

ON THE US-CHINA SUMMIT MEETING, LESSONS FOR INDIA

The Hindu

Paper - II
(IR)

This week's summit meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping in San Francisco is unlikely to resolve any of the major differences that plague relations between the world's two biggest powers. It has, however, offered the promise of much needed respite for the world by stabilising a relationship that has recently been in free fall and brought growing concern. The summit, on the sidelines of APEC, yielded two significant takeaways. The first involved several concrete agreements, including to restart military-to-military direct dialogue and to discuss risk and safety issues involved with artificial intelligence. The second is what both sides have described as establishing a floor to the relationship. That was the goal when the two leaders last met in Bali in 2022. The Bali consensus was, however, blown away by the "spy balloon" incident. This time there is cautious optimism that this attempt at stabilisation has been built on more solid ground. But how long it will last remains an open question, especially with two potentially disruptive political events looming on the horizon. In January next year, Taiwan goes to the polls, and the outcomes could see a further ratcheting up of tensions across the strait. On Taiwan, both sides reiterated their stands, with China cautioning against interference, and the U.S. saying it opposed any change in the status quo. Meanwhile, the U.S. will, next year, go into election mode ahead of polls in November 2024, and campaign season inevitably brings heated rhetoric on China.

A longer term concern — and one that underlines the limits of this modest stabilisation — is a basic point of difference in how they see the future of their relations. As Mr. Xi put it, "the number one question" was whether they were "adversaries or partners". He criticised U.S. framing of the relationship as being fun-

How was the diplomatic ties between the U.S. and China so far?

- ❖ The diplomatic ties between the U.S. and China establishment in 1979.
- ❖ Both the countries embarked on a path of increasing economic interdependence.
- ❖ China gained immensely from this relationship and its economic and military power grew, to challenge the primacy of the U.S.
- ❖ Trump Era - The Trump administration made it a point to attack the gargantuan bilateral trade imbalance in favour of China.
- ❖ The U.S.-China 'trade war' started and the US started following 'Decoupling' policy.
- ❖ Biden Era - Over time, the Biden administration added its own features into the China policy inherited from Trump changing it in to 'de-risking'.

damentally competitive, saying it would lead to “misinformed policy making, misguided actions, and unwanted results”, and asked it to “refrain from flip-flopping, ... and crossing the lines” on issues including Taiwan and export controls. Mr. Biden, however, “emphasised that the U.S. and China are in competition” and described the immediate challenge as how to “manage it responsibly”. These differences aside, one crucial point of agreement is the apparent realisation that high-level engagement and open channels are key in preventing competition from sliding into conflict. This offers clear lessons to the India-China relationship, as the crisis along the Line of Actual Control enters its fourth winter. Dialogue in and of itself is not a concession, and as the U.S. and China have realised, building a floor, when ties between major powers are at the risk of free fall, is the first step.

What was the recent US-China summit about?

- ❖ It occurred on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. Key discussion topics included –
 - a) the regulation of artificial intelligence (AI) and regional security issues
 - b) High-level political and military communication channels between the US and China were agreed to be renewed
 - c) The summit focused on managing the US-China competition rather than forming a strategic partnership
 - d) The discussions also touched on the crises in the Middle East and the Ukraine war.

Expected Question for Prelims

Que. What are the main issues of dispute between America and China?

1. Taiwan issue
2. China's aggressive stance in the South China Sea
3. Issue of Hong Kong independence

Code

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| (a) Only 1 and 2 | (b) Only 2 and 3 |
| (c) Only 1 and 3 | (d) 1, 2 and 3 |

Answer : A

Mains Expected Question & Format

Que.: What impact will the recent US-China summit have on India?

Answer's Approach:

- ❖ In the first part of the answer, discuss the US-China summit factually.
- ❖ In the second part, discuss the impacts of this summit on India.
- ❖ Finally give a conclusion indicating the way forward.

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.