

Daily Editorial Analysis 21 June 2025

June 21, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

Lighting the Spark in U.K.-India Cultural Relations

Context

- In May 2025, a **new and promising dimension was added to the strategic partnership between India and the United Kingdom**, one that extends beyond trade and diplomacy, delving into the rich and transformative world of culture.
- While the ratification of the much-anticipated Free Trade Agreement captured economic headlines, **the signing of the Programme of Cultural Cooperation (POCC) signalled a cultural renaissance.**
- Amid these developments, **it is imperative to explore the deeper implications of the POCC, analysing its role in developing cross-border creativity**, empowering cultural industries, and enhancing bilateral ties between two nations connected by shared history and aspirations.

The Programme of Cultural Cooperation and its Key Features

- **The Programme of Cultural Cooperation: A Landmark Agreement**
 - **On May 2, 2025**, the U.K. Secretary of State for Culture, Rt Hon Lisa Nandy, and India's Minister for Culture, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, signed the POCC, **a landmark cultural agreement aimed at strengthening creative collaboration.**
 - **Structured around five key programme areas**, digital technologies for culture, exhibitions and collections, performances and events, cultural property, and sustainability, the POCC aligns with both nations' strategic objectives.
 - For the U.K., **it complements its creative economy strategy**; for India, **it provides a framework to amplify its cultural soft power.**
 - This **agreement also reflects a growing recognition of culture** as a driver of economic development and international goodwill.
 - By committing to the POCC, **both governments have sent a strong message: cultural diplomacy is not peripheral but central to 21st-century international relations.**
- **The Creative Economy: A Global Engine of Growth**
 - The **POCC arrives at a time when the global creative economy is on the rise**, projected to constitute 10% of global GDP by 2030.
 - This **sector includes film, music, digital content, heritage tourism, design, and more, industries** that not only generate economic value but also foster innovation, inclusion, and identity.

- **At the 2023 G-20 New Delhi Leaders' Summit**, global leaders, including those from **the U.K. and India**, **acknowledged the sector's potential and emphasised the need for greater investment.**
- **India's hosting of the inaugural World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) in Mumbai was a tangible step in this direction**, and Ms. Nandy's presence there underlined the U.K.'s interest in co-shaping this global narrative.

India's Creative Strength and UK-India Synergies

• India's Creative Strengths: Cultural Wealth Meets Youthful Innovation

- India's creative advantage is rooted in a **unique convergence of tradition and technology.**
- With a cultural economy valued at \$35 billion and employing nearly 8% of its workforce, **India is second only to agriculture in terms of employment generation in this sector.**
- **What makes this growth even more significant is its decentralisation:** six of India's top 10 creative hubs lie in non-metro areas, showcasing the country's cultural diversity and grassroots talent.
- Moreover, **with over 300 universities and 3,000 colleges offering degrees in design, arts, and architecture, India is actively building a global-ready creative workforce.**
- When paired with its **demographic dividend**, the world's largest youth population, India is poised to emerge as a **creative superpower.**

• U.K.-India Synergies: Institutions, Technology, and Storytelling

- The **POCC enables deep institutional engagement**, involving not only ministries and councils but also renowned British cultural institutions such as the British Library, British Museum, and the Science Museum Group.
- With over 1,700 accredited museums in the U.K., **the opportunities for partnership in digitisation, exhibitions, and collaborative events are vast.**
- Additionally, **the U.K.'s role in India's G-20 presidency highlighted its support for cultural priorities** through events like Wales in India, which culminated at the 2024 Hornbill Festival in Nagaland.
- **These projects are not merely symbolic** but are shaping a new cultural infrastructure that links artists, educators, and audiences.
- **One compelling example of this synergy is Royal Enfield's Himalayan project**, which, in partnership with UNESCO, supports artisan communities and conserves intangible heritage.
- This **model demonstrates how private enterprise can be a powerful cultural actor**, merging business, sustainability, and storytelling.

Emerging Challenges and the Road Ahead

- Despite the sector's momentum, **the creative economy faces significant challenges.**
- **A shortage of skilled labour**, insufficient training infrastructure, and the rapid evolution of technology, including Artificial Intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, demand urgent attention.
- Reports such as the British Council's Arts and Technologies in India: Reimagining the Future advocate for **integrating emerging technologies into creative education.**

- **International cooperation**, such as through the POCC, **can play a pivotal role in equipping professionals with global competencies** and adaptive skills.
- To realise Prime Minister Modi's vision of India as a global creative hub, **a tri-sectoral approach is essential**.
- **Governments must invest in education and policy frameworks**, industries must create sustainable business models, and academic institutions must provide interdisciplinary and future-oriented training.

Conclusion

- **The POCC marks more than just a bilateral agreement**; it is a cultural compact that reflects the evolving nature of diplomacy in the 21st century, one that values stories, art, and shared heritage as much as strategy and economics.
- In a world fractured by conflict and uncertainty, **cultural collaboration offers a powerful tool for connection and healing**.
- **As India and the U.K. move forward in this new chapter of their relationship**, the creative spark that unites their people, from artisans in the Himalayas to curators in London, **will not only preserve the past but also shape a shared future of innovation, inclusion, and imagination**.

Lighting the Spark in U.K.-India Cultural Relations FAQs

Q1. When was the POCC signed?

Ans. The Programme of Cultural Cooperation (POCC) was signed on May 2, 2025.

Q2. Who signed the POCC on behalf of the UK?

Ans. The POCC was signed by Rt Hon Lisa Nandy, the U.K. Secretary of State for Culture.

Q3. What are the key focus areas of the POCC?

Ans. The POCC focuses on digital technologies for culture, exhibitions and collections, performances and events, cultural property, and sustainability.

Q4. What is the value of India's creative economy?

Ans. India's creative economy is valued at \$35 billion.

Q5. Why is cultural cooperation important?

Ans. Cultural cooperation is important because it promotes innovation, strengthens international relationships, and supports inclusive economic growth.

Source : **The Hindu**

It Is Still Not Too Late for India's Voice to Be Heard

Context

- On June 13, 2025, **a unilateral Israeli strike on Iranian territory once again underscored the perils of militarism** devoid of accountability or international consensus.
- This **development has not only imperilled regional stability in West Asia** but also threatens to unravel ongoing diplomatic overtures between Iran and the United States.
- As global powers stand at a crossroads between confrontation and conciliation, **it becomes vital to examine the motivations behind such aggression, the hypocrisies that often accompany it**, and the broader implications for international peace and India's role on the global stage.

A Dangerous Escalation: The Israeli Strike on Iran

- The **recent Israeli military action on Iranian soil has drawn widespread condemnation**, which characterised the strike as unlawful, escalatory, and heedless of civilian lives.
- **Coming at a moment when Iran and the U.S. were making tentative progress** in reviving diplomatic ties, with five rounds of negotiations already completed in 2025 and a sixth anticipated, **the attack appears especially ill-timed and disruptive**.
- **What further compounds the recklessness of this strike** is the fact that the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, **Tulsi Gabbard, publicly confirmed in March 2025 that Iran was not actively pursuing nuclear weapons**.
- Her testimony reaffirmed that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had **not authorized any such activity since 2003**.
- **Thus, Israel's military aggression appears to be not only premature but also based on disputed premises**, threatening to derail promising diplomatic avenues.

The Politics of Escalation and US Complicity

- **The Netanyahu Government and the Politics of Escalation**
 - To understand the Israeli posture, **it is essential to examine the ideological and political trajectory of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government**.
 - Characterised by alliances with ultra-nationalist factions, aggressive settlement expansion, and a clear departure from the two-state solution, **Netanyahu's leadership has consistently undermined peace in the region**.
 - Historically, **Netanyahu's role in fanning right-wing extremism is well-documented**, with indirect links to the environment of hostility.
 - **It led to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination in 1995**, a turning point that derailed hopes for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
 - The **current attack on Iran is consistent with this broader pattern of choosing escalation over engagement**.
- **The Complicity of US Leadership**

- The **complicity of U.S. leadership**, particularly President Donald Trump, **has further exacerbated the situation.**
- **Despite past criticism of America's military interventions** and the influence of the military-industrial complex, **President Trump's June 17 statement falsely alleging Iran's nuclear ambitions contradicts his own intelligence apparatus.**
- This **abandonment of factual analysis in favour of alarmist rhetoric mirrors the misinformation that led to the disastrous invasion of Iraq** and undermines the credibility of diplomatic engagement.

Nuclear Hypocrisy and Regional Double Standards

- Israel's preoccupation with Iran's nuclear potential rests on a core strategic anxiety, **but it is also fraught with double standards.**
- **As a clandestine nuclear power, Israel has never subjected itself to international non-proliferation treaties**, even as it preaches the dangers of nuclearization to others.
- In contrast, **Iran remains a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)** and had committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015, agreeing to verifiable restrictions on its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.
- **The U.S. withdrawal from the JCPOA in 2018 undid years of patient diplomacy** and destabilised not only the region but also vital economic interests for other nations, including India.
- The **reimposition of sanctions has hindered major Indian projects such as the International North-South Transport Corridor** and the development of Chabahar Port, critical ventures for regional connectivity and energy security.

The Gaza Catastrophe, India's Silence, Responsibility and Strategic Interests

- **The Gaza Catastrophe and India's Silence**
 - **India's current diplomatic silence is particularly glaring** in the context of Israel's ongoing campaign in Gaza.
 - The **humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire**, with famine looming and civilian suffering escalating by the day.
 - **New Delhi's reluctance to voice concern or advocate for the two-state solution** marks a troubling **departure from India's principled stand in global affairs.**
 - This shift reflects not only a **strategic miscalculation** but also a **moral abdication.**
- **India's Diplomatic Responsibility and Strategic Interests**
 - **Iran is not a distant actor** in Indian foreign policy, **it is a nation with which India shares deep historical, civilisational, and strategic ties.**
 - From backing India on the Kashmir issue in 1994 **to developing bilateral trade and energy partnerships, Iran has often stood as a reliable ally.**
 - In contrast, **the Imperial State of Iran had previously aligned more closely with Pakistan**, making the Islamic Republic's support even more significant.

- At the same time, **India has cultivated strong relations with Israel, especially in the fields of defence and technology.**
- **This unique positioning gives India both the moral responsibility** and the diplomatic leverage to act as a credible mediator in the region.
- With lakhs of Indian citizens working in West Asia, **regional peace is not merely a matter of foreign policy, it is a national interest.**

The Way Forward: A Call for Moral and Diplomatic Leadership

- The **unfolding crisis in West Asia is a critical test of the international community's commitment** to peace, justice, and the rule of law.
- It is **also a moment of reckoning for India's foreign policy**; as a nation historically aligned with non-alignment, peace-building, and global justice, **India must reclaim its moral voice and actively work toward de-escalation in the region.**
- **India must leverage its unique relationships with both Iran and Israel** to promote dialogue, condemn disproportionate violence, and support a return to multilateral diplomacy.
- **The stakes are too high, for the region, for global stability,** and for India's own credibility on the world stage. It is not too late to choose the path of principle, and India must lead the way.

Conclusion

- **Unilateral military actions, like Israel's strike on Iran, destabilise diplomatic progress and undermine regional peace efforts,** especially when based on disputed or false premises.
- New Delhi's current silence erodes its moral credibility; **a principled stand promoting de-escalation, humanitarian protection, and the two-state solution is both urgent and necessary.**
- **India, with its historical ties to both Iran and Israel, holds a unique position to mediate and must reclaim its traditional role** as a voice for peace, balance, and justice in global affairs.

It Is Still Not Too Late for India's Voice to Be Heard FAQs

Q1. What triggered fresh tensions in West Asia in June 2025?

Ans. The fresh tensions were triggered by a unilateral Israeli military strike on Iranian territory on June 13, 2025.

Q2. What was Iran's nuclear status according to U.S. intelligence in 2025?

Ans. According to U.S. intelligence, Iran was not pursuing nuclear weapons, and its Supreme Leader had not authorized their development since 2003.

Q3. How has Israel's response in Gaza been described?

Ans. Israel's response in Gaza has been described as brutal, disproportionate, and catastrophic, resulting in severe civilian suffering and massive destruction.

Q4. What diplomatic position has India traditionally supported in the Israel-Palestine conflict?

Ans. India has traditionally supported a peaceful two-state solution, ensuring mutual security and dignity for both Israel and Palestine.

Q5. Why is India uniquely positioned in this conflict?

Ans. India is uniquely positioned because it maintains strategic relations with both Iran and Israel, giving it the diplomatic leverage to act as a mediator for peace and de-escalation.

Source: **The Hindu**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-21-june-2025/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.