



**WIG**

The Whitehall & Industry Group  
connecting the sectors



## 'Trade & International Affairs' Series

Lord Mark Sedwill, Former Cabinet Secretary  
and National Security Adviser

13 January, 2021

### Expert Insight

We were delighted to be joined by Lord Mark Sedwill, former Cabinet Secretary and National Security Adviser, for a webinar discussing the current global landscape, and Britain's role on the world stage:



- Joe Biden has picked a very experienced foreign policy team, they are emphasising re-engagement in the multilateral system including arms control negotiations with Iran and Russia, re-committing to the WTO and WHO, and rejoining the Paris Climate Change Treaty.
- The US's involvement in COP26 will be key. Their selection of John Kerry as envoy suggests an ambitious approach to the discussions.
- The new US National Security Adviser, Jake Sullivan, has spoken of standing with allies against Chinese behaviour but has also criticized the EU's new investment agreement and has made clear he expects allies to stand with the US.
- Stabilising the Western relationship with China is key to global security, key to the world economy and key to the future of the planet - the big environmental questions cannot be addressed without China or the US.
- Western countries have swung between conciliating China, and then confronting China and thinking of ways of decoupling our economies, but the arguments for a hardline approach have strengthened.
- China is the 21st Century's "Workshop of the World": it is the engine of global economic growth and Chinese companies are competing very effectively worldwide.
- We must not underestimate the strength of the UK's own position or the Western model: the US, the EU and the "big five" (the UK, Canada, South Korea and Australia) still account for two-thirds of the global economy, we must build a consistent, coherent and a comprehensive allied consensus about the governance of the world system.
- There has been a period of fractious relationships that have made a consensus among western nations more difficult, but with Biden's presidency imminent, and the UK's transition period finalised with the passing of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, there is considerable scope for consensus.
- The UK has both the COP26 and the G7 presidency this year, an opportunity to try and shape the consensus with our Western allies which would be a great beginning to the post-Brexit global Britain.

### Our members' questions

Over 400 attendees from WIG's cross-sector membership tuned in live and posed a number of important questions. Some of the key issues raised included:

- Increasing cybercrime/cyberattacks internationally and the UK's preparedness to fight these.
- Russia: a threat or a disruptor?
- The West's reaction's to China and the economic impacts that would come as a consequence.
- The future of EU member states military alignment.
- The UK's key priorities at COP26 later this year and the potential economic costs associated with COVID-19; will nations roll back their commitments?
- How the UK can best use it's COP26 and G7 roles to influence its global partners to achieve net-zero.
- The UK's current relationship with Commonwealth nations, and how can strengthen relationships with them.
- The key takeaways when working with allies that have "difficult or non-traditional" leaders.
- The UK's approach if Trump had been re-elected to serve a second term.

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