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Q5(b)

Explain the philosophical foundations of India's foreign policy.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy

Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy: India's position on the recent crisis in Afghanistan, Iraq and West Asia, growing relations with US and Israel; vision of a new world order.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the philosophical foundations of India's foreign policy
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Gandhian peace and anti-colonial freedom are the ethical roots.

Nehru made non-alignment the working philosophy of autonomy.

Appadorai systematised peace, the UN, and Asian resurgence as doctrine.

Panchsheel is the named coexistence code.

Kautilya and later tests sit as the realist under-layer.

Introduction

India's foreign policy rests on a mix of civilisational ethics, anti-colonial freedom, and a State's need for autonomy. **Jawaharlal Nehru** and A. **Appadorai** gave that mix a public vocabulary. Practice later added harder power.

Body**Ethical and civilisational sources**

- Ahimsa and peaceful settlement, filtered through **Gandhi** and through Buddhist-Hindu ideas of a moral order, discouraged glory in conquest.
- Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam and later Panchsheel translated coexistence into five principles with China in 1954.
- Anti-racialism and anti-colonial solidarity came from the freedom movement, not from a textbook of IR.

Nehru and Appadorai

- **Nehru** treated non-alignment as moral independence and as a way to keep policy space in a bipolar world.
- **Appadorai** wrote the doctrine as a systematic public philosophy: peace, the UN, and Asian resurgence as Indian interests with an ethical face.
- **Kautilya** is often recovered as a realist counter-foundation: mandala, sandhi, and vigraha. Official speech still prefers **Nehru**'s grammar.

How the foundations operate

- They justify strategic autonomy, UN multilateralism, and Global South voice.
- 1962, 1971, and 1998 show that survival and capability can override sermon when the State is threatened.

Flow diagram

Freedom movement ethics -> Nehru non-alignment
Appadorai public philosophy -> Nehru non-alignment
Nehru non-alignment -> Panchsheel UN autonomy
Kautilya realist strain -> Panchsheel UN autonomy

Conclusion

The philosophical foundations are peace, anti-colonial autonomy, Panchsheel, and a civilisational claim to moral politics, as **Nehru** and **Appadorai** framed them. They are real guides. They are not a substitute for the balance of power.

Facts & figures

Nehru

Non-alignment, Asianism, and the UN as the public philosophy of early Indian foreign policy.

Appadorai

Scholar-diplomat who stated India's foreign-policy principles as peace, independence of judgment, and international cooperation.

Panchsheel 1954

Five principles of peaceful coexistence, the compact ethical-legal core with China and later NAM.

Kautilya

Arthashastra mandala as the indigenous realist foundation often paired against purely idealist readings.