



U.S.-Russia: Helsinki Summit

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- U.S. President Trump recently met with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin at Helsinki in Finland for a bilateral.

\n

- While it was a historic opportunity of sorts, its outcomes are uncertain.

\n

\n\n

What is the context in which the Helsinki summit took place?

\n\n

\n

- A tense cold war was fought between the blocs lead by the U.S. and Russia (Soviet Union) for over 5 decades, which polarised the entire world.

\n

- While tensions of the cold war have presently subdued, the recent summit nonetheless was an important for both the countries.

\n

- It was an opportunity to discuss areas of shared interest, find ways to dial down mutual tensions and work together to address global issues.

\n

- Notably, the past few years have seen a significant spike in Russia's international confrontations with the west and the U.S.

\n

- Despite these tensions, the threat posed by nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles, were discussed at the Helsinki summit.

\n

- But it's not clear whether the talks will lead to any significant change in policies due to the lack of consistency in Mr. Trump's approach.

\n

\n\n

Did the events of the 2016 U.S. presidential elections affect the summit?

\n\n

- \n
 - Trump openly called for bettering ties with Russia in his campaigns, and some of his campaign aides also established contacts with Russians.
- \n
 - In that backdrop, allegations were rife that Russia had deployed hackers to prop up Trump's chances in the elections and weaken his opponents.
- \n
 - After the elections, an inquiry was set up to probe the case, and recently, 12 Russian intelligence officials were indicted by the U.S. justice department.
- \n
 - Due to the mounting evidence, Trump had earlier stated that, "while Russians might have hacked emails, it didn't influence the election results".
- \n
 - Hence, even before the summit began, there were concerns that the alleged Russia interference in the presidential elections could cloud the meet.
- \n
 - After the summit Trump had stated that he believes in Mr. Putin's assertion that Russia had no role in the electoral meddling.
- \n
 - This u-turn implicitly means that Trump has accepted Mr. Putin's version over the one stated by the U.S. intelligence, which has caused an uproar.
- \n
 - Mr. Trump could have certainly managed the summit better by addressing genuine concerns in the U.S. over allegations of Russia's election meddling.

\n\n

Why is Russian engagement essential?

\n\n

- \n
 - The resolving the civil war in Syria, and the saving the "Iranian nuclear deal", are important areas that require Russia-US cooperation.
- \n
 - **Arms Race** - Cold war triggered the massive expansion of the nuclear and other arsenal of both the US and USSR (Russia), which was a scary trend.
- \n
 - In this context, "Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty" (START) was signed as a mutually declared disarmament treaty between the U.S. and Russia in 1991.
- \n
 - This was subsequently renewed as "New START" in 2010 to further the

cause and this renewed deal is set to expire by 2021.

\n

- While Russia has displayed willingness to renew it, high-level talks between the U.S. and Russia are needed to seal the agreement.

\n

- **Ukraine Crisis** - Ukraine was one of the republics within the USSR during the cold war days, and has remained a strong ally of Russia ever since till 2013.

\n

- While it was planning to sign an association agreement with the European Union in 2013, Russia sternly objected to it, leading to tensions.

\n

- Russia subsequently annexed “Crimea” (Russian speaking province in Ukraine) by force and declared its sovereignty over it with people’s support.

\n

\n\n



\n\n

\n

- Currently, the issue remains unresolved and the various approaches adopted by the international community have come a cropper.

\n

\n\n

What is the way ahead?

\n\n

\n

- Many of Russia's rough actions were internationally condemned and several economic sanctions were imposed as a pressure tactic.

\n

- Although, these made the Russian economy stumble for breath, Russia's international ambitions have only grown stronger and more aggressive.

\n

- Hence, as isolating Russia is proving to be fruitless and abrasive, the international community needs start engaging Russia to smoothen things.

\n

- Russia, in turn, will have to shed its rogue attitude and be more open to address the bitterness of the past in order to build a better future.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n\n

\n\n

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative