

Cold peace: On first Biden-Putin Summit in Geneva

What is the issue?

The Geneva summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin has set a pragmatic tone for engagement between the two competing great powers.

Why is the meet so significant?

- Relations between the US and Russia have hit the lowest point in recent years since the end of the Cold War.
- The U.S. had accused Russia of interfering in its elections and launching cyberattacks.
- Russia was also criticised on stifling of internal dissent.
- On the other hand, Russia had slammed America's "interventionist" foreign policy.
- Given these differences, the summit gains significance.

What are the key outcomes?

- Despite the differences, the leaders held talks on all critical issues, bringing diplomacy to the centre-stage.
- Mr. Biden sought a more predictable, rational engagement, while Mr. Putin said relations were "primarily pragmatic".
- They have decided to return their Ambassadors to the Embassies.
- The leaders also announced "a strategic stability dialogue" to discuss terms of arms control measures.
- While there was no major breakthrough, they could at least demonstrate a willingness to strengthen engagement and reduce tensions.

What are the long-pending irritants?

- There are many structural issues in the U.S.-Russia ties.
- Russia ended its post-Soviet strategic retreat and adopted a more assertive foreign policy under Mr. Putin.
- It did this partly in response to NATO expansion into eastern Europe.
- The West saw this as a threat to its primacy.
- The 2008 Georgia war practically ended the good terms between

“democratic Russia” and the West.

- The annexation of Crimea in 2014 again renewed the tensions.
- Russia was thrown out of the G8, and western sanctions followed.
- But such steps did not deter Mr. Putin.
- Ties hit rock bottom after allegations on Russian cyberattacks and role in US elections.
- Russia, which had amassed troops on the Ukraine border earlier in 2021, sees NATO’s expansion into its border region as a threat.

What is the way forward?

- Mr. Biden and Mr. Putin cannot resolve these geopolitical and bilateral issues in one summit.
- But they can certainly take measures to prevent relations from worsening.
- Both countries should be ready to address their critical concerns and agree to a cold peace.
- This would help in addressing other geopolitical problems such as Syria.
- The U.S. should be less pessimistic about Russia’s foreign policy goals.
- Permanent hostility with other powers cannot be of much help to Russia.
- So, Mr. Putin should realise that if his goal is to restore Russia’s lost glory in global politics, he should be ready to cooperate with the West.

Source: The Hindu