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## India Pulls Out of Kavkaz 2020

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### Why in News

Recently, India has withdrawn its participation from **Kavkaz 2020**, a multinational tri-services exercise in Russia, citing **Covid-19** as the official reason.



### Key Points

- **Other Possible Reasons for Withdrawal:**

- Participation of Chinese, Turkish and Pakistani troops.
  - The **standoff** at **Line of Actual Control** (LAC) with China has been ongoing since May 2020 and several rounds of talks for disengagement have failed to end the impasse.

However, in June 2020, Indian and Chinese military contingents marched at the **Victory Day Parade** at Red Square in Moscow to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **World War II**.

- Turkey has been critical of India's policies on Kashmir.
- Participation of Georgian breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the exercise which have **been recognised only by Russia and few other countries**.

India **does not recognize** these breakaway regions.

- **Kavkaz-2020 Exercise:**

- It is a strategic **command-post exercise**, and also known as **Caucasus-2020**.
- The **tri-service exercise** is part of a **four-year exercise cycle** of the Russian army. Previous editions of the exercise were held in 2012 and 2016. In 2020 it will be conducted in the Astrakhan province of Southern Russia.
- Member countries of **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** and **Central Asian countries** would be participating.

- **India-Russia Military Diplomacy:**

- India's military diplomacy with Russia started in 2003 with the first edition of **Ex Indra**, a bilateral Naval exercise. India also participated in **Exercise TSENTR 2019**.
  - Exercise **TSENTR 2019** is a **part of the Russian Armed Forces' annual training cycle**.
  - It aims at evolving drills of the participating armies and practising them in the fight against the scourge of international terrorism thereby ensuring military security in the strategic Central Asian region.
- India's withdrawal from Kavkaz assumes significance because the Kavkaz was essentially a Russian military exercise and not a Chinese one.
  - India has always viewed its relations with Russia independent of China-Russia ties.
  - Russia has also responded in a similar fashion. It maintained its commitment of supplying arms to India even during the standoff.

## Way Forward

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- India needs to **deepen its ties with Russia** because Russia is an important balancer for India vis-à-vis China.

- Also, India should seek to reset its relationship with Russia, especially as the defence element is starting to fade as India has started diversifying its defence procurements. Energy and strategic minerals can be other areas of cooperation.
- **Promoting mutually beneficial trilateral cooperation between Russia, China and India** could contribute towards the reduction of mistrust and suspicion between India and China. In this context, the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** and **RIC trilateral forum** must be leveraged.

**Source: TH**