

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Border Crisis

Forum: General Assembly

Student Officer: Julia Kim, Head President

Introduction

In direct translation, a border is the boundary of a country, and its definition refers to the boundary that separates the territory of one country from another country. Of the numerous countries, island countries sometimes have no borders, while others often do. When the map shows that the longest borders are in Russia, China, the United States and Canada, Chile, and Argentina. Among these countries, China has the longest border in the world, with a length of 22,147 kilometers. Many countries are tightening security at their borders and addressing their border issues with importance. That is because border issues are vital to homeland security, economic prosperity, and national sovereignty to protect borders from arms, drugs, contraband, and illegal movement of people while promoting legitimate trade and travel.

Background

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, were established, maintaining their borders in the 1920s under Josef Stalin's rule. Since independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have experienced economic, political, and social changes resulting from the dissolution of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) and have worked to overcome the problems. However, different Soviet maps and agreements were used as the basis for their claims to argue over ownership of various territories because the Kyrgyz and Tajik communities have shared property rights to access and use natural resources under the Soviet state-backed land occupation system.



It is the state of the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The current restrictions on Kyrgyzstan's pasture laws have affected Tajikistan's pasture users. Tajikistan's pasture laws are still under development. Rural governments are currently responsibly managing the country's pastures, but they are struggling because their functions are not clearly defined. In addition, Tajikistan's inhabitants have no legitimate access to Kyrgyzstan's grazing areas, as appropriate laws and international agreements have not yet been established in the management of the border meadows of the two countries.

Nor can the growing population of both countries support their weak infrastructure. The hydropower facilities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are located on a border they cannot care about. So, when the use of water supply increased, people had to suffer from water shortages. Many Kyrgyzstan farmers say that Tajiks living upstream of the river use too much water and complain that there is little water left. However, natural resource issues, including water resources, are being shunned by both countries without special laws and consultations.

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These internal problems also affect relations between neighboring countries. The situation at the border between the two countries is deadlocked as Tajik and Kyrgyz authorities continue to seek a solution to the border dispute. Today, as a result of ambiguous borders, disputes over them are a major issue between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The conflict is causing various problems over access and use of natural resources for irrigation water and grazing pastures. This situation often causes tension between the border guards and citizens.

Problem raised

A Meadow Resource Conflict

Since ancient times, the Kyrgyz people have lived nomadic lives, moving between

pastures at different elevations.

Tajiks kept three to four cows and most of their livestock in their homes. With the establishment of the Soviet Union, the Soviet regime forced the residents of Kyrgyz and Tajik provinces to move. Their livestock got redistributed into collective farms and state farms. Although the number of livestock



A Meadow Resource in Kyrgyzstan

increased during this period, livestock along the Tajik border was limited in their wandering areas, and they relied on Kyrgyzstan's territorial pastures. This pasture sharing referred to an agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and pasture management was under state control by the Soviet Union. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the collapse of the Soviet Union agreement becomes invalid.

Later, the law on pasture management in Kyrgyzstan stated that pasture use was based on local leases. The common authority may lease or manage the pasture as common property. It also offered individual pasture leases. Rent of pastureland is offered for five years and could extend for up to ten years. The Kyrgyz Pasture Act grants all Kyrgyz residents the right to use pasture but prohibits foreigners from using it unless there is an intergovernmental agreement. This situation has negatively affected Tajikistan's people, who do not have proper land use laws, such as the inability to use pastures. This leads to various disputes between these border communities, jeopardizing the peaceful coexistence of other ethnic groups in the region as well as sustainable pasture use.

Conflict of Ownership of Natural Resources

Over time, the number of small farms in both countries increased as collective farms in the two countries separated. Along with that, the use of water resources consumed by farms naturally increased together. Most of the water resources in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which share nearly 40 streams of water, have routes from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan. In the process, Kyrgyz people complain that Tajiks use too much water upstream of the river, leaving them with too little.

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Water resources are also an important resource that can directly affect people's livelihoods, so when disputes arise on the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, they are used as a way to create tension and heighten the situation between countries.

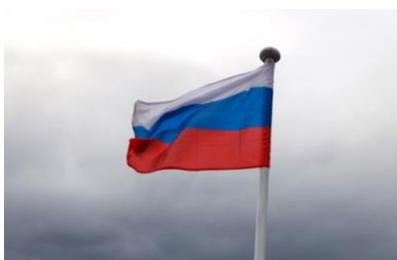
Although there are these problems, there are no special laws or consultations on this issue because most of them are in border areas where the interests of the two countries are lacking. As a result, people cannot use a lot of water.

Serious Cross-border Military Expansion

In September 2022, soldiers from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan fought gun battles at various points on the border. This battle expanded into Kyrgyzstan's territory, which ruined remote parts of the country. Tajikistan's military destroyed bridges, residential areas, and commercial districts across the Aksu River, and occupied the town's public schools. Kyrgyzstan also shelled Tajikistan's border areas. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, at least 62 civilians and military officers have been killed in Kyrgyzstan, about 200 have been injured, and about 136,000 have become domestic refugees. Tajikistan also announced 41 civilians and soldiers were killed.

Related Countries

Russia



The flag of Russia, the country which is the member of both SCO and CSTO

Russia is in an alliance with both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is also a member of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) at the same time. However, it did not intervene directly in the issues of both countries. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are members of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) that have historically decided not to intervene in disputes between member states. In response to the recent conflict, the CSTO proposed diplomatic mediation between Bishkek and Dushanbe which are the capital of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Russia is not interested in the union of Central Asia being unified without its own backing, but it also does not want to see the region turn into a volatile place along the southern border.



Logo of SCO

China

China is also a member of the SCO. Leaders of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan use border tensions for domestic political gain. Although both are completely different regimes, Tajikistan is very autocratic. The Tajik regime obtained ammunition and received military training from China, while the Chinese Ministry of Public Security funded the establishment of a new military base in Tajikistan to counter the threat from Afghanistan.

Iran

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Iran is interested in calming ongoing tensions between the two countries and preventing the border dispute between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan from escalating to other parts of Central Asia closer to Iranian territory. Iran has maintained a more balanced neutrality than other countries. Iran revived this approach on September 17, when Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani urged Bishkek and Dushanbe to peacefully resolve the military standoff by talking it out. Kanaani emphasized the friendly relationship between the two countries, stressing that Iran is ready to help resolve differences between the two countries. The Tajikistan regime is also receiving military training support from Iran, which has opened a production facility to produce Ababil-2 tactical drones.

Possible Solutions

Substantive Intervention of Each Government

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have agreed to demilitarize the disputed area, but the conflict is not over yet. The war between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has shaken the entire Confederation of Independent States (CIS). The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) proposed diplomatic mediation, but there was no positive response from the parties. The solution to this problem was difficult to find because CSTO had not previously developed a method to solve a similar problem.

However, these systems do not solve the source of the problem. Several institutional changes in the agricultural sector, which should provide sustainable resource management since the independence of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have failed to regulate the water and pasture sectors of the border region. This is making it harder for people over time and can eventually lead to bigger conflicts and conflicts. Pasture problems and ownership of natural resources cannot be solved without government intervention. So, it is necessary to strengthen the government's capacity in this area, reinforce the agency in charge, and improve the system effectively. In proceeding with this, clarification of the agencies and departments in charge, transparency in the use and management of natural resources, including water resources, compromises on the separation of pastures, and transparency in the use of profits used as taxes are essential.

Glossary

CSTO: Collective Security Treaty Organization; The federation consists of six former Soviet states, including Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. The federation is based on independent Soviet forces.

Border: Borders are typically geographical boundaries imposed by features such as the sea and terrain, but also by governments, sovereign states, federal states, and other sub-national entities.



Kyrgyzstan's president is shaking hands with Tajikistan's president at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

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SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organization; The organization is responsible for politics, economy, international security and national defense in Eurasia. It is the world's largest regional organization, accounting for about 60% of Eurasia's area, 40% of the world's population, and 30% of the world's GDP.

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States; It is a regional intergovernmental organization in Eurasia. It was founded after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The CIS encourages cooperation in the economic, political and military sectors and has specific powers related to trade, finance, legislation, and security coordination. It also promoted cooperation in crime prevention across borders.

Timeline

1920 – The Soviet Union established boundaries between the two regions, resulting in settlements.

1992 – The dissolution of the Soviet Union.

May 1992 – Establishment of CSTO.

June 2001 – SCO signing between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

April 2021 – The border dispute between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan began.

May 2021 – The two countries completed their withdrawal from the border, and on May 18, officials announced that they had agreed to joint security controls along the disputed border.

July 2021 – part from a small-scale incident; The ceasefire has begun.

January 2022 – At the end of the ceasefire, two civilians were killed and several wounded in the clashes. Authorities in Kyrgyzstan say Tajik citizens blocked roads between central Bat ken province and the town of Ishaan in Kyrgyzstan contributed to the clashes.

March 2022 – Armed clashes broke out between Kyrgyzstan's border guards. Officials from the Bat ken region of Kyrgyzstan and the Sughd region of Tajikistan met.

September 2022 – The two countries attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit to discuss the conflict.

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