



Adding Another Field to India-UK Cooperation

This editorial is based on [“Delhi To London”](#) which was published in Indian Express on 14/12/2021. It talks about the opportunities for India to collaborate with the UK in the field of Technology.

When India thinks of **technological cooperation with major powers**, it generally refers to the US, [European Union](#) and Japan. Russia also remains a major force in defence technologies.

China has also risen to the top ranks of technological powers, however, its expansionist policies have put it at odds with India.

The **missing link in India’s technological mind space, however, is the United Kingdom** which despite being the first nation to industrialise and having a long tradition of scientific research and technological development, is **not among India’s top preferences for technological cooperation.**

India, UK and Technology

- **UK in Global Innovation and Technology Rankings:** Britain is one of the world’s top technology powers with top-ranking universities and the **golden triangle of science and innovation — London, Oxford and Cambridge.**
 - It was **ranked third**, just after China and ahead of Russia in **the World’s Cyber Power Index put out by Harvard University** in 2020 while India was ranked at number 21.
 - In 2021, the [World Intellectual Property Organisation \(WIPO\)](#) ranked Britain fourth in the [Global Innovation Index](#) whereas India was far behind at the 46th position.
- **UK’s Influence in Other Areas:** The External Affairs Minister of India has often highlighted Britain’s continuing weight in the world as the **fifth-largest economy.**
 - The UK is also a **permanent member of the UN Security Council**, a major financial centre, and a leading hub of higher education and technology.
 - It also **enjoys a global maritime reach** and a measure of **political influence across the world.**
- **UK’s Cyber Strategy, 2022:** London’s report on **“Global Britain in a Competitive Age: An Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development, and Foreign Policy”**, its outer space strategy and an artificial intelligence strategy clearly state its commitment towards unfolding a new technological revolution.
 - It is also expected to announce a **new cyber strategy in 2022.** The main themes that stand out from these initiatives include:
 - Leverage technology to **“level up” the regional and social inequalities** in Britain.
 - Ensure Britain’s privileged position as **a leading science power.**
 - Focus on **technological innovation to drive Britain’s future economic growth.**
 - Build **internal security resilience** against new technological threats.
 - **Modernise the intelligence apparatus** with the help of new technologies.
 - **Integrate technology into the national defence strategy** as new capabilities like [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) become as consequential as battle-tanks, ships and fighter jets.

- Project technological power to **counter malevolent actors in the international system.**
- **Issues in India-UK Relations:**
 - **Technology, a Less-Explored Area for Indo-UK:** While a trade agreement between Delhi and London is said to be imminent, it is in the technological domain that the **prospects are immense but under-explored.**
 - However, in the annual **Carnegie India's Global Technology Summit** to be held in December, 2021, some of those possibilities for partnership are going to be highlighted.
 - **The Pakistan Angle:** Britain's ties with India have never looked as promising as today but the popular narrative on **bilateral relations remains mired in the past.**
 - Delhi's foreign policy community can't shake off the Pakistan prism in viewing London.
 - **London's advocacy of Pakistan** has always been a matter of concern for Delhi.
 - **Colonial Prism:** One reason for limited India-UK ties has been the colonial prism that has distorted mutual perceptions.
 - **Anti-colonial resentment against Britain** is always seething barely below the surface among the Indian political and bureaucratic classes.
 - Britain has found it **difficult to shed its own prejudices about India.**

Way Forward

- **Moving on from Existing Differences:** India has grown out of its colonial blues and now **deals with Britain as an equal** rather than a former ruler. India is also **well set to overtake Britain in aggregate GDP rankings** in a year or two.
 - Instead of focussing on London's South Asian policy, Delhi can now simply ignore its claims for a special role in India's political disputes with Pakistan.
 - At the same time, Delhi shall also **recognise the enormous strategic possibilities with Britain** and **invest political capital to build on those synergies.**
- **UK's Ambitious Policies, an Opportunity for India:** London wants to build a coalition of like-minded countries to **reshape the global governance of technology.**
 - This includes strengthening technological ties with the traditionally close partners in the Anglosphere — US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand as well as other partners like Japan and India.
 - All these **elements in British policy mesh with India's own interests** in the field of economy, polity and security.
 - The UK's technology initiatives are **also aligned with the technological agenda of the Quad.**
 - All these opportunities provide more of a reason for India to collaborate with the UK.
- **London's Changing Views About Delhi and Vice Versa:** With the steady **relative decline of Pakistan**, its economy now about a tenth of that of India's and the **latter's deepening strategic partnership with the USA** are encouraging the UK to rethink its past approach to the Subcontinent.
 - Given India's diplomatic success in getting the US, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to put "India first" in their South Asia policies, it is confident that the UK can be turned around too.
- **Offering Assistance in Various Segments:** India will elevate to a **21st century superpower** and will soon be **'one of the biggest influences on the world'**.
 - It is looking for new partners in the global race which represents a great opportunity for the **UK which has much to offer India in education, research, civil society and the creative sector.**
 - Further, India's skilled labour, technological assistance and the vibrant market open a lot of avenues for Britain as well.
 - In this context, what India needs from Britain is an initiative that allows working of IT professionals and skilled workforce in Britain.

Conclusion

- For Delhi, the essence of the new alliance with Britain is fourfold — **generating domestic prosperity, enhancing national security, climbing up the global technology hierarchy**

and contributing to the construction of a free, open, and democratic global technological order.

- The UK's upcoming cyber strategy for 2022 might also offer opportunities in the technological field for India to collaborate in.

Drishti Mains Question

“While the trade agreement between India and the UK is said to be imminent, it is in the technological domain that the prospects are immense but under-explored”. Comment.

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