

CSB IAS ACADEMY

TOPIC OF THE DAY (DATE: 25.09.2023)

NAGORNO KARABAKH CONFLICT

WHY IN NEWS?

Recently, Azerbaijan launched a military operation in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region, resulting in casualties and Ethnic Armenians (Refugees) are leaving Nagorno Karabakh region, recognized as part of Azerbaijan but controlled by ethnic Armenians.

BACKGROUND

- The conflict can be traced back to the **pre-Soviet era** when the region was at the meeting point of Ottoman, Russian and the Persian empires.
- Once Azerbaijan and Armenia became Soviet Republics in 1921, Russia (erstwhile Soviet Union) gave Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan but offered autonomy to the contested region.
- In the 1980s, when the Soviet power was receding, separatist currents picked up in Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1988, the national assembly voted to dissolve the region's autonomous status and join Armenia. However, Azerbaijan suppressed such calls, which led to a military conflict.
- **Flash Point of Conflict:** The self-declaration of independence by Nagorno-Karabakh in September 1991 in the backdrop of an imminent collapse of the USSR resulted in a war between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh — supported by Armenia.
- Ceasefire: This clash lasted till a ceasefire agreement was reached in 1994, mediated largely by Russia. Since then, **the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chaired by the USA, Russia and France have engaged Azerbaijan and Armenia extensively to resolve the conflict.** By that time, Armenia had taken control of Nagorno-Karabakh and handed it to Armenian rebels.

What is the Nagorno-Karabakh Region?

- The Nagorno-Karabakh region refers to a landlocked region in the **South Caucasus**. It is **legally recognized as part of Azerbaijan**. However, it is largely controlled and **governed by ethnic Armenian authorities (Republic of Artsakh)**

The strategic significance of the region

- The Caucasus (the area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea) is home **to several gas and oil pipelines that travel from the energy-rich Azerbaijan to Turkey and Europe**. This includes the Western Route Export oil pipeline, the Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline, the South Caucasus gas pipeline, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which can move **1.2 billion barrels of oil per day**. Some of these pipes are located near the area of conflict (within 16 km of the border). The pipelines might be attacked in an all-out conflict between the two nations, which would have an effect on energy supplies.



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Causes of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

- **Territory** – Geographically speaking, Nagorno-Karabakh is an area that is controlled by ethnic Armenians and has a 95% Armenian population while being acknowledged as belonging to Azerbaijan internationally.
- **Cultural Identity** – Due to Armenia, the identity and demographic makeup of the region have altered, making the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute a problem of identity. Following Armenia's takeover of the area, more than 1.5 million Azerbaijani Muslims were compelled to move to other areas of the country as thousands of Armenians poured into the area, ultimately altering Nagorno-cultural Karabakh's character and securing Armenia's dominance in the area.
- **Religious** – While Azerbaijan is predominantly Muslim, Armenia is predominantly Christian.
- **Domestic Politics** – The political vested interests of the leaders of both countries have repeatedly fueled the issue.

Recent Clashes in Nagorno Karabakh Region

- For the past nine months, Azerbaijan has imposed a blockade on the only route into the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia, known as the Lachin Corridor.
- The residents of Nagorno-Karabakh **have accused Azerbaijan of causing a humanitarian crisis since December 2022 when the blockade was first imposed, saying that it has resulted in the crippling of critical civilian infrastructure like access to gas, electricity, health services, and internet access.** Nagorno-Karabakh has also accused Azerbaijan of blocking the import of Large-scale violence erupted again in 2020, leading to the Second Nagorno Karabakh War. Azerbaijan gained the upper hand. It recaptured several territories occupied by Armenia, including parts of Nagorno-Karabakh itself.
- A ceasefire **agreement was signed in November 2020, mediated by Russia. Russian**
- Regional and international organizations like **the OSCE and EU have called on Azerbaijan to lift the blockade.** Azerbaijan has so far refused to relent.
- Armenia has requested help from the **Collective Security Treaty Organization and Russia. However, both have declined to intervene.**

International Reaction

- Russia Role declined in Nagorno Karabakh as **relations between Yerevan and Moscow have been impacted after Armenia held military exercises with the United States.** Armenia has also taken steps towards ratifying the Rome Convention, which created the international criminal court that indicted Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- **UN Security Council** scheduled an urgent meeting as France and the United States led efforts to stop a military operation by Azerbaijan. Albania, which holds the rotating Security Council presidency, announced a session would take place on Thursday. **France's Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said military operation is illegal, unjustifiable and unacceptable.**

COLLECTIVE SECURITY TREATY ORGANISATION

The Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) is a group of countries that join hands to keep themselves secure. **It was formed in 1992 by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The CSTO's main aim is to prevent attacks and keep the region peaceful.** It follows the rules of the United Nations and international law. The member countries work together to improve their abilities and solve security threats. They also fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, and cyber threats.