



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict

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What's in News?

Dozens of Armenian soldiers have reportedly been killed in renewed border clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh:

Nagorno-Karabakh is a **landlocked, mountainous and forested region** with a population of around 150,000, falling within the boundaries of Azerbaijan.

Nagorno-Karabakh, called **Artsakh in Armenian**, hosts a **predominantly ethnic Armenian population** with an Azeri minority.

It is located in the **South Caucasus region**, which straddles the border between eastern Europe and western Asia and spans the southern part of the Caucasus mountains.

It is roughly made up of **modern-day Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia**.

Nagorno-Karabakh, which was once a part of the Armenian Kingdom, has been ruled by several empires over the centuries — the Ottomans, the Persians, and the Russians.

Tsarist Russia ruled over the South Caucasus for most of the 19th Century but its influence lessened post the 1917 Russian Revolution which brought the Bolsheviks to power.

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia later became separate Republics, with the Azeris incorporating Nagorno-Karabakh into their Republic.

During the First World War, the Ottomans, aided by Azeris, attacked the south Caucasus, especially targeting ethnic Armenians.

As the Ottomans retreated at the end of the World War, Azerbaijan and Armenia descended into a full-blown war in 1920, which had a devastating effect on Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh

Though **Azerbaijan is predominantly Muslim and Armenia is a Christian majority nation**, religious tensions play only a bit role in the conflict over the territory.

The Azeri-Armenian war of 1991:

The Soviets officially placed Nagorno-Karabakh as an **autonomous Oblast** (administrative region) in Azerbaijan's territory, despite the chiefly Armenian population.

The ethnic Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh expressed a desire to be reunited with their roots and become a part of Armenia, organising a vote for the same in 1988.

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This did not go down well with Azerbaijan and military clashes ensued.

With the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan became independent countries, and this time, Armenian rebels in Nagorno-Karabakh declared it an independent territory, which was not recognised internationally.

This led to an open war between Armenia and Azerbaijan which lasted till 1994.

The war ended in 1994 when both countries entered into a ceasefire brokered by Russia but the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan were not demarcated

Minsk Group:

The Minsk Group was created by the **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)** in early 1990 to facilitate talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The Minsk Group was co-chaired by **Russia, the United States, and France.**

But peace treaty could not be brokered.

The role of the Minsk Group declined during the 2020 war between the two countries, as other negotiating groups entered the scene.

Regional Conflict:

The conflict, initially a local one between Azerbaijan and Armenia, turned into a regional one in the years following the 2016 war, with the entry of Turkey into the picture.

The Azeris and Turks share strong cultural and historical links as Azerbaijanis are a Turkic ethnic group of mixed heritage, speaking a language belonging to a branch of the Turkic family

Russia remained neutral in the early days of the war but later established small military outposts along the Armenian border, supposedly to prevent the conflict from extending into mainland Armenia

India's Stand:

Armenia is the only country in the region with which India has a Friendship and Cooperation Treaty (signed in 1995), which incidentally would prohibit India from providing military or any other assistance to Azerbaijan in case Azerbaijan's offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh spills over to the territory of Armenia.

Armenia extends its unequivocal support to India on Kashmir issue whereas Azerbaijan not only supports but also promotes Pakistan's narrative on this issue

Azerbaijan falls on International North-South Transport Corridor route, connecting India with Russia through central Asia; it can also connect India with Turkey and beyond through Baku-Tbilisi-Kars passenger and freight rail link.

India has adopted a balanced and neutral stance and made a politically correct statement in which it has expressed its concern, called for restraint and immediate cessation of hostilities and resolution of conflict peacefully through diplomatic negotiations.

Conclusion:

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With Russia being in a military defence pact with Armenia and Turkey backing Azerbaijan, the escalating conflict threatens to pull in regional powers in the fighting.

With the Caucasus countries being a key region for pipelines carrying oil and gas, the conflict could further destabilise the international energy supply when the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine has already sent food and power prices skyrocketing.

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