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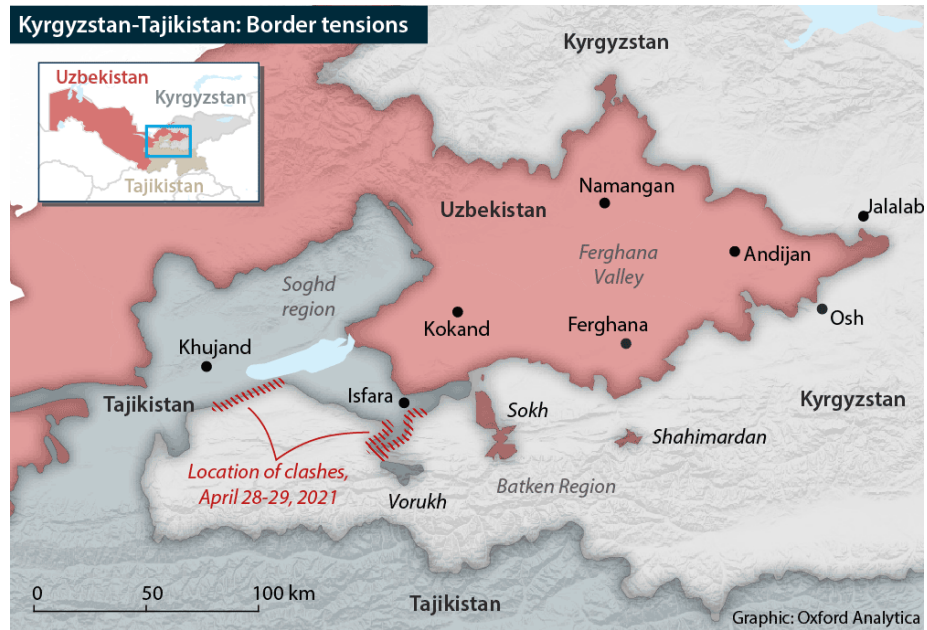
Crisis on the Border: Tajik-Kyrgyz Conflict in Post-Soviet Central Asia



Kyrgyz soldiers stand guard at the border outside the village of Kok-Tash.
Photo Credit: Vladimir Voronin, AP Photo

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Over 100 people, including almost 40 civilians, were killed in another clash between the Tajik and Kyrgyz border patrols. The Kyrgyz government reported evacuating about 137,000 people from the Batken region, where the conflict took place. The skirmish broke out on September 14, 2022, after Tajik guards reportedly fired at Kyrgyz border agents at the “Dostuk” outpost, according to the Kyrgyz Border Guard Service. Tajik officials deny this, claiming that it was Kyrgyz officers that opened fire first. On September 16, both countries agreed to a ceasefire.

The September 14th dispute was the deadliest in a long series of violent clashes between the two nations. The tension dates back to the Soviet era, when both countries were occupied by the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders feared the Central Asian republics working together and uniting against the USSR, thus they intentionally creating poorly drawn borders in an attempt to secure the Soviet Union’s sovereignty in the region. After the 1991 collapse of the USSR, the makeshift borders drawn up in Moscow became the official borders of the newly independent nations. As a result, nearly half of the 970-kilometer border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has yet to be officially delineated.



Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signing a protocol on regulating armed conflict near the border. (AKIpress News Agency)

Both nations consider Russia to be an ally. Vladimir Putin called upon both nations to pursue de-escalation. In a statement from his office, he urged Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to come to a resolution via “peaceful, political, and diplomatic means” as soon as possible. Due to Russia’s recent actions towards Ukraine, Russia remains focused on Ukraine and consequentially unable to do much to assist both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has issued a statement urging the two nations to negotiate a lasting ceasefire. In addition, Guterres stated that the United Nations is willing to send peacekeepers to the Ferghana Valley, the main location of the violence, to negotiate peace talks.

At last month’s summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, of which both nations are members, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon agreed on a ceasefire. While the ceasefire was broken on September 14, it is unknown if it will be broken again in the future.

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