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 been 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 21st 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.

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