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Sustaining the U.S. Defense Industrial Base as a Strategic Asset

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Since World War II, the Department of Defense (DoD) has been able to count on America's defense industrial base (DIB) always being ready to design and produce the world-class weaponry on which the U.S. military has long relied. But the U.S. DIB is considerably smaller today than it was following the Cold War's end. Now the Pentagon confronts a period of shrinking defense budgets at the same time the international security environment is posing new military challenges, such as the emergence of anti-access/area-denial capabilities, the growing threat to space-based systems, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Defense Department has never had a coherent, long-term strategy for sustaining the defense industrial base's core competencies. Absent a strategy that proceeds from deciding first what to keep rather than what to cut, the possibility is growing that a day will come when the country's industrial base will no longer possess all the critical design and manufacturing capabilities that the U.S. military needs.

This study provides a diagnosis of the military competitions most likely to dominate military relationships between the United States and prospective adversaries over the next decade or two, and the corresponding DIB competencies where the U.S. military will need to sustain advantage.