# UK tech renaissance hinges on policy reforms amid global power shifts, says SER Group CEO



John Bates, CEO of SER Group, provides an analysis of the UK’s position in the global technology landscape, highlighting the potential for a resurgence in native tech innovation amid shifting geopolitical dynamics. Writing in Computer Weekly, Bates examines the historical context, current challenges, and emerging opportunities that frame the UK’s tech industry today.

Bates begins by tracing the decline of the UK’s early wave of tech success, characterised by the sale of homegrown firms in hardware, networking, and software. He refers to notable examples such as the 2014 sale of DeepMind, founded by Demis Hassabis, a Nobel Prize-winning researcher. This trend has been partly attributed to UK investors' preference for sectors like property and finance over technology, contrasting with US investment patterns.

Despite this, university-driven innovation has offered some hope. Bates points to Cambridge University as an illustrative hub where figures like Andy Hopper, Hermann Hauser, and Mike Lynch spearheaded a generation of tech firms, illustrating the potential for a thriving UK ecosystem. However, he notes a shift in university policies where institutions now claim a significant equity stake—often a third—in spin-off companies. These restrictions, combined with limited government support, have made it difficult for emerging UK tech entrepreneurs to scale. In comparison, the US government’s recent $100 million investment towards university research commercialisation underscores a more supportive environment.

Bates acknowledges recent shifts in the UK government's approach. He references efforts to cut regulatory red tape, accelerate data centre construction, and increase digital roles within the civil service as signs of a pragmatic tech investment strategy. The national AI Action Plan, which aims to attract £14 billion of private investment and create over 13,000 new jobs, is highlighted as a significant step forward.

However, Bates emphasises ongoing structural challenges. The City of London’s focus on short-term gains and restrictive university spin-off rules remain obstacles. He also suggests that revitalisation efforts should extend beyond southern tech hubs to include northern industrial areas.

A major theme in Bates’ analysis is the impact of global geopolitical shifts on the UK tech industry. He identifies three driving forces reshaping the landscape: the US, China, and Russia. The Trump administration’s disruption of post-war norms has prompted Europe, including the UK, to rethink its reliance on American technologies and secure its own data infrastructure. China’s emergence as a tech powerhouse, particularly in AI and quantum computing, represents a significant competitive benchmark. Meanwhile, geopolitical tensions involving Russia, along with a rearming Europe, increase the imperative for advanced defence technologies.

Bates argues that these dynamics create a unique opportunity for the UK to revitalise its technology sector, particularly through AI-driven innovation and defence-related research and development. He calls for political leadership, specifically addressing Keir Starmer, to revise policies and encourage a new generation of tech entrepreneurs analogous to pioneering figures like Mike Lynch and Andy Hopper.

The Computer Weekly article concludes with Bates warning of the risk that without such efforts, the UK’s technological heritage might diminish into a historical artefact rather than a vibrant future. His commentary underscores the intersection of technology, education, and geopolitics as crucial factors shaping the UK’s path in the evolving global tech arena.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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