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Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan Conflict: Causes and Pathways to Peace



Abstract: The undefined frontiers in Central Asia have long been a source of conflict. There is a lengthy and complicated history of the Tajik-Kyrgyz war. Despite being about 1000 km long, only about half of the border between the two states has been marked since 1991. This article explains the reasons for the war between two former Soviet Socialist States. And the role of Russia in this scenario. Also, this research will come up with some policy suggestions to resolve this border dispute between two neighboring states. The long-standing disagreement over the boundaries became a major reason for the war. Due to the violent situation of both states, many clashes erupted in the region which became a reason for the loss of a huge number of people.

Key Words: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Central Asia, Border Conflict.

Introduction

The border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan frequently sees clashes of all sizes and intensities, but in this particular incident, it appears that Tajikistan was acting aggressively toward Kyrgyzstan. Based on the sheer extent of the operation, the quantity of heavy military equipment, and the number of army personnel, it appeared to be a deliberate and planned Tajik military assault. This incident differs from previous border confrontations in that Tajikistan attacked civilian infrastructure in undeniably Kyrgyzstan's territory, well from the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. It has become a significant issue to be concerned for the development of policies and scholarly sectors. Recent conflicts on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have rapidly escalated from previous tension and skirmishes to overt acts of violence. As it turns out, the events of September 2022 resembled an interstate war that ensued from a military assault with heavy weaponry, during which it seemed as though civilian property and infrastructure had been deliberately attacked. To solve this dispute the

international community should participate with both Central Asian states (Gretsky, 1995).

The awful events taking place on the Ukrainian frontlines are trembling the entire world. However, other conflicts that could have a significant impact on regional and possibly even global security continue to go unrecognized. One such incident is the recent uptick in hostilities along the Tajik-Kyrgyz border, which was mostly ignored by the world's media. The shooting between the two Central Asian nations is nothing new, but the escalation in September 2022 should raise considerably more concerns in the eyes of the rest of the world. On the one hand, Tajikistan sees itself as a "security guard" keeping Eurasia apart from Afghanistan, and on the other, Kyrgyzstan, gains from several international assistance programs for border security as well as trade agreements with China. The phrase "border conflicts" serves as the foundation of the narrative put forth by the few foreign actors who discuss the conflict. There should be more clarification regarding this term's international legal qualification, even though its use may be motivated by policy to prevent the situation from worsening. As a result, the purpose of this article is to discuss

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whether the border dispute between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has become an international armed conflict and whether any parties may have the right to self-defense (Emtseva, [2022](#)).

On September 14, 2022, gunfire was exchanged between Tajik and Kyrgyz forces at many sites along the border, including in villages and towns where people lived. Both nations have traded responsibility for starting the conflict. Despite efforts to achieve a truce, artillery firing intensified on September 16 and expanded from border regions into the indisputable Kyrgyz territory, in particular the city of Batken. Hard weapons were used in the battle, such as tanks and rocket launchers. On the Kyrgyz side, at least 62 individuals including civilians died as a result, and 140,000 people were forced to flee their homes. In Kyrgyzstan, hundreds of homes and other pieces of civil infrastructure were set ablaze and destroyed. The Tajik government has thus far reported 35 fatalities. War broke out along the border between the provinces of Sughd in Tajikistan and Batken in Kyrgyzstan, in late April 2021. The immediate issue developed over control of the Golovnoy water distribution system, which separates what Tajiks and Kyrgyz refer to as the Isfara River and the Ak-Suu, respectively. Locals continued to use pebbles as well as certain light and tiny weaponry, as in the past. But on this occasion, the conflict quickly intensified and involved trained military personnel. Before a truce went into force on May 1, dozens of people perished, hundreds were injured, and thousands fled to other regions (Kurmanalieva, [2018](#)).

According to one viewpoint, the fighting started because of long-standing disagreements over boundaries and demography. The artificial borders erected by the former Soviet authorities, which complicate the administration of trans-border resources, have made local rivalry for arable land and water worse. The Fergana Valley, which spans portions of northern Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and eastern Uzbekistan, is especially rich in ethnic exclaves, where the citizens of one Central Asian republic are encircled by the territory of a neighboring nation. Notably, there is still work to be done on more than a third of the 974-kilometer state border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Since gaining independence in 1991, both parties have contested control of numerous

territories, basing their claims on various Soviet maps and accords. Conflicts break out in particular locations; in the Kyrgyz villages, they happen in the Ak-Sai, Kok-Taş, Samarkand, Tajik Corku, and Surh districts. The Tajik President EmomalRahmon (in office since 1994) and the presidents of Kyrgyzstan have failed to find a solution to this issue (Weitz, [2021](#)).

Additionally, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan worked to resolve the social, political, and economic issues brought on by the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The relationships between neighbors are impacted by these underlying issues. The situation in the border regions of both nations is at an impasse while Tajiki and Kyrgyz authorities continue to work on resolving the border conflict. Due to the abundance of productive farmland, the hazy terrain, illicit crossings, animal grazing, and control over water supplies, tensions frequently develop between border guards and locals. This is also because, the inhabitants of Kyrgyz and Tajikistan had comparable property rights to access and utilize natural resources under the land tenure system based on property rights that was backed by Soviet state authorities (Emtseva, [2022](#)).

Historical background

The two nations have continually traded gunfire since 1991. (In 2000, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2015). According to some accounts, there were 63 violent occurrences on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border between the years 2011 and 2013, ranging from hostage-taking to minor alterations. The fighting became more intense in April 2021. At least a dozen Kyrgyz villages in the districts of Batken and Leilek, which border Tajikistan and include the enclave Vorukh, saw the start of extensive warfare. The installation of security cameras at a water distribution point close to Vorukh was the cause of the escalation. As a result, hundreds of people were hurt on both sides, including at least 41 fatalities. It is concerning that violence has increased during the past two years. The events of 2021 led to an extraordinary response from Kyrgyz civic society. Several violent events involving Tajik villagers and Kyrgyz troops have occurred; citizens considered they were within their region, while the troops from Kyrgyzstan disagreed. A request to open an inquiry into suspected war crimes

committed by Tajik government officials was made to the International Criminal Court in June 2021 by Kyrgyz academics, along with several NGOs and CSOs. In May 2000, Tajikistan approved the agreement, giving the Court the right to exercise territorial jurisdiction. The Kyrgyz president, who advocated for using other methods to settle the disagreements between the two countries, refused to support this idea (Emtseva, [2022](#)).

At a contested border stretch, border guards from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan exchanged gunfire on September 14. Drones, planes, tanks, and a rocket firefight were all used during the two-day, violent standoff. At least 94 people were killed and more than 100 were hurt in the deadliest violence in years. Due to the unrest, over 137,000 individuals have been taken out of the contentious border territory in the Batken and Osh districts of Kyrgyzstan. There were no reports of a Tajik Side evacuation. Both nations have charged one another with aggressiveness. The Kulundu, Maksat, and Jani-Jer border villages were shelled by Tajik forces, according to the Kyrgyz side, which also claimed that modern equipment and weapons were employed. Following altercations with Tajik border guards, Kyrgyzstan declared a catastrophe in the area of Batken. Conversely, Tajik authorities claimed that Kyrgyz forces were targeting civilian properties, including homes, and had demolished a mosque. Additionally, according to Tajikistan's security agencies, in case of provocations, Kyrgyzstan was stockpiling military hardware and supplies close to the border. (Sultanalieva, [2022](#)).

It was not immediately clear what precipitated the fighting along the tense border in Central Asia between the two former Soviet neighbors. Due to frequent cease-fire violations, the two countries decided to create a committee to settle the border dispute. Additionally, the issue is made worse by the accusations and denials made by the two administrations (Matveeva, [2017](#)). In the post-Soviet era, the 1920s Soviet border delimitation, which sought to partition Central Asian administrative boundaries along ethnic lines, was found to be ineffective. Due to the mixing of various ethnic groups, the Ferghana Valley, which is shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, is a region with a high population and fertile terrain. There have been several tragic interethnic conflicts in this resource-rich Valley,

which overlapping ethnic communities in border areas must equitably share. The main source of contention between the three Central Asian countries that share the valley has been the question of enclaves and exclaves. There has long been fighting in the area over access to resources. Throughout the Soviet era, disputes between republics and administrative divisions involved the distribution of land, water, and pasture. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, these tensions further intensified. According to government data, the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan spans more than 974 kilometers, yet only 504 of those kilometers have been marked. Particularly in Vorukh, a Tajik exclave of 30,000 people in Kyrgyzstan's Batken Province, which borders Tajikistan's Sughd Province, and in the northern Tajik region of Isfara, social tensions are common. The legalization of ownership of private property and Kyrgyzstan's declaration of some leased Tajik meadows as its own furthered the tense situation (Matveeva, [2017](#)).

Border Conflict

All around the former Soviet Union, conflicts have become more violent. Armed battles between Tajik and Kyrgyz military personnel took place on the border of the Batken area in southern Kyrgyzstan between September 14-17, 2022. In a region where occasional provocations and skirmishes are commonplace, this was a major escalation of hostilities between the two nations. Each nation accused the other of beginning the war. As of September 28th, 63 Kyrgyz individuals had died and 195 had been injured, according to official figures from Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, 136,770 individuals were evacuated to secure regions, according to the press office of Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Emergency Situations. On the other hand, the Tajik government said that 74 people perished in the armed battle along the Kyrgyzstan border. A significant portion of the fighting is concentrated on Vorukh, a Tajik exclave that is encircled by Kyrgyz territory along a hilly border that is still mostly undelineated (Davies, [2022](#)).

Despite the frequent conflicts of varied sizes and intensities along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, it appears that Tajikistan was acting aggressively toward Kyrgyzstan in this instance. It appeared to

be a purposeful and planned Tajik military action based on the sheer size of the operation, the quantity of heavy military equipment, and the number of army personnel. The fact that Tajikistan targeted civilian infrastructure in indisputable Kyrgyzstan's territory, far from the Kyrgyz-Tajik boundary, distinguishes this episode from earlier border conflicts. The provincial capital of Batken, which is unquestionably Kyrgyz territory and is only 10 kilometers from the border, was shelled. Untargeted shelling suggests that evicting civilians from the area may be the intention (Matveeva, 2017).

Ineffective Leadership

When a vigorous Kyrgyz response replicated Tajikistan's military moves, the situation eventually became more tense. At the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Samarkand, Rahmon and his Kyrgyz counterpart Sadyr Japarov shared a room for several days. Both presidents reaffirmed their commitment to using diplomacy to resolve any issues. Additionally, it appears that they missed a crucial chance to defuse the crisis at the outset, continuing a tradition of ineffective leadership on both sides when resolving the unmarked portions of the Kyrgyz-Tajik boundary. The Kyrgyz administration took populist actions before the escalation regarding border control and the settlement of territorial disputes. In the late 2020 elections, Kamchybek Tashiev, the head of the State Committee for National Security, and Japarov ran on platforms of territorial sovereignty and border security. The administration replaced outdated Russian UAZ, off-road vehicles that were easily penetrated by gunshots with a few Turkish Bayraktar drones and Russian "Tiger" armored personnel carriers after being elected in early 2021. In August 2021, the government decided to have a military parade in the capital to show off its new acquisitions. Some of the weaponry was later moved to the border region (Davis, 2022).

Additionally, boasting about their ability to quickly resolve border conflicts with Tajikistan, government representatives may have been relying on their ability to successfully resolve border problems with Uzbekistan. The Tajik side of the border has long been militarized by the regime. About Afghanistan, Tajikistan has recently gotten a lot of military training and assistance, notably

from Chinese, Russian, Iranian, and American personnel. The launch of a facility to manufacture tactical drones with Iranian design, Ababil-2, is the most recent endeavor in this regard. This escalation implies that, as several media sources and pundits have done, using the vocabulary of "boundary conflict" or "border skirmish" to describe what occurred obscures rather than clarifies it (Matveeva, 2017).

Reasons for Conflict Emergence

There are several possible explanations for why Tajikistan launched an armed attack on Kyrgyzstan at this time. More than 150 disputes over resource access and use between border towns in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over the past ten years have been documented between the two nations. A further reason for the dispute is the usage of water resources. Nearly 40 channels are shared by Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Some of these rivers have their sources in Kyrgyzstan and travel from there to Tajikistan and vice versa. Numerous farmers in Kyrgyzstan claim the Kyrgyz farmers downstream receive less water due to the excessive usage of water by Tajiks residing upstream of the river. In response, groups of Tajiks further downstream gripe about a lack of water entering their regions. Every year, between April and June, when irrigation is taking place, a conflict emerges (Urciuolo, 2022).

The Kyrgyz-Tajik border's present deteriorating water infrastructure makes the problem worse. This is because a few of the hydrological facilities are located in a transboundary region and are not under the control of the Tajik or Kyrgyz states. Since there is no specific institution, pact, or law governing reparations, neither of these nations wishes to invest in the field. As a result, a large amount of water cannot be used for agriculture. There are also just political grounds for examining the reasons for the conflict in an era of tremendous stress and unrest in the post-Soviet space. Rumour has it that the President of Tajikistan Rahmon wants to give his son Rustam Emomal, the current speaker of the parliament, the reins of power. A brief, successful battle that demonstrates regime stability is typically necessary for such a succession process. Rahmon may also want to divert domestic and foreign audiences' attention from the outcome of

the tenacious and rebellious demonstrations in the Pamiri minority's native region, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBO) (Davis, 2022).

Discontent of Russia

The armed battle began on the same day that Uzbekistan, China, and Kyrgyzstan inked a long-awaited deal in Samarkand to build a train connecting these nations that would create a faster path to Europe while avoiding sanctions-hit Russia. Thus, conflict along the Tajik and Kyrgyz borders, according to some Kyrgyz authorities, would serve as a warning about Russia's unhappiness, which has attempted to make the Central Asian countries as economically dependent as possible throughout their history. As a result, Tajik armies would attack Kyrgyzstan with Putin's backing (Rickleton, 2022).

Additionally, a lot of people were worried that Moscow would get resentful of Kyrgyzstan's impartial position on the Ukrainian crisis and would decide to support Tajikistan. This perspective contends that Russian methods are the reason why the two nations are engaged in this conflict. Some, like Russian State Duma deputy Alexey Chepa, believe that external forces, especially Russia's adversaries, have chosen to use the circumstances and foment instability in the area by utilizing Tajikistan's interior problems and the clash with Afghanistan. The goal of all mayhem is to use conflicts to damage the reputation of Russia (Urciuolo, 2022).

Deadly Clashes

The 970-kilometer border between two of the poorest former Soviet republics is still not completely defined. Border disputes in Central Asia are mostly a result of Moscow's attempts to split the continent into various ethnic groups, whose settlements were frequently mixed in with those of other tribes. The security forces on both sides have been actively engaged over the past few weeks amid ongoing shelling, deadly clashes amongst local communities, and incessant shelling. Families are being uprooted and resettled in Kyrgyzstan's Batken area. Out of the 5,50,000 or more residents of the Batken region, around 1,50,000 have either fled the area or have been evacuated by the government, according to the

Kyrgyzstani Ministry of Emergency Situations. There is no difference in the circumstances in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. Additionally raising tensions are the heavily fortified borders. Old pre- and post-Soviet legacies are being re-enacted in contemporary conflicts. The borders of the two republics were drawn under Joseph Stalin's instruction. The people of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan once shared rights to natural resources. The argument about boundary demarcation dates back to the Soviet period. Despite efforts to settle the issue via frequent conversations, one of the primary points of dispute is still the map that should be used for demarcation. Debatable territory makes up about half of its roughly 1000 km boundary (Rickleton, 2022).

Dynamics of two Central Asian States

Even though the two nations have a similar past, their internal dynamics have changed significantly since they gained independence. Global issues and domestic ethnic strife are connected to their instability. Leaders of each nation have played a role in the conflict's continuation in some manner by envisioning a certain type of growth initiative in an attempt to legitimize their rule and stabilize the internal affairs of their respective nations. This "development project" is similar to the modernization strategy of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the widespread expulsion of nomadic people and eventually became an "environment driver" for the continuous war. As previously indicated, in disputes between the two countries over the past ten years, concerns about the use of land and water have been more important. During this time, there was tension and conflict between them, with significant casualties as a result of the aforementioned factors. Many individuals died in the most recent fatal battle, which broke out in April 2021; Most of them were from Kyrgyzstan and some were from Tajikistan. Gaining management of the system of distribution of water in the Golovnoy system, which is situated on the Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan boundary, was the cause of the conflict (Rickleton, 2022).

On September 16, the presidents of the two nations met in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, in conjunction with the 22nd Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit. The two leaders of state spoke about the situation along the Tajik-

Kyrgyz border during their conversation. The presidents advised the other members of the Intergovernmental Commission on the boundaries and Demarcation of the nation's Border to intensify their work, including the working groups' activities on topographic and legal issues, and "agreed to set up a commission to look into the causes of the armed incident." according to a statement posted on the website of the president of Tajikistan. All new difficulties should be resolved entirely through political and diplomatic channels, said the leaders of the state. The two presidents have spoken about border concerns before, but those discussions have taken place on several occasions and at different levels without leading to any concrete answers. When identifying the root causes of an unresolved boundary clash between both nations, it is important to consider the following: - In Central Asia, the only politician from the Soviet period whose power remains concentrated on developing the nationalism of Tajik is the president of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon. The boundary dispute between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan can also be seen through the lens of Tajik nationalism. Tajikistan's geographical integrity might be in danger if it settles its border issues with Kyrgyzstan. Any practical resolution to this problem has thus far been postponed. In the upcoming years, President Rahmon also plans to transfer authority to his son. Therefore, any compromise on Tajik's territorial integrity might work against his goals (Urciuolo, [2022](#)).

Challenges to Kyrgyzstan

The sole democratic nation in post-Soviet Central Asia is Kyrgyzstan, which has had numerous color revolutions. In the most recent revolution, the populist leader Sadyr Japarov won the presidency. To stabilize the domestic situation in the nation, he must overcome several challenges. The Tajikistan border issue presents serious difficulties for his government. He has advocated for negotiation, discussion, and adherence to international laws, yet one of his key priorities has been to increase armed capabilities. But President Japarov opened the Border Guard Service's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) base just a day before the current clash. He told the border safeguards that maintaining border security in Kyrgyzstan was a top priority for the government. We are responsible for taking all

essential actions to improve the capacity of our boundary guards. Drones of Turkey, which the Tajik side claimed were used in the boundary battle with Tajikistan, were recently purchased by Kyrgyzstan. (Wood & Khashimov, [2022](#)).

Significantly, when tensions between these two nations and Uzbekistan subsided, fighting broke out between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Tashkent has evolved into one of the most cooperative partners in recent years, whereas Uzbekistan had the most antagonistic stance toward its neighbors under its former regime. This is crucial, not only because of Uzbekistan's strategic location in the middle of Central Asia and its potential for border conflicts but also because Tashkent has demonstrated how effective leadership can avert future confrontations (Helf, [2021](#)). The Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan dispute increases the likelihood of other unfrozen hostilities and drastic boundary alterations, however, if the most recent fighting ushers in a new period of military conflict between Central Asian republics. This latter viewpoint would be consistent with the theory that Moscow may take advantage of tensions to increase its influence, both directly and about other countries like China. Supporting initiatives to build mechanisms among Central Asian leaders to manage such border tensions independently of outside forces would be one way to mitigate this negative impact (Urciuolo, [2022](#)).

Impact of the conflict

On September 25, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan agreed to demilitarise a portion of their shared border that had been affected by war, although the issue has not yet been resolved. The entire Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is trembling as a result of the hostilities between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and Russia and Ukraine. The former Soviet Union's member states are all watching the ongoing upheaval of the established order with uncertainty and worry. The parties rejected the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization's (CSTO) offer of diplomatic intervention, since 2002 both nations have been members of CSTO. Furthermore, the CSTO hasn't yet created a method to address comparable issues (Engvall, [2014](#)). Each nation makes an effort to defend its borders or the regions it claims, using both external assistance and domestic

resources. While Tajikistan receives substantial backing from both Russia and, more lately, Iran, it appears that Kyrgyzstan is looking for a comparable strategy to counterbalance the strength of its neighbor. Many experts believe that boundary demarcation will resolve the disagreement between the two republics. (Gupta, [2022](#)).

However, when taking into account natural resources and the placement of homes in border communities that resemble chessboards, the process can be challenging. Therefore, government interventions from both countries are required to manage the current situation. These interventions must strengthen cooperation, increase resource management capacity building, encourage efficient collaboration across ministries, strengthen independent monitoring methods, and involve local users and stakeholders more fully. These two nations want an intergovernmental agreement to specify property rights for using and accessing pasture and water resources (Urciuolo, [2022](#)). A major portion of the 1,000 km border between the two landlocked nations is under question. Shared water and land resources have also caused squabbles in the past. Unsettlingly unexpected components in the most recent violence point to a more active role played by national authorities in the issue. Conflict parties deployed artillery and tanks as well as other heavy weaponry for the first time. The recent rise of other intrastate wars in the former Soviet Union, including the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan, also precedes this one. The most recent conflict also started as a result of Kyrgyzstan's government's March proposal to trade portions of its Batken region for Tajikistan's Vorukh territory, an enclave surrounded by Kyrgyzstan. Since President SadyrJaparov declared that Kyrgyzstan's armed forces would conduct significant military drills in the region, Tajik officials may have viewed the swap suggestion as a threat. Additionally, Dushanbe's decision-makers might have thought that Kyrgyzstan's months of political unrest would hinder Bishkek's response. The conflict occurred at a time when both leaders were trying to establish their populist credentials, with Rahmon rumored to be planning the succession to his son and Japarov has illegitimately gained power (Urciuolo, [2022](#)).

Recent Development

Over 100 people have died in border battles between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over the past week, at least 37 of them civilians, four of them children. The fighting started on the 14th of September when border protectors from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan fired at one another along a contentious section of the border. Fighting has impacted civilian populations in at least a dozen communities on both sides of the widely undelineated boundary between the two countries, with hundreds more injured. (Jazeera, [2022](#)). According to statements made by Kyrgyz officials and published in the media, several residences in the Ak-Sai hamlet in Kyrgyzstan were intentionally torched and pillaged, and more than 300 civilian buildings, including markets and schools, were damaged or destroyed during conflicts. Authorities in Kyrgyzstan claim that around 137,000 people were forced to flee and are either staying with relatives in the southwest Kyrgyz provinces of Batken and Osh or in 53 schools that have been turned into temporary shelters (Urciuolo, [2022](#)).

Any attempt to resolve this interstate conflict is hampered by the current political atmosphere. There have not been any reports of government-led evacuation attempts there, despite claims made by Tajik authorities that numerous civilian homes have been torched there and that a large number of individuals who have been critically injured are being treated in hospitals in the bordering Sughd region (Sullivan, [2021](#)). Both nations have accused one another of employing weaponry, such as Grad rockets and Bayraktar armed drones, to attack populous areas and infrastructure that supports the civilian population, killing civilians in the process. Similar confrontations in late April 2021 resulted in the deaths of nearly 50 persons on both sides, the majority of whom were civilians, hundreds of injuries, and the forced emigration of about 58,000 people. The reported deployment of explosive weapons with wide area impacts in populated areas, the claimed deliberate burning of homes and marketplaces, and the destruction of schools and other civilian infrastructure, and these actions could all be considered violations of the rules of war. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan should look into their role in civilian deaths and property damage, hold those guilty accountable, and offer suitable

relief to people. (Kachroo, 2022). To guarantee that civilians, including those who have been internally displaced, have adequate protection, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's international allies, organizations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations, should get in touch with both governments right away (Urciuolo, 2022).

Road Map

The path to peace will need the opposing sides to settle on a common map. Since elders have traditionally been used to mediate conflicts, the international community will need to take action to include elders in the communities to address the issue. To stabilize the geopolitical dynamics, the individual countries would also have to cooperate to improve the informal small-scale governance structures even further. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are both landlocked nations that share a roughly 1,000 km long boundary, much of which is up for debate. Shared water and land resources have also caused squabbles in the past. The boundary demarcation dispute is a relic from the Soviet period. Regular discussions have attempted to fix the issue; however, one of the key grounds of contention still exists regarding the map that should be used for demarcation reasons. The way to peace will require the opposing sides to settle on a shared map. The global community will also need to put more effort into resolving the conflict by working with local elders (Sullivan, 2021).

Conclusion

The ongoing border conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan affected those the most who reside close to the border. Such events have a significant socioeconomic impact that is occasionally challenging to reverse. Putting aside personal interests, the front-runners of the two countries essentially move fast to invent a practical resolution to this issue. They need assistance from regional and international players to resolve this issue. Russia has a key role to play in this situation. Given that it has army installations in two countries and that Kyrgyzstan is a member of the CSTO, which Russia heads, Moscow must take the initiative to mediate a settlement of the territorial disputes between the two presidents. The earliest possible border resolution should be a topic of talk

during the heads of the Central Asian states' consultative meeting.

Way Forward

The cease-fire between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan seems to be holding as of May 4th. There are a few options for managing the current situation and preventing future disputes from spiraling out of control. To overcome such issues, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, the five countries of Central Asia, should cooperate. The offer by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to mediate the crisis between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is encouraging. The people of Central Asia are aware that they are stronger when they work together and that addressing their problems is always preferable to enlisting the help of outside powers. However, in times of need, these former Soviet nations frequently turn to Russia for assistance. Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have access to external forces to help settle the conflict as members of the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), both of which are led by Russia. However, Russia may not have the time or motivation to handle another crisis given that it is embroiled in a diplomatic dispute with the United States, has deployed troops along Ukraine's border, and mediated a cease-fire that led to the deployment of Russian peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh. Uncertainty surrounds China's stance on the conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but it may see this as a chance to play a bigger part in the region. Iran has volunteered to mediate on the other side.

State-to-state confidence-building measures can stop clashes from growing, while community-to-community trust-building efforts along the borders of the region, similar to those carried out by USIP elsewhere, can help manage resource conflicts that frequently serve as the spark for clashes. It's also important to consider how social media processes information and the likelihood that it could be misused in this conflict and others in the future. It is more crucial than ever to work toward resolving the conflicts over resources, borders, access, and mistrust that are the root causes of these breakouts since the political momentum will no longer push toward keeping things under control. While assistance from outsiders is useful, the region itself

should provide the long-term answer to these issues.

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