



Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan Border Tension

Why in News

Recently, a **ceasefire on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan** appeared to be holding after a day of intense **fighting between the two countries** that has killed about 40 people and wounded about 175.

- **Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan** belong to the central asia region. Other countries of the region are Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.



Key Points

- **Background:**
 - Both nations have **claimed the area around the water supply facility in Kok-Tash, a dispute dating back decades** to when they were both part of the **Soviet Union**.
 - The current configuration of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border is the **product of Soviet mapmakers** drawing the dividing lines for Soviet republics, after the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed in late 1991**.
 - The meandering boundary between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is particularly tense as over a third of its **1,000-km length is disputed**. **Restrictions on access to land and water** that communities regard as theirs have often **led to deadly clashes in the past**.
- **International Response:**
 - Russia and **European Union (EU)** welcomed the ceasefire deal and emphasised the **need for a lasting and peaceful solution**.

▪ Importance of Central Asia for India:

◦ Political:

- India has a very wide array of interests in Central Asia covering **security, energy, economic opportunities etc.**
- Security, stability and prosperity of Central Asia is **imperative for peace and economic development of India.**
- Central Asia serves as a **land bridge between Asia and Europe, making it geopolitically axial for India.**
- Both **India and Central Asian Republics (CARs) share many commonalities and perceptions** on various regional and world issues and can play a crucial role in providing regional stability.

◦ Economic:

- The region is **rich in natural resources** such as petroleum, natural gas, antimony, aluminum, gold, silver, coal and uranium which **can be best utilized by Indian energy requirements.**
- Central Asia has **huge cultivable areas lying barren** and without being put to any productive use, offering enormous opportunity for cultivation of pulses.
- CARs are fast getting linked to the global market for production, supplies of raw materials and services. They are also increasingly getting integrated into the **East-West Trans-Eurasian transit economic corridors.**

▪ Indian Initiatives:

- India intends **expansion of International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** to Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.
 - It will act as a vital gateway to access Eurasian markets and optimally operationalize its use, requiring a Central Asian state joining the project as a direct stakeholder.
- **India-Central Asia Dialogue:**
 - India has proposed setting up of 'India-Central Asia Development Group' to take forward development partnership between India & Central Asian countries.
 - This group will help India to expand its footprints in the resource-rich region amid China's massive inroads and to fight terror effectively, including in Afghanistan.

India-Kyrgyzstan

▪ Political:

- India has enjoyed **strong bilateral ties with Kyrgyzstan since 1991.**
- India was **one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with Kyrgyzstan in 1992.**

▪ Culture & Economic:

- **Since 1992, the two countries have many agreements,** including on Culture, Trade and Economic Cooperation, Civil Aviation, Investment Promotion and Protection, Avoidance of Double Taxation, Consular Convention etc.

▪ Military:

- In 2011, the joint '**Khanjar**' series of exercises was started.

▪ Indian Diaspora:

- In Kyrgyzstan, about **9,000 Indian students** are studying medicine in various medical institutions in the country. Also, **there are many businessmen living in Kyrgyzstan** who are involved in trade and several other services there.

▪ Strategic:

- The Kyrgyz leaderships have been **largely supportive of India's stand on Kashmir**.
- They also support India's bid for a permanent seat at the [United Nations Security Council](#) (UNSC).

India-Tajikistan

▪ Political:

- India and Tajikistan elevated bilateral relations to the level of a **Strategic Partnership in 2012**.
- Tajikistan supported India's membership to the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#) and also permanent membership of an expanded UNSC.
- India supported Tajikistan's accession to the [World Trade Organization](#) in 2013.

▪ Culture & Economic:

- Trade between two sides is **not to expectations despite efforts from both countries, due to more transit time and lack of readily accessible trade routes**.
- Despite limitations, trade in food processing, mining, pharmaceuticals, textiles, skill development, science & technology, Information Technology, culture and tourism are continued between two countries.

▪ India's Assistance:

- India delivered **major food assistance** in 2001-02. To overcome a crisis caused by an unprecedented harsh winter in January-February **2008, India gave a grant of USD 2 million** (USD 1 million as cash assistance and USD 1 million in kind, such as power cables, generators and pump sets).
- India provided **2 million doses of oral polio vaccine** through the [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) in November 2010.
- In March 2018, India gifted **10 Russian-made ambulances** to various regions of Tajikistan drawing substantial media coverage and appreciation from high offices.

▪ Indian Diaspora:

- The **total number of Indians is estimated at about 1550**, out of which more than 1250 are students.

Way Forward

- Geography has placed central asia at the nexus of crucial political and economic transformations for centuries. With the actualization of the [Belt and Road Initiative, India's Connect Central Asia policy](#), and the EU's new Central Asia strategy, the 21st century could possibly be the most decisive period for the region.
- Stemming from its historic cultural and economic bonds, **India is now well placed to take a more active role in the development of the region**. India's growing global visibility and key contributions to multilateral forums like the SCO have catapulted India from an observer into a critical stakeholder in the region.
- As India looks beyond its borders, **Central Asia provides India with the right platform to leverage its political, economic and cultural connections to play a leading role in Eurasia**.

[Source:TH](#)