Waning India - Russia ties

What is the issue?

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- Russia has been a long time ally of India since early in the cold war days.
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- But recently, Russia has been gravitating towards “China and Pakistan”, which calls for policy introspection and correction on India’s part.
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How has the relationship evolved over the years?

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- **Historically -** For the past 70 years since Independence, Russia have been a time-tested ally and major defence supplier for India.
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- During the cold war, the relationship was very strong and even gave rise to U.S. suspicions that India was an unofficial part of the Soviet camp.
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- Notably, this was despite New Delhi’s affirmations that it was a leading member of the “Non-Aligned Movement” (NAM).
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- **India’s Shift -** India has traditionally sought to maintain a balance between superpowers and refrained from joining groups for preserving its sovereignty.
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- But in recent years this position appears to have shifted in favour of finding new allies, with changing power structures and security concerns.
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- This change was amply in displayed when India actively pursued the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (involving US, India, Japan, and Australia).
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- Notably, this has been conceptualised as security alliance with a vision of ensuring freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region (targeted at China).
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- **Russia’s Shift -** In parallel to these creeping changes, Russia’s interest

towards Pakistan and China has increased and warmth with India decreased.
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- Russia-Pakistan relationship is on an upward trajectory, with Russia signalling support for Pakistan's candidature to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
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- Joint military exercises between Russia and Pakistan held in 2017, is another major concern as Russia is a long-time trusted military partner for India.
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What is the way ahead?

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- Russia is clearly drifting away from India, and a historically close bilateral relationship with Moscow is become a relatively low priority for New Delhi.
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- There are multiple risks due to this, but the immediate concern is the possible emergence of a Russia-China-Pakistan trilateral, which isn't in India's interest.
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- China and Pakistan would be eager to support such an alliance as it could arrest India's strategic momentum in the region and globally.
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- While bilateral ties are currently at an all time low, there are opportunities to broaden cooperation, which needs to be capitalised on.
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Source: The Hindu

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