

THE PROTRACTED BORDER AND TERRITORIAL DISPUTES BETWEEN
KYRGYZSTAN AND ITS NEIGHBORS

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ABSTRACT

THE PROTRACTED BORDER AND TERRITORIAL DISPUTES BETWEEN KYRGYZSTAN AND ITS NEIGHBORS, by Major Suiuntai Zhaimagambetov, 82 pages.

The Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan) still has not resolved border disputes between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan since getting its independence due to having political, social, diplomatic, and economic challenges and the impact of the old Soviet border policy. As constituent parts of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries, including these three countries, did not face border disputes. The scholars claimed that the collapse of the USSR had the effect of reviving border disputes between post-Soviet republics and external countries. During the Soviet era, Moscow formed the borders between its Central Asian republics and its planners drew borderlines without considering those countries' original geographic frontiers and ethnic links and borders were often revised. The presence of enclaves is another source of territorial dispute. Kyrgyzstan and both adjoining republics attempt to resolve the problems in their respective favor. There are not only border and territorial disputes, but also disagreements over natural resources. Due to unresolved disputes, there often occur border incidents that cause casualties and increase the number of confrontations. This thesis studies the main source of continuing border disputes for Kyrgyzstan that hampers the resolution of border disputes. These facts increase the risk of future conflicts within the region, and affect overall peace, stability, and security of the nations and region.

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In the name of God. The most gracious and the most merciful. All praise is due to God. Lord of the world.

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ACRONYMS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

We would like to voice our positions: the border issues should not be solved by force. We are concerned about the trend, when conflicts are solved by force. Nothing good will come of it - to any country. Let us just solve border issues peacefully. In an extreme case - somehow postpone, but to solve without the use of military force. The boundaries should be friendly in the future. Asia security issues should be primarily solved by the Asian countries themselves - without the intervention of other, distant countries.

— President of Kyrgyzstan, Almazbek Atambayev,
Shanghai-24.kg News Agency

A nation that cannot control its borders is not a nation.

— President, Ronald Reagan, *Quotes by Ronald Reagan*

The resolution of border disputes should not be difficult given the right conditions and the prospect of peaceful negotiations. No one knows what will happen in the future, except God, but everyone lives with his or her conjectures. Before the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR or Soviet Union), one could predict that someday it would collapse. However, to the question “exactly when would it collapse?” no one had the answer. As constituent parts of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, did not face border disputes. Free crossing of borders between all the republics of the Soviet Union and free movement from one republic to another without passports were the norm. Although all post-Soviet republics officially got their independence, some of them are still dependent on each other. One of them is the Kyrgyz Republic, known as Kyrgyzstan and during the Soviet Union known as Kirghizia.

The Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan) is a landlocked Central Asian country. The total area of the country is 199,951 square kilometers (km). The total border length is 4,675, 17. Kyrgyzstan is surrounded by mountains and bordered by China (1,084,35), Kazakhstan (1,241,58), Uzbekistan (1,378,44), and Tajikistan (970,8).¹ Since declaring independence, Kyrgyzstan has been struggling with economic, political, and social challenges that have enough impact on resolving border and territorial disputes.

While a part of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan played a crucial role in the economic sector as a supplier of minerals such as mercury, lead, copper, zinc, silver, antimony, and gold. These minerals moved freely across the borders within the USSR, and industries outside the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) depended on them. The development of Kyrgyzstan's mining industry began early in the twentieth century and became significant. Its shares of total production of minerals in the USSR amounted to 100 percent of antimony, 40-100 percent of mercury, 30 percent of rare-earth materials, and 15 percent of uranium.² During the period of the USSR many skilled workers relocated to Kyrgyzstan and most of them were involved in the production of important agricultural and industrial products, such as textile equipment and machines, missiles, ammunition, and guns. Right after the dissolution of the USSR, however, many of those skilled people moved to other newly independent countries, mostly to Russia.

One source of tensions over borders between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors has been water. Kyrgyzstan, in contrast to its neighboring countries, did not have oil and gas

¹ Erlan Kirataev, e-mail message to author, May 2, 2015.

² Artyom Zozulnsky, "Kyrgyzstan: Mining Industry Overview," accessed September 20, 2014, http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/uploads/images/lzXO-ytUAKSiRn8QQojRTg/KG_07_Mining_Report.pdf.

resources, but it had plenty of pure water sources that originate from the mountains. Water resources in this region are strategic, and Kyrgyzstan is rich with ground and surface waters; the enormous stocks of which are in the rivers, glaciers, and snow masses. The annual average volume of total water resources make up 2,548 km³ including 50 km³ of surface river runoff, 13 km³ of potential reserves of ground water, 1,745 km³ of lake water, and 650 km³ of glaciers.³ After independence of Kyrgyzstan, its water resources would play a significant role to improve the economic situation, especially in terms of selling water to neighbors, building hydroelectric dams, exporting the hydroelectric energy, and using water for the agricultural purposes.

Kyrgyzstan's Naryn River flows into Uzbekistan, which draws benefits from the water almost without cost. Russia agreed to build two hydroelectric power plants in Kyrgyzstan, one of which Kambarata -1, will operate through a dam on the Naryn River and affect the flow of water into Uzbekistan. However, Uzbek officials refused to take part in discussions about the proposed hydroelectric plant. Russia's offer to fund the dam was seen as a means to take control over former Soviet republics through scarce water resources. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan has openly warned of possible regional conflict over water resources.⁴ It seems that Moscow's interest was not only in financial profit but also in the escalating conflict between peaceful neighboring republics over trans-boundary

³ M. K. Cusupov, N. E. Mamatov, and B. Raimcanov, "Water Resources Problems in Kyrgyzstan," accessed September 20, 2014, http://www2.dsi.gov.tr/english/congress2007/chapter_3/86.pdf.

⁴ Ruby Russel and Askar Erkebaev, "Kyrgyzstan Risks Regional Water Fight, as Russia Waits in the Wings," *Washington Times*, November 9, 2012, accessed September 20, 2014, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/nov/9/kyrgyzstan-risks-regional-water-fight-russia-waits/?page=all>.

water resources. The USSR planned to build in Kyrgyzstan the Toktogul dam, but instead, they constructed the Kambar-Ata dam in Uzbekistan. This dam is located in the city of Khonobod, Uzbekistan, between two regions of Kyrgyzstan whose borders have been closed unilaterally for a long time. This is a major obstacle for citizens of the two countries, especially in terms of visiting their relatives in Uzbekistan and crossing between two regions Osh and Jalalabad (instead of 50 km, people drive more than 130 km), as well as promoting agricultural relationship, exporting and importing goods, etc.

Besides economic issues, Kyrgyzstan has faced political challenges, which have been influencing border disputes since its independence. During the Soviet era, Moscow formed the borders between its Central Asian republics and drew borderlines without considering those countries' original geographic frontiers and ethnic links.⁵ Along with this redrawing of borders by Soviet officials, the republics were permitted to have long-term leases of territory from other republics. As a result, those leased territories became enclaves of isolated islands of territory within the boundaries of other republics. For example, the Batken province, which is located in the southwest of Kyrgyzstan, contains seven enclaves that belong to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Additionally, Kyrgyzstan's exclave, Barak, is located in the territory of Uzbekistan. (Figure 1). Compounding this situation are rumors of how these leases came about, to include the loss of territories by Kyrgyz officials in a card game with Tajik and Uzbek officials. According to the former head of the Kyrgyz Department of Regional Problems, Salamat Alamanov, there is no

⁵ International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: Border Disputes and Potential Conflicts," *Asia Report*, no. 33 (April 4, 2002): 1.

documentations of transferring one of the enclaves, Shakhimardan, to Uzbekistan by Kyrgyz officials, by either lease or in any other way.⁶



Figure 1. Enclaves and Exclaves within the Fergana Valley

Source: Roman Muzalevsky, *Border Disputes in the Ferghana Valley Threaten to Undermine Regional Trade and Stability* (Washington, DC: The Jamestown Foundation, August 2014), accessed January 25, 2015, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42706&cHash=53b6bf8f36b41d6221ada47e0516dfcb#.VMVF8E0g_IU.

After the Central Asian states secured their independence, the state borders within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) remained open and trade continued to

⁶ Leila Saralaeva, “Kyrgyz Call for Return of Uzbek Territory—Territorial Disputes Threatening to Aggravate Kyrgyz-Uzbek Relations,” accessed October 11, 2014, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/kyrgyz-call-return-uzbek-territory>.

cross freely. Neither Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan nor Tajikistan rushed to demarcate their borders.

Two developments at the end of the decade brought the issue of border demarcation sharply into focus. The first was the activity of armed guerrillas crossing from Tajikistan through Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 with the aim of overthrowing the regime in Uzbekistan. That drove Uzbekistan to take measures to protect the country by mining its borders and restricting free movement across its frontiers. Since Uzbekistan sanctions occurred in the absence of an agreement on borders, neighbors viewed them negatively amid growing concern that Uzbekistan was unilaterally determining its boundaries. The second development that underlined the need to demarcate Central Asia's borders was the establishment of visa regimes by some states, most particularly Russia's 30 August 2000 announcement that it would withdraw from the 1992 "Bishkek Accord" that allowed visa free travel between almost all member countries of the CIS. Moscow's decision to establish a visa regime was tied to security concerns, especially the smuggling of narcotics and contraband, illegal immigration, and belief that terrorists and organized criminal gangs were operating freely within the CIS because of the visa-free regime. With the introduction of visas, it quickly became necessary to institute border checkpoints at agreed boundaries, spurring the Central Asian states to push forward with border talks. Uzbekistan had begun enforcing a rigorous visa regime in 1999 that complicated the normal flow of traffic in the region and raised concerns among Central Asians about the consequences of demarcating borders.⁷

Thus, border issues might have been resolved in those republics on a mutually suitable basis in accordance with the requirements of international law if there was political will. Additionally, taking advantage of the political instability of Kyrgyzstan, "its friendly neighbors" were adding some lands of Kyrgyzstan's border areas. While Chinese herders were penetrating deep into Kyrgyz territory for pasture, Uzbekistan was advancing its border posts into Kyrgyz land, and Tajikistan was occupying large areas inside the Batken province by settling in land vacated by impoverished Kyrgyz people

⁷ International Crisis Group, 3.

who migrated abroad or to other cities.⁸ Compounding the actions of neighboring states against the integrity of Kyrgyzstan's territory were those of the countries' post-Soviet leaders. The first president of the Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akaev, committed illegal actions against his nation by letting the police shoot at peaceful protestors, when he ceded the land of Kyrgyzstan to China, thus abusing his power. After overthrowing Askar Akaev in 2005, the next president Bakiev Kurmanbek ceded the Karkyra territory to Kazakhstan, which was located in the north of Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, in 2010 he was also overthrown by Kyrgyz protesters.

Importantly, two colored revolutions impacted on the progress of resolutions of border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors. The first revolution happened in March 2005 and the second one occurred in April 2010. For example, Kyrgyzstan lost a whole year in the process of defining the borders in 2010. Due to the April 2010 revolution, on the initiative of the Uzbek and Tajik sides of the negotiations on the borders had been suspended from April 2010 to May 2011.⁹

During the Soviet era, borders were often revised. Thus, their boundaries turned into vital to border discussions and arguments.¹⁰ Access to official materials (Soviet records and maps) has been difficult. Officials in Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan, and Dushanbe, the capital city of Tajikistan, criticized the inaccessibility of the central

⁸ Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen, *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation-State* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010), 46.

⁹ Ekaterina Ivashenko, "Кыргызстан: Большой Вопрос, или Как Решать Пограничные Споры" [Kyrgyzstan: A Painful Question or How to Resolve the Border Disputes], accessed October 14, 2015, <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/7437>.

¹⁰ International Crisis Group, 3.

archives, which are located in Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan. Furthermore, as of 2002, Bishkek had not sought assistance from Moscow to gain access to records located there.¹¹ In addition to the aforementioned political instability in Kyrgyzstan, there are social factors that affect border issues.

One of the social issues in Kyrgyzstan is ethnicity. Kyrgyzstan is an ethnically diverse republic. The southern provinces of Kyrgyzstan are the most ethnically Uzbek populated areas, especially near the border. The border issues have contributed to the redefinition of ethnic and geographical senses of identity, which has in turn created the possibility of ethnic conflict. Since 1999 Uzbekistan has strengthened its borders against terrorism, smuggling, and other threats. After the ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in 2010, Uzbekistan closed its borders without informing Kyrgyzstan through diplomatic channels. The assertion made by the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, about securing the border and its prosperity from impoverished Kyrgyzstanis was criticized by groups because equally advantageous trade was going on across borders.¹² A poor economic situation, increasing organized crime groups, widespread corruption, growing unemployment, tensions between the south and north of the republic have impaired the officials' ability to exercise control over the country. These factors hinder Kyrgyzstan from negotiating and normalizing relations with its neighbors.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Nick Megoran, "On Researching 'Ethnic Conflict': Epistemology, Politics, and a Central Asian Boundary Dispute" *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 2 (March 2007): 253-277, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org.lumen.cgsccarl.com/stable/pdfplus/10.2307/20451348.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

Importance

Therefore, the border question remains a serious issue because it defines the future and sovereignty of the Kyrgyz state. With the exception of Kazakhstan, other neighboring countries threaten Kyrgyzstan's border. For example, civilians and border patrols of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have recently exchanged fire in the Tajik-populated enclave of Vorukh in Kyrgyzstan's southern Batken. Although the Kyrgyz border patrols warned them that buildings or infrastructure were not authorized, Tajik construction workers did not leave the Kyrgyz borderland arguing that the terrain belonged to them.¹³ Moreover, since 1999 Uzbekistan has worked unilaterally to strengthen its border control through the demolition of bridges over canals, denial of access to noncitizens attempting to cross, initiating a visa requirement, erecting a two-meter-high barbed wire perimeter fence along large stretches of the valley boundary, and digging a trench of along the border. Uzbekistan has absorbed tens of thousands of square meters of Kyrgyz land.¹⁴ In contrast to the situation with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan has completed the border demarcation process with its other two neighbors, Kazakhstan and China.

Research Questions

This summary of issues that relate to border and territorial disputes forms the context for the author's exploration of why Kyrgyzstan still has not resolved delimitation

¹³ Menas Consulting, "New border incident between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan," accessed October 12, 2014, http://www.menas.co.uk/menasborders/news/article/3541/New_border_incident_between_Kyrgyzstan_and_Tajikistan/.

¹⁴ Diener and Hagen, 42

and demarcation processes for its borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan since obtaining its independence and the reasons for the lasting border disputes.

The primary question for research is: what are the sources of continuing border disputes for Kyrgyzstan?

To address the primary question, secondary research questions are:

1. What are the origins and nature of the border dispute between the two states?
2. What other disputes are there between the two states?
3. What efforts have the two states made to resolve the disputes between them?

What progress and results have these efforts produced?

4. What role(s) have third parties played in the disputes themselves or in the efforts to resolve the disputes?

Key terms and their definitions

The following terms will be used throughout the thesis:

Border: a line used to divide one jurisdiction from another.

Borderlands: regions proximate to either side of a border. Borderlands may also be interpreted as the spaces of hybridity created by the proximity of two or more distinct cultures, economic systems, or political entities.

Boundary delimitation: this second phase involves cartographic using maps and satellite imagery to plot the boundary. The use of global positioning systems is making this process much more exact.

Boundary demarcation: this third phase involves marking the boundary using objects such as poles, stones, fences, and walls. Once again, GPS technology is increasing the accuracy and sustainability of this process.

Boundary: the limits of a territory; the boundary of a state defines the scope of its territory.

Enclave: a portion of one state's territory completely surrounded by the territory of another state. One state's enclave is often another state's exclave. The only exception would be enclaves that do not belong to another state.

Exclave: a territory belonging to one state that is not contiguous with rest of the state. Most exclaves are also enclaves inside another state. The only exception would be exclaves that are not completely surrounded by another state.

State: a government recognized as possessing sovereignty over a territory and its people. States are the primary political units of the modern world and together constitute the interstate system.

State border: the line (and passing along this line the vertical surface), which determines the limits of the territory of the state (land, water, subsoil and airspace), and accordingly the action limits of state sovereignty.¹⁵

Territorial: disputes of this nature relate to broader claims to specific territorial entities or entire regions. Classic examples relate to islands.

Territory: a general term used to describe a portion of space occupied by a person, groups, local economy, or state.¹⁶

The Fergana Valley: a huge region located in Central Asia's southeast corner and is enclosed by the Tian Shan Mountains to the north and the Gissar-Alai range to the

¹⁵ Отчественные Записки [Native Notes], “Граница: Понятие и Термины” [Border: Concepts and Terms], accessed November 26, 2014, <http://www.strana-oz.ru/2002/6/granica-ponyatie-i-terminy>.

¹⁶ Diener and Hagen, *Borderlines and Borderlands*, 229-234.

south. The valley's approximately 22,000 square kilometers (almost 8,500 square miles) of flat plains distinguishes it from surrounding regions in Central Asia, where the terrain is made up of mountains, deserts and treeless steppes. It is also distinguished by its agricultural fertility, due to the Syr Darya River and its numerous tributaries—water resources that are the subject of controversy in the region. The Fergana Valley is a major source of food for Central Asia. Its principal crops include wheat, cotton, rice, vegetables and fruit. The Fergana Valley's population consists mainly of Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Tajiks. Correspondingly, the valley is split among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, each of the three countries in the Fergana Valley contains significant minorities of the other two ethnic groups.¹⁷

The next chapter will review the literature on border disputes and provide an evaluation of the importance of that material to this study. It will be followed by an explanation of the research design.

¹⁷ Stratfor Global Intelligence, “Central Asia: The Complexities of the Fergana Valley,” accessed November 26, 2014, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/central-asia-complexities-fergana-valley#axzz3Kfl1pKTt>.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The extant literature includes publications on border and territorial disputes around the world, including the Central Asian states; however, there have been a few specific studies about Kyrgyzstan's border issues with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan since receiving their independence. In this chapter, the author will review literatures concerning Kyrgyzstan's border and territorial disputes with other neighboring countries, similar issues in the former USSR, and in another countries around the world.

The extant literature, while not robust in its consideration of the border disputes in Central Asia, offers insights into the history and origins of such disputes in general. The author will both draw on this broad context and build on the literature by conducting a detailed examination of the border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The Border and Territorial Disputes between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan

Nick Megoran examined, in the book *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation–State*, the chapter 3 *The Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Boundary*, the border and territorial disputes between those three post-Soviet Union republics. The disputes originated in Stalin's policy that designated ethnic republics within the USSR and the importance of the formerly internal boundaries that became the borders of the newly independent states of Central Asia after the dissolution the Soviet Union. In his research the author was interested in a national territorial delimitation and

drawing boundaries, as well as the results of Soviet-era policies that have continued to affect the region in complex ways.

In 1924, those three current republics' people were called "Sarts," "Tajiks," "Kuramas", or "Kypchaks" to differentiate between them, and the country of Turkestan was divided into Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party. This was based on Lenin's proposal and approval of the Politburo (the highest policy-making government authority under the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) that established a special commission for the national territorial delimitation. The Soviet government formed a Tajik Autonomous Region within the Uzbek SSR, which achieved its full union status as the Tajik SSR after five years. Present day Kyrgyzstan was the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Region that attained its full union status as the Kyrgyz SSR in 1936.¹⁸ Up to the dissolution of the USSR there were no international borders between the union republics including in the Fergana Valley as the countries did not recognize any obstacles while their populations moved from one republic to another republic. This was partially due to planning projects, such as industrial and agricultural, which set conditions for people from one republic to move freely over into the territory of its neighboring republic.

However, in 1955 there was established a joint Uzbek-Kyrgyz SSR border demarcation commission due to existing a few interrepublican disputes in order to resolve them, but that commission did not complete its work. The same year the Tajik territory, Vorukh, was formed within the Kyrgyz SSR. Consequently, in 1989 the Kyrgyz SSR created a border delimitation and demarcation committee that established two

¹⁸ Diener and Hagen, *Borderlines and Borderlands*, 38.

arrangements of land usage, which were essential territorial swaps. The Tajik SSR's Leninabad province was utilizing 636 hectares of land in Leylek, a city within the Batken province of the Kyrgyz SSR,. The people of Leylek were, in return, using 164 hectares of the Tajik's land.¹⁹

Toward the end of 1998 Uzbekistan began consolidating its borders with Kyrgyzstan by the demolition of bridges over canals, setting of concrete blocks, eliminating cross border bus routes and formally imposing visa requirements on citizens of Kyrgyzstan. Then, year by year it unilaterally started constructing two-meter-high barbed wire perimeter fence along large stretches of the valley boundary, which resulted in the accusation of Uzbekistan assimilating significant hectares of Kyrgyzstani lands. Usage of water resources by Uzbekistan plays a significant role to water its land and suspend its economy that comes from mostly cotton. Although Kyrgyzstan did not mention anything before about watering that would not be free anymore because they consider it is not fair for Uzbekistan not to contribute financially for using of water for a long period. It is not fair to make Kyrgyzstan dependent on Uzbekistani gas supplies and turn off during the winter periods for the unpaid bills.²⁰

Megoran wrote in his journal "Political Geography" that mapmakers of the Soviet Union never considered the created boundaries would be independent republics because their planning approaches were considered on a unified basis in terms of watering, gas, and transport networks. Additionally, industrial, transport, and agricultural planning projects of one republic moved freely over into the territory of its neighboring republic.

¹⁹ Ibid., 41.

²⁰ Ibid., 42.

During the 1920s and 1950s, the Commissions of border delimitation and demarcation were not finalized, instead they left dissimilar maps viewing varied borderlines.²¹

In the book *Border and Territorial Disputes* a scholar, John B. Allcock briefly explored Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan's unresolved territorial issues. The scholar claimed that the collapse of the USSR had the effect of reviving border disputes between post-Soviet republics and external countries. So, the author is interested in researching whether the same events happened specifically in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan or not, and who were the key players necessary to resolve these disputes.

The book further discussed issues concerning the reopening of old territorial disputes in the 1920s by the Soviet officials, where Tajiks were dispossessed from their cultural and religious values. The actions of the Soviet Union were particularly considered unjust because map makers of the Soviet Union annexed Samarkand, Bukhara, and other historic Tajik–populated cities to Uzbekistan. Additionally, Tajiks put in a claim to the Surkhan–Darya region, which is located in Uzbekistan, west of the existing border to the south–west of Dushanbe. However, Uzbeks countered with the fact that Fergana valley cities such as Khodjent, Isfara, and Kanibadam were within Uzbekistan until 1929, but were included in Tajikistan after it became one of the SSRs.²²

Furthermore, the book explored that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan experienced territorial issues. For example, in the late 1980s, the Tajiks claimed the Batken province of the Kyrgyz SSR stretching south–west from Osh up to the Tajik territory connecting

²¹ Nick Megoran, “The Critical Geopolitics of the Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary Dispute, 1999–2000,” *Political Geography* 23 (2004): 733.

²² John B. Allcock, *Border and Territorial Disputes* (UK: Longman Group, 1992), 191.

the region of Tajikistan with the mountains areas of Alay and Zaalayskiy (figure 2). But, Kyrgyzstan held an opposite opinion of Tajikistan's statement, and Kyrgyz nationalists claimed to the Gorno-Badakhshan region in the Pamir Mountains and the top reaches of the Surkhob river valley of the Tajikistan's present territories. Nevertheless, the most interesting part of the knotty aspect of these disputes is that enormous Uzbek minorities in both republics retained regional aspirations originating from the historical dominance of Uzbeks in the pre-Soviet Muslim government of the region.²³



Figure 2. Map of Tajikistan

Source: Aaron Erlich, “Tajikistan: From Refugee Sender to Labor Exporter,” Migration Policy Institute, July 1, 2006, accessed January 25, 2015, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/tajikistan-refugee-sender-labor-exporter>.

²³ Ibid., 191.

In the Turkish *Journal of Defense Sciences (Savunma Bilimleri Dergisi)*, the Turkish scholar Levent Demirci explores the overall problematic aspects and territorial disputes in Central Asia including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. He related historical events that have been affecting the region since the Soviet Union artificially determined the borders of the nations, and this false or deliberate identification has not allowed those republics to move forward from their problems.

Demirci's analysis of the border arrangements made by the Soviet Union in those three countries points to the "divide and rule" policy that was intended to intentionally alienate the populations. While observing the continuation of this policy, there have been changes in the land given to the SSRs. For example, Uzbekistan's Hodjent region was given in September 1929 to Tajikistan, and its name later changed to Leninabad. The same policy took place between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, in 1924, where the Karakalpakstan province was first given to Kazakhstan, and then in 1938 given to Uzbekistan. A few years later, after the start of construction of the Grand Canal in the Fergana Valley, a portion of the land of Tajikistan was given back to Uzbekistan.²⁴

Demirci argued the Soviet Union's purpose is still going on, and the border adjustments would result in a situation where no ethnic group in any region could stand on its own and be fully independent. This would result in a constant source of problems in the region, regardless of borders and physical security needs. In fact, the geographical

²⁴ Levent Demirci, "Özbekistan, Kırgızistan ve Tacikistan'ın Kesişimindeki Sorunlu Vadi: Fergana" [The troubled valley Intersection between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Fergana], *Savunma Bilimleri Dergisi* [Defense Science Journal], 11 (November 2012): 42.

structure of the challenges in the coming period with Soviet practice has created a complicated situation.²⁵

Specifically, he identified aspects of the border issues between those republics that are beginning to be seen as the most significant issues. Economic, political, and security factors in the regions continue to adversely affect the solution of the boundary problem. Entering the limits of the difficult issues to be resolved by peaceful means, directly affects the security of this region. Uzbekistan is the largest population in Central Asia, has the most advanced military power, and it is a key country that has common borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in solving the border problems.²⁶

Consequently, Demirci identified in his research two main problems that arose between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The first problem was that presence of enclaves. The other problem is presence of disagreements over the borderlines of their regions. The presence of enclaves is a vital problem that negatively affect relations between those republics. For example, there are two of four important Uzbek enclaves in Kyrgyzstan, Sokh and Shohimardon. The geopolitical and geo-economic importance of Uzbekistan's enclaves in Kyrgyzstan increases the importance of the issue. Natural gas is extracted in the Sokh enclave. At the same time during the Soviet era, there was the Soviet military base in there. Today this military base is used as the center of military exercises.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 42.

²⁷ Ibid., 45.

The Border and Territorial Disputes in the other Former Republics
of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

In the book *Border and Territorial Disputes* scholars, Allcock, Arnold, Day, Lewis, Poultney, Rnace, and Sagar, briefly addressed not only Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan's territorial issues but also other territorial disputes in the remainder of the former USSR and countries around the world with similar unresolved boundary and territorial issues. The scholars claimed that the collapse of the USSR had the effect of reviving border disputes between post-Soviet republics and external countries.

On the eve of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, almost all republics indicated ambitions to territorial expansion, although, the governments of the new republics announced their support for the preservation and maintenance of present borders. However, immediately after the collapse of the USSR, Kazakhstan's nationalists claimed the Russian Federation's territories, which are located on the western border of Kazakhstan, Astrakhan, Volgograd, Orenburg districts and on the north frontier of Kazakhstan, Kurgan, and Omsk to the Altay mountain area in the north-east. Further, the Russians showed their readiness to claim enormous territories of Kazakhstan that were the Aktyubinsk and Uralsk districts, a large part of northern Kazakhstan, including the cities of Kustanany, Kotchetav, and Tselinograd. Particularly, these areas were Russians predominant ethnicity.²⁸ (See figure 3).

²⁸ John B. Allcock, *Border and Territorial Disputes* (UK: Longman Group. 1992), 191.



Figure 3. Map of Kazakhstan

Source: MapsNWorld, “Map of Kazakhstan,” accessed January 25, 2015, <http://www.mapsnworld.com/kazakhstan/kazakhstan-map.html>.

The scholars also explored more than ten years ago one of today’s ongoing significant issues; the invasion by Russia into the Crimea, which was a part of Ukraine. Thus, there was Ukrainian apprehension before the dissolution of the Soviet Union because Russians would claim on Ukrainian territories where majority of regions formed Russians ethnicity, although, they signed a treaty guaranteeing existing borders on November 19, 1990.²⁹ It meant that by that period, the world had already noticed the territorial disputes between Russia and Ukraine, and the invasion occurred despite a bilateral treaty, which the Russian Federation violated. Another important note identified was that on November 28, 1991, the Russians adopted a law that gave citizenship to Russians living outside the borders of Russia. This included roughly 26 million people,

²⁹ Ibid., 159.

including an enormous part of the Russian contingent of 22 per cent of 51,400,000 population in Ukraine.³⁰ After the dissolution of the USSR, events led to not only of redrawing the map of Europe but also of reopening old territorial issues and creating new ones.

Russian researchers, Irina Komissina and Azhdar Kurtov in the journal *Central Asia and The Caucasus*, discovered that Kyrgyzstan was a legal successor of both the Russian empire and the USSR, and has historically established borders with China. The initial border question was regulated between czarist Russia and China. Beijing also recognized the Soviet Union's borders that existed at the time it was recognized in 1949. The USSR, as the successor of the czarist empire, retained this territory, but preferred not to discuss its disputed nature publicly at the highest political level, although it held long and strained negotiations with Beijing. Moreover, they cited the importance of a historical event that recorded of 26 August 1999: the signing of an agreement on the state borders between China, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. At that time, Bishkek and Beijing entered into an additional agreement, which was ratified by the Kyrgyz parliament. According to this agreement, Kyrgyzstan conceded several areas to China.³¹

The Turkish scholar, Isa Burak Gonca examined in his research paper "World Politics Ethnic Tensions and Regional Conflicts" historical records leading to recent events of Caucasus region, which is located between the borders of Asia and Europe, and is the center of the territorial disputes, fighting, and terrorism. Specifically he provided

³⁰ Ibid., 160.

³¹ Irina Komissina and Azhdar Kurtov, "Russia-China-Central Asia: Striving for a New Quality," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 26, no. 2 (2004): 156.

research of the bloody territorial conflicts in Caucasus region between Armenia and Azerbaijan during the era of Soviet Union, which is the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict.

In 1921, Joseph Stalin and Vladimir Lenin passed on the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan when they worked through the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party in order to calm Mustafa Kemal, the tough leader of the Turkish Nationalist Army. Their decision infuriated the Armenian leaders. Consequently, Azerbaijan and Armenia became two of fifteen autonomous republics of the Soviet Union under the name of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic until 1936. Then, according to their “divide-and-rule” policy the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic was divided into three SSRs as the Armenian, Azerbaijan, and Georgian SSRs where Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (province) was remained within the Azerbaijan SSR.³²

Gonca made remarkable arguments that the USSR was losing its power and after Michael Gorbachev’s Openness and Restructuring policies, between Azerbaijan and Armenia started bloody war over Nagorno-Karabakh disputed territory that lasted from 1988 to 1994. However, until May 1994, it seems that Russia or other major countries did not demonstrate their capability or willingness to stop the war. The war eventually ended with the defeat of Azerbaijan with thousands casualties. The Armenians then pushed on to occupy Azerbaijani territory outside of Karabakh, creating a buffer zone connecting Karabakh and Armenia. The Minsk Group was established in 1992 by the Organization

³² Isa Burak Gonca, “What Are Armenian’s Claims and Azerbaijan’s Position over Nagorno-Karabakh and Peace Efforts?” *World Politics Ethnic Tensions and Regional Conflicts* (2010), accessed December 28, 2014, http://www.academia.edu/524700/What_are_Armenians_Claims_and_Azerbaijans_Position_over_Nagorno-Karabakh_and_Peace_Efforts.

for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with purpose of mediating to end the war between these two countries.³³

However, Russia was not in favor of having a peacekeeping force in the Caucasus region because that group consisted of eleven North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries and it was Russia's backyard. In May 1994, ultimately Russia arranged for a cease fire and the Bishkek Protocol was signed between two republics in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. As a result, the protocol ended the Nagorno-Karabakh War and froze the dispute, which is still in effect. His research provided two clear clarifications for the initial of that conflict, demographical and influential. The demographical side is the Armenians considered the Nagorno-Karabakh historically belonged to them, as ethnic Armenians made up 94 percent of the citizens in Nagorno-Karabakh by 1921 and reduced to 76 percent by 1979. The influential side is Russia was powerful and influential in the Caucasus, and when Russia lost its influence on Georgia and Azerbaijan on the eve the collapse the Soviet Union it was a huge loss for it.³⁴

Border and Territorial Disputes Outside the Post-Soviet Space

The broader literature on border disputes in general also bears consideration of the specifics of Kyrgyzstan's relations with its neighbors. In the *Wall Street Journal*, American reporter Amy Dockser Marcus explored reasons for many of the existing border disputes in the Middle East. She traced most of the instability to the period following World War I, when Britain and France divided the Turkish Ottoman Empire

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

and formed the today's Middle East. Another reason was the discovery of oil and other natural resources in remote abandoned islands of the Middle East.

Thus, because of the economic and political interests of Britain and France, the Middle East's borders were established through their eyes rather than based on the national, political, cultural, or religious importance of the dwellers. That set in motion many of the disputes that linger until present. Specifically, the British formed Iraq by randomly assembling the three former Turkish Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. In 1990 Saddam Hussein used the old border dispute as an excuse for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait because the country was one of the former Ottoman territories.³⁵

After finding oil and other natural resources in the Middle East, in order to possess control of oil, water resources, etc., Middle Eastern countries started marking their borders. Distant islands turned out to be vital because they provided access to untouched oil reserves in the surrounding the ground under the sea. However, when those countries wanted to demarcate their borders, they were faced with obstacles because the official maps were drawn up by the former colonial countries, which controlled the Middle East after World War I.³⁶

According to Marcus's argument, the Middle East provided the main spark and rebirth of many border disputes is the Gulf War. After the Gulf War, Yemen laid claim to portions of land given to Saudi Arabia 70 years prior by Britain. Moreover Syria still

³⁵ Amy Dockser Marcus, "Border Disputes Continue to Roil Mideast-Despite Arab-Israeli Moves, Disputes Abound," accessed December 29, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/995705202/6F25B8FB888B4750PQ/6?accountid=28992>.

³⁶ Ibid.

desires the return of a strip of its territory that France passed to Turkey during the colonial period. She wrote one of the Middle East experts' comments, Asher Susser at Tel Aviv University, "The average Middle East border is only 70 years old, which is nothing in the context of the history of the region. In the eyes of many Arab countries, the region's borders remain fundamentally illegitimate, the artificial creations of foreign powers."³⁷ Furthermore, some of the present border and territorial disputes seem to be determined as much by commercial interests as historical claims. For example, when Iran declared intentions to construct an airport and seaport in the island of Abu Musa, the United Arab Emirates laid claim to that island. Additionally, when Yemen attempted in advance to make a tourist resort on the disputed Hanish islands, its forces came into a conflict with Eritrean military.³⁸

The history of border disputes in Africa also contributes to this aspect of the literature. Dr. Wafulu Okumu in his chapters "The Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries: with Specific Reference to Africa" in the book *Delimitation and Demarcation Boundaries in Africa* indicated that border disputes continue to plague African states due to European notions of land division in Africa during the colonial period. His writing reflected how these boundaries were either accepted or not accepted by African states after gaining their independence, as the border disputes have become a source of conflict depending on how they are employed, controlled, administered and managed.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

During his research, he discovered that there were close to 40,233 km of African boundaries, which had not been demarcated by anyone. When the Organization of African Unity was created in 1963 the boundaries remained simply a line on the map without its demarcation and delimitation.³⁹ Additionally, Europeans presumed Africans did not have states. Consequently, Europeans obtained and took control of the African territories that they did not recognize as states. However, before granting the African states their independence, colonialists divided the entire land of Africa based on either economic interests or sheer desire for space.⁴⁰

The case of India and Pakistan also finds a place in the literature. Doctor in Political Science Mushtaq Ahmad Mir, in the *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, analyzed the true nature of India and Pakistan conflicts and their long term consequences. He focused on the unresolved border dispute over Kashmir region between India and Pakistan, which were a single colony of Britain before getting their independence.

When he analyzed this unsolved border conflict where India and Pakistan fought three wars over Kashmir region in 1947, 1965, and 1999, he found the root of crises that was a deliberate partition of these countries in 1947 by Britain, which created an ednless adversarial relationship between them. The British government, which ruled India more than two centuries, had adopted and used their “divide and rule” policy to form artificial boundaries between nations. That policy provoked the religious violence that has

³⁹ Wafula Okumu, “The Purpose and Functions of International Boundaries: with Specific Reference to Africa,” in *Delimitation and Demarcation Boundaries in Africa*, ed. Addis Ababa (Ethiopia: Commission of the African Union, Department of Peace and Security, 2013), 40.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

continued to plague the region. This disruptive policy created a serious break in friendly nations, between Hindu and Muslims, in order to weaken any possible cohesive opposing power.⁴¹

Summary

A review of the extent literatures concerning Kyrgyzstan's border and territorial disputes with neighboring countries, similar disputes elsewhere in the former Soviet sphere and in another countries around the world. The literatures pointed to the serious nature of the disputes and identified two distinct factors, external and internal. The first factor is the influence of external third parties, which in itself is often intrusive and destructive. The second factor is the influence of hyper patriotic or "nationalists" internally, which can prove to be more destructive than the external factor. These two factors could be sufficient to spark a war over disputes between peaceful countries absent a diplomatic solution.

The present study will build on the extant literature by examining in greater detail the external and internal factors that have produced border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and her neighbors, as well as efforts to mitigate these factors. The following chapter will discuss the methodology by which the present study will conduct this examination and answer the secondary research questions.

⁴¹ Mushtaq Ahmad Mir, "India - Pakistan: The History of Unsolved Conflicts," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 19 (April 2014): 101.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains the methods used to answer the secondary research questions, and it is used a comparative case study approach. The research study will provide an in-depth examination of the border and territorial disputes to identify their causes, whether they originate with outside actors or from other sources of the continuing unresolved process of delimitation, demarcation, enclave, exclave, and security issues. Consequently, irresolution over border and territorial disputes escalates the risk of conflicts between countries and affects overall peace and security of nations. Importantly, delimitation and demarcation are vital to exclude such ambiguity between states and bring peace in nations of states. Specifically, Fergana Valley is a region of several enclaves with an enormous population, which a center of tensions and cross-border conflicts that spark quickly. Also, day by day access to water and other resources are becoming on the border the main issues to pay attention to.

Thus, the author will use a comparative case study methodology to study three cases. The aim of the methodology is to answer the secondary research questions, thereby addressing the primary research question. The three cases, which involve countries of Central Asia and the border disputes between them, are: Kyrgyzstan's border and territorial issues with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan's border and territorial issues with Tajikistan, and the border and territorial issues between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The third case, which does not include Kyrgyzstan, was selected as a means to assess the extent to which the causes of the border problems between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors might lie outside Kyrgyzstan.

To facilitate comparison between the three cases, this study will pose the secondary questions to each case. The questions are designed to enable collection and analysis of data in order to address the primary research question. The questions are:

1. What are the origins and nature of the border dispute between the two states?
2. What other disputes are there between the two states?
3. What efforts have the two states made to resolve the disputes between them?

What progress and results have these efforts produced?

4. What role(s) have third parties played in the disputes themselves or in the efforts to resolve the disputes?

The study will compare the data that answers the four secondary research questions across the cases in chapter 4, Analysis, with the goal of drawing inferences about Kyrgyzstan's border disputes with its neighbors and answering the primary research question in Chapter 5, Conclusion.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

In order to address the secondary questions this chapter will apply the comparative case study methodology to explore three cases; the Kyrgyzstan's border and territorial issues with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the border and territorial issues between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In all three cases the author will address the following four secondary questions and answer them based on research and explored evidence. They are: what are the origins and nature of the border disputes; what other disputes are there between the states; what efforts have the states made to resolve the disputes; what progress and results have these efforts produced; and what role(s) have third parties played in the disputes themselves, or in the efforts to resolve the disputes?

Kyrgyzstan's Border and Territorial Issues with Uzbekistan

Origins and nature of disputes

The origins of the border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan reached back to border regulations of the 1920s created by the Soviets and are having enormous impacts on the Uzbeks in the south of Kyrgyzstan. The regulation affected the mixed populations of Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, and separated villages into either Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, today one of the most significant problems between two republics remains a border dispute. Specifically problems exist in the densely populated enclaves of both countries where the Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan live near Uzbekistani territories. Since 2002, the established Kyrgyz-Uzbek joint commission for delimitation

and demarcation of state borders has been working to demarcate the border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.⁴² Their latest efforts resulted in an agreement of about 780 kilometers of the current 1,099 kilometer common border. However, the remainder of border section still requires clarification because of uncertainty. Furthermore, there are about 50 controversial points awaiting solutions.⁴³ The author wants readers to pay attention to the length of common borders, which vary widely according to the variety sources.

Agreeing to the magnitude of the problem is often part of the problem. Agreement to the distance of the border provides an example. According to the President of the Kyrgyz Geographic Society and Deputy Chief of the Institute of Geology of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic, Salamat Alamanov, in 2006 the Presidents of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan reached an accord on 993 km out of the estimated 1,375 (1,378,44) km border line. However, these numbers differ from those previously mentioned by the Kyrgyz-Uzbek joint commission for delimitation and demarcation. More importantly, of 382 km remaining, there are 60 disputed parts. The most challenging to resolve are the areas of Gavasay, Andijan, the Kerkidonskoe reservoir, and Burgandy array and enclaves.⁴⁴ The population, economic resources, and military power of Uzbekistan as compared to its neighbors would seem to put it in a position of regional

⁴² Levent Demirci, “Özbekistan, Kırgızistan ve Tacikistan’ın Kesişimindeki Sorunlu Vadi” [The Troubled Valley Intersection between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan], *Fergana*, 43.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁴ Salamat Alamanov, “There Is an Urgent Need for Substantive Discussion of This Matter at the Highest Level,” accessed December 29, 2014, <http://www.ipp.kg/en/news/2659/>.

power in Central Asia. To underscore this position, in order to support the independence and sovereignty of the republic, the Uzbekistani president Islam Karimov's administration has taken significant measures in the economic and security domains. Further, from a population standpoint the Uzbek diaspora is a widespread populace in Central Asia. Each of the surrounding Central Asian countries has countless Uzbek citizens, including Kyrgyzstan. In fact, almost half of Central Asia's population is comprised of Uzbeks, and Uzbekistan is the third most populated country among the former SSRs.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the largest concentration of the Uzbek population is located in the south of Kyrgyzstan within the Fergana Valley, which is the second largest ethnic group after Kyrgyz. According to the 2009 census, the Uzbek population consists of almost 15 percent of those that reside close to the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border.⁴⁶ Although both ethnic groups have similar religious beliefs and cultures, in 1990 and 2010 the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks brutally clashed with each other.⁴⁷ Based on Border Regulations of the former USSR, throughout the history Moscow changed the borderlines several times. These changes in Central Asia required each country to approach the disputes with their own interests. For instance, according to Kurbanbai Iskandarov, the Chief of the Department for delimitation and development of border areas under the government of the Kyrgyz

⁴⁵ A. Sait Sonmez, "Özbekistan Dış Politikasını Oluşturan Temel Faktörler" [Basic Factors That Form Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy], *AİBÜ Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* [Journal of the Institute of Social Sciences] 13/2 (2013): 393.

⁴⁶ Humanitarian News and Analysis, "Kyrgyzstan: Delicate Ethnic Balance," accessed January 11, 2015, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/89526/kyrgyzstan-delicate-ethnic-balance>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Republic, in dealing with the border dispute, Uzbekistan has been referring to the 1924-1927 national-territorial delimitation facts, while Kyrgyzstan has desired to be held to the 1955.⁴⁸ Iskandarov said,

The reason is that in the years 1924-1927 have not been brought to the completion of the work to clarify the boundaries between the republics. Therefore, disputes over land between the republics has not been stopped. In order to put an end to border issues by agreement, in 1955 there was established the Intergovernmental Joint Commission. This Joint Commission fully clarified the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, its results were approved by the Council of Ministers of the Kyrgyz SSR and the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR. In addition, in 1961, were approved by the decree of the Supreme Council of the Kyrgyz SSR.⁴⁹

Unlikely, in the book *Borderlines and Borderlands, the chapter 3 The Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Boundary*, based on taken an interview with Azim Karashev, 6 December 2000, who was a member of bilateral Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan border demarcation committee, Megoran stated, “a joint Uzbek-Kyrgyz SSR border demarcation commission was established in 1955 to resolve outstanding interrepublican disputes, although this commission never completed its work.”⁵⁰

From this perspective, both republics sought to resolve the problems in their respective favor. However, Uzbekistan today sees the dispute as a chance to succeed in dealing with today’s Kyrgyzstan's unfortunate socio-economic conditions, challenging the ethnic composition of the southern part, and its transport-fuel and gas dependence.

⁴⁸ Narynkul Nazaralieva, “Твои Границы Разграничены, Уточнены, Кыргызстан?” [Are Your Boundaries Demarcated, Refined, Kyrgyzstan?], *Кыргыз Туусу* [Kyrgyz Tuusu], July 19, 2012, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/12771__tvoi_granitsyi_razgranichenyi_utochnenyi_kyrgyzstan/.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Diener and Hagen, *Borderlines and Borderlands*, 41.

Four Uzbekistan enclaves inside Kyrgyzstan's Fergana Valley territory have increased problems to negotiations, they are Sokh, Shahimardan, Qalacha (also referred to as Kalacha, and Chong-Kara), and Dzhangail (also referred to as Khalmion).⁵¹ However, two of them, Sokh and Shahimardan, have received the most attention. For example, since 1920, Sokh has been disputed territory between the two countries, which was not fully demarcated. Additionally, this enclave was remote from Uzbekistan, and would be used as a haven for any remaining the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan insurgents.⁵²

Other Disputes

There are also disagreements between the two countries over resources. Interestingly, Kyrgyzstan ceded to Uzbekistan the rights to gas and oil fields immediately following the disintegration of the USSR within its territory, as Kyrgyzstan was not able to manage those facilities on its own. However, after ten years of independence, Kyrgyz officials recalled the resource fields and claimed that Uzbekistan had to pay its \$180 million in lease indebtedness, as well as return to Kyrgyzstan's authority all leased natural gas and oil fields. Due to a lack of justifiable evidence, Uzbekistan did not show enthusiasm to further debate that matter. Similarly, during the existence of the former Soviet Union, in order to raise cattle Kyrgyzstan leased Uzbek territories, which it has not returned to Uzbekistan.⁵³

⁵¹ Enclaves of the World, "Central Asia. Enclaves of the World," accessed January 18, 2015, <http://enclaves.webs.com/centralasia.htm>.

⁵² International Crisis Group, 14.

⁵³ Ibid.

Furthermore, when Kyrgyzstan decided to build huge hydroelectric dams, Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan, decided to halt giving gas to south Kyrgyzstan due to a long-standing water dispute. Water resources for Uzbekistan are extremely vital because the majority of its economy relies on agricultural sector, and it does not want to be dependent on its neighbors that may use as water as leverage, and stop the release of water. That is why, two years ago, Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan, seriously cautioned Kyrgyzstan about the possibility of war if it makes plans without regard for downstream states like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.⁵⁴

Efforts to resolve the disputes and their results

According to Kurbanbai Iskandarov, the Chief of the Department for delimitation and development of border areas under the government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the formed Kyrgyz-Uzbek joint commission for delimitation and demarcation of state borders had been working to demarcate the border between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; however, because of the April (revolution) and June 2010 (ethnic clash) events in Kyrgyzstan, the work of the joint commission was temporarily suspended. In May 2011, they renewed the process of delimitation and demarcation of the boundaries to define and resolve the disputed territories. It is important to note that in the end of 2009, the Uzbek officials had previously approved about 1,000 km of demarcated borderlines.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Fyodor Savintsev, “Conflicts in Kyrgyzstan Foreshadow Water Wars to Come,” accessed February 1, 2015, <http://creativetimereports.org/2014/06/17/kyrgyzstan-conflicts-foreshadow-water-wars/>.

⁵⁵ Narynkul Nazaralieva, “Твои Границы Разграничены, Уточнены, Кыргызстан?” [Are Your Boundaries Demarcated, Refined, Kyrgyzstan?], *Кыргыз Туусу* [Kyrgyz Tuusu], July 19, 2012, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/12771__tvoi_granitsyi_razgranichenyi_utochnenyi_kyrgyzstan/.

However, when negotiations recommenced, they presented the signed protocol by the former Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Daniyar Usenov, in Tashkent, where he agreed upon the Uzbekistani proposal, “some of the previously demarcated borderlines might be revised.”⁵⁶ According to that protocol, the Uzbek members claimed that some areas of the border had been demarcated incorrectly, and consequently demanded to demarcate them again. The Kyrgyz members clarified that they would resume to further resolve undefined territories of the border, and only after completing the process of the delimitation would they consider previously defined areas. Thus, after agreement the members of both sides reviewed over twenty undefined areas of the border. However, they needed the legal justification of those areas to define and come to an agreement under the relevant portion of the territory and then record the areas in which their positions were accorded.⁵⁷

Further Iskandarov mentioned Burgondu, an area of Kadamzhay district of Batken province, where Uzbekistan pumps gas and oil. Uzbekistan has been pumping and producing oil and gas, and uses that territory as a source for the collected gas. Since 1996 there has been some consideration to a transfer the land to Kyrgyzstan with gas and oil in the area of Burgondu, along with the equipment. In late 2000, Uzbekistan returned back to Kyrgyzstan four portions of land containing the fields of “Chaura-Yarkutan”, “Sary-Reed”, “Sarytotok” and “North Rishton,” along with the equipment. Those efforts made great progress in resolving problems. However, there were still three locations with deposits; “Chongaro Gulch”, “Sokh North” and “Gas storage”. For unknown reasons

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

these have not been transferred yet. However, Kyrgyzstan has all relevant legal documents verifying ownership of all of those places.⁵⁸

On the other hand, in 2002 former Deputy Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Bazarbai Mambetov claimed to Shahimardan that areas were a legal properties of Kyrgyzstan. He raised this issue after one incident happened on the border where an Uzbek border guard shot a Kyrgyz citizen due to ignoring the Uzbek border guard's a stop warning.⁵⁹

Actually, despite the existed tension between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, all representatives of Border Services of two countries are doing everything at their level to intensify joint efforts to prevent and respond immediately to conflict situations on the border. Unit border commanders up to chiefs of the Border Services of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan often conduct meetings to prevent border violations, incidents, and conflicts and reach a bilateral consensus through signing agreements about further cooperation and stabilization at the border. For example, on 12 December 2014, in Osh city of Kyrgyzstan, a meeting of the delegation of Border Services of two countries was held. During the meeting, First Deputy Chairman of the State Border Services of Kyrgyzstan Colonel Iskandar Mambetaliyev and First Deputy Commander - Chief of Staff of the National Security Service of Uzbekistan Major General Nasirbek Usmanbekov summed up the activities of border representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 2014 and identified the main problems of interaction and co-operation in 2015. During a discussion of the current issues on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek state border area, they outlined the prospects

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ International Crisis Group, 16.

of bilateral cooperation and decided to continue the practice of joint patrols in some areas of the state border.⁶⁰

These kinds of meetings prevent and decrease the border violent confrontations and other incidents between borders guards and local inhabitants. These official bilateral meetings at the all levels and practices of joint patrols in vulnerable areas of the borders have resulted in a significant decline of violent incidents on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek state border. (See table 1).

Table 1. The Number of Border Incidents Continue to Decline		
Years	Recorded	Percentage
2013	15	100%
2014	5	33.33%

Source: Created by author, data from the official web page of the State Border Service of the Kyrgyz Republic [Государственная Пограничная Служба Кыргызской Республики], accessed March 14, 2015, <http://border.kg/itogi-peregovorov-pogranichnikov-kr-i-ruz/>.

Roles of third parties in the disputes or in the efforts to resolve the disputes

Unfortunately, both Russia and China have proved themselves as incapable mediators to resolve border disputes. Neither the Commonwealth of Independent States (Russia) nor the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (China) are concerned about

⁶⁰ Государственная Пограничная Служба Кыргызской Республики [State Border Service of the Kyrgyz Republic], “Итоги Переговоров Пограничников Кыргызстана и Узбекистана” [The Results of Negotiations of the Border Guards of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan], accessed March 8, 2015, <http://border.kg/itogi-peregovorov-pogranichnikov-kr-i-ruz/>.

working on complex border challenges.⁶¹ The United Nations or OSCE could be a mediator in Central Asia; however, officials of both countries have not demonstrated a will for such services yet. The OSCE could create some conditions to resolve the bilateral border and other disputes effectively within international legal standards.⁶² Because the OSCE has worked for a number of years on border management and conflict prevention and resolution, which have resulted in organized seminars, trainings and conferences, and publications of guidance and handbooks around the world. For example, in July 2013, in Kyrgyzstan the OSCE organized a two-day seminar on delimitation and demarcation in Central Asia for 30 senior governmental and border representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, including international experts from different countries, who exchanged experiences and best international delimitation and demarcation practices.⁶³

Additionally, signed bilateral agreements between Bishkek and Moscow in 2012 indicate not only their close and warm relationship, but also literally mean the intersection of substantial “red line”, which makes Tashkent worry. The reason for Tashkent’s concern is both Kyrgyzstan and Russia declared the unification of all Russian military bases located in the territory of Kyrgyzstan that would be established as a new influential military base in the Batken province of Kyrgyzstan (bordering province with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Consequently, Russia has also assured military financial support to Kyrgyzstan totaling \$1 billion, which will be employed specifically on border

⁶¹ Ibid., 6.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ OSCE, “Border Delimitation and Demarcation Topic of OSCE Meeting in Central Asia,” July 11, 2013, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/103496>.

security and included the distribution of armored vehicles, helicopters, and satellite equipment. With these agreements in mind, the Russian Federation openly refuses to be as a potential referee in regional disputes.⁶⁴

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the relationship between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan has deteriorated daily, and their disputes over natural resources have been contributing to conflicts. Uzbekistan is often considered as economically and as militarily powerful in Central Asia. Instead of helping resolve any disputes between the brotherhood and neighboring countries, Russia deliberately resumed its impact not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in Tajikistan through investing in the hydropower projects. This investment has potential to cause a significant conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and also, between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, in 2013, Russian president Vladimir Putin signed the investment of the Kambarata hydropower project to ensure Kyrgyzstan with technical and financial support for work.⁶⁵

Kyrgyzstan's Border and Territorial Issues with Tajikistan

Another of Kyrgyzstan's most problematic neighbors is Tajikistan, which is located on the north by Kyrgyzstan. Between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan numerous complicated problems exist. These include the ongoing border delimitation and

⁶⁴ Aleksandr Kuli and Marlen Laruel, “Новый Российский Курс в Центральной Азии Отказ от Политики Сферы Привилегированных Интересов в Пользу Тактики “Разделяй и Властвуй”?” [New Russian Course in Central Asia Rejection of the Policy Sphere of Privileged Interests in Favor of the Tactics of “Divide and Rule”?], *Ponars Eurasia* 261 (June 2013): 7.

⁶⁵ Timur Toktonaliev, “Russia Factor Shifts Kyrgyz-Uzbek Power Balance,” (Global Voices Central Asia, 2014), accessed February 1, 2015, <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/russia-factor-shifts-kyrgyz-uzbek-power-balance>.

demarcation process, having disputed enclaves, illegal crossing state borders, penetration terrorists undefined boundaries, thriving drug trafficking, illegal migration, and having resources on and in the disputed territories.

Origins and nature of disputes

Disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have increased since the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan penetrated into southern territory of Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan. However, in the late 1980s before the terrorist incursions happened, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan had claims to disputed territories. The Tajiks' territorial claim was from the Batken province of the Kyrgyz SSR stretching south –west of Osh up to the Tajik territory connecting the region of Tajik SSR with the mountains areas of Alay and Zaalayskiy. However, Kyrgyz SSR's assertion is the opposite of Tajik's statement, and in addition the Kyrgyz nationalists have laid claim to the Gorno-Badakhshan region in the Pamir Mountains and the top reaches of the Surkhob river valley of the Tajikistan's present territories.⁶⁶ In August 1999 a group of rebellious terrorists joined militant Islamist groups in Tajikistan and Afghanistan and penetrated Kyrgyzstan's southern Batken province in order to establish an Islamic state in the Fergana Valley.⁶⁷ Two Tajikistan enclaves within the Kyrgyzstani territory, Varukh, and western Qalacha have become wider problems of border delimitation. These enclaves are ulcers to the body of Kyrgyzstan. According to plenipotentiary representative of Kyrgyzstani government in

⁶⁶ Allcock, 191.

⁶⁷ Nick Megoran, "Rethinking the Study of International Boundaries: A Biography of the Kyrgyzstan–Uzbekistan Boundary," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 2012, accessed March 8, 2015, https://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/nick.megoran/pdf/megoran_biographies.pdf.

Batken province, Jenish Razakov, the number of people who dwell in enclaves are growing. They need more space, and consequently, they gain disputed and unmarked territories that lead to conflicts, especially, along the Kyrgyzstani border.⁶⁸

According to Razakov, residents of the Vorukh enclave purchase houses three times more often than Kyrgyz citizens living on the borderlands. Inexpensive housing contributes to the problem. For example, one house made of clay, 12 acres costs about \$ 70,000. Numerous Tajiks are ready to spend that kind of money. Thus, leaders of neighboring countries encourage their citizens to keep on taking such actions.⁶⁹

Other disputes

Even though Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have a surplus over water resources, water has long become one of the causes of conflicts between these two countries. Dwellers of the two countries blame each other for consuming water excessively. When some villages in Kyrgyzstan do not have water due to incorrect operation of the water canals, the situation worsens, although the water comes from Kyrgyzstan into the Tajik villages.

The largest Tajik enclave Vorukh has 35,000 dwellers surrounded by Kyrgyz villages. Kyrgyzstan is actively developing these areas in terms of communications and water systems. According to the Soviet legacy Vorukh became an enclave on the map in

⁶⁸ Ivan Merchenko, “Жениш Разаков: В Кыргызстане Процесс Делимитации Границ Анклавов в Должном Объемe Не Проводился” [Zhenish Razakov: In Kyrgyzstan, the Process of Delimitation of the Boundaries of the Enclaves Was Not Performed in the Proper Way], accessed March 14, 2015, <http://arch.24.kg/community/174757-zhenish-razakov-v-kyrgyzstane-process-delimitacii.html>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

1959 that does not recognize the Tajik side. During the spring and summer seasons, agricultural work begins and the water flow is increased ten times. Consequently, its deficiency is also becomes a cause of conflict. Therefore, theTajik side is against any construction of additional communications and water canals.⁷⁰ The German journalist Elke Windisch wrote about water problems stating “in Central Asia where the war over water is just the tip of the iceberg, and many energy projects in this region, rich in oil and gas, may be threatened.”⁷¹

Due to the border regions of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan having limited access to land and water, these conditions have created a source for conflict. This existing situation fuels economic ambiguity and interethnic antagonisms and weaknesses in both governments enable tensions to suppurate. The Batken area in which the Kyrgyz-Tajik firefights often occurs is far from capitols of both countries. Because of the disputed territories, the open border becomes a free way for local traders and smugglers. When the Tajiks launched an assault with heavy weapons on January 11, 2014, the Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister Tokon Mamytov said that Tajik mortars targeted strategic facilities like a small dam and electricity substation inside Kyrgyzstan.⁷²

⁷⁰ Anora Sarkorova, “Из-За Чего Конфликтуют Таджикистан и Киргизия?” [Why Do Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan Conflict?], accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/international/2014/01/140116_tajikistan_kyrgyzstan_border_conflict.

⁷¹ Elke Windisch, “Conflict Over Water between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Possible,” accessed March 14, 2015, <http://www.eturbonews.com/24771/conflict-over-water-between-kyrgyzstan-and-tajikistan-possible>.

⁷² David Trilling, “Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan: What’s Next After Border Shootout?” accessed March 14, 2015, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67934>.

Efforts to resolve the disputes and their results

The process of delimitation and demarcation depends on how one views the both sides decisions. The established Kyrgyz-Tajik joint commission for delimitation and demarcation of state borders has been working since 2002 to demarcate the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The total length of the border is 970 kilometers. The Osh region is 406 km and Batken is 564 km. The work of delimitation and demarcation of Kyrgyz-Tajik border resulted in an agreement of about 567 km of border lines. However, the remainder of border still requires clarification because of the uncertainty. Furthermore, there are about 80 controversial and unspecified sites waiting for solution. They are mainly located in the Batken province and Leilek region.⁷³

Iskandarov states that from 2002 until 2006 during negotiations on the delimitation of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border was considered clarification the only on a legal basis. While the Tajik side proposed to use documents of 1924-1927 as a legal basis, the Kyrgyz side proposed to use the documents from the 1958-1959 period. However, neither set of are fully approved. When both sides failed to come to a decision on the legal framework, they agreed to clarify and record sections with identical positions and initiated work on the boundary line. The outcome of this work was 567 km of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, as mentioned above. The mountain ridges matched to the positions of both sides. But descent into the plains areas created problems because during the era of Soviet Union, there was an exchange of numerous lands between the collective farms,

⁷³ Narynkul Nazaralieva, “Твои Границы Разграничены, Уточнены, Кыргызстан?” [Are Your Boundaries Demarcated, Refined, Kyrgyzstan?], *Кыргыз Туусу* [Kyrgyz Tuusu], July 19, 2012, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/12771__tvoi_granitsyi_razgranichenyi_utochnenyi_kyrgyzstan/.

regions, provinces at the republic level. Unfortunately, there were no appropriate procedures to transfer or exchange lands. These circumstances still have a serious impact on the work to resolve the Kyrgyz-Tajik border dispute.⁷⁴

According to Oleg Salimov, a Central Asia–Caucasus analyst, significant progress in consultations on border demarcation and delimitation has occurred between the two countries’ governments. However, at the same time, dwellers living in the border areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan continue confronting each other through engaging in violent clashes and shootouts. For example, just before the Tajik officials arrived in Kyrgyzstan on August 25, 2013, Tajik and Kyrgyz border guards shot at each other, and five Tajiks were wounded on the border of Tajikistan’s Sughd province. Thus they have to come to an agreement of disputes and overcome the existing disagreements on borderlines because the result of this continuing conflict can predetermine the future development and stability on the borderlands.⁷⁵

Due to frequent border incidents involving deaths and increasing number of confrontations, local meetings were held between the border guards and law enforcement officials in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to develop joint actions and prevent escalation of the situation. The Former Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan Tokon Mamytov stated that the border guards of two countries should continue joint patrols in the border areas of Batken province. He also added that the meetings and negotiations on delimitation and demarcation of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border are more active and ahead than

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Oleg Salimov, “Border Dispute at the Center of Tajik-Kyrgyz Meeting,” accessed March 15, 2015, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/13039-border-dispute-at-the-center-of-tajik-kyrgyz-meeting.html>.

the Tajik side. Fortunately, working group meetings are now held two or three times a month, although for the first few years the process was slow. Currently, Uzbekistan is refining individual sections of the border. In the near future it is expected that the Working Group will agree to future revisions to several tens of kilometers of border territory.⁷⁶ Based on his statement it is possible the joint meetings hold promise to resolve future border problems (see table 2).

Table 2. The Comparison of Border Incidents on the Kyrgyz–Tajik and Kyrgyz-Uzbek Borders		
Border Areas	Date of Incidents	Recorded Incidents
Kyrgyz-Tajik	January – April 2014	28 times
Kyrgyz-Uzbek	January – April 2014	1 time

Source: Created by author, data from the official web page of the State Border Service of Kyrgyzstan [Государственная Пограничная Служба Кыргызской Республики], accessed March 16, 2015, <http://border.kg/gps-itogi-služhebno-boevoj-deyatelnosti-za-4-mesyatsa-2014g/>.

Roles of third parties in the disputes or in the efforts to resolve the disputes

Since the Soviet Union collapsed, the Central Asian states have faced challenges such as unresolved border delimitation and demarcation process, disputes on ownership of energy, water, land, ethnic tensions, corruption, obstacles to trade, terrorism, trafficking of drugs, weapons, and human trafficking. Today Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

⁷⁶ Bermet Malikova, “Мамытов Рассказал о Работе по Делимитации Границ с Соседями” [Мамытов Told about Work on Delimitation of the Border with Neighbors], accessed March 15, 2015, http://www.vb.kg/doc/262353_mamytov_rasskazal_o_rabote_po_delimitacii_granic_s_sosediami.html.

are members of variety intergovernmental organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Treaty Organization, Commonwealth of Independent States, etc. The heads of states of the member countries have signed multilateral agreements to strengthen their economic, political, and military relations. For example, initially when the leaders of member countries met in Shanghai and Moscow, they signed the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions and the Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions respectively in 1996 and 1997.⁷⁷

However, numerous unresolved problems between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan still exist, such as the border and territorial disputes, distribution of water resources, and cross-country transit. Unfortunately, none of these problems have been resolved. Furthermore, all parties seem deaf to the disputes of their neighbors through demonstrating incapability to maintain a dialogue to stop conflicts. Day by day border guards are shooting at each other and locals are damaging their properties. Specifically, on July 10, 2014, about 30 citizens of Tajikistan attempted to build a pipeline within the territory of Kyrgyzstan (river Karavshin) in the village Bedak, enclave Vorukh, Tajikistan. When a Kyrgyz border guard arrived at the area and demanded to end their work because that site was disputed. In response the citizens of Tajikistan threw stones at Kyrgyz border guard. In order to prevent misconduct by Tajiks, Kyrgyz border guards were forced to fire warning shots into the air. According to authorities, the Tajik border guards near the scene of the incident opened fire on the Kyrgyz border guards. As a result, the two countries border guards shot each other. At the same time, the Tajik border

⁷⁷ SCO, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization," accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/sco.htm>.

guards used mortar and grenade fires towards Kyrgyz border check points. As a result, according to Tajik authorities, they had seven wounded and one killed.⁷⁸

Interestingly when the Border Service of Kyrgyzstan was established, the Russian Border Service forces stayed until June 2005 on the Tajik- Afghan border. Then Russia started playing a leadership role in the Council of Commonwealth of Independent States Border Service Commanders and maintaining a Border Service Advisory mission both in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through attaching liaison officers.⁷⁹ However, as a border officer for eleven years, this author has not seen the effectiveness of these advisory mission officers, who were intended to advise and at least mitigate the risks on the border.

Furthermore, there are a number of international and non-governmental organizations involved to provide support to enhance the professional capacities of the Kyrgyz and Tajik border services through conducting trainings on conflict preventions and cross – border cooperation. One of these organizations is the Border Management Programme in Central Asia. It has worked for a long period not only in Kyrgyzstan but also in other Central Asian countries on “Cross Border Conflict Prevention.” In 2012, it initiated a five –year Cooperation Plan for 2012-2017 that facilitated jointly with the United Nations Development Programme including border Kyrgyz-Tajik officials that

⁷⁸ Politmer.kg 2011, “На Кыргызско-Таджикской Границе Произошла Перестрелка Сотрудников Пограничных Служб Двух Стран”[On the Kyrgyz-Tajik Border Occurred a Skirmish between the Two Countries’ Border Services], accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.politmer.kg/ru/promises/850>.

⁷⁹ BOMCA, “The European Union's Border Management Programme in Central Asia,” accessed March 17, 2015, [http://www.uz.undp.org/content/dam/uzbekistan/docs/projectdocuments/ggu/un_prodoc_EU_UNDP%20Border%20Management%20Programme%20in%20Central%20Asia%20\(BOMCA\),%20Phase%208.pdf](http://www.uz.undp.org/content/dam/uzbekistan/docs/projectdocuments/ggu/un_prodoc_EU_UNDP%20Border%20Management%20Programme%20in%20Central%20Asia%20(BOMCA),%20Phase%208.pdf).

signed a plan to improve the situation. The plan's first objective was to enhance a dialogue among cross-border communities to reduce ethnic tension and reach mutual solutions and the second was to enhance a dialogue of cross-border communities with law enforcement agencies, border guards, and customs officers in conflict zones.

In addition, the OSCE is very helpful in conducting seminars for local communities, distributing brochures about their rights and obligations while living in border areas, installing boards to illuminate border crossing guidelines. The OSCE is committed to resolving existing problems between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and has urged both to work together with its Offices in Dushanbe and Bishkek to apply for an expertise on border management.⁸⁰

The OSCE has been contributing to the field of border security and management to enhance a cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan through organizing training sessions for all levels of officials. For example, on July 3, 2014, the OSCE Office in Tajikistan jointly with the OSCE Centre in Bishkek and in close co-operation with the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces conducted a training course on conflict prevention. Twenty-one participants were invited for this course from the Tajikistan Presidential Staff, Tajik Foreign Ministry, Tajik Justice Ministry and Tajik Border Troops, alongside counterparts of the Kyrgyz Presidential Staff, Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry, Kyrgyz Government' Secretariat on border issues and the Kyrgyz State Border

⁸⁰ Michael Kelleher, "Border Clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan," accessed March 17, 2015, http://osce.usmission.gov/sep_4_14_border_clashes.html.

Service. The purpose of this course was to share international best practices and case studies from countries that experienced analogous problems.⁸¹

Border and Territorial Issues between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan

The dissolution of the Soviet Union created multilateral and bilateral border and territorial disputes for several countries including Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Discussing crossing borders between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is one of the most difficult border experiences in Central Asia. There is a burning tension between them not only over border and territorial disputes but also over gas supply, using water resources, construction of the “Roghun” hydroelectric power plant, transportation blockade, unilaterally closing cross-border check points, and mine fields along the two countries' border. Consequently, over recent years these two post-Soviet republics have been involved in a number of frequent conflicts.

Origins and nature of disputes

Historically the relationship between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan was not stable due to the Soviet border policy. In the 1920s, the Soviet boundary officials disposed Tajiks from their cultural and religious values, and in particular annexed Samarkand and Bukhara cities to Uzbekistan. Additionally, the Tajiks claimed to the Surkhan – Darya region, which is located in Uzbekistan, west of the existing border to the south – west of Dushanbe. However, the Uzbeks claimed Fergana valley cities such as Khodjent, Isfara,

⁸¹ Munira Shoinbekova, “OSCE Trains Officials from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on Conflict Prevention,” accessed March 17, 2015, <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/120723>.

and Kanibadam were within Uzbekistan until 1929, but they were annexed into Tajikistan after it became one of the SSRs.⁸²

The length of the state border between two countries is almost 1,333 km. During Soviet period, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were separated by only administrative boundaries. The dissolution of the Soviet Union created a need for these two newly established independent countries to define the state border. However, they formed the intergovernmental commission on delimitation and demarcation of the borders just in 2000, and both sides defined and agreed approximately on 86% of the borderlines on the Tajik-Uzbek border.⁸³

Moreover, within the territory of Tajikistan are several Uzbek enclaves, and in Uzbekistan has one Tajik enclave, which all create problems. A visible example of the ridiculousness of the situation in the field of cross-border regulation of the Soviet Union that occurred after its dissolution is the problem of Farkhad reservoir on the Syr Darya River located on the Tajik side. Each of the parties has their own view of the situation. Uzbekistan claims that in 1944 the area of the basin had been given to them by Tajikistan. Tajikistan, on the other hand, claims that in 1933 Uzbekistan leased the reservoir for 40 years, which was already expired. After this dispute, Uzbekistan continued to control the reservoir for ten years. However, in 2002, the police forces of

⁸² Allcock, 191.

⁸³ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, “Таджикско-Узбекская Государственная Граница” [The Tajik-Uzbek State Border], accessed March 18, 2015, <http://mfa.tj/ru/pogranichnie-voprosi/tadzikistan-uzbekistan-granitsa.html>.

the Nauskogo district of Sughd province of Tajikistan drove Uzbek guards from the reservoir and took the territory under control.⁸⁴

The Tajik citizens routinely crossed back and forth through this border area. After the collapse Soviet Union, relations worsened because in 1999 and 2000 a group of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan guerillas penetrated the area from Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan with the purpose of entering Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan unilaterally laid mines along its borders and made it impossible for citizens of Tajikistan to cross the border, although their borders still were not demarcated. Uzbekistan claimed Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were incapable of securing from the guerrillas and unilaterally took protective measures to secure its borders.⁸⁵ According to the Tajik Mine Action Centre, since Uzbekistan laid mines on the Tajik-Uzbek border, there were more than 80 people killed and about 100 people injured.⁸⁶

Other disputes

Today's situation between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is more complicated because of the existing complex relationship between them for the fifteen plus years. Further, Tajikistan is upstream from Uzbekistan on the Amu-Darya River. Because Uzbekistan is the world's fifth largest cotton producer and second largest exporter, it is

⁸⁴ Andrei Degtev, “Таджикистан и Узбекистан: Надежда на Примирение” [Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: Hope for Reconciliation], accessed March 18, 2015, <http://eurazvitiye.org/publication/20150310>.

⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, 4.

⁸⁶ Бахтиер Мусоев, “Таджикско-Узбекские Переговоры По Границе. Каждый Остался при Своем” [Tajik-Uzbek Talks on the Border. Each Stuck to His Position], accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.avesta.tj/government/11274-tadzhiksko-uzbekskie-peregovory-po-granice-kazhdyy-ostalsya-pri-svoem.html>.

more dependent on water sources in order to continue to produce cotton. Thus, rights to water for crop irrigation provides a continuing source of tension between the two countries. For example, Tajikistan tried to charge for water usage by Uzbekistan because Tajikistan had stated that the water was flown from its land. However, Uzbekistan refused to pay and accused Tajikistan of using mixed industrial and agricultural toxic waste such as pesticides and fertilizers that caused diseases into the water.⁸⁷

Beyond the water issue, there also exists energy resources and transportation blockade problems. Based on 2010 talks between the leaders of the Central Asian countries in their quest to resolve regional disputes over water and energy resources, the conflict between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on rail issues indicates that the relations of the countries remain far from smooth. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan sent a protest note to the Uzbek ambassador stating a large number of rail transport wagons were not able to cross the border and claimed the aim was to prevent the delivery of the necessary materials to the “Roghun” hydroelectric power plant. Uzbekistan opposed the hydroelectric power projects because it would reduce the flow of water in its rivers that creating shortages for irrigation. According to the Russian news agency ITAR-TASS, the reason for the delay of wagons were technical, not political, and it occurred because of obligations of Tashkent for the supply of goods to Afghanistan that caused the railway network blockage.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Levent Demirci, 50.

⁸⁸ Информационно-Аналитический Центр [Information-Analytical Center], “Спор Между Таджикистаном и Узбекистаном Мешает Региональному Консенсусу” [The Dispute between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Prevents Regional Consensus], accessed March 18, 2015, <http://www.ia-centr.ru/expert/7610/>.

Uzbekistan's opposition to building the hydroelectric power projects stems not only from its concern about reducing the flow of water, but also because of the possibility of a major earthquake in the area of the Rogun hydroelectric power station. It is located in a seismically dangerous area. Uzbek experts state that if the result of the cataclysm dam collapses, a hundred-meter wave that moves at a speed of 130 meters per second would result and flood large areas including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.⁸⁹

Efforts to resolve the disputes and their results

According to Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan Nizomiddin Zohidov, despite having different disputes between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, relations are gradually developing. On February 22, 2012, two countries restarted talks on delimitation and demarcation of the Tajik-Uzbek border in the disputed territories. The delegations of the two countries planned and expressed their confidence about positively resolving all disputes positively based on the centuries-old friendship and good neighborly relations between the two brotherly peoples. However, the Tajik-Uzbek intergovernmental commission on delimitation and demarcation process of the common border ended without the final of demarcation of 16 percent of the 1,333-kilometer border (1,161 km according to other sources). Regarding the remaining disputed borders, both sides came to consensus to consider a draft treaty on the final settlement of the state

⁸⁹ Andrei Degtev, "Таджикистан и Узбекистан: Надежда на Примирение" [Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: Hope for Reconciliation], accessed March 18, 2015, <http://eurazvitiye.org/publication/20150310>.

border between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; nevertheless, they did not mention the exact date and location on which such negotiations would take place.⁹⁰

The resolution of existing problems between two countries are based in large part of the relationship between the two heads of states. In the the first time since 1998, the President of Uzbekistan visited Dushanbe and met with the President of Tajikistan in 2014 within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit. The nature of the talks gave a one reason to believe the bilateral relationship will receive a positive reaction, because they achieved an agreement on the establishment of normal relations between the two countries in terms of resuming flights between Tashkent and Dushanbe and simplifying visa procedures. This would allow citizens of both countries to get their visas at the border checkpoints.⁹¹ However, there were no any discussions of resolving border disputes.

Roles of third parties in the disputes or in the efforts to resolve the disputes

Initially, the so-called Shanghai Five, which encompassed Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, was formed to settle border disputes between the

⁹⁰ Anvar Tashpulatov, “Таджикско-Узбекская Граница: Все Вопросы Еще Не Сняты” [The Tajik-Uzbek Border: All Questions Have Not Yet Been Resolved], accessed March 18, 2015, http://rus.kg/news_rus/cccr_rus/2764-tadzhiksko-uzbekskaya-granica-vse-voprosy-esche-ne-snyaty.html.

⁹¹ Andrei Degtev, “Таджикистан и Узбекистан: Надежда на Примирение” [Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: Hope for Reconciliation], accessed March 18, 2015, <http://eurazvitiye.org/publication/20150310>.

countries; however, its later aims focused on regional security.⁹² In 2001 Uzbekistan joined this Union, which was later renamed, because it did not want to be politically isolated and felt in need of military and technical help from the two superpowers, Russia and China, to face the threat of terrorism.⁹³

When Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov visited Dushanbe in April 2012, the President of Tajikistan Imomali Rahmon confirmed his loyalty to Russia and remained a strategic partner. Rahmon rejected the request of the United States to allocate a military base at the Ayni airport. During discussions, Lavrov was interested in tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but Rahmon did not get intention of whether Russia had offered to assist in mediation between the two states or not.⁹⁴

For every problem there can always be found a resolution. Both countries are interested in resolving their disputes without military solutions. Tashkent and Dushanbe increasingly believe the international community does not care to get into the conflict between these two states. International communities pretend that they do not see anything and the problems are internal to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In this case neither Russia,

⁹² Alisher Ilkhamov, "Prospects for Regional Integration in Central Asia," accessed March 18, 2015, <http://essays.ssrc.org/10yearsafter911/prospects-for-regional-integration-in-central-asia/>.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Farkhod Tolipov, "Uzbekistan-Tajikistan Relations in Limbo," accessed March 19, 2015, <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5775>.

the United States, China, nor the European countries want to take up the role of mediator.⁹⁵

However, the OSCE has been doing incredible work through conducting different courses; a one-year “Border Security and Management for Senior Leadership Course,” and a one-month “Border Management Staff Course.” The purpose of these courses is to enhance the professional skills of current and future officers of border security in the context of international standards and cover the three dimensions of comprehensive security, such as the political-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects. There are 57 participating countries, including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Participants gain knowledge through research on important aspects of security environment, threats, conflict solving methods, strategic thinking, and management and leadership that combine skills from different disciplines to reach interoperability and synchronization in securing and managing borders.⁹⁶

Summary

Overall, the most these complicated disputes arose after the independence of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan from the Soviet Union in 1991. Based on the three comparative case studies, the Kyrgyzstan's border and territorial issues with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and the border and territorial issues between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan helped to explore answers.

⁹⁵ BBC Monitoring, “Uzbekistan and Tajikistan: Deadlock, Not Warfare,” accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.tol.org/client/article/23122-uzbekistan-and-tajikistan-deadlock-not-warfare.html>.

⁹⁶ OSCE, “OSCE BMSC Courses,” accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.oscebmsc.org/en/courses>.

Chapter 4 compared the data through answering the four secondary questions across the cases, with the goal of drawing inferences about Kyrgyzstan's border disputes with its neighbors, thus providing necessary analysis for answering the primary research question in chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzes the information from chapter four to seek to answer the primary research question: what are the sources of continuing border disputes for Kyrgyzstan? Since 1991, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have been engaged in almost continuous disputes over their shared borders. If the leaders of these countries do not peacefully find solutions for any unclear or disputed border areas, tensions between them will continue to increase—tensions that may lead to negative outcomes that reach well beyond their shared frontiers. To answer the research question, this study employs three case studies of bilateral border disputes among Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors: Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan-Tajikistan.

Kyrgyzstan received its independence in 1991 along with the other former republics of the USSR, and for 24 years since has been unable to resolve border issues with its neighbors Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Periodically, incidents that have resulted in fatalities have occurred in the disputed areas. These incidents have created problems in relations between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors. Officials from all sides routinely blame each other for the incidents. In seeking to determine the causes for this state of affairs, this chapter takes into consideration points raised by Kyrgyz experts as well as the results of the current research. Before answering the primary question, therefore, this chapter will summarize the findings—both similarities and differences—from the three case studies in chapter 4.

The similarities are rooted in the influence of the central authorities in Moscow, who established administrative boundaries of these then-republics of the Soviet Union in

the mid-1920s. The drawing of the borderlines set the conditions for complex historical territorial claims and counterclaims that only came to the fore when the three republics of the USSR (the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic) became independent states. The products of the Soviets' drawing of boundaries between these three republics that produced border disputes between the three sovereign states were enclaves of inhabitants (later citizens) of one republic within the territory of another and lingering uncompleted delimitation and demarcation of border areas. Following the dissolution of the USSR, Russia's leaders in Moscow often neglected—or chose—to devote sufficient attention to these disputes, and when they did attend to them pursued favors in return for their efforts. Beyond Moscow's influence, the three cases also shared neglect by the parties in seeking mediation to resolve the disputes as soon as possible in a peaceful way, and a related lack of cooperation with international, governmental, and non-governmental organizations towards peaceful solutions. Today, all these complications have hampered these countries' ability to develop normal relations and cooperation with each other.

The differences between the three cases begin with the characteristics of the territorial enclaves that define the physical terrain in which the border disputes are played out. The enclaves are varying sizes, some large and others small; some enclaves are politically vital and others economically vital in that they sit astride transportation routes and rivers, and encompass reservoirs, and industries. Finally, the degree to which the three states—Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—manage their border disputes also distinguish the cases. This management includes Kyrgyz and Uzbek border officials often conducting meetings on the borders to resolve disputes; building good relationships over

the long term; and striving to minimize the number of border incidents that produce casualties.

What, then, are the sources of continuing border disputes for Kyrgyzstan? The aforementioned results of this study's case studies, both similarities and differences, offer insights into an answer to this question. In a sense, this study constitutes the beginning of a conversation in both the academic and policy communities about Kyrgyzstan's border disputes with its neighbors. Additional voices in the conversation, from Kyrgyz officials with first-hand knowledge of the issue, point the way forward to broader answers to the research question; answers which, nonetheless, await additional research.

Today, the sources of continuing border disputes for Kyrgyzstan, according to a member of Kyrgyz parliament, Tokon Mamytov, who served as chief of the Border Service of Kyrgyzstan, as Deputy Minister of Defense on border issues, and as the Secretary of the Council Security, include, first of all, a lack of political will on the part of the leaders of Kyrgyzstan. Mamytov highlights the importance of establishing personal contacts and having political will while dealing with the border issues. The first President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev and his successor, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, did not show the political will to resolve border issues with neighboring countries. When the USSR collapsed, the Joint Interstate Commission was formed, which included China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to resolve primarily the border disputes between China and these countries. The commission conducted its work from 1990 to 1994. Its work set a necessary example to provide a way for the solution of border issues, because the commission's members addressed border issues not by measuring gains but by the principles of mutual respect, openness, mutual benefit and mutually agreeable interaction.

Mamytov offers an example of this mutuality: “If you cede 10 meters, and then they concede as well.”⁹⁷ Within the Joint Interstate Commission, China set an example for the Central Asian states by applying the main principle of its foreign policy, which was the stable development of China through the steady development of its neighbors.⁹⁸

The limits of political will are also evident in Mamytov’s assessment. When the first Kyrgyz President, Akaev, visited Uzbekistan, he had the opportunity to meet face to face with Uzbek President Islam Karimov. There Karimov expressed to Akaev a desire to quickly resolve the border disputes between their countries. Kyrgyzstan, however, did not even move towards this proposed solution and missed that opportunity.⁹⁹

Another source of the unresolved border issues between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors is political instability within the region. Mamytov notes the importance of external and internal forces, which are interested in only creating instability in Kyrgyzstan and quarrels with neighboring countries.¹⁰⁰ Echoing Mamytov, the former head of the Kyrgyz Department of Regional Problems and expert on border issues in Central Asia, Salamat Alamanov, identifies the main sources of the unresolved border issues as internal problems and political instability in Kyrgyzstan. As an example he cites the resistance of residents of the Batken province (which is adjacent to the border with Uzbekistan) to the Kyrgyz government’s offer to give Uzbekistan a corridor to its enclave

⁹⁷ Ekaterina Ivashenko, “Кыргызстан: Больной Вопрос, или Как Решать Пограничные Споры” [Kyrgyzstan: A Painful Question or How to Resolve the Border Disputes], accessed March 19, 2015, <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/7437>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Sokh (in Kyrgyzstan), in exchange for Uzbekistan's granting to Kyrgyzstan a corridor for the residents of the Kyrgyz enclave of Barak, which is located in Uzbekistan. As another example, when Kyrgyzstan finished the delimitation of the border with Kazakhstan, a Kyrgyz politician accused Kyrgyz members of the Joint Commission of conceding land to Kazakhstan. Alamanov, again along Mamytov's lines, also said, "Kyrgyzstan has to make concessions."¹⁰¹ The opposition and outright political sniping Alamanov describes does not contribute to progress in resolving border disputes.

The border policies of the former Soviet Union, as mentioned in this study's findings and analysis, are the third source of border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and its neighbors. Moscow was responsible for changing the borderlines several times to fit its need, rather than those of the affected areas of the USSR, which would become independent states. These changes in Central Asia set conditions for each country to approach the disputes from the perspective of its own interests. For example, according to the current Chief of the Department for Delimitation and Development of Border Areas of the government of the Kyrgyz Republic, Kurbanbai Iskandarov, in dealing with the border dispute, Uzbekistan referred to the 1924-1927 national-territorial delimitations established by the USSR, while Kyrgyzstan referred to the 1955 official documents.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Abdumomun Mamaraimov, "Саламат Аламанов: Граница между Киргизией и Узбекистаном Напоминает Сито" [Salamat Alamanov: The Border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan Reminds Sieve], accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/4745>.

¹⁰² Narynkul Nazaralieva, "Твои Границы Разграничены, Уточнены, Кыргызстан?" [Are Your Boundaries Demarcated, Refined, Kyrgyzstan?], *Кыргыз Туусу* [Kyrgyz Tuusu], July 19, 2012, accessed February 1, 2015, http://www.gezitter.org/interviews/12771__tvoi_granitsyi_razgranichenyi_utochnenyi_kyrgyzstan/.

All in all, according to this research, it is possible to draw preliminary conclusions that uncertainty over the border, lingering territorial disputes, lack of statesmanship and interpersonal experience between heads of state, desire to gain more lands, political, social, and economic instability, and third-party influence have hampered the resolution of border disputes of Kyrgyzstan with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The resulting situation increases the risk of future conflicts within the region, and affects the overall peace, stability, and security of the nations and region. Nonetheless, given the data presented in this study, the conclusions are only preliminary and, as noted above, the conversation about this important issue has been joined, but not yet concluded. Further research should include analysis of how Kyrgyzstan completed the border delimitation and demarcation process with its other two neighbors, Kazakhstan and China. In particular, a comparison of the role of third parties in these processes is worth researching. Also, further research in this complex Central Asian environment might illustrate the future impact of foreign policies of the United States of America and the Russian Federation on the border issues.

What measures might the three countries—Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—take to resolve their border issues? If the officials of the three countries turned to international mediators, this approach might accelerate the process and help to objectively address the issues according to international laws and experiences. For example, the OSCE, which includes Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan as members, could be an effective mediator because of its credibility and its vast experience for mediating regional border disputes. At the end of the day, the author believes that well-defined international borders and adjacent lands will lead to better political, social, and

economic stabilization and cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and its neighboring countries.

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