

RUSSIA, CHINA SET TO LAUNCH JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests

Improving ties: A file photo of Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Reuters

China will join Russia in a giant military exercise, sending a message of deterrence to the U.S. which has designated Beijing and Moscow as “revisionist powers”.

The five-day Vostok 2018 exercises, to be held from September 11, will be bigger than Zapad 81 — the mammoth manoeuvres carried out in Eastern Europe by the former Soviet Union in 1981. Mongolia will be the third country participating in the drills.

The Vostok-2018 will involve 3,00,000 troops. They will engage in tri-service mock-operations involving 1,000 military aircraft, two of Russia’s naval fleets and all its airborne units, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Tuesday.

Nearly 36,000 military vehicles will participate in the drills at Russia’s Tsugol training range in the trans-Baikal region. China will dispatch about 3,200 troops, along with more than 900 pieces of weaponry, as well as 30 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, Xinhua reported, citing China’s Ministry of National Defence.

Growing friction

These exercises are taking place amidst Washington’s growing friction with Russia and China. The Pentagon’s national defence strategy unveiled in January focussed on Russia and China as principle strategic challenges to the U.S.

In presenting the new strategy, U.S. Defence Secretary James Mattis called China and Russia “revisionist powers”, that “seek to create a world consistent with their authoritarian models”.

He stressed that “great power competition, not terrorism, is now the primary focus of U.S. national security”.

Russian foreign policy commentator Mark Sleboda was quoted by Sputnik as saying that the upcoming exercises are “a clear indication to the U.S. that it’s a response to their national security strategy, as well as a response to U.S. and NATO posturing in the South China Sea, in the Taiwanese Straits, as well as... the permanent stationing of troops that we are seeing on Russia’s western border”.

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