

## The Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Conflict

### Why in news?

The heavy clashes on the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border have turned the world's eyes to the border issues in the Central Asia that could not be completely solved for the last 31 years.

### How are these two nations related?

- Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were established and have retained the borders demarcated in the 1920s under Josef Stalin's rule.
- The two landlocked countries share a 1,000-km long border, a large part of which is disputed.
- Historically, the Kyrgyz and Tajik populations enjoyed common rights over natural resources.

### What are the reasons for the disputes?

- **Border dispute-** The main problem is that the two republics are using two different geopolitical maps.
- Tajikistan operates with maps from 1924-1939 and the Kyrgyz Republic with a map from 1958-1959.
- The region, **Fergana**, is divided between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan without taking into account the ethnic structure and culture of the inhabitants.
- The enclave factors, which are located in a region belonging to another country, have brought the countries of the region against each other.
- **Livestock-** With the formation of the Soviet Union, the livestock which were the main source of household income, were redistributed to collective farms and state farms.
- Since the Tajik livestock has limited rangelands, the Tajik depended on the pasture resources located in the Kyrgyz territory.
- With the demise of the Soviet Union, the collective and state farms were dissolved, and the pasture management agreements became invalid.
- **Water conflicts-** The dissolution of the Soviet era water and land agreements saw the creation of multiple smaller independent farms.
- The use of water resources increased among farmers leading to constant conflict between border communities.
- Population growth and poor infrastructure are other reasons for the conflicts around natural resources in the border area.



## What about the past conflicts in this region?

- Resource access and use clashes between Kyrgyz and Tajik border communities took place recurrently in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- **Apricot war (2004)**- Several apricot trees were planted on the disputed area by Tajik farmers, where then Kyrgyz inhabitants disputed and removed all those trees.
- **Ketmen war (2014)**- The border communities fought using garden tools, stones and burned animal shelters.
- In a conflict that took place in 2014, about 1000 local civilians were involved, including many young people.

## What is the current happening at the border?

- There were constant shelling, violent confrontations by local communities, and active engagement by security forces on either side.
- The **Batken region** of Kyrgyzstan is seeing families getting relocated.
- Nearly 100 people have been killed and scores injured in violent border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.
- A ceasefire, brokered by Russia, was agreed by both sides.

## What is the road ahead?

- The path to resolution of the conflict will require warring groups to agree upon a

common map.

- An intergovernmental agreement is needed to be signed to define property rights to access and use water and pasture resources
- The international community will have to make efforts to solve the dispute.
- The informal small-scale governance mechanisms would have to be strengthened through a concerted effort to stabilise the geopolitical dynamics.

## References

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