

# Zapad-2025 Military Drills

## Zapad-2025 Military Drills - India's Participation

### 1. Context

- **Zapad** (meaning *West* in Russian) is a large-scale military exercise conducted by **Russia and Belarus**, traditionally focused on Europe-facing security threats.
- The **2025 edition** of the exercise has gained global attention due to heightened tensions from the **Ukraine war** and Russia's growing military assertiveness.
- These drills are also seen as a signal to **NATO and the West**, showcasing Russian readiness, including the possible use of **tactical nuclear weapons**.

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### 2. India's Participation

- **65 Indian armed forces personnel** were sent, as confirmed by the **Indian Ministry of Defence**.
- This is **not the first time** India has joined:
  - In **2021**, India participated in exercises in Russia's **Volgograd region**, focused on *Counter-Terrorism and Conventional Operations*.
- India's involvement underscores its **long-standing defence ties with Russia**, even as it maintains growing security cooperation with the **United States and QUAD partners**.

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### 3. Key Highlights of Zapad-2025 Drill

- **Scale of Participation:**
  - Russian President **Vladimir Putin** claimed **100,000 troops** took part.
  - Observed directly by Putin in **Nizhny Novgorod region**.
- **Major Components:**
  - **Rehearsal of Tactical Nuclear Weapons Launches** by Russia and Belarus.
  - Deployment of **Oreshnik hypersonic missile**, first used against Ukraine in November 2024.
  - Integration of both **conventional and nuclear warfare scenarios**.

- **Belarusian Role:**

- Belarus confirmed nuclear rehearsals took place on its territory.
- President **Alexander Lukashenko** openly admitted: *"We are practising everything – from small arms to nuclear warheads."*
- Emphasized it was for defence, not aggression.

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## 4. Geopolitical Context & Implications

- **India-Russia Relations:**

- Defence ties remain strong (Russia is India's largest arms supplier).
- India continues to buy **discounted Russian oil** during the Ukraine war.

- **India-US Relations:**

- Strained by:
  - US disapproval of India's **Russian oil imports**.
  - Past trade disputes (e.g., **Trump-era tariffs**).
- India walks a **strategic balancing act**: strengthening QUAD ties while not alienating Moscow.

- **Europe's Concerns:**

- NATO and Poland reported shooting down **Russian drones** in Polish airspace just before the drills.
- Western analysts argue these multi-nation exercises are designed to **intimidate Europe** and signal nuclear readiness.

- **Russia-Belarus "Union State":**

- Putin described the drills as rehearsing defence of the **Union State of Russia and Belarus**, strengthening their military integration.

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## 5. Why It Matters for UPSC

- **IR (International Relations):**

- India's strategic autonomy in foreign policy → balancing US & Russia.
- Importance of multipolarity in global politics.

- **Security & Defence:**

- India's participation in multilateral drills = defence diplomacy tool.
- Exposure to different operational doctrines.

- **Current Affairs:**

- Highlights nuclear risks in Europe.
- Shows growing Russia-Belarus axis.

- **Essay/GS-II/GS-III Angle:**

- *"India's balancing act in global geopolitics".*
- *"Significance of defence diplomacy in shaping strategic autonomy".*

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□ **In short:**

India's participation in **Zapad-2025** reflects its continued engagement with Russia in defence cooperation despite Western disapproval, while the drills themselves underline Russia's nuclear signalling and Europe's security anxieties.

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