Racial Tensions in the US

Why is the issue?

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Call for the removal of symbols representing the confederacy has heightened racial tensions in USA.

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What is the Confederacy?

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- USA was historically the destination market for slaves brought from Africa.
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- The economy of the southern states of US was mainly based on cotton cultivation & plantations and depended heavily on slave labour.
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- When Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860 on an agenda to abolish slavery, the southern states rebelled.
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- The confederacy of American states was founded in 1861, consisting of the eleven south states that seceded from the union.
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- This marked the beginning of the civil war that lasted four years and ended with the reunification of the country.
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- Though the confederacy officially ceased to exist by 1865, it remained the ideological nucleus for all future white supremacist movements like violent Ku Klux Klan.
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What is the recent conflict?

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- Series of racial attacks on black youth in the US recently, revamped the organisations working for racial equality.
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- This also gave rise to the anti-confederacy movement that has called for removing all symbols of the confederacy as a means to true reconciliation.
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- While most see the symbols of the confederacy, such as flags, monuments, statues etc as one of racist oppression, some see them as their historical heritage.
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How have the provincial governments reacted?

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- While some provinces have laws mandating the protection of the symbols of the confederacy, in many, the governors & lawmakers have openly & proudly initiated actions for removing them.
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- Despite several efforts, around 1500 statues/monuments stand as of today, and hence, the stand-off between the groups could potentially grow ugly.
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- Some policy makers advocate a middle path, whereby they call for the preservation of the controversial monuments while also simultaneously accommodating symbols of racial equality as a way to subdue tensions.
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Source: The Hindu

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