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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the nature and resolution of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries.

Materials and Methods: The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Results: The literature review on environmental mediation in Bolivia reveals significant impacts on conflict management, including changes in dispute resolution approaches, mediator roles and outcomes. Indigenous and community mechanisms emphasize land rights, resource control and livelihoods, influencing contemporary practices. However, integration also raises concerns about cultural identity, self-governance and ecological preservation. Balancing community principles with state

environmental laws proves difficult. Strict adherence to indigenous doctrines limits innovation while adaptations undermine cultural identity.

Recommendations: This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries by synthesizing existing literature and providing a comprehensive analysis of the drivers, patterns, and impacts of these conflicts. The study offers insights into the practical implications of land and boundary conflicts, including the need for effective governance, inclusive decision-making processes, and sustainable resource management. The findings can inform policymakers, practitioners, and scholars in developing strategies to address land and boundary conflicts, foster peacebuilding, and promote regional stability in the context of Russia and former Soviet countries. The study also identifies gaps and areas for further research, highlighting the complex and dynamic nature of land and boundary conflicts in this region.

Keywords: *Land Conflicts, Resolution, Russia, Former Soviet Countries, Mediation, Arbitration, Litigation*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Russia and countries of the former Soviet Union have complex histories of navigating land and boundary conflicts. Borders were often arbitrarily defined, overlapping claims were common, and sovereignty was frequently contested (Heldt, 2013). As independent nations emerged in the 1990s, long-standing disputes over land and territory came to the fore (Smith, 2014). Certain regions even saw violent clashes over border control, resource access or historical claims (Woehrel, 2016). However, governing territorial disputes also poses difficult policy choices. Resolving one conflict can spark new tensions with neighbors or marginalized groups (Ogorkiewicz, 2010). Agreements must balance national interests with moral claims (Engstrom, 2015). Policies must consider both present realities and historical inequities (DeLeon, 2018). There are also trade-offs between stability, justice and inclusion (DeLeon, 2018). Simply imposing solutions rarely satisfies all parties or addresses underlying drivers of conflict (Zevelev, 2017).

Within increasingly globalized and interdependent geopolitical systems, land conflicts can have vast and complex consequences (Smith, 2014). Territorial disputes can damage diplomatic and economic relationships, redirect regional alliances, fuel geopolitical power plays, and even lead to military engagement (Woehrel, 2016). Domestically, they can undermine state authority, destabilize society, marginalize groups and regional economies, and exacerbate nationalism or grievances (DeLeon, 2018). There are no easy answers navigating the maze of interests, claims and costs surrounding territorial disputes (Heldt, 2003). Success depends on nuance, not simplistic platitudes. Fair resolution considers both legality and moral weight of claims (Engstrom, 2015). It balances justice and expediency without sacrificing either. Policies integrate differing perspectives while enabling shared purpose (DeLeon, 2018). Harmony arises from acknowledgement of harms and sacrifice, not dominance of particular interests.

Each generation faces choices that shall shape futures yet to be written (Zevelev, 2017). How shall sovereignty now be balanced, borders now defined, and moral claims now weighed? What voices and values shall guide policies determining who is included, who marginalized, who compensated and at what cost? The nation's character and destiny alike shall turn on these stories (DeLeon, 2018). And so, work that is complex, fraught yet urgently important continues.

Nuanced policies discern purpose through a maze of competing claims and collateral damage. (Heldt, 2003) They balance interests without sacrificing conscience or compassion. Policies integrate views into shared journey, not mere tolerance. Harmony emerges from acknowledging harms, valuing sacrifice, and weighing interests with eyes open to costs.

Each generation inherits past complexity and determines its future through choices alone. (Zevelev, 2017) How shall sovereignty balance, borders now define, and moral claims now weigh? (Engstrom, 2015) Which voices and values shall guide policies determining inclusion, compensation and at what cost? (DeLeon, 2018) A nation's destiny now hangs in the balance. And so, work complex yet imperative for the ages continues. The road ahead holds promise and peril in equal measure. (Smith, 2014) Each step now taken shapes not just process but the society to emerge. (Engstrom, 2015) The future, unwritten, awaits voices and courage to guide its form. How shall present realities find fair and balanced purpose amid injustice, contending claims and historical wrongs alike? What truth shall now light a path when reasons for war seem equally just and moral claims equally valid on each side?

There are no facile answers yet in awakening shared fate lies salvation. (DeLeon, 2018) Policies forge either harmony or tragic divide here and now. This moment shapes the age. And history shall judge not intentions alone but paths now trodden. (Zevelev, 2017) Policies

navigate not just present straits but also destiny uncharted. (DeLeon, 2018) Each generation faces choice of the story now added to histories millennia old. How that story is now told determines not merely governance but souls of nations to come.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Land and border disputes have materialized as significant governance challenges in Russia and neighbouring post-Soviet states following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Issues of contested territory, contradictory claims over resources, ambiguous legal frameworks and corruption compound resolution of conflicts and securing frontiers. (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2012; Ponomarenko, 2011; Petersen, 2012) Pressure to control land, support ethnic groups or gain strategic advantage often exacerbates tensions rather than resolving them through open and equitable means.

While disputes themselves become increasingly intricate and destabilizing, analysis of how they are addressed, if at all, remains limited. Scant research examines strategies or impacts of arbitration by political leaders at inter-state summits, determinations by international courts such as the European Court of Human Rights or application of post-Soviet agreements. Approaches tend to focus on geopolitical manoeuvring rather than reconciliation, cooperation or integrated development.

Therefore, it is imperative to analyse land and boundary conflicts between Russia and neighbours, how they have emerged and intensified in recent years, approaches implemented thus far to resolution if any, and opportunities for progressive change. Key queries encompass causes of rising disputes, self-interested vs. cooperative motivations behind mechanisms applied, marginalized groups affected or instability/insecurity resulting, and prospects for balanced, inclusive resolution grounded in international law and common interests.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries can be analyzed through various theoretical perspectives, including International Relations Theory, Political Geography Theory, Historical and Ethnic Identity Theory, Resource Conflict Theory, and Post-Soviet Transition Theory.

2.1.1 International Relations Theory

International Relations Theory focuses on the interactions between states and international actors. In the context of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries, this theory implies that these conflicts can be influenced by geopolitical interests, power dynamics, and international relations between states. Factors such as competing national interests, historical legacies, and geopolitical rivalries can shape land and boundary conflicts in the region (Waltz, 1979). International Relations Theory is important to this study as it provides insights into the broader international context that can influence land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries.

2.1.2 Political Geography Theory

Political Geography Theory examines the relationship between geography, territory, and politics. In the context of land and boundary conflicts, this theory suggests that geographical factors, such as access to resources, topography, and ethnic distribution, can play a significant role in shaping conflicts over land and boundaries in Russia and former Soviet countries. Geographical features such as disputed territories, disputed borders, and competing territorial claims can be important drivers of land and boundary conflicts in the region (Agnew, 2002).

Political Geography Theory is important to this study as it provides insights into the spatial dynamics of land and boundary conflicts in the region.

2.1.3 Historical and Ethnic Identity Theory

Historical and Ethnic Identity Theory focuses on the role of historical legacies and ethnic identities in shaping conflicts. In the context of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries, this theory suggests that historical grievances, unresolved territorial disputes, and ethnic tensions can contribute to conflicts over land and boundaries. Factors such as historical narratives, cultural identities, and perceptions of historical injustices can shape the dynamics of land and boundary conflicts in the region (Smith, 1999). Historical and Ethnic Identity Theory is important to this study as it provides insights into the role of historical and ethnic factors in shaping land and boundary conflicts.

2.1.4 Resource Conflict Theory

Resource Conflict Theory examines the role of natural resources in shaping conflicts. In the context of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries, this theory suggests that competition over valuable resources, such as land, water, and energy, can be a significant driver of conflicts. Factors such as access to resources, resource distribution, and resource ownership can contribute to conflicts over land and boundaries in the region (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Resource Conflict Theory is important to this study as it provides insights into the role of resource-related factors in shaping land and boundary conflicts.

2.1.5 Post-Soviet Transition Theory

Post-Soviet Transition Theory focuses on the challenges and dynamics of the transition from Soviet rule to independent states in the region. In the context of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries, this theory suggests that the complex and evolving process of post-Soviet transition, including issues of state-building, nation-building, and governance, can have an impact on land and boundary conflicts. Factors such as political transitions, institutional changes, and changing identities can shape the dynamics of land and boundary conflicts in the region (Hale, 2008). Post-Soviet Transition Theory is important to this study as it provides insights into the unique challenges and dynamics of land and boundary conflicts in the post-Soviet context.

2.2 Empirical Review

Numerous empirical studies have investigated the complex issue of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries. These studies have employed diverse research methods, data sources, and theoretical frameworks to examine the dynamics, causes, and impacts of land and boundary disputes in this region. Five empirical studies conducted between 2015 and present will be reviewed to provide insights into this topic.

Kolossov et al. (2015) conducted a comprehensive study on the role of land and boundary conflicts in the post-Soviet space. The study explored the historical, political, and social factors that contribute to land and boundary disputes in this region, including issues related to land ownership, resource distribution, identity politics, and geopolitical tensions. The study found that land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries are complex and multifaceted, involving a variety of actors, interests, and motivations. The study emphasized the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches to address land and boundary disputes, taking into account historical, cultural, and political contexts.

Golubchikov et al. (2017) investigated the dynamics of urban land conflicts in Russia, with a focus on issues related to property rights, land use planning, and development projects. The

study examined the role of various stakeholders, including local communities, developers, and government agencies, in shaping urban land conflicts in Russian cities. The study found that urban land conflicts in Russia are driven by competing interests and visions of urban development, often resulting in social tensions, legal disputes, and environmental impacts. The study highlighted the importance of participatory decision-making processes, transparent land use planning, and effective dispute resolution mechanisms in addressing urban land conflicts in Russia.

Ivanova et al. (2018) explored the impacts of land and boundary conflicts on rural communities in the Caucasus region of Russia. The study examined the social, economic, and environmental consequences of land disputes for local communities, including issues related to land access, livelihoods, and social cohesion. The study found that land and boundary conflicts in the Caucasus region have significant negative impacts on rural communities, leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and social fragmentation. The study emphasized the need for sustainable and inclusive approaches to land governance, involving local communities, government agencies, and other stakeholders.

Kuznetsova et al. (2020) investigated the role of international law and institutions in resolving land and boundary disputes in the post-Soviet space. The study analysed the legal frameworks, mechanisms, and challenges of international intervention in land and boundary conflicts, including issues related to sovereignty, territorial integrity, and dispute resolution mechanisms. The study found that international law and institutions play a complex and contested role in addressing land and boundary disputes in the region, involving geopolitical interests, legal complexities, and power dynamics. The study highlighted the need for nuanced and context-specific approaches to international intervention in land and boundary conflicts, taking into account the complexities of the post-Soviet space.

Petrova et al. (2021) conducted a comparative study on the drivers and impacts of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and Central Asia. The study examined the similarities and differences in land and boundary disputes in these regions, including issues related to ethnic tensions, resource competition, and political dynamics. The study found that land and boundary conflicts in Russia and Central Asia share some common drivers, such as historical legacies, identity politics, and resource competition, but also exhibit regional specificities. The study emphasized the need for region-specific and culturally sensitive approaches to addressing land and boundary conflicts in Russia and Central Asia, taking into account the diverse socio-political contexts.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

4.0 RESULTS

Land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries have been the subject of extensive research, revealing key findings and research gaps. The results indicate that these conflicts have significant geopolitical, historical, and cultural complexities that impact land ownership, resource exploitation, and political stability in the region. Studies have shown that unresolved land and boundary conflicts have led to disputes over territory, resources, and

identity, resulting in political tensions, social instability, and economic challenges. These conflicts have also had implications for international relations, with potential spill-over effects on neighboring countries and global security.

4.1 Conceptual Gaps

Conceptual gaps exist in the understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries. While previous research has explored the historical, political, and cultural factors that contribute to these conflicts, there is a conceptual gap in the literature regarding the role of identity politics, nationalism, and regionalism in shaping these conflicts. (Brown & Richardson, 2016; Wolfe, 2016) Further research is needed to investigate how identity-based narratives and nationalist ideologies fuel land and boundary disputes, and how these conflicts are connected to broader regional and global geopolitical dynamics. (Veselovsky, 2016; Ttkhe, 2017)

4.2 Contextual and Geographical Gaps

Contextual and geographical gaps also exist in the understanding of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries. These conflicts are often shaped by the specific historical, political, and cultural contexts of the region, (Zhorov, 2015; Vasilenko, 2017) which may be unfamiliar to readers from outside the region. Contextual gaps may arise from differences in language, cultural norms, and historical perspectives, (Tkacheva, 2014; Kozhemiako, 2016) making it challenging to fully comprehend the intricacies of these conflicts. Geographical gaps may also pose challenges, as readers from other countries may lack familiarity with the geography and borders of Russia and former Soviet countries, (Tulaeva, 2011; Smirnov, 2013) which can impact their understanding of the conflicts.

Existing research on land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries has often focused on specific conflicts or regions, (Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: Panossian, 2006; Ukraine conflict: Wilson, 2014) resulting in contextual and geographical gaps. For example, studies have examined conflicts such as the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict or the conflict in Ukraine, but may not fully capture the broader dynamics of land and boundary disputes in the region. A more comprehensive understanding of these conflicts requires analyses that consider the historical, political, cultural, and geographical context in a holistic manner, including perspectives from within and outside of the region. (Croft, 2012; Lynch, 2013) Bridging these gaps can lead to a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries.

4.3 Methodological Gaps

Methodological gaps exist in the research on land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries. Existing research has primarily relied on qualitative approaches, such as case studies, interviews, and historical analyses, (Allison, 2008; Bowen, 2010) to understand the causes and dynamics of these conflicts. While these approaches provide valuable insights, there is a methodological gap in the literature regarding the use of quantitative and mixed-methods research (surveys, modeling, mixed methods) to examine the broader impacts of land and boundary conflicts, such as their economic, (Banerjee, 2016; Nesterov, 2019) social, (Baskaeva, 2013; Kerimov, 2018) and environmental (Khutyrov, 2017; Orudzhev, 2019) consequences.

For example, quantitative analyses could examine the economic costs of land and boundary conflicts, including impacts on trade, investment, and development in the region. Surveys and modeling may shed light on broader socioeconomic trends resulting from these conflicts.

Mixed methods could provide a more comprehensive understanding by integrating qualitative case studies and quantitative data.

The methodological focus of most research on land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries has been limited, relying primarily on qualitative approaches. Quantitative and mixed-methods research is needed to provide a more robust and comprehensive evidence base for understanding the multi-dimensional impacts of these conflicts. Mixed and multi-method research designs that combine qualitative depth and quantitative breadth can enable analyses with greater validity, reliability, and policy relevance.

Bridging methodological gaps through more integrated and mixed methods analysis can lead to a more nuanced, evidence-based perspective needed to craft targeted solutions for managing land and boundary conflicts in the region. With a stronger methodological foundation, research on these complex issues can provide deeper insights and more effective strategies for addressing them.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

Land and boundary conflicts in Russia and former Soviet countries have had significant impacts on the political, social, and economic landscapes of these regions. These conflicts have often resulted in strained relations between countries, human rights violations, displacement of populations, and environmental degradation. Resolving land and boundary conflicts requires a multi-dimensional approach that takes into consideration historical, cultural, and political factors. It is important to recognize that these conflicts are complex and interconnected, and solutions must be approached with sensitivity, inclusivity, and a long-term perspective.

5.2 Recommendations

One key recommendation is to prioritize peaceful and diplomatic means of conflict resolution, such as negotiation, mediation, and international arbitration. The use of force should be avoided, as it can escalate conflicts and lead to further instability. Countries involved in land and boundary conflicts should engage in constructive dialogue, with the support of international organizations and the international community, to find mutually acceptable solutions that respect the rights and interests of all parties involved.

Another important recommendation is to promote inclusive governance and participation of local communities and stakeholders in decision-making processes related to land and boundary issues. This includes involving representatives from affected communities, civil society organizations, and indigenous peoples in the negotiation and implementation of agreements related to land and boundary disputes. Inclusive governance can help ensure that the diverse perspectives and interests of different groups are taken into account, and that decisions are transparent, fair, and accountable.

Furthermore, there is a need for increased research and data collection on the causes and impacts of land and boundary conflicts in the region. This can help inform evidence-based policy making and facilitate a better understanding of the underlying factors contributing to these conflicts. Research should also focus on the long-term environmental and social impacts of land and boundary conflicts, including the displacement of populations, degradation of natural resources, and the loss of cultural heritage.

Finally, international cooperation and collaboration are crucial in addressing land and boundary conflicts. Regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), can play a key role in facilitating dialogue and negotiation between countries,

and promoting confidence-building measures. Bilateral and multilateral agreements should be pursued with the aim of finding sustainable and equitable solutions to land and boundary disputes, and promoting regional stability and cooperation.

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