Tensions between U.S & Russia

Why in news?

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered 755 US diplomatic staff to leave the country.

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What is the background?

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- This move came few days after the U.S. Senate passed a sanctions Bill targeting Moscow and its allies.
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- While the investigation into the allegations of Russia's election-time interference in US is still under way, Congress went ahead preparing the sanctions Bill.
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- The Bill seeks to limit US President Trump's ability to suspend or lift sanctions on Russia.
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- The new sanctions will add to Russia's economic troubles at a time it is already facing sanctions imposed by Europe and the U.S., and dealing with a commodities slowdown.
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- Russia has thus opted to retaliate diplomatically.
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What is the impact of this?

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- Russia's expulsion of U.S. mission staff could lock the two countries into a retaliatory spiral as it signals a serious escalation in tensions between the two superpowers.
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- The decision also signals that Mr. Putin, who had pinned hopes on the Donald Trump administration to improve ties, is losing heart about such a reset.
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- Trump himself had expressed interest in building stronger ties with Moscow. But despite Mr. Trump's approach, the U.S. establishment has continued to take a hard-line position towards Moscow.
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What lies before Russia and US?

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- Whenever Russia and the U.S. joined hands to address the world's pressing problems in recent years, there were positive results.
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- The Iran nuclear deal is one example.
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- The Trump administration's willingness to work with the Russians in Syria has also helped calm parts of the war-ravaged country.
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- The ceasefire brokered by Moscow and Washington between the Syrian regime and rebels recently is still holding, raising hopes for a sustainable political solution to the crisis.
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- Besides, if the U.S. wants to address the North Korean nuclear crisis diplomatically, which is perhaps the biggest foreign policy challenge, it could do with Russia's help.
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- Russia is also crucial to stabilising Afghanistan, where US is reportedly arming the Taliban.
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- But instead of expanding their cooperation and addressing these challenges as responsible global leaders, the nuclear-armed powers seem to have fallen into the old Cold War-era hostility.
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Source: The Hindu

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