

There is an increasing recognition of the need to reassess the intersection of global co-operation and security, and how Western democracies can best balance those needs and interests.

Global politics is a grey area with individuals, state- and non-state actors blurring the lines between internationally acceptable norms of behaviour and internationally questionable actions. The balance required for peace and prosperity is difficult to find, but proponents of global co-operation and security offer astute evaluations of threats and opportunities.

The need for effective global co-operation was accentuated by the pandemic. As global crisis tightened, the World Health Organisation led the response. Millions of lives were saved through the exchange of information, expertise and resources — but with such co-operation came a security consideration that is now becoming a pressing concern.

Peace, prosperity, and — as the last 18 months demonstrate — humanitarian necessity require a level of co-operation that can at times create national or regional vulnerability. Trust can be misplaced in potentially malicious actors. There are challenges to the maintenance of high moral standards when engaging internationally. The importance of global trade, military, and intelligence channels can sometimes be at odds with international norms, expectations, treaties, and rules. For the leaders of the world's democracies, striking the balance between pragmatic co-operation and astute security considerations can be a challenge.

The UK's trade relationships reflect this, as we engage with states that restrict human rights, freedom of information, and free speech. While important for UK industry, trade reflects a necessity to work with countries that are being governed outside of international norms. This is particularly evident in the western reliance on energy imports.

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This dependency can cause human rights to be ignored, empowering disruptive states. Achieving global prosperity has become increasingly difficult for Western democracies. This has prompted a NATO Advanced Presence in the Baltic states, and deployment of its Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. Communications with the North Atlantic Council have been suspended and NATO's London Declaration of 2019 identified specific threats to Euro-Atlantic security. Additional threats to election integrity, cybersecurity and personal safety have led to Russia being outcast and sanctioned by the Western political community.

With bilateral relations deadlocked, effective co-operation with Russia has become almost impossible, detrimentally impacting trade, research, military and intelligence efforts. Identification of Russia as a threat has increased Putin's sense of exclusion and encourages Russian interference in other regions. In this light, Russia's intervention in Syria can be viewed as status-seeking, as it seeks to establish a sphere of influence in the [Middle East](#) to challenge Western action in the region. There will be no solution to the Syrian civil war without Russia's input, and the West must recognise the driving force of Putin's foreign policy.

How effective are deadlocked bilateral relations and heavy economic sanctions on the long-term strategic interests of the West? While claiming to remain open for dialogue and a constructive relationship, Western leaders tend to alienate Russia with their disciplinary tone. If global co-operation requires a pragmatic approach, then diplomatic relations require better-

chosen language and a focus on mutual interests. Commentators argue that Russia is craving US recognition of its rise in geopolitical status, and the Biden-Putin summit in June serves this end. Joe Biden's approach reflects a broader consensus, expressed in the UN Security Council Meeting, where the EU High Representative called for global co-operation based on agreed rules — "rules-based multilateralism".

Rules-based multilateralism is not new, but the recent emphasis on this approach can pressurise countries that wish to participate in UN discussions, negotiations, and agreements into conforming with international rules. China has identified the EU as a model for multilateralism that should lead on "renouncing double standards and working towards shared goals"; the UK promotes an international rules-based system with the UN at its centre.

But the comments from the Russian representative reflect a persisting issue with the European Union. The Russians accuse the bloc of "arbitrary coercive measures" that go beyond council mandates. Can rules-based multilateralism combat such sentiments? And how can both sides be sure of its capacity to ensure their respective security?

China poses a significant threat to global norms and the maintenance of an international rules-based system. There are rising concerns among Western leaders about President Xi's tenure as the 2021 G7 joint-communiqué reflects this. And yet, the G7 joint-communiqué reflected compromise between cooperating with the Chinese in areas of mutual interest and calling on China to respect human rights. Anxieties around confronting President Xi Jinping demonstrate the importance of diplomatic relations in the quest for peace, prosperity and international security.

This reflects tensions surrounding global co-operation and security that are difficult to balance. The need for continued co-operation with a state that challenges everything the West claims to stand for is indicative of its global eminence, and the value it holds when bargaining with multilateral blocs such as the UN and the EU.