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Armenia Azerbaijan Peace Deal

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Why in News

Recently, **Russia has brokered a new peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan**. Both countries have been in a **military conflict** over the **disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh** in the South Caucasus.

Key Points

- **Nagorno-Karabakh Region:**



- The region extends across **western Asia and Eastern Europe.**
- It has been **part of Azerbaijan territory** since the Soviet era and is being internationally recognised so but most of the region is **controlled by Armenian separatists** who have declared it a republic called the “**Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast**”.

While the **Armenian government does not recognise Nagorno-Karabakh as independent**, it **supports the region** politically and militarily.

- **Conflict and Ceasefire:**

- When the **Soviet Union began to collapse** (with the end of the **Cold War**) in the late 1980s, **Armenia's regional parliament voted for the region's transfer to Armenia** but the **Soviet authorities turned down** the demand.
- Clashes and the violence lasted till **1994**, when **Russia brokered a ceasefire**, by which time ethnic Armenians had taken control of the region.
- In **2016**, the region saw a **Four-Day War** before Russia mediated peace.
- The **Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group**, chaired by France, Russia and the USA, has also tried to get the two countries to reach a peace agreement for several years.
 - **OSCE is the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organisation.** Its mandate includes issues such as arms control, promotion of human rights, freedom of the press, and fair elections.
 - **OSCE Minsk Group** was created in **1992** by the **Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)** to encourage a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh.
- In **October 2020**, both countries **agreed to a Russia brokered ceasefire** agreement, however, it also proved to be **unsuccessful**.

- **Reason for the Conflict:**

- Decades-old **Ethnic tensions** have a crucial role in the dispute. While the **Azeris claim** that the disputed **region was under their control in known history**, **Armenians maintain** that Karabakh was a **part of the Armenian kingdom**.
- Currently, the disputed region consists of a **majority Armenian Christian population**, even though it is **internationally recognised as a part of Muslim-majority Azerbaijan**.

- **New Peace Deal:**
 - Both sides will now maintain positions in the areas that they currently hold, which will mean a **significant gain for Azerbaijan** as it has **reclaimed over 15-20% of its lost territory** during the recent conflict.
 - All **military operations are suspended** and **Russian peacekeepers will be deployed for a period of five years**, along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the **Lachin corridor** which links the Karabakh capital, Stepanakert, to Armenia.
 - **Refugees and internally displaced persons will return** to the region and the adjacent territories and the two sides will also **exchange prisoners** of wars and bodies.
 - A **new corridor will be opened** from Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan, which will be **under Russian control**.
 - **Reactions: Armenian people are against** the deal and have protested while **Azerbaijan is pleased** with the deal and considered it of “historic importance”.
- **Russia’s Role:**
 - Russia has always taken a **balanced position** on the matter and has traditionally **good relations with both countries**. It **supplies arms to both** countries.
 - Russia has a **military base in Armenia** and both are **members** of the **Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation**.
 - The treaty envisages Russia's military support if Armenia is attacked.
 - However, it does not include Nagorno-Karabakh or the other Azerbaijani regions around it seized by Armenian forces.
 - At the same time, **Russia also has strong ties to Azerbaijan**, which is being **openly backed by Turkey, a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation** (NATO) member.

Source: IE