EDITORIAL

During the Cold War, defense contractors and commercial enterprises ran on parallel tracks, often duplicating effort and expense to solve related engineering problems. Indeed, the Semiconductor Industry Association once reported that the Popular Nintendo video game may have an even more sophisticated processor than that of the latest military equipment.

Today, when military security stands in the shadow of more general economic concerns, the cost and complexity of bringing previously defense-related R&D activity to manufacturing applications poses a substantial challenge for industry. It is imperative to implement dual-use technology that will continue to preserve the security of a nation, while in addition, address other pressing needs in communications, the environment, health care, national infrastructure, power generation, and transportation.

The problem in effecting programs that reallocate defense efforts toward peacetime progress is usually not related to the technologies, but to the way governments do business with industry. Regulatory barriers, such as policies regarding a government's right to proprietary and intellectual property, often hinder or impede industry/government collaboration. Government incentives for individuals and industries once engaged solely in defense work would go a long way toward continuing the contribution of many of our most experienced materials and processing experts. The alternative is the loss of an invaluable pool of talent to nontechnical, but less "layoff"-prone, careers. The U.S. Cooperative Research and Development Agreements(CRADAs)—blueprints for industry/national laboratory joint efforts—are one means of achieving defense technology commercialization. Many such agreements are signed, but go unexecuted because of a lack of firm direction from sponsoring government agencies.

The technology is already paid for...bureaucrats should stop playing games with taxpayers' money. We are in a manufacturing environment in which time-to-market is crucial. Unless the CRADA effort and similar programs are made time-effective, as well as cost-effective, the paradox of Nintendo superiority is likely to continue.

Winning the Cold War took hard work and sacrifice. It will take the same dedication and commitment from government, as well as industrial, to bring about a much-needed boost in industrial competition and productivity.

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