

ALTERNATIVE REFLECTIONS ON COLD WAR: VOICES UNHEARD

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ABSTRACT

Cold War started by the end of the second world war which arose out of tensions between the two blocs of USA and USSR. 'Cold war' remains a very interesting phase in the field of international relations which manifested in more than one ways in the global scenario. In our study of Cold War, we have tried to locate how the initial enthusiasm towards USSR made way to a more US centric market economic reforms. We have also attempted in our study to reflect upon an "alternative voice", that is, the voice of the people who were inclined to the US, despite the then government professing otherwise. For this study, primary research has been exclusively undertaken through questionnaire as a sample survey and interviews with a few diplomats, thus trying to reach out to those people who might have in some or the other way experienced the impact of cold war and how they perceived it. The findings suggest that the initial enthusiasm towards non-alignment and USSR seemed to fade away when the Cold War ended and the promise of 'development' still remained as elusive as ever, which led many to reconsider their viewpoints regarding USSR and the feeling that they were losing on economic fronts, also led many to think that a sympathetic, diplomatic or friendly relation with the US would have been more beneficial to the country. This paper is a sincere attempt at exploring this alternative view, that is, the role of US with regard to India in the post-Cold War era.

Keywords: *Crisis, Diplomacy, Non-alignment, Power, Voices.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking of the inevitability of Cold War, Henry Kissinger, who was an eminent American diplomat, stated in a meeting of the 25th anniversary of the fall of Berlin wall as follows,

"I did think it was inevitable, because if you read what Stalin was saying at the time about the nature of international systems, it was imperative for him to have a confrontational atmosphere between the two systems."

He further added that he saw both, the ideological difference between the two countries and geopolitical aim of both nations as responsible for cold war. America slid into the Cold War because countries appeared to be threatened. What better explains both the nuance and blatantness of international politics, if not Cold War

politics? After the two world wars, the US established its hegemony as the strongest capitalist nations whereas Soviet Russia expanded and established as a communist state. After the Second World War, the Cold War started, which brought into fore many nuances of international politics. Although there are some disagreements as to when the Cold War began, it is generally conceded that mid to late-1945 marks the time when relations between Moscow and Washington began deteriorating. This deterioration ignited the early Cold War and set the stage for a dynamic struggle that was often blown out of proportion.

Soviet Russia established and entrenched itself in Eastern Europe by the end of World War II, imposing the hegemony of Kremlin over these countries. It also expanded its security zone further, which had long term impression in world politics like the submerge of Afghanistan into deeper crisis, the creation of North and South Korea, the Vietnam crisis etc. Similarly, the United States established a security zone of its own that comprised Western Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. It was the threat that each side perceived from the other that allowed for the development of mutual suspicion. It was this mutual suspicion, augmented by profound distrust and misunderstanding that would ultimately fuel the entire conflict.

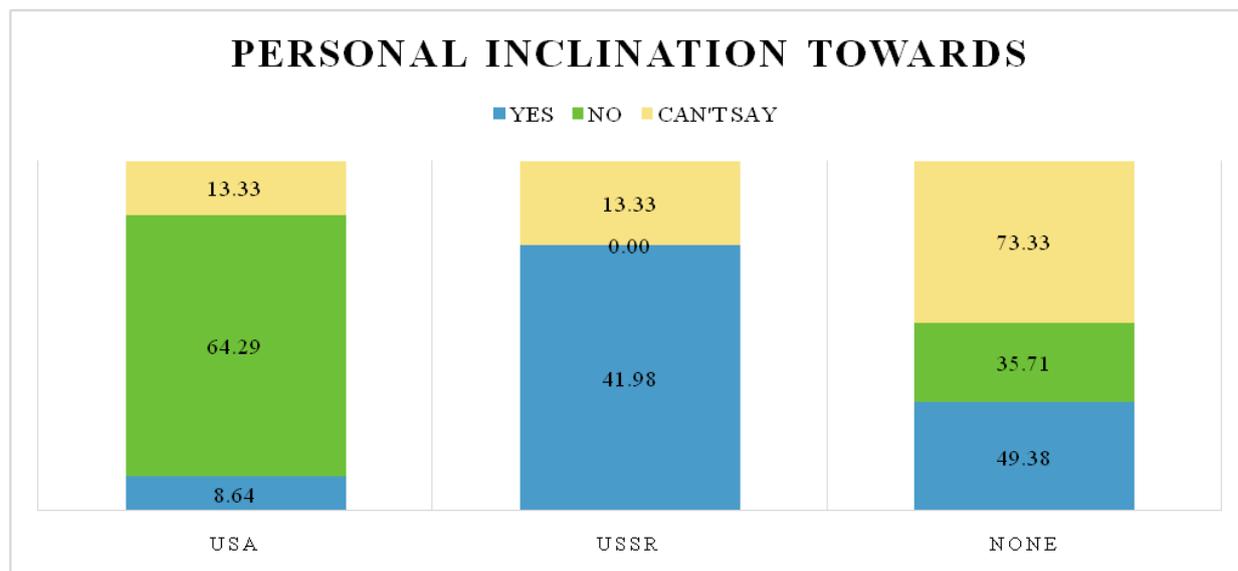
The first few years of the early Cold War (between 1945 and 1948), the conflict was more political than military. Both sides sought closer relations with nations that were not committed to either side, and articulated their differing visions of a postwar world. By 1950, however, certain factors had made the Cold War an increasingly militarized struggle. The communist takeover in China, the implementation of the Truman Doctrine, the advent of a Soviet nuclear weapon, tensions over occupied Germany, the outbreak of the Korean War, and the formulation of the Warsaw Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as rival alliances had all enhanced the Cold War's military dimension. U.S. foreign policy reflected this transition when it adopted a position that sought to “contain” the Soviet Union from further expansion. By and large, through a variety of incarnations, the containment policy would remain the central strategic vision of U.S. foreign policy from 1952 until the ultimate demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. We are here, more interested in looking at India and exploring the relation of this country with both the power blocs. India, posed a unique challenge to both the blocs with her non-alignment policy which many countries of South Asia immediately followed suit. But as Cold War began to intensify in Asia, India was compelled reluctantly to take cognizance of it because of the ways it manifested in Asia, particularly China. On the other hand, while India espoused democratic political doctrines of the West, yet they didn't adopt them without criticisms; who better articulated these criticisms than Gandhi himself, when he explained it through the categories of ‘brute force’ vs. the ‘soul force’. However, India’s unique position also reflected in itself the geographic dynamism. Because of its proximity to Asian neighbors where communism has slowly crept in, India’s rational espousal of democracy in opposition to Communism were counterbalanced by the emotional sensitivity and anti-imperialism.

The US-Soviet rivalry was slowly begun to be seen through the lens of nuclear arms race. According to this analysis, the Cold War presented a classic case of ‘security dilemma’. In terms of a realist view of international politics, the United States and the Soviet Union took steps to protect themselves, but the other side easily misunderstood these defensive measures. Each side manufactured nuclear arms under the guise of defense purpose and were frequently seen by a nervous adversary as aggressive and offense oriented, launching an unnecessary arms race. Nuclear weapons heightened the security dilemma, because the side that launched

weapons first could have tremendous advantages. Michael Dobbs wrote, “While U.S leaders hated the idea of their communist adversaries possessing the bomb, Washington at least trusted Moscow and Beijing to act in their own self-interest and refrain from blowing up the entire planet”. Nuclear weapons stabilized international politics during the Cold War, preventing political disagreements between the United States and the Soviet Union from escalating into armed conflict; few political goals were worth the risk of mutual annihilation. Since the “Cold-War world was a bipolar world, stabilized by a nuclear balance between two superpowers,” Thomas Friedman opined, it was far less frightening than today's nuclear environment manifested in the likes of North Korea.

II. METHODOLOGY

The idea behind this study was not just a secondary study of Cold War but to bring into account the “lived” experience of people of that period whether in the area of foreign affairs or in the academia. Therefore, a fieldwork was conducted to bring into light these viewpoints. Here, primary research is done through questionnaire with people of various walks of life. Of the people surveyed, 99 percent of the respondents were living in India during the period. Almost 74 percent of the total respondents thought that it was a good strategy to be in a strategic partnership with USSR during the period of cold war. Following is the graph depicting the viewpoints of respondents. (Graph 1)



Graph 1: Represents agreement to India's strategy during Cold War.

It does not come as surprising to anyone that a large number of people saw the partnership with USSR as a good strategy, given the fact that the socialism bubble was very much intact at that point in time. Both socialism and capitalism were equally new for the citizenry added to the enthusiasm of a new country led by a charismatic leader like Jawaharlal Nehru.

Around 51 percent of the people surveyed had a personal leaning towards one or the other of the two power blocs. A close to 33 percent of the total respondents who had personal affiliation had a personal leaning towards USSR and 16 percent of the total respondents who had personal affiliation were tilted towards US. Almost 13

percent of the respondents were not in agreement with India's policy of strategic alliance with USSR with none with a personal affiliation towards USSR.

Another query of our research was, does age have a correlation to people's liking/disliking of government policy. Here, a pattern was seen that, it was the older generation that were more in favor of the Soviets as against the relatively younger group who were more open to US. 78 percent of the respondents above 50 years of age are in agreement with government's strategic relationship with USSR. 12 percent are not in agreement and 10 percent had no opinion. This was not very different as compared to people in the age group of 45 to 50 where 70 percent were in agreement, 12 percent were not and 18 percent had nothing to say. The difference was visible in the extreme ends of both groups, where stark shift could be seen.

We were keener on knowing about these "black sheep" who were more inclined towards the US. We refer to them as black sheep because the one who doesn't go with the flow is often seen as black sheep and what made them stand for a power bloc which their government was clearly not supporting. 72 percent of the respondents who were inclined towards USA were professionals and business man who favored open capitalist economy. One can assume looking at the profession that, the stranglehold of closed economy was strangulating some profession more than the other. Therefore, a small section of the population seemed to be exploring the capitalist economy which the closed economy was not being able to provide.

Our keen interest was in analyzing the people who were not in agreement with India's strategic partnership with USSR. Since only 13 percent of the respondents were not in agreement with India's close relationship with USSR, it makes for an interesting case as to who were this 13 percent and what shaped their choice. 50 percent of the respondents who were not in agreement (with government policy) were self-employed and owners of businesses. On closer query of their opinion, we realized they were not necessarily against socialism, but were all for the economic value of democracy i.e. capitalism. Three of them Mr. Achal Jatia, Mr. Sidharth Kejriwal and Mr. Amar Aggarwal were in export and international business and the end of Cold War which allowed for the opening of the Indian economy, also brought about a period of boom for their businesses. Their opinion was also seemed to be shaped by the fact that their education was in the United States. One of them, Mr. Shreekant Koradia commented "India's alignment with Soviet Union was only politically expedient. The Nehruvian model of a mixed, socialist economy was the need of that time. The model should not have extended beyond a decade or so, but political compulsions stretched its way into the 80s and changed only at the end of the Cold War and the subsequent opening of the economy." Another such respondent, Mr. Naozer Jamshed Aga stated "The Spirit of free enterprise, were lost in aligning with the USSR." He further states "India moved to a more, but not fully open Economy after 1991, out of compulsion arising out of IMF's dictates for bail out and not by choice." Also, a retired civil servant and retired senior management specialist from World Bank, Washington D.C. USA, Mr. Amarjit Sodhi, was in disagreement with India's strategic partnership with USSR. He stated, "I got an opportunity to work in World Bank while Cold War was still going on. India was lacking in economic growth, as compared to other developing countries in various sectors, including and not limited to agriculture, infrastructure and manufacturing. State control and domination of various sectors such as airlines, railways and insurance was counterproductive to growth". Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Vasantha R. Raghavan- India's leading military strategic thinkers who served in the Indian Army for thirty-seven years and retired as the Director General of

Military Operations in 1994 stated, “The Cold War choices made by India were an important lesson in International relations. Those countries which joined either the western or soviet bloc, still carry the burden of that choice in the modern globalized world”. Charleston Malkemus - a US based Professional opined, “After prevailing over Britain colonialism, India had a universal rejection of Western Imperialism. This left many Americans feeling that India rejected America's interest in the Cold War purely because the British were aligned with us. Despite America's support for Indian Independence and desire to open trade relations, India choose to passively support the USSR”. Ramesh Kumar Shanmugham- Retired officer with Indian intelligence services said, “With the US providing arms to Pakistan and encouraging military dictators there , India had no alternative but to rely on the USSR for its military and strategic support . While there were short term tactical gains, this had an adverse effect on our economic development and on our Space, Power and Technological programmes. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War gave a boost to the above sectors in particular and launched India to becoming an emerging World Power.

These viewpoints composed the 13 percent of the people interviewed who thought that adopting a capitalist method of growth with the help of US would have been much more productive for the country. Unfortunately, in our survey we do not have opinion from the agrarian sector of the society at that point of time. The views of academicians were significantly different from the business and bureaucratic class as far as the dichotomy between socialism and capitalism is taken into consideration.

One can only assume that the underlying reason for people being in disagreement with India’s strategic partnership with USSR could be the uneven growth in the society. India opened its market and brought in economic reforms only after Cold War came to an end. However, the period of Cold War delayed the process of economic liberalization in the country. When during the period of Indira Gandhi there was a huge food crisis and the country had to borrow food grains from the US, was the importance of having a balanced relation realized. One cannot overlook the ‘Green revolution’ in the agriculture sector which came to the country during Indira Gandhi’s period with the assistance of the US.

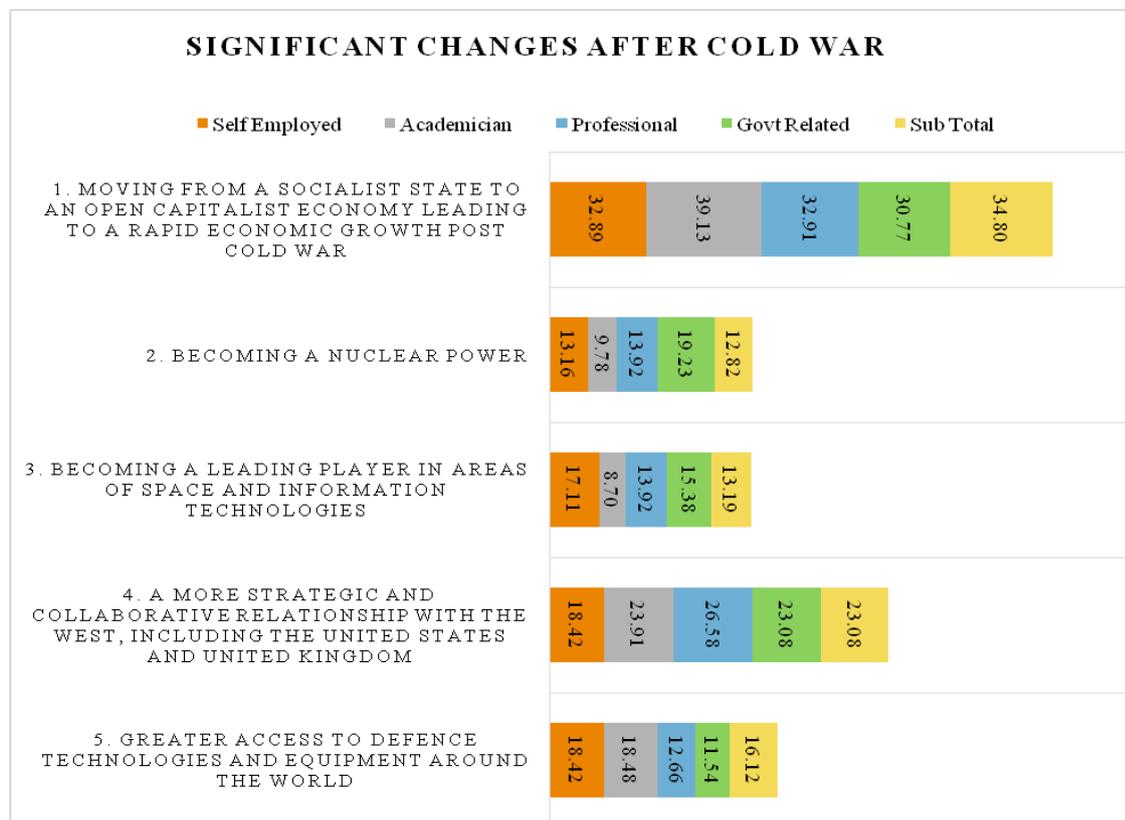
III. DISINTEGRATION OF THE SOVIET UNION: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

Hedley Bull (1977) argued that the states of the world are members of a “society” characterized by the absence of governance, that is – by the condition of anarchy. As members of the anarchical society, Bull suggests, states abide by certain rules and regulations, thus allowing much more civility in international politics than classical realists were willing to admit. States, according to Bull, act in such a way as to preserve international order, because this order is in their own interest, facilitating the states’ pursuit of security and prosperity. Bull viewed the US-Soviet détente (and the Cold War international order) as a common good, not only serving the interests of Washington and Moscow, but that of the European countries, the non-aligned and the third “worlds”. That was because avoidance of a nuclear war was an imperative for all states. Incidentally, with the disintegration of détente and the onset of the Second Cold War in the early 1980s, Bull became dissatisfied with the ability of the superpowers to preserve international order. In 1980 in an article by Bull, he lamented that the ideologies followed by the Soviet Union and the United States jeopardized their cooperation in the common interest of the international society.

In addition, another reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union was caused in good measure by nationalism. Unified in their hostility towards Kremlin’s authority many constituent states declared sovereignty and began to build state institutions of their own. The principle of nationality that buried the Soviet Union and destroyed its empire in Eastern Europe continues to shape and reshape the configuration of states and political movements amongst the new countries of the vast European-Eurasian region.

Brezhnev was replaced by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 and he envisioned drastic changes to the Soviet system if Soviet Russia was to survive as a State. He instituted a series of liberal reforms known as *perestroika*, and he seemed genuinely interested in more open relations with the West, known as *glasnost*. The Gorbachev-Reagan relationship was personally warm and the two leaders were able to decrease tensions substantially by the time Reagan left the White House in 1989. Despite improved East-West relations, however, Gorbachev's reforms were unable to prevent the collapse of a system that had grown rigid and unworkable. By most measures, the Soviet economy had failed to grow at all since the late 1970s and much of the country's populace had grown weary of the aged Communist hierarchy. In 1989, the spontaneous destruction of the Berlin Wall signaled the end of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe, and two years later the Soviet government itself fell from power. The Cold War had lasted for forty-six years, and is regarded by many historians, politicians, and scholars as the third major war of the twentieth century.

In our survey also, a large number of people were of the opinion that, rapid economic growth could happen only after the cold war, as it is also the phase of intersection of two important events, that is fall of USSR and the economic reforms in India. The views of the people are represented in the following graph (graph 2)

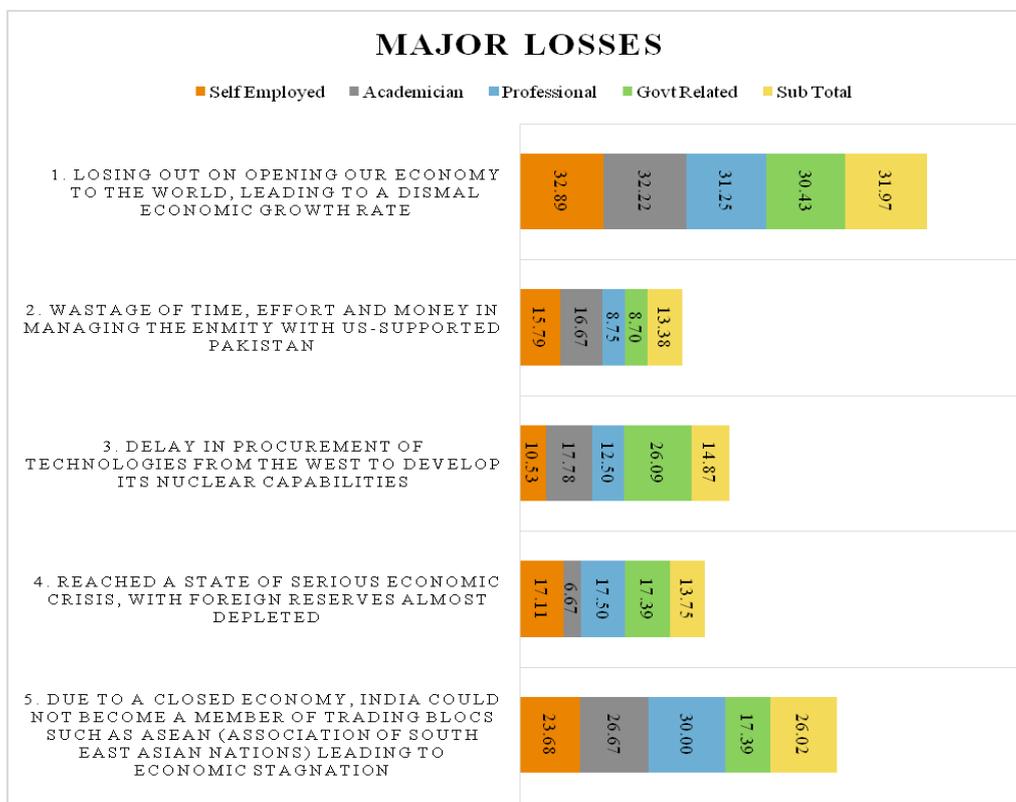


Graph 2: Significant changes after Cold War

IV. INDIA’S IMPROVING TIES WITH THE US: CONTEXT OF GLOBAL TERRORISM AND OTHERS

There was widespread speculation at the turn of events in 1990s will the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Eric Hobsbawm remarked that the year 1991 marked the end of the 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st century. Fukuyama defined it as “end of history” and marked the universalization of capitalist market economy, liberal enterprise and democratic policy.

For most part of the period after India achieved independence, the US viewed South Asia as a region largely peripheral to its central strategic needs. However, various American administrations did consider India to be a potentially important front in the cold war contest and to this end substantial economic aid came into the country. For its part, India refused to join either the American or the Soviet side in the Cold War conflict and instead charted its own “non-aligned” course largely independent of either superpower. However, the “non-alignment” policy of India was seen with suspicion by the US and non-alignment didn't convert into neutrality. Instead India came more and more into the Soviet ambit and largely refrained from taking positions in case of several of Soviet Union invasions. In addition to these, India was also economically unattractive during the period of the Cold War. Given India’s chronic underdevelopment, the U.S. did not view it as a potentially serious trading partner, target for investment, or source of skilled labor. In our survey too, the respondents were of the view that Indian citizens were losing on many fronts. Below is the graph depicting the major losses of the era of cold war as perceived by the respondents. (Graph 3)



US's favoring of Pakistan also didn't go well with India. India and the U.S. also spent several decades during the Cold War in bellicosity over the issue of nuclear weapons proliferation. In the wake of India's 1974 "peaceful nuclear explosion," in Pokhran, the U.S. made South Asia a centre-piece of its non-proliferation efforts, by formulating the 1978 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. However, the end of Cold War brought in strategic changes in the relationship between the two countries. India's economic reforms too made it an attractive business and trading partner. At the level of politics too, political leaders broke with past policies in ways that helped change the dynamics of the relation between the two countries.

We sought the views, via email, of a Senator from the US, Brian Patrick Kennedy, with regard to India's relation with the US during the Cold War era and how in the coming years does he look at the relation between India and the US. Mr. Kennedy, stating the obvious, commented that the relation between India and US was definitely not at its best during the period post Independence. India's closeness to the Soviets definitely raised questions regarding India's non-alignment policy. When President Dwight David Eisenhower visited India in 1959, he became the first US President to visit and attempt to build bilateral ties. He assured India that the United States would stand with the country against Chinese Communist aggression. But this did not continue until the period of Indira Gandhi when Ms. Gandhi and Nixon shared a mutual suspicion for each other. However, relation with India began improving when President Jimmy Carter took office. After 1990s, US and India was beginning to become important trade partners. The road ahead is of co-operation, maintains Kennedy keeping in view US and India's recent collaboration against global terror.

While the Indo-US engagement had been proceeding at a good pace right from the beginning of the Bush administration, it gained a new sense of immediacy after September 2001 after the attack on the Twin Towers of US. Any improvement in India-United States relations will largely revolve around the ability and the motivation of the policy makers in both Washington and New Delhi to make a break with the turbulent past. In the recent past too, there has been various attempts at improving the relationship between the two nations, with both the Indian Prime Minister and US President resolving to fight against global terror.

V. CONCLUSION

In our study of Cold War through our survey, we have found how the initial enthusiasm towards USSR made way to a more US centric market economic reforms. Here, we tried to bring in various "alternative voices" that have looked at the possibility of an alternative discourse as far as foreign relations of India are concerned. Our study also locates the shift in people's preference after the cold war. The preference by age also brought in an interesting aspect, that is, the older generation preferring the USSR over US and the younger generation vice versa. With the promise of 'development' still remaining as elusive as ever, which led many to reconsider their viewpoints regarding USSR and the feeling that they were losing on economic fronts also led many to think that a sympathetic or friendly relation with the US would have been more beneficial to the country.

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