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## The shock-effects of South Asian tumult

(The Hindu, 14-08-24)

### What recent events have challenged India's foreign policy in South Asia?

- Coup in Myanmar and Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in 2021
- Ouster of Prime Minister Imran Khan in Pakistan in 2022
- Riots pushing Gotabaya Rajapaksa out of Sri Lanka in 2022
- Electoral changes in the Maldives and Nepal bringing less India-friendly governments in 2023
- Dramatic departure of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh in 2024

### What are the key lessons for India from these events?

- Avoid being caught off guard by regional developments
- Maintain engagement with all stakeholders, including opposition parties
- Prioritize pragmatism over ideological alignments
- Avoid reducing ties to communal binaries
- Remain committed to securing minorities within India's borders

### What challenges does India face in maintaining its influence in South Asia?

- Countering China's growing influence in the region
- Navigating US-China rivalries in the subcontinent without compromising India's interests
- Addressing the erosion of pan-South Asian mechanisms
- Balancing economic progress with democratic values
- Addressing joblessness and unequal growth in the region

### How can India improve its diplomatic approach in the region?

- Broaden neighborhood engagements beyond ruling parties
- Favor plurality of political views within and outside borders
- Balance support for friends with pragmatic engagement with new governments
- Express concerns for minorities more discreetly
- Revive pan-South Asian mechanisms like SAARC

*Can you answer the following question?*

*India's foreign policy in South Asia has faced significant challenges in recent years. Analyze the key lessons India should draw from these experiences and suggest strategies to strengthen its position as a pre-eminent power in the subcontinent. (250 words)*

## Hints of the corporatisation of science research in India

(The Hindu, 13-08-24)

### How does India's research funding compare to other countries, and what are the concerns?

- India spends 0.6% to 0.7% of GDP on public science research funding
- This is low compared to countries like South Korea, which spends 2% to 3% of GDP
- Concerns about maintaining financial and administrative autonomy of research institutes
- Worries about potential political interference and ideological constraints on academic freedom

### What is the Indian government's new approach to science and research funding?

- Emphasis on "innovate, patent, produce, prosper"
- Encouraging research institutes to earn revenue from external sources
- Promoting marketization of patents to self-finance research
- Encouraging development of research centers as Section 8 companies for private investment

### What is the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) and how does it reflect this approach?

- Established under the ANRF Act of 2023 to fund research and improve industry-academia linkages
- Focus on prototype development and marketability of research
- 72% of its ₹50,000 crore funding over five years expected from the private sector
- Signals a reduction in government's role in funding research

### What are the potential implications of this market-oriented approach to science funding?

- May prioritize research with immediate market applications over curiosity-driven basic science
- Could lead to a decline in public funding for non-profit and basic scientific research
- Risks undermining public trust in science if dominated by private interests
- Increased pressure on researchers to produce marketable results
- Potential conflicts of interest between scientific integrity and commercial interests
- Smaller institutions or those in less industrialized regions might struggle to attract private funding
- Increased privatization of knowledge through patents and proprietary research. Challenges in addressing global issues that require open sharing of scientific knowledge
- Researchers focused on basic science might seek opportunities abroad where such research is better funded (Brain drain).
- Critical areas of research important for national security or long-term strategic interests might be underfunded if they lack immediate commercial appeal

### What is the way forward?

- Balanced funding approach:
  - Maintain a strong base of public funding for basic and curiosity-driven research
  - Gradually increase public funding for science to at least 1% of GDP, closer to international standards
- Preserve autonomy of research institutions:
  - Protect academic freedom and the right to pursue diverse research interests
  - Implement safeguards against political interference in research agendas
- Develop a robust national science policy:

- Create a comprehensive policy that outlines a vision for both basic and applied research
- Ensure representation from diverse scientific disciplines in policy-making bodies
- Invest in research infrastructure:
  - Develop state-of-the-art facilities that can be used by both public and private researchers
  - Ensure equitable access to these facilities across institutions
- Support interdisciplinary research:
  - Encourage collaboration across disciplines to foster innovation
  - Create funding mechanisms that support interdisciplinary projects
- Develop ethical guidelines:
  - Establish clear guidelines for managing conflicts of interest in funded research
  - Ensure transparency in research funding and outcomes
- International collaboration:
  - Maintain and expand international research collaborations
  - Ensure that IP regulations do not hinder global scientific cooperation on critical issues
- Support for early-career researchers:
  - Create specific funding streams and mentorship programs for young scientists
  - Ensure a diverse and robust pipeline of future scientific talent

*Can you answer the following question:*

*The Indian government's new approach to science funding emphasizes market-oriented research and private sector involvement. Critically analyze the potential benefits and drawbacks of this strategy for India's scientific development.*

