Advantages in Basic Science Inject New Momentum into Innovation-Driven Development: The United Kingdom' s Path to Becoming a Global Science and Technology Powerhouse (Postprint)

Authors: Liu Yun, Tao Siyu

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Abstract

As the birthplace of the modern scientific and technological revolution and the Industrial Revolution, the United Kingdom possesses a distinguished scientific tradition, has produced outstanding achievements in basic science, and has thereby established the foundation for its status as a world leader in science and technology. In the process of building this status, the UK has accumulated rich experience as well as historical lessons. This article briefly reviews the developmental trajectory of scientific and technological innovation in the UK across important historical stages since the 17th century, systematically analyzes the evolutionary characteristics of the UK' s scientific and technological innovation strategy since the two World Wars, and finally, summarizes the experiences and implications of UK scientific and technological innovation from the perspectives of continuously maintaining advantages in basic science, cultivating a profound scientific spirit and innovation culture, constructing a national innovation system for the new era, and promoting the integration of science and technology with the economy.

Full Text

Basic Science Advantage Instills New Power for Innovative Development—The Path of the United Kingdom to Becoming a World Science and Technology Power

1. School of Public Policy and Management, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100049, China
2. National Science Library, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100190, China

Abstract

As the birthplace of the modern scientific and technological revolution and the Industrial Revolution, the United Kingdom possesses a distinguished scientific tradition and has produced remarkable achievements in basic science, laying the foundation for its status as a world science and technology power. Britain' s journey toward building this status offers both valuable experience and historical lessons. This article reviews the evolution of science and technology innovation in the UK since the 17th century across major historical stages and systematically analyzes the developmental characteristics of Britain' s science and technology innovation strategy since the two world wars. Finally, it summarizes the UK' s experience and insights in science and technology innovation from four perspectives: maintaining advantages in basic science, accumulating a profound scientific spirit and innovation culture, constructing a national innovation system for the new era, and promoting the integration of science and technology with the economy.

Keywords: world science and technology power, United Kingdom, basic science, science and technology innovation strategy
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The United Kingdom stands as one of the modern world' s centers of science and technology and the birthplace of the first Industrial Revolution, boasting a long and distinguished scientific tradition. Since the 16th century, Britain has produced numerous great scientists, including Newton, Darwin, Faraday, Cavendish, Thomson, and Maxwell, whose outstanding contributions to classical mechanics, evolution, electromagnetism, and calculus laid the groundwork for modern scientific and technological development [1]. To this day, the UK' s scientific and technological strength, particularly in basic research, remains at the forefront globally. Through the first Industrial Revolution, Britain was the first to transform from an agricultural nation into an industrial powerhouse. However, beginning in the late 19th century and especially after the two world wars, Britain' s industrial and economic strength gradually declined, and its dominant position in science and technology was overtaken by other nations. Since entering the 21st century, the UK government has continuously strengthened its guidance and support for science and technology innovation, targeting key S&T fields and establishing coordination mechanisms between science and industry to convert basic research advantages into innovation-driven momentum for economic and social development, thereby addressing issues such as the disconnect between S&T and industrial development and weak innovation capacity [2].

The Course of British Science and Technology Innovation

The 17th Century: Establishing the Modern Scientific System

In the 17th century, Britain pioneered the establishment of a modern scientific system, cultivated a tradition of pursuing excellence, and laid a profound scientific foundation. The Renaissance created the ideological emancipation necessary for modern scientific development. The British bourgeois revolution established a constitutional monarchy, and liberal thought combined with a stable environment provided favorable conditions for the advancement of modern science [1]. The expansion of overseas trade and manufacturing prioritized mechanical invention, while navigation stimulated progress in astronomy and physics. Britain was also the first to establish a patent system, protecting and incentivizing inventors. The founding of the Royal Society marked the institutionalization of scientific organizations and promoted scientific exchange and the popularization of scientific values. During this period, many renowned British philosophers and scientists made foundational contributions to modern scientific theory, such as Bacon, the founder of materialist philosophy, experimental science, and modern induction, who profoundly influenced British scientific thought and culture; Newton, who established the classical mechanics theoretical system and dominated physics from the 17th to 18th centuries; and Boyle, who defined chemical elements, introduced experimental methods into chemistry, and established chemistry as an independent science [3].

The 18th to Mid-19th Century: The Industrial Revolution

From the mid-18th to mid-19th century, Britain experienced the Industrial Revolution. The technological revolution represented by the steam engine gave birth to British industrialization, and the integration of science and production propelled Britain into a world-leading industrial power. The Industrial Revolution began in the textile industry with inventions and applications such as the flying shuttle, spinning jenny, and water frame. Watt’ s major improvements to the steam engine solved critical power problems, enabling its widespread application in textiles and subsequent diffusion into mining, machinery, transportation, metallurgy, and other industrial sectors. Machines replaced manual labor, dramatically improving productivity and pushing the Industrial Revolution to its climax [2]. During this period, Britain’ s scientific endeavors took root in manufacturing centers such as Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds. The Lunar Society , in particular, brought together members who valued the application of scientific knowledge and innovation in craft technology, promoting the development and integration of science and industry to some extent [4].

After the Mid-19th Century: Missing Opportunities in New Industrial Revolutions

After the mid-19th century, Britain missed opportunities in the electrical technology revolution, and its scientific and industrial advantages were gradually replaced by the United States and Germany. While Britain continued to produce outstanding scientific achievements in physics, chemistry, and biology during the 19th century—such as Dalton’ s atomic theory (1803), Faraday’ s discovery of electromagnetic induction and invention of the disk generator (1831), Maxwell’ s electromagnetic theory (1873), and Darwin’ s theory of evolution (1859)—

a trend emerged where science and production became increasingly separated. For example, although Britain pioneered groundbreaking scientific achievements in electromagnetism, it failed to seize the initiative when the second technological revolution marked by electrical technology emerged. Key inventions such as electric motors, transformers, and diodes originated in Britain but were ultimately applied on a large industrial scale in Germany and the United States [4]. The economic prosperity brought by the Industrial Revolution paradoxically led to insufficient motivation for scientific and technological innovation during this period, as substantial national capital was invested overseas, social life became aristocratic and genteel, entrepreneurs remained complacent and feared losses from technological updates, S&T development relied on individual initiatives, education lagged behind, and state support for scientific activities was very limited. In the second half of the 19th century, Britain' s problem of separating science from production remained unresolved, with the government lacking systematic and coherent policy guidance and adequate investment in science and education. Meanwhile, the United States and Germany seized the opportunity to vigorously develop electricity, chemistry, and automotive technologies and industries, substantially improving their manufacturing capabilities and surpassing Britain' s total industrial output in the 1880s and the first decade of the 20th century, respectively [5].

The Two World Wars: Changing Government Attitudes Toward S&T Support

The two world wars fundamentally altered the British government' s attitude toward supporting science and technology. During the wars, S&T fields related to military capabilities and national competitiveness developed rapidly under strong government support. World War I exposed long-accumulated weaknesses in Britain' s science, technology, education, and industry, prompting the government to recognize the importance of supporting S&T and the necessity of systematically organized scientific activities for modern industrial nations. Consequently, the British government began actively investing in science and education, with R&D funding growing rapidly during World War II. British science and industry began serving the war effort, and important scientific discoveries and technological inventions significantly influenced the war' s course, including Rutherford' s nuclear model (1911) and artificial nuclear reaction (1919), Fleming' s discovery of penicillin (1928), Robert Watson-Watt' s invention of radar (1935), and Whittle' s invention of the jet engine (1930). Additionally, Britain achieved many outstanding results in traditional strengths such as quantum physics, astronomy, mathematics, and biology.

In 1915, Britain established the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research to manage government laboratories and support the R&D activities of industrial research associations. In 1918, Cabinet Minister Richard Haldane proposed recommendations on how the government should organize scientific activities, arguing that research should maintain independence and freedom without excessive administrative interference or over-centralization. The "Haldane Principle" profoundly influenced British government S&T management. The Medical Research Council (MRC) was founded in 1920 to fund medical and related biological research, and this independent research funding model gradually expanded to agriculture, natural environment, and other fields. Universities, which held a primary position in basic research, saw the establishment of the University Grants Committee in 1919 to manage government funding, with support increasing substantially during World War II. Universities undertook considerable wartime R&D work, and institutions originally dependent on private donations gradually evolved into publicly funded organizations after the war [6,9,10].

The Cold War confrontation prompted defense R&D to dominate, though the late Cold War period saw a shift toward civilian research. After World War II, UK science policy was influenced by Cold War competition, with Britain fully participating in the arms race between the US and USSR and prioritizing defense technologies such as atomic energy, aviation, and missiles. R&D funding was government-led and continued to grow. In the 1960s, as the British Empire's colonial rule collapsed, the economy stagnated and international status declined markedly. With Cold War tensions easing and defense R&D enthusiasm cooling, questions about how science and technology could promote economic development and how to prioritize S&T investments gained prominence. The British government began shifting its S&T focus toward civilian R&D, implementing a series of policy adjustments.

Late 20th Century Onwards: Promoting Integration of S&T and Economy

Since the late 20th century, the British government has vigorously promoted the integration of science and technology with the economy. Long-standing issues such as emphasizing science over application, slow transformation of research results, and weak connections between S&T and the economy have persisted. Beginning in the 1990s, the UK government strengthened guidance for S&T development, reorienting S&T goals toward serving economic development. In the 21st century, developing a knowledge economy has become the common objective of British science, technology, industry, and commerce. Building upon its profound scientific foundation and excellent scientific tradition, the UK has constructed and improved its national innovation system, striving to maintain high-level and efficient research output while focusing on future emerging technologies and industries, actively promoting the transformation and application of scientific achievements, and strengthening coordination and cooperation among science, technology, education, and industry. To this day, Britain maintains its status as a world science and technology power.

Evolutionary Characteristics of UK National Science and Technology Innovation Strategy

UK science and technology policy originated in the two world wars. Under the combined influence of scientific tradition, social thought, national development, and international competition, Britain's national science and technology innovation strategy has continuously optimized, with science and innovation becoming the core driving force for sustainable economic and social development in the UK.

The two world wars prompted large-scale government investment in science, technology, and education. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, despite strong economic power, Britain's technological equipment was outdated, industry was declining, many strategic materials depended on imports, and there was a shortage of scientific and technological talent. The urgent demands of war compelled the government to assume responsibility for investing in and organizing science and education. Through establishing government laboratories, supporting industrial research associations, and increasing university funding, the government prioritized support for military equipment and industrial fields, followed by health and agriculture. During the war, government laboratories expanded continuously, driving the emergence of new industries such as nuclear and aviation. Britain began establishing "Industrial Research Associations" at the end of World War I, with government matching support for enterprise applied research, eventually establishing 20 such associations covering approximately 50% of industrial sectors [6,9].

In the 1980s, Britain's phenomenon of "emphasizing science while neglecting technology" and its problems of limited technology transformation and poor economic returns became prominent. The Thatcher government (1979–1990) implemented a series of reforms to promote the transformation of science and technology into productive forces, forming a market-oriented science and technology policy that favored private enterprises. On one hand, the government pursued privatization of state-owned enterprises, reduced public investment in "near-market" R&D, and encouraged enterprises to increase R&D investment, with businesses gradually becoming dominant in R&D funding [11]. On the other hand, the government actively promoted cooperation between universities and enterprises by establishing "linkage programs," developing university science parks, strengthening industry-university-research connections, adjusting basic research layouts, establishing interdisciplinary research centers in universities, and focusing on strategic S&T fields such as information, biology, and new materials to revitalize the economy. For example, the government formulated high-tech R&D programs like the "Alvey Information Technology R&D Program" and the "Information Engineering Advanced Program," while also cutting defense R&D funding and promoting privatization reforms of public research institutions [12–14].

Entering the late 20th century, the UK government reflected on its science and technology policies and development status since the 1970s: the strong advantage in basic research contrasted sharply with the weakness in applying scientific achievements to industry; the government lacked clear S&T policy positions and effective implementation mechanisms; and there were a series of problems in S&T talent cultivation. Recognizing that it should promote economic development through close integration of the scientific community, industry, and government while maintaining Britain' s scientific excellence, the UK government further reformed its fragmented S&T management system. In 1992, the Office of Science and Technology (OST) was established in the Cabinet, with the Government Chief Scientific Adviser responsible for S&T policy and management affairs. To better coordinate S&T and industrial policies, OST was transferred from the Cabinet to the Department of Trade and Industry in 1995, while maintaining the functions of the Government Chief Scientific Adviser [1,8].

In 1993, the UK released its first national science and technology development strategy, the white paper *Realising Our Potential: A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology*, which identified improving national competitiveness, increasing social wealth, and enhancing quality of life as strategic goals for S&T development. This strategy emphasized that S&T development was key to Britain' s economic revitalization and that the UK must strengthen connections between science, engineering, and industry while maintaining scientific advantages, tapping into S&T potential to serve economic growth. For the first time, this white paper explicitly stated the goal of science and technology creating wealth for the nation, changing the government' s policy of not intervening in "near-market" R&D. This led to the implementation of a series of new policies and initiatives, including technology foresight, publication of science and engineering outlooks, establishment of the Science and Technology Committee, reorganization of research councils, privatization of public research institutions, nationwide science popularization campaigns, technology transfer promotion programs, support for university research infrastructure, improvement of graduate training programs, and strengthening of international S&T cooperation [1]. Among these, technology foresight has continued to this day with far-reaching impact, focusing on long-term S&T and economic development, consolidating wisdom from government, industry, academia, and research institutions, identifying strategic research areas and emerging technologies, and supporting the formulation of national S&T strategies, optimizing field layouts, and research funding directions [1,15,16].

At the turn of the 21st century, the UK released several consecutive white papers with innovation as the central theme, reflecting the nation' s dependence on and demand for science and innovation in the wave of the knowledge economy. The 1998 white paper *Our Competitive Future: Building the Knowledge-Driven Economy* established developing a knowledge economy as the cornerstone of British technology, industrial, and trade policy. The 2000 white paper *Excellence and Opportunity—Science and Innovation for the 21st Century* served as the programmatic document for British science and innovation in the 21st century, emphasizing that science is the driving force for social progress, innovation is the key to the knowledge economy, and their combination forms the core of Britain' s 21st-century S&T policy [8]. Additionally, the 2001 white paper *Opportunity in a Changing World—Enterprise, Skills and Innovation* and the 2002 white paper *Investing in Innovation—A Strategy for Science, Engineering and Technology* both embodied the strategic thinking of promoting economic development through innovation [8,17].

To promote the knowledge economy and strengthen the national innovation system, Britain formulated its first medium- and long-term S&T development plan in 2004—the *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-2014* (hereafter referred to as the "Ten-Year Framework Plan"), which proposed that Britain' s science and innovation development goal was to establish a UK science and innovation system that would make Britain a key knowledge hub in the global economy [15]. In 2006, the UK adjusted the Ten-Year Framework Plan, proposing the development direction of building an innovation ecosystem, incorporating the health field into the national R&D investment framework, and putting forward five key policies: (1) maximizing the economic impact of public investment in science through innovation pathways; (2) improving the operational capacity of research councils; (3) supporting excellent university research; (4) supporting world-class health research; and (5) strengthening STEM education [16]. Implementation of the Ten-Year Framework Plan saw continuous growth in R&D funding before the 2008 financial crisis, which drove private investment in R&D, rapid growth in STEM students and the S&T workforce, and innovation contributing 63% to Britain' s labor productivity growth between 2000 and 2008 [18].

In 2008, the UK released the *Innovation Nation* white paper, proposing to build an innovative nation that drives prosperity across society through innovation, creating the best environment for innovative enterprises and public services, and constructing an innovation system guided by government and participated in by enterprises, institutions, and individuals across society, with attention to "hidden innovation" such as creative design and public services, emphasizing open innovation and innovation internationalization [19,20].

Following the 2008 global financial crisis, the UK identified science and technology innovation as the core driver for economic development. To promote economic recovery, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills released the *Innovation and Research Strategy for Growth* in 2011, proposing a series of important measures to improve the national innovation system and leverage the innovation ecosystem to promote economic development, prioritizing life sciences, nanotechnology, high-value manufacturing, digital technology, and space technology. In 2012, based on technology foresight results, the UK government identified eight important technology areas: big data, satellite and space technology, robotics and autonomous systems, synthetic biology, regenerative medicine, agricultural technology, advanced materials, and energy storage technology [21]. Subsequently, Britain made knowledge-intensive services and advanced manufacturing its pillar industries, issuing 11 key industry strategic plans covering aerospace, life sciences, agricultural technology, automotive, construction, information economy, international education, nuclear energy, wind energy, oil and gas, and professional and business services, establishing long-term strategic partnerships between government and industry to jointly cultivate business opportunities [22].

In 2014, the UK released a new 10-year plan for science and innovation development—*Our Plan for Growth: Science and Innovation*. This plan prioritized the development of future emerging technologies and industries, with the government playing an important role in ensuring Britain' s advantageous position, assisting in establishing long-term effective investment and transformation mechanisms between science and industry, and planning to invest £5.9 billion in scientific infrastructure from 2016–2021. The plan emphasized talent cultivation in STEM, support for excellent research activities, external evaluation of universities and research councils, continuous encouragement of innovation, construction of technology innovation centers (with 10 various technology innovation centers established by 2018), and provision of financial, tax, and intellectual property assistance to enterprises. It also stressed active participation in global science and technology innovation activities and developing global S&T partnerships through mechanisms such as the Newton Fund [23]. Subsequently, the UK formulated strategies or roadmaps for emerging technologies and industries, such as the *Emerging Technologies and Industries Strategy 2014–2018* (2014), *UK Quantum Technology Roadmap* (2015), *UK Animal Replacement Technology Roadmap* (2015), and *UK Synthetic Biology Strategic Plan* (2016), with government guidance on R&D investment and commercialization investment in future emerging technologies to form new industries and quickly capture global markets.

In recent years, following the initiation of the "Brexit" process, Britain' s science and technology innovation has faced many new challenges, prompting the government to implement reform measures to address changes. In 2015, an evaluation of the research councils was conducted under the leadership of Royal Society President Paul Nurse, and the UK government reformed the research and innovation funding system accordingly. In April 2017, the *Higher Education and Research Bill* was enacted, establishing Research England to assume the functions of the former Higher Education Funding Council for England in funding university research activities and knowledge transfer, and creating a national research funding agency—UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)—composed of seven research councils, Innovate UK, and Research England, consolidating over £6 billion in research budgets into a clear and unified strategic framework. This agency officially began operations in April 2018 [23]. To revitalize the British economy after Brexit, the UK government released the green paper *Building Our Industrial Strategy* in January 2017, making investment in research and innovation one of 10 core policies. Addressing problems such as low R&D investment intensity, insufficient transformation of scientific achievements, and low proportion of investment in experimental development, the paper proposed increasing government R&D investment by £4.7 billion by 2020, establishing the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to incentivize university-enterprise cooperation and technology transfer, and evaluating the tax environment for enterprise R&D. After extensive public consultation, the UK government formally launched the white paper *Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain Fit for the Future* in November 2017, focusing on global change trends brought by the new technological revolution and identifying four major future challenges (artificial intelligence, clean growth, future mobility, and aging society) and five foundations for economic transformation (creative capacity, human resources, infrastructure, business environment, and regional development). Regarding the emergence and transformation of creativity, the white paper proposed corresponding policies on government and enterprise R&D investment, commercial transformation capacity of creative ideas, construction of regional science and technology innovation ecosystems, and global science and innovation cooperation. Core measures included increasing the R&D expenditure as a proportion of GDP from 1.7% to 2.4% over the next decade and raising government R&D investment from £9.5 billion (2016) to £12.5 billion (2021) over the next five years; increasing the enterprise R&D tax credit rate to 12%; and investing an additional £725 million in the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (following the first round' s £1 billion investment in key technology areas such as robotics, new energy batteries, pharmaceuticals, and satellites) [24]. These strategic measures will help Britain revitalize its innovation economy.

Experience and Enlightenment

A Strong Scientific Foundation as the Source Power for New Economic Development

Britain' s rise as a world science and technology power and industrial power is inseparable from its profound scientific accumulation. The emergence of experimental philosophy and developments in mathematics, mechanics, chemistry, and other disciplines established a solid knowledge and cultural foundation for the Industrial Revolution. The founding of the Royal Society marked the institutionalization of scientific organizations, emphasizing scientific experimentation and communication, which greatly promoted scientific development and public understanding of science, making science a culture and belief. The establishment of the Lunar Society promoted the integration of science, technology, and manufacturing. These scientific foundations, combined with specific political and economic conditions and industrial production needs at the time, formed a powerful driving force for the Industrial Revolution. Overall, the UK government' s support for basic research is reflected in science and technology policies across different periods. British universities emphasize elite education and basic research, possess high-level research teams and laboratories, and receive support from a dual funding system. These conditions enable Britain to produce fundamental and theoretical scientific breakthroughs more readily, maintaining high-efficiency output and world leadership in basic research. Britain' s outstanding research achievements in biology, space science, new materials, and other fields strongly support the development of high-tech and high value-added industries such as life sciences and aerospace, making the scientific foundation the driving force for Britain' s technological innovation and knowledge-based economic development.

Scientific Spirit and Innovation Culture as Fertile Ground for Sustained S&T Innovation

The importance of the scientific revolution in the Industrial Revolution and Britain' s subsequent rise is reflected not only in breakthroughs in scientific theories such as mechanics and mathematics but also in the "spirit of discovery" advocated and cultivated by the scientific revolution. The scientific revolution made the British populace nearly fanatical in their pursuit of science, while the establishment of scientific societies such as the Royal Society and the Lunar Society further boosted this enthusiasm and created a favorable social and cultural atmosphere. Historians have confirmed that the scientific knowledge necessary for the first Industrial Revolution existed 100 years earlier during the scientific revolution, merely awaiting mature social conditions to utilize this knowledge or waiting for self-taught genius inventors such as Newcomen and Watt to combine existing knowledge with craft technologies into decisively influential new technologies.

Moreover, innovation culture requires institutional guarantees. Britain enacted the *Statute of Monopolies* in 1624, becoming the world' s first country to implement a patent system. In 1852, Britain introduced the *Patents Law Amendment Act* and established the National Patent Office, which gradually incorporated management functions for copyright, design, trademarks, and other intellectual property, and was renamed the UK Intellectual Property Office in 2007 to better serve various IP fields and promote the development of Britain' s emerging economic industries, particularly creative industries. Over more than 400 years, Britain has gradually formed a sound legal, law enforcement, and judicial system for intellectual property, established a convenient and efficient comprehensive management agency, deeply embedded IP protection awareness among the public, and continuously adjusted the IP system according to industrial development and changes in the business environment, expanding protection scope and continuously stimulating social creativity and innovation to transform achievements into productive forces and social benefits.

A High-Quality, Efficient National Innovation System as a Strong Support for New Economic Development

Britain possesses a long scientific tradition and profound scientific foundation, with a balanced and complete disciplinary system and outstanding advantages. British research in biology, medicine, environment, physics, mathematics, space science, business management, social sciences, and other fields ranks among the world' s leading positions. World-class universities such as the University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, University College London, and Imperial

College London attract large numbers of outstanding global talents. The number of British Nobel laureates ranks second in the world, after only the United States. Moreover, Britain maintains high research output efficiency. According to 2013 research performance evaluation results, Britain, with 0.9% of the world' s population, 3.2% of global R&D expenditure, and 4.1% of the world' s researchers, produced 6.4% of world journal articles (ranking third globally), 11.6% of citations (ranking third), and 15.9% of highly cited papers (ranking second) [25].

Britain's national innovation system features efficient management and coordination mechanisms. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, as the government department responsible for S&T, formulates S&T policies and budgets, plays an important role in coordinating S&T resources, and coordinates budgets among various government departments and non-governmental bodies including research councils, higher education funding agencies, Innovate UK, and the Royal Society, submitting them to Parliament for approval. The Government Office for Science and the Government Chief Scientific Adviser coordinate the allocation of research funding. Britain' s dual funding system emphasizes stability, coordination, and competition, with non-governmental departments independently responsible for management while maintaining "arm' s length" from government—emphasizing the role of research evaluation in optimizing R&D funding allocation, with the Research Excellence Framework and peer review by research councils serving as important measures for funding allocation, thereby ensuring fairness and efficiency in research funding.

Insufficient Technology Transfer as a Constraint on Economic Development

Britain has always contributed significantly to world science and technology development, but the transformation and application of scientific achievements have progressed slowly compared to other developed countries, with limited impact on improving productivity and expanding markets.

During the first Industrial Revolution, Britain's technology R&D was always oriented toward practical industrial applications, with inventors maintaining close connections with entrepreneurs. The efficient integration of science and production drove the rise of the Industrial Revolution. However, during the second Industrial Revolution, Germany and the United States seized the opportunity of the electrical technology revolution, rapidly applying scientific achievements to large-scale industrial production. In contrast, British research featured strong individualistic characteristics and a tendency to emphasize pure theoretical science, with relatively backward technology development and industrialization in industry. Consequently, many important scientific and technological achievements were transformed into practical technologies and advantageous industries in Germany and the United States.

After World War II, similar lessons were repeatedly learned through the application and dissemination of new technologies, products, and processes. The coordination problem between science and technology development has continuously affected Britain' s progress and the leading and supporting role of its strong scientific foundation in national economic and social development. Although the British government has been committed to adjusting S&T policies since World War II, the path to revitalizing the economy through science and technology has been difficult due to the long-term occupation of substantial resources by defense R&D, insufficient technical education and training, and cultural factors such as the 轻视 (undervaluation) of engineering and technical professions. Only a few high-tech industries such as pharmaceuticals and aviation have maintained clear technological advantages. In recent years, Britain has actively improved its national innovation system, laid out emerging technology fields, promoted university-industry integration, and established a network of technology innovation centers to continuously catalyze innovation, striving to overcome its weaknesses in technology R&D and application by focusing on emerging technologies such as big data, satellite and space technology, robotics and autonomous systems, synthetic biology, regenerative medicine, advanced materials, and energy storage, as well as knowledge-intensive services such as financial and business services, making them important drivers for Britain' s future economic and social development.

The Lunar Society was formed in 1756 by more than a dozen scientists, engineers, instrument manufacturers, and gun manufacturers living in central England. Members met regularly in Birmingham, England from 1765–1813. Initially named the Lunar Circle, it was formally renamed the Lunar Society in 1775.

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LIU Yun
Deputy Dean, Professor, and Doctoral Tutor at the School of Public Policy and Management, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences. His research interests focus on R&D evaluation, science and technology policy, innovation management, and knowledge management. He serves as Executive Director of the Chinese Association for Science of Science and S&T Policy Research, Executive Director of the China Society of Soft Science, Director of the China Technology Economics Association, Academic Committee Member of the Technological Innovation Research Center of Tsinghua University, and Visiting Researcher at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He has presided over more than 60 national research projects, including 973 Programs, key projects of the National Natural Science Foundation of China, and projects of the National International Cooperation of S&T Programme. He has published over 200 academic papers and 9 monographs, and received multiple provincial and ministerial-level science and technology awards. As an expert group member, he participated in the research, drafting, and evaluation of many national S&T plans, including the *Outline of the National Medium- and Long-term Science and Technology Development Plan (2006–2020)*.
E-mail: liuyun@ucas.ac.cn