STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What are the areas of Cooperation between China and UK?

International Relations

26 Jan 2029

Background

China and the United Kingdom maintain a multifaceted relationship characterized by cooperation in various sectors, despite periodic tensions over issues like human rights, security, and geopolitics. Recent developments, including a meeting between UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Chinese President Xi Jinping on January 29, 2026, have emphasized building a "comprehensive strategic partnership" focused on mutual benefits, dialogue, and addressing global challenges.

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Below is an overview of key areas of cooperation

Economic and Trade Relations

China is the UK's third-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade exceeding £45 billion in UK exports of goods and services annually. Cooperation includes:Trade Agreements and Investments: Efforts to reduce tariffs (e.g., on Scotch whisky), facilitate visa-free travel for British visitors, and conduct joint feasibility studies for a UK-China Trade in Services Agreement. The two countries have a Double Taxation Agreement and an Investment Agreement to promote FDI and integration into global value chains.

Financial and Professional Services:

Deepening ties in finance, insurance, legal services, and banking, with the UK serving as a hub for RMB internationalization and China investing in UK infrastructure.

Science, Technology, and Innovation

Focus on artificial intelligence, biological sciences, life sciences, robotics, automation, and advanced manufacturing. Joint initiatives include academic exchanges and R&D in digital infrastructure. Smooth cooperation in aviation, with historical ties extending to scientific and technological exchanges.

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Energy, Environment, and Climate Change :

Clean Energy and Green Development: Partnerships in new energy development, low-carbon technology, and carbon budgeting, with commitments to combat climate change through joint initiatives like creating the world's first carbon-neutral eco-city. The UK leverages China's scale in rolling out renewables, while sharing expertise in policy frameworks.

Education and Skills:

Extensive exchanges, with large numbers of Chinese students in the UK and bilateral partnerships in higher education, vocational training, and skills development.

Healthcare and Global Health:

Collaboration in healthcare services, biological sciences, and addressing pandemics or global health challenges.

Security, Migration, and Global Governance :

Agreements to combat human trafficking, organized crime, and illegal immigration, including cooperation on preventing small boat crossings in the English Channel.

Multilateral Cooperation:

As permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5), both nations collaborate on global stability, multilateralism, free trade, and issues like poverty elimination and environmental protection through forums like the G20, UN, and WTO. Military exchanges and dialogues on human rights also occur on a basis of mutual respect.

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Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

Active ties in culture, sports, tourism, and academic programs to foster mutual understanding, including forums like the China-UK Forum.

These areas reflect a pragmatic approach to enhance prosperity and stability, with recent resets aiming to offset global uncertainties like U.S. trade policies under President Trump. While cooperation is robust in economic and global issues, it coexists with frank discussions on disagreements.