

The NATIONAL INTEREST FOUNDATION

[Armenia and Azerbaijan Sign a Russia-Brokered Peace Deal Regarding the Region of Nagorno-Karabakh](#)

A peace treaty has been signed to end the fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the contentious region of Nagorno-Karabakh. The deal was brokered by Russia, and is widely seen as a victory for Azerbaijan. Under the terms of the agreement, Armenian military forces will immediately leave Nagorno-Karabakh and be replaced by Russian peacekeepers. The deal allows Azerbaijan to reclaim territory that it owned under international law, but had been under the de facto control of Armenia since the 1992 war between the two countries over the region. It also gives Armenia and Azerbaijan control of the territory each secured during the recent clashes, which benefits the latter. In the aftermath of the agreement being reached, furious Armenians stormed the country's parliament demanding they continue to fight while in contrast, Azeri citizens took to the streets to wave Azerbaijan's flag and sing the national anthem. In the subsequent days leading up to the deal, the momentum in the conflict had tipped in favor of Azerbaijan, as the country's forces captured the strategically vital town of Shusha and were poised to begin an assault on the largest city of Stepanakert. Small skirmishes had started to break out in the areas immediately surrounding Stepanakert, and Armenia's prime minister said the military had warned him they would be unable to prevent the city from falling into Azerbaijani hands if a full-fledged attack was mounted.

The tensions in Nagorno-Karabakh stretch back to the break-up of the Soviet Union. A war over the region between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1992 set the stage for the conflict today. In 1992, Nagorno-Karabakh was part of Azerbaijan, though it was home to an ethnic Armenian population. At the time, the Armenian population declared its independence, and was immediately supported by Armenia proper. In response, Azerbaijan crushed the resistance, but not before Armenian fighters captured several areas of Azerbaijan to secure a ceasefire on their terms. Based on these events, Nagorno-Karabakh remained part of Azerbaijan according to international law, but was under the de facto control of Armenia. Azerbaijan has long harbored the desire to reclaim their territory, but have been unsuccessful in doing so through diplomacy. The most recent fighting has come as Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev vowed to do militarily what he was unable to do diplomatically.

The peace deal signed this week was brokered by Russian President Vladimir Putin and signed by the leaders of both Armenia and Azerbaijan. Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan of Armenia said that the deal was "not a victory" but necessary to stop the loss of life. In contrast, Azerbaijani leader Ilham Aliyev called it a complete "capitulation" by Armenia and a historic victory for his country. Despite Prime Minister Pashinyan saying the ceasefire was necessary, Armenians were infuriated by the result and stormed the country's parliament to demand the military fight on. The Armenian leader of Nagorno-Karabakh, Arayik Harutyunyan, echoed the sentiment of Pashinyan, and said that a ceasefire was the only solution after Shusha was taken by Azerbaijan. Under the terms of the ceasefire, Armenia's military will leave Nagorno-Karabakh, but the country will remain in control of certain areas of the contentious region, including Stepanakert.

Despite not being the main belligerents during the fighting, outside actors such as Russia and Turkey have played a large role in the outcome of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Throughout the fighting, Russia remained neutral, but fueled the conflict by selling weapons to both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The country also gained leverage in the situation by mediating the ceasefire negotiations, after previous peace deals mediated by the United States and others were broken. Russia will also continue to have a presence in the former Soviet-states as just under 2,000 Russian soldiers will be stationed in Nagorno-Karabakh as peacekeepers. Turkey, meanwhile, outwardly supported Azerbaijan through political and military support. Multiple countries including France and Russia have credibly accused Turkey of sending Syrian proxies to fight along Azeri forces, and Armenia claimed to have shot down a Turkish fighter jet early in the conflict. Turkish forces will also be deployed to Nagorno-Karabakh for peacekeeping according to Azerbaijan's president. Moving forward, the actions of Russia and Turkey will be of equal importance to those of Armenia and Azerbaijan in ensuring that the ceasefire is maintained and violence is prevented.