

ENDING CONFLICT IN THE CAUCASUS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Smoke rises after a shelling next to the church of the city of Shusha as fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces spilled over on October 8, 2020, in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh province. | Photo Credit: [AFP](#)

The [military confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan](#), the gravest since a fragile ceasefire was established in 1994, reflects the failure of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Co-chaired by Russia, France and the U.S., the Minsk Group put forward in 2007 the Madrid Principles as the basis for the formulation of a peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Drawn from the 1975 Helsinki Final Act principles, signed at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, they provided for a prohibition on the use of force, respect for territorial integrity, and recognition of the equal right to self-determination.

In concrete terms, the Madrid Principles envisaged the demilitarisation of [Nagorno-Karabakh](#), the Armenian majority region that seceded from Azerbaijan towards the end of the Soviet Union, and the gradual liberation of Azerbaijani territory that Armenia had occupied in the 1991-94 war. Significantly, these steps are consistent with the UN Security Council's 1993 resolutions, calling for the unconditional withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from Azerbaijan. Besides, the Madrid Principles mentioned that international peacekeeping operations were to be deployed immediately after the Peace Agreement came into force, to monitor the Armenian redeployment; and internally displaced persons and refugees were to be provided the right to return to their original place of residence.

The Hindu Explains | [What's behind the Armenia-Azerbaijan clashes?](#)

The two Caucasus states also identified more specific guidelines that were to underpin any peace treaty. The most significant of them was Nagorno-Karabakh's right to self-governance and the election of officials with legislative and executive powers during the interim period preceding a plebiscite. Nagorno-Karabakh would establish judicial institutions, conduct external relations in certain areas, have representation on OSCE forums relevant to bilateral matters and, crucially, be accorded representation in international organisations where statehood was not a constraint. The above catalogue in effect amounts to the grant of statehood for Nagorno-Karabakh in all but name.

Unsurprisingly, Azerbaijan, seeing itself as the aggrieved party over the years, has adopted a hawkish stance, matching aggressive rhetoric with a barrage of artillery and aerial attacks. During the oil boom, Azerbaijan's defence spending exceeded Armenia's total budget. In the current hostilities, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, has asserted the country's long-standing claim over the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, ruling out any dialogue with Armenia until the government there offered an apology. Armenia had until recently talked of Nagorno-Karabakh's reunion with the country as a precondition for a possible return of other territories.

Staunchly backing Azerbaijan is Turkey, given the deep cultural ties between the two countries. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan even described Armenia as the "biggest threat to peace in the South Caucasus". Mr. Erdogan has also been accused by French President Emmanuel Macron of sending Syrian rebel forces to fight in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Despite hosting a military base in Armenia and entering a mutual defence agreement with that country, the

Russian response to the hostilities has so far been muted. The U.S. is all but absent from the picture.

Located in the main corridor of oil and gas supplies to Europe, Armenia and Azerbaijan have also relied on a nationalist rhetoric and fuelled the dispute through relentless propaganda against each other. In the absence of a peacekeeping force and the political will for peace, low-level frictions have persisted over the years. The adversaries cannot indefinitely delay striking practical compromises to promote their own mutual interest. Difficult as this process may appear, there is no better starting point than the reasonable framework outlined in the Madrid Principles.

garimella.subramaniam@thehindu.co.in

This article is available only to our subscribers.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Start your 14 days free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Dear reader,

We have been keeping you up-to-date with information on the developments in India and the world that have a bearing on our health and wellbeing, our lives and livelihoods, during these difficult times. To enable wide dissemination of news that is in public interest, we have increased the number of articles that can be read free, and extended free trial periods. However, we have a request for those who can afford to subscribe: please do. As we fight disinformation and misinformation, and keep apace with the happenings, we need to commit greater resources to news gathering operations. We promise to deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Dear subscriber,

Thank you!

Your support for our journalism is invaluable. It's a support for truth and fairness in journalism. It has helped us keep apace with events and happenings.

The Hindu has always stood for journalism that is in the public interest. At this difficult time, it becomes even more important that we have access to information that has a bearing on our health and well-being, our lives, and livelihoods. As a subscriber, you are not only a beneficiary of our work but also its enabler.

We also reiterate here the promise that our team of reporters, copy editors, fact-checkers, designers, and photographers will deliver quality journalism that stays away from vested interest and political propaganda.

Suresh Nambath

Please enter a valid email address.

To reassure Indian Muslims, the PM needs to state that the govt. will not conduct an exercise like NRC

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com