

## Opinion | **The Neglected Agency at the Center of Biden's China Strategy**

If the U.S. is serious about countering China, it should acknowledge the Commerce Department's growing importance — and provide the money, talent and authorities to let the agency do its job.

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On [Monday](#), U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai [called out](#) China's "lack of adherence to global trading norms" and vowed that the United States would respond by developing trade policies that protect U.S. markets against unfair economic practices and benefit American workers. The speech is one of the clearest examples thus far of the Biden administration's intent to compete with China by countering its anti-competitive economic methods, which have flouted free-market rules, distorted

Tai made it clear that economic tools like tariffs and export controls are central to the administration's approach. Yet the government agency most critical to these efforts still lacks the resources and authorities it needs to accomplish its mission.

We're talking about the Department of Commerce. As America's national security becomes intertwined with its economic strength and technological leadership, Commerce has an increasingly central role in protecting U.S. technology advantages, addressing supply chain vulnerabilities and ensuring long-term economic competitiveness.

The Commerce Department's role and responsibilities have grown in size and complexity, while its capabilities and resources have not. This shift reflects the nature of the competition with China (and one of the reasons the analogy to a "new Cold War" is flawed): Economic security and advantages in non-military technology have outsize importance compared to traditional military strength. That's still crucial, of course, but much of the day-to-day contest happens in the arena of commerce.

Just as other departments, like Treasury and Homeland Security, have been revamped and restructured as their relevance to national security grew, the Biden administration needs to reform the Commerce Department's resources, structure and authorities if its China strategy is to succeed.