrial and scientific savings easier to achieve through the merging of research agencies. It facilitates interoperability between allies and the maintenance of units in time of war, by making it possible to pool and exchange ammunition, spare parts, etc. Standardisation is clearly, therefore, a means of enhancing the military capacity of the alliance by reducing costs.

DTIB and the question of arms production and control

Arms standardisation, at the time when the Treaty of Brussels was signed in 1948 and NATO was established in 1949, was achieved *de facto* for the short term. The armies of mainland Europe were primarily equipped with American or British materiel obtained during the war or subsequently as part of mutual assistance. That standardisation, however, was not to last. The United States and Britain were not proposing to give their allies materiel indefinitely. As for the allies, they wanted to revive their own arms industries.

Within NATO, the Military Production and Supply Board was established in November 1949. It was responsible for collecting information on the allies' military needs, considering the supply situation, drawing up recommendations for increasing supply and encouraging the standardisation of spare parts and finished products. On 18 December 1950, it was replaced by a Defence Production Board with increased powers, which was charged with *'expanding and accelerating production and with furthering the mutual use of the industrial capacities of the member nations' of the Atlantic organisation.*^[1] Following the reorganisation of NATO's civilian structures in 1952, its Secretary General was given responsibility for drawing up correlated production programmes for the main types of military materiel.

The object was *'both to ensure that the defence production undertaken by European countries within their own budgets is on the most economic lines and to make defence production in Europe more effective'*.^[2] Standardisation was therefore precisely defined by the Standing Group and the Military Committee, and went beyond arms production: *'NATO military standardization is taken to mean the adoption by all, or a group of NATO countries of: a) In the non-materiel field, like or similar operational, logistic and administrative procedures. [...] b) In the materiel field, like or similar military equipment, such as end-items and components, and ammunition, supplies, and stores.'*^[3] The principles were set out by the Military Committee in these terms: standardisation was voluntary; it was not an end in itself; it was considered to be essential where the effective implementation of operational plans depended upon it; it was considered to be desirable where the implementation of operational plans and the NATO economy would be enhanced thereby; it was not desired where it would hinder research, the development of materiel and operational techniques, and the production of war materiel; NATO-wide standardisation and standardisation by groups of countries within NATO were complementary. The exchange of information in the pursuit of standardisation was governed by national security directives.^[4]

The process that was established consisted more of bilateral negotiations between European countries and the United States than of real cooperation in the arms field. The United States placed off-shore contracts to revive western rearmament. In 1958, the Production Board's remit was widened to include research and development, in particular of high-technology armaments, and in 1966, after France had left NATO's integrated command, it became the 'Conference of National Armaments Directors' (CNAD). Whatever it was called, the results were inconclusive, given British and US misgivings.

In the field of arms standardisation, there was a sizeable lag between the British and the Americans, on the one hand, and the countries of the European mainland, on the other, in research, development and production. While mainland Europeans, with France in the lead, were avid for exchanges of information in order to make up for lost time, the Americans and, to a lesser extent, the British saw nothing to be gained from a standardisation which would go against their economic, scientific or military concerns. Given the initial imbalance, standardisation could only mean technology transfer to the mainland's advantage.

On the European level, an Armaments Committee was set up under the Brussels Treaty. It proved to have very little impact, since the European countries lacked resources. It was actually in a European framework, however, albeit a parallel one, that there was an attempt at arms standardisation: the FINBEL group^[5] (France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg).^[6] This group, a French initiative, was specific to the land forces of the countries involved. It was born of the '*need, in respect of arms standardisation, to create a level for natural, intermediate coordination between all the mainland countries of western Europe belonging to NATO and NATO itself, in order to make up for the shortcomings of the Military Agency for Standardisation in London*'.^[7] The FINBEL organisation comprised a series of committees in a ranking structure which was very much reminiscent of the Army General Staff: a decision-making body, the Army Chiefs of Staff Committee, assisted by the Deputy Chiefs of Staff Committee (assistant chiefs of staff); working bodies (the Military Experts Committee, Technicians Committees, and the Secretariat). Having no supranational authority, FINBEL had a collegial system of organisation within which the solutions adopted arose out of the goodwill of the Member States. The organisational structure was flexible and light. NATO was officially informed of the creation of FINBEL and its aims in December 1953. In the course of its work, FINBEL, as far as possible, took account of decisions issued by the Atlantic Alliance's standardisation office and the Standing Group's directives. On the other hand, FINBEL selected the questions it thought it should study. It was not bound by the order of priority set by NATO at the practical level. To emphasise the links between FINBEL and NATO, in principle the same experts and technicians represented their countries on the working parties of the Military Agency for Standardization and the FINBEL Committees. The existence of FINBEL had a considerable influence on NATO's work but the results remained disappointing. There was genuine success on standardisation of spare parts, but not on finished products,^[8] for example.

[1] NATO, Communiqué of the North Atlantic Council of 18–19 December 1950.

[2] NATO, Communiqué of the North Atlantic Council of 23–25 April 1953.

[3] NATO, Standing Group. *Standardisation militaire OTAN*. SGM-756-54, 2 December 1954.

[4] NATO, NATO Military Committee. *Principes de la standardisation militaire OTAN*. MC020-2-définitif FRE, 1954.

[5] BURIGANA, David and DELOGE, Pascal. *Standardisation et production coordonnée des armements en Europe. Une voie vers l'étude d'une défense européenne (1953–2005)*. In: RUCKER, Katrin, WARLOUZET, Laurent (eds), *Quelle(s) Europe(s) ? Which Europe(s)? Nouvelles approches en histoire de l'intégration européenne, New Approaches in European Integration History*. Brussels: Peter Lang, 2006, 388 p.

[6] FINBEL became FINABEL when Germany joined it in 1956.

[7] French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAEF), Service des Pactes, 52, State Secretariat for War, Army General Staff, staff office, briefing paper on the FINBEL organisation, No 5495EMA/CAB/SCI, secret, 24 January 1955.

[8] SHAT, 8Q270/2, Note from the War Economy Section for the Permanent Secretary-General for National Defence on standardisation, No 1772EG, 9 November 1953.