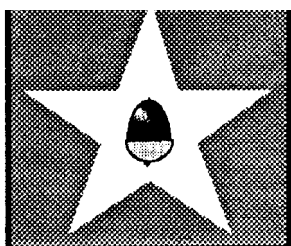


Conflict Studies Research Centre

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**The Prospects For Internal
Unrest In Turkmenistan**

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The Prospects For Internal Unrest In Turkmenistan

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The Prospects For Internal Unrest In Turkmenistan

Michael Fredholm

While the country is in uproar, the Turkmen sleeps.
Turkmen saying¹

Turkmenistan at a Glance

Internal Policy Objective: Continued existence as a secular state, nation-building, and retention as well as augmentation of presidential power.

Foreign Policy Objective: The construction of pipelines through Afghanistan, paid for by a third party and with protection provided by any Afghan government, as a way to revive Turkmenistan's economy.

Security Policy Objective: Measures to achieve foreign policy objectives under the protective cover of official neutrality.

Means: (At home) presidential personality cult, control of media, and emphasis on internal security; (abroad) tacit support of Pakistan (and in extension Pakistan's Afghan allies) and attempts to procure foreign investment.

Allies: None.

Population: 4.4 million (1999).²

Armed Forces: 17,000 as well as 12,000 border guards.³

Security Forces: 20,000 members of the law enforcement organs (the Soviet-style militia) as well as at least 5,000 operating under the security ministry MNB and another 2,000 to 3,000 in the Presidential Guard (which may include a dedicated motor rifle battalion in Ashgabat or various OMON riot police units formally under the ministry of internal affairs).⁴

Stalin's Disneyland?

The widely publicised attempt on Turkmenistani President Saparmurat Niyazov's life on 25 November 2002, and the subsequent arrest in the capital Ashgabat of an exiled, leading opponent to the Niyazov regime, dispelled the notion that any rumours of attempted palace coups against the Turkmenistani government were exaggerated.⁵ Although the facts of the affair so far remain impossible to verify, there is, as will be shown, at least circumstantial evidence to suggest that Turkmenistan has a history of planned, if not actually carried out, coups against Niyazov.

It is difficult to be truly objective about Turkmenistan and her president. Where but in Turkmenistan can one find a twelve-metre high, gold-plated statue of the country's leader which is not only covered in 26 kilograms of precious metals but also slowly revolves on top of the 75-metre high Neutrality Arch so that the president always faces the sun? Where else is a CD with songs about the president always on top of the hit parade? Where but in Turkmenistan will every computer sold in the country not only include the standard Microsoft baggage but also special software with speeches by the president? Where else have all government ministries built increasingly extravagant residences for the president, collectively known in the diplomatic corps as Stalin's Disneyland? Even serious news reporting seems unable to penetrate further than to state that "Turkmenistan is bombastic, bizarre, a combination of the Gulag Archipelago and Absurdistan".⁶ While a lack of objectivity may be understandable, this detracts from serious analysis of what, so far, is one of the few relatively orderly states in Central Asia. Turkmenistan's

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authoritarian regime and largely homogeneous ethnic population have combined to produce what on the surface appears to be the politically most stable of the former Soviet Central Asian republics.⁷

Despite the activities of a few members of the opposition and widespread shortages of daily necessities, one should accordingly not underestimate the stability of the Turkmenistani regime. Niyazov may still be perceived domestically as promoting the social benefits, national traditions, and security of the Turkmen people. If so, the Turkmen apparently accept a certain level of repression in exchange for material benefits, a not uncommon trade-off in a state with an ethnically largely homogeneous population.

Yet, Turkmenistan retains a potential for internal unrest. The subsequent sections therefore contain surveys and an analysis of the social and political contexts of Turkmenistan, her internal, foreign, and security policy, and how she is affected by her immediate neighbours. This is followed by an evaluation of the potential of various possible causes of conflict within Turkmenistan, defined as, respectively, popular unrest, Islamic extremism, organised crime and international smuggling, spill-over effects of Afghan conflicts, foreign intervention, war with a neighbouring state, and a coup d'état within the ruling elite. As the data available to an outside observer are limited, parts of this evaluation must be of a speculative nature.

Background

The Turkmenistani Population

The Turkmen population consists of a number of tribes. There is little consensus on the total number or identity of these tribes, although one today commonly speaks of seven major tribes, corresponding to the seven major dialects of Turkmenistan: Yomud, Tekke, Göklen, Salor, Saryk, Ersary, and Khoudur.⁸

The principal Turkmen tribe is currently the Tekke, divided into the Mary and Ahal sub-tribes, so named after their respective geographical locations (Ahal is the province of which Turkmenistan's capital Ashgabat is the centre; Mary is the historically well-known city of Merv and capital of Mary province). Although currently of lesser importance in the Turkmenistani elite, the Yomud, dominating the west and the Caspian littoral, and Göklen regard themselves as pure Turkmen (*ik*), that is, those Turkmen who do not have slaves among their ancestors, and are reported to look down on the currently dominant Tekke who are not regarded as *ik*. The Ersary were historically close to Bukhara (east of the Amu Darya and now in neighbouring Uzbekistan) and accordingly more settled than the other, nomadic or semi-nomadic Turkmen tribes. The Tekke, on the other hand, dominate the centre of the Turkmen territory and remember that they defeated the Russians at Gök Tepe (Gokdepe) in 1879, the only battle against the Russian army ever won by the Turkmen.⁹

Although the differences among most Turkmen tribes have diminished due to frequent intermarriage, especially since the Soviet period, it is rumoured that political rivalries among them have grown since independence. The truth in this allegation is hard to substantiate, although in earlier times there certainly was long-standing rivalry between the two largest tribes, the Tekke and Yomud, rivalry that was played up by the Russians as they annexed the territory.¹⁰ Historically, the Turkmen were scattered tribes that never lived together in a unified state. They rarely allied to campaign against sedentary neighbours, nor did they form a

unified front against the Russian advance. Even during the Russian and Soviet times they did not blend into a nation, some claim.¹¹ While one could argue that the Tekke rule the country, being embodied in the person of Turkmenistan's president, a Tekke Turkmen, it is alleged by some that the Tekke earlier was a weaker tribe that only could attain power with Russian help. This is probably an allusion to the well-known Yomud leader Muhammad Kurban Junaid Khan (c 1860-1938), who after uniting the Turkmen tribes after 1917 set himself up as the master of Khiva, where his opponents soon appealed to the Red Army for help. Having been driven out of Khiva, Junaid Khan became a leader in the eventually failed Basmachi revolt against Soviet power.¹²

The Turkmen constitute from 77 to 85 per cent of the total population, depending on who is counting (official figures being the higher ones). It is beyond doubt, however, that the Turkmen enjoy a comfortable majority, which is an advantage in Turkmenistan's nation-building project. The rest of the population consists of minorities such as Uzbeks (9.2 or 5 per cent, predominantly along the northern border in the Dashhowuz province), Russians (6.7 per cent; most of whom live in the cities), Kazakhs (2 per cent according to non-official figures) and several others, including Armenians, Azeris, Tatars, and Ukrainians (each of less than 1 per cent of the population). Yet smaller minorities include Baluchis and Kurds along the southern border.¹³

The Armenians have occasionally suffered persecution, for instance in Ashgabat and Nebitdag in August 1989.¹⁴ This was no doubt triggered by the simultaneous ethnic disturbances between Armenians and Azeris on the other side of the Caspian. Furthermore, unlike the Russian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Church (as well as other Christian denominations) has not been permitted to operate in Turkmenistan.¹⁵ Since Turkmen is linguistically close to Azeri and Turkish,¹⁶ it is hardly surprising that Turkmen are affected by sentiments common in Azerbaijan and Turkey. For this reason, it for a while seemed as if Turkey would attain a key role in the policies of independent Turkmenistan. Niyazov made his first official visit abroad after independence to Turkey. However, although Turkey still provides some aid, it is debatable whether she wields any particular influence in Turkmenistan.

Relations between the majority Turkmen and the minorities were always somewhat uneasy. The majority Turkmen population even in Soviet times often frowned upon marriage outside the Turkmen race. Besides, the Turkmen even then attempted to turkmenise their own minorities (Baluchis, Germans, and others). On a more personal level, observers have long noted the prevalence of racial jokes among the Turkmen.¹⁷

There is also a considerable although poorly known Turkmen population outside Turkmenistan, in particular in neighbouring Iran (variously estimated as from 300,000 to 900,000 Turkmen), Afghanistan (probably 150,000 but perhaps as many as 400,000), and Uzbekistan (at least 150,000). However, there are also Turkmen in Iraq (possibly 300,000), Turkey (120,000), Syria (110,000), and Jordan (several thousand), as well as in Tajikistan (20,000) and Russian North Caucasus (almost 40,000).¹⁸ Some of them are the descendants of Turkmen who emigrated to Iran and Afghanistan at the time of the First World War, the Russian Revolution, and the Russian Civil War, for many in an ultimately futile attempt to continue the struggle against the Soviet power.¹⁹

Internal Policy

The objectives of Turkmenistan's internal policy, not surprisingly in light of her recent independence, appear to be continued existence as a secular state and nation-building. A further objective of the Turkmenistani government since independence, as will be shown, is the retention as well as augmentation of presidential power.

The government of Turkmenistan is divided into three branches: the executive branch headed by the president, the legislative branch consisting of the National Assembly (Milli Majlis), and the judicial branch embodied in the Supreme Court. A People's Council (Halk Maslahaty), of which the president is chairman, nominally has the ultimate power to oversee the three branches. While a Council of Elders, chaired by the president, exists as an advisory body to the government, everyday affairs are conducted by a Cabinet of Ministers appointed by the president and of which he is the chairman. The president also appoints the procurator general and other officers of the courts.²⁰

The president is without doubt the most powerful individual in the country, both constitutionally and in actual practice. In a country dependent on a single authoritarian leader such as Turkmenistan, any thorough analysis of the country's policy accordingly must begin with the background of the leader, in Turkmenistan President Saparmurat Niyazov.

President Niyazov

President Saparmurat Ataevich Niyazov's background is that of the Soviet Man, a thoroughly sovieticised party functionary.²¹ He was born on 19 February 1940. As his father, a Tekke Turkmen named Atamurat Niyazov, died a soldier during the Second World War and his mother Gurbansoltan Ije and two brothers died in the great 1948 Ashgabat earthquake, young Saparmurat was raised first in an orphanage and later in the home of relatives. This did not prevent him from receiving a solid education. He studied at the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute, but returned home to begin party work among trade unionists in 1959. He was accepted as a member of the Communist Party in 1962. Niyazov again stayed in Leningrad from 1965, during which he graduated from the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute in 1966 with a degree in power engineering. Niyazov then returned home, and in 1967 found employment at the Bezmeinskaya Power Station near Ashgabat.

In 1970, Niyazov began working for the Communist Party of Turkmenistan (CPT) Central Committee. From 1980, he was also First Secretary (party chief) for the city of Ashgabat. In 1985, he was appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (TSSR) and subsequently, in December 1985, was elected First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPT, thus holding the highest state and party posts within the TSSR. From 1986 to 1991, he was also on the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in Moscow. On 13 January 1990 Niyazov became Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the TSSR. He was elected the first president of the TSSR on 27 October 1990 and one year later, on 27 October 1991, proclaimed Turkmenistan's sovereignty from the Soviet Union. A second presidential election was held on 21 June 1992, in which Niyazov was elected president of the independent Republic of Turkmenistan. Niyazov was the sole candidate in both the October 1990 and June 1992 presidential elections.

Following a referendum on 15 January 1994 in which Niyazov, as in previous elections, received 98 to 99 per cent of the vote, he extended his term until 2002

(presidential elections were scheduled for January 2002). On 28 December 1999, Niyazov accepted the proposal of the Milli Majlis to grant him "unlimited authority" for an indefinite period. He later stated that he would rule until 2005 or 2007. In February 2001, Niyazov announced that he would step down in 2010.²²

Niyazov remains the chairman of Turkmenistan's leading political party. In November/December 1991, the CPT under Niyazov's leadership held its twenty-fifth congress, during which the party renamed itself the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), thus inheriting the mantle, organisation, and property of the CPT. The congress confirmed Niyazov in the position of party chairman as well.²³

It seems clear that Niyazov is a pragmatic and cautious, albeit somewhat megalomaniac, leader. At the time of the attempted Moscow coup in August 1991, Niyazov was careful not to commit himself either for or against. Instead Niyazov has since independence created and nurtured a powerful personality cult. He is also the founder and president of the Humanitarian Association of Turkmens of the World, due to which he holds the official title of Türkmenbashi, Head of all Turkmens (a title granted by the Milli Majlis in 1993; his birthday was also declared a public holiday). In March 1992, he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, being the first Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) president to do so and thereby the first of them to reinvent himself as a devout Muslim, thereby facilitating links not only with Iran and Turkey but perhaps as importantly, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.²⁴

Niyazov is married and has two children, a son and a daughter. His wife, a Russian of the Jewish nationality named Muza, and daughter Irina live in Moscow,²⁵ which may possibly be explained by Niyazov's emphasis on his Muslim credentials. His son Murat runs an oil and gas business in Austria and shows no inclination to return to Turkmenistan.²⁶

Despite Niyazov's insistence on the use of the Turkmen language, scholars of Turkmen outside Turkmenistan have at times said that Niyazov's command of Turkmen is not flawless and that this has delayed a standardisation of the language, as scholars inside Turkmenistan fear Niyazov and dare not correct his Turkmen.²⁷

Foreign & Security Policy

Turkmenistan's chief foreign policy concerns appear to be (1) how to survive while surrounded not only by much larger and militarily more powerful neighbours, such as Iran and Uzbekistan, but also very turbulent neighbours, primarily Afghanistan; and (2) to revive Turkmenistan's stagnant economy by exporting her natural resources oil and natural gas.²⁸

When Turkmenistan unexpectedly acquired independence in 1991, the state's territorial integrity was not as yet recognised by all neighbouring states. Uzbekistan had some claims to border areas in Dashhowuz and Charjew regions, mainly populated by ethnic Uzbeks.²⁹ Only in June 2000 was a joint protocol issued with Uzbekistan, according to which neither country had territorial claims over the other. The two sides also agreed to form an intergovernmental commission to delimit and demarcate their common borders and prepare a draft treaty on state borders to be signed by the presidents of the two countries.³⁰ An agreement on the mutual borders was included among several agreements signed between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in September 2000.³¹ Relations have since been occasionally tense, however, and shooting incidents have taken place on the common border. Niyazov has ordered border fortifications to be built and reinforced

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the border guard.³² By the end of 2002, military units of the two countries were deployed on the common border.³³ One source of contention was the Qarshi canal, divided between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. According to an agreement between the two states, Uzbekistan is leasing the Turkmenistani part of the irrigation infrastructure, the Qarshi pumping cascade, for a yearly payment in money and water. Turkmenistan has complained that Uzbekistan did not live up to her obligations for controlling the water supply, while Uzbekistan regards it as vital to her needs.³⁴ It thus appears clear that in spite of existing agreements, the border issue is far from settled.

Another complication was that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan no longer had any particular strategic value. Her territory no longer marked the Soviet border with hostile neighbours (Iran and Afghanistan). As a source of raw materials (natural gas and oil), Turkmenistan had some potential, but her neighbours had the same advantage.

The Turkmenistani leadership accordingly had to search for a means of preserving territorial integrity and guarantee security, but also creating favourable conditions for political and economic reforms, to realise its raw materials potential without becoming politically dependent on the neighbouring states across whose territory the export routes would have to pass. The solution was the proposal that Turkmenistan be granted a neutral status.³⁵

Turkmenistan declared herself a "neutral" country in 1993.³⁶ President Niyazov also announced Turkmenistan's neutral status at the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan, on 14 March 1995. In October 1995 Turkmenistan joined the Non-Aligned Movement. On 12 December 1995, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on "The Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan," thus recognising Turkmenistan's status of "permanent neutrality," and expressed its hope that the member states would support the neutral status of Turkmenistan and respect her sovereignty and territorial integrity.³⁷ Turkmenistan's military doctrine was amended to underline the neutral status in September 1996, enabling Turkmenistan to substantially reduce military spending.³⁸

Although the first foreign policy objective (to survive while surrounded by much larger, militarily more powerful, and often very turbulent neighbours), Turkmenistan might argue, has been achieved by adhering to the policy of neutrality, the second objective (to revive Turkmenistan's stagnant economy by exporting oil and natural gas) turned out to be unattainable without risking involvement in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan is surrounded by countries with exploitable oil and natural gas resources of their own, among them Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. These neighbours have little interest in supporting Turkmenistan's exports as long as they can sustain the export of their own resources.³⁹

This predicament left Turkmenistan only one choice: to promote a new export pipeline corridor through Afghanistan to Pakistan, from which oil and gas could be shipped to South Asia and the Far East. The idea was apparently born in Pakistan. In December 1991, a Pakistani delegation visiting Ashgabat expressed its interest in building a gas pipeline across Iran and Afghanistan to Pakistan.⁴⁰ In May 1992 during consultations between President Niyazov and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at a working meeting of ECO heads of state in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan and Pakistan agreed jointly to develop their energy sources and build

a gas pipeline and a highway connecting the two countries across Afghanistan.⁴¹ An important objective of the plan was that the energy routes would exit through Pakistan, the ally of the United States, rather than through Iran. For this reason, Turkmenistan has continuously maintained friendly relations with Pakistan as well as Pakistan's Afghan allies.⁴²

Probably for this reason, subsequent meetings concerning the projected pipeline were held in Pakistan: on 6-7 February 1993 in Quetta and on 28 November 1993 in Islamabad. The Argentinian oil company Bridas finalised plans for such a venture in 1994. In 1995, the American oil company Unocal and its partner, the Saudi-owned Delta Oil company, also announced plans for a pipeline in response to what they regarded as a threat from Bridas to corner the market.⁴³ Afghan troops of the Taliban movement, recently formed by Pakistan with Saudi assistance, were expected to secure the highways and routes for oil and gas pipelines. In March 1995 in Islamabad, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and President Niyazov signed a memorandum on building a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and on re-opening a highway between the town of Haman in Pakistan and the town of Turgundi on the Afghan-Turkmenistani border.⁴⁴

Turkmenistan's involvement in the Afghan conflict in the role of what can only be referred to as Pakistan's ally, while understandable in light of her second foreign policy objective, was obviously irreconcilable with her officially stated policy of neutrality. So far, all the accords had been bilateral in nature. Afghan representatives were not parties to the accords.⁴⁵ But more was to follow. In April 1994, Turkmenistan and Pakistan signed a bilateral agreement on military co-operation, during a visit to Ashgabat by a Pakistani air force delegation led by Vice Marshal Faruq Usman Haider. The agreement provided for the training of Turkmenistani military personnel including pilots at military colleges and training establishments in Pakistan, Pakistani assistance in the formation of an air force academy in Turkmenistan, as well as for military specialists to be trained in Turkmenistan by Pakistani instructors.⁴⁶

Pakistan, however, was not the only country to offer Turkmenistan assistance in military matters. Turkey, too, has helped train military officers from Turkmenistan, beginning with a first group of 30 Turkmenistani cadets in 1992, followed in 1993 by a second group of 300 cadets and junior officers. So has Iran. Russia and Ukraine have also offered places to Turkmenistani cadets and officers at military schools and academies. In 1997, USA made Turkmenistan eligible for Foreign Military Financing. NATO has also been involved in the enrolment of Turkmenistani military officers in training courses in the United States and Western Europe (following an appeal from the Turkmenistani ministry of defence in April 1993) as well as the provision of advice for the Turkmenistani armed forces. So far, however, Western military support to Turkmenistan appears to have been negligible. There have also been occasional rifts in Niyazov's relations with in particular the United States, chiefly due to Niyazov's insistence on future pipeline routes through Iran and Afghanistan, instead of those preferred by the United States.⁴⁷ Turkmenistani pilots apparently also receive training in India.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the Turkmenistani leadership established contacts with the Taliban. At this point, Turkmenistan was - with Pakistan - the only foreign partner of the Taliban. In winter 1994, when Taliban units first appeared on the Turkmenistani border, a railway link between Gushgy (Kushka, Turkmenistan) and Turgundi (Afghanistan) was opened. Although significant amounts of traffic bound for Afghanistan soon appeared, it is not known what kind of cargo the trains were

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carrying. According to Turkmenistani officials, Turkmenistan was providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. This claim has been doubted by some independent observers. It appears more likely that Turkmenistan sold fuel, lubricants, construction materials, consumer goods, and other commodities to the Taliban.⁴⁹

As the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan met on 4 October 1996 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to state their concern over the events in Afghanistan (Taliban units had by then taken the capital Kabul), President Niyazov declined an invitation to attend, citing Turkmenistani neutrality. However, on 7 October 1996, Iglal Haider Zaidi, special envoy of the Pakistani prime minister, arrived in Ashgabat to meet Niyazov. After the meeting, the two sides announced that "the views of Turkmenistan and Pakistan on the situation in Afghanistan fully coincide". On 27 October 1997, Niyazov signed a protocol with the American oil company Unocal to build a trans-Afghan gas pipeline, along a route then controlled by Taliban forces.⁵⁰

Following the United States air strikes on terrorist-related positions in Afghanistan and Sudan on 20 August 1998, Unocal suspended its participation in the project.⁵¹ In late February 1999, Turkmenistan's foreign minister Boris Shikhmuradov visited Kandahar, Afghanistan, to meet Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar to discuss the gas pipeline. This resulted in a meeting in Islamabad on 29 April 1999 between energy ministers from the three countries. Among the participants were Rejepbay Arazov, Turkmenistan's minister of oil and gas industry and mineral resources; Nisar Ali Khan, minister of oil and natural resources of Pakistan; Ahmad Jan, minister of mining and natural resources of the (Taliban) Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan; and also Batyr Sarjaev, Turkmenistan's deputy chairman of the cabinet responsible for energy who within days was to be appointed Turkmenistan's minister of defence. The three sides reaffirmed their intention to implement the gas pipeline project.⁵² The Taliban deputy foreign minister Abdur Rahman Zahid visited Ashgabat on 10-12 May 1999 to sign various economic agreements with Turkmenistan: the first known occasion on which the Taliban government signed any agreement with a foreign state.⁵³

In November 1999, a Turkmenistani military delegation headed by Batyr Sarjaev visited Pakistan, being received by Pakistani leader General Pervez Musharraf and the chiefs of staffs of the Pakistani air force and navy. Discussions centred on the security of the planned gas pipeline and the expansion of military co-operation between the two states.⁵⁴

Niyazov has pursued an independent course in participating in multilateral and regional gatherings. He declined, for instance, to attend the summit conference in April 2000 dealing with the growing crisis in Afghanistan, as well as the Shanghai Five summit meeting in Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek later in 2000.⁵⁵ Instead Niyazov met Pakistan's leader General Musharraf in Ashgabat on 15 May 2000 to discuss various projects of political and economic co-operation, including the construction of rail and road links and the planned trans-Afghan natural gas pipeline.⁵⁶ Musharraf had a second meeting with Niyazov in Ashgabat on 6 November 2000.⁵⁷ Both meetings can, perhaps, be seen as deliberate snubs to the other Central Asian states as well as Russia, since they strongly condemned the Taliban regime. Niyazov has also provided electricity, fuel and gas to Taliban-controlled territory in western Afghanistan, with the intention to eventually also supply electricity to Pakistan.⁵⁸

Independent Turkmenistan has been friendly with whoever is in charge in Afghanistan, even before the formation of the Taliban movement. For instance, diplomatic ties had been established with the then Najibullah government in Afghanistan by February 1992.⁵⁹ After discussions on border security between President Niyazov and officials from northern Afghanistan in July 1993, Turkmenistani consulates were established in the Afghan cities of Mazar-e Sharif and Herat. In 1994, further talks focused on building a railway link and supplying electricity to Herat (an agreement to build an electrical grid from the TSSR to Herat had already been concluded between the Soviet Union and her protégé, the Afghan Najibullah government, in May 1991;⁶⁰ both tasks were eventually completed after the Taliban had assumed control over the border area). A direct telephone communications line was eventually completed connecting Ashgabat and Mary with Herat.⁶¹ It is thus hardly surprising that Niyazov eventually also allowed the Taliban to open a legation in Turkmenistan.⁶²

While it could be argued that Turkmenistan's firm decision to maintain friendly relations with any rulers in Afghanistan began as a purely pragmatic move to revive Turkmenistan's stagnant economy by exporting her natural resources,⁶³ Turkmenistani policy soon began to lean increasingly towards instituting what might be referred to as an unofficial military pact with Pakistan and the Taliban. This was in flagrant disregard of Turkmenistan's official policy of neutrality as well her relations with other Central Asian states - perhaps with the exception of China, another staunch supporter of Pakistan.⁶⁴

There is no doubt that China is interested in the long-term prospect of building a gas pipeline that will allow the export of natural gas to China. Herself in need of additional future energy sources, China could also re-export the gas to the global market, for instance to Japan.⁶⁵ Turkmenistan has accordingly discussed an interim rail line for transporting liquefied gas through China until the pipeline is finished. President Niyazov visited Beijing in November 1992 for talks on the pipeline, and in December 1992 held further talks with representatives of the Chinese ministry of oil. This resulted in an alternative route for the proposed gas pipeline, running through Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and China to the Yellow Sea coast opposite Japan, where a natural gas liquefaction plant would be built to convert the gas prior to shipment.⁶⁶

From 1998, contacts with China intensified. Niyazov spent six days in China discussing regional security, meeting his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin on 31 August 1998 regarding the situations in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Taiwan, and the fight against separatism. Turkmenistan and China signed joint agreements including one to combat separatism in September 1998. Turkmenistani minister of defence Batyr Sarjaev made a ten-day visit to China in September 1999. Speaking in the wake of the visit, he expressed an interest in military co-operation with China, specifically mentioning personnel training and the use and repair of military hardware as areas of particular interest.⁶⁷ China's President Jiang Zemin arrived in Turkmenistan on 6 July 2000 to discuss the long-term project to build oil and gas pipelines to China. So far, however, the project remains dormant because of the high costs needed to build, protect and maintain a route over such vast distances in an unstable region. In this context, it should be noted that the first Chinese delegation to meet the Taliban went to Kabul on 31 January 1999.⁶⁸

China's interest in the natural gas and oil resources of Turkmenistan may possibly be shown also in another aspect of Turkmen court life. Sources close to Niyazov's entourage have reported the existence of a Chinese miracle healer who takes care of

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the president's medical needs.⁶⁹ While the importance of this, if any, is impossible to evaluate, China has been known to use individual Chinese as unofficial informers in the region.⁷⁰

It is fair to conclude that American and Pakistani interest in Turkmenistani natural gas survived the 2001 war on terror and that Turkmenistan's policy may yet pay off. Afghanistan's leader Hamid Karzai during his first state visit to Pakistan's capital Islamabad on 8 February 2002 declared that the construction of a pipeline carrying natural gas from Turkmenistan across his country to Pakistan was "very essential". The pipeline was the project in which Karzai had been involved as a Unocal consultant and one he knew was dear to the Pakistani leaders.⁷¹ Yet, a trans-Afghan pipeline is unlikely to be completed in the immediate future. Meanwhile Turkmenistan is increasingly being used as a transshipment point for illegal drugs from Afghanistan.⁷² This shows that Turkmenistan has not been able to insulate herself from the effects of the Afghan conflict. Turkmenistan remains directly affected by further instability there, despite the fact that she currently has little to gain from her exposure to Afghanistan.

In 1995, there were more than fifty armed clashes on the border involving smugglers, about two tonnes of drugs were seized, and some 1,800 Afghan citizens were detained. The drug problem has since grown. In 1996, more than 14 tonnes of drugs were confiscated. In 1997, approximately 42 tonnes were confiscated, and 2,107 illegal border crossings were recorded, most of which were connected to drug trafficking. In 1999, 50 tonnes of hashish, 2.3 tonnes of heroin, and 7.7 tonnes of opium were confiscated. No doubt far larger shipments went through undetected.⁷³ Most of the narcotics trafficking is believed to have been controlled by Islamic extremists, including the Taliban.⁷⁴

The various Taliban offensives also compromised what the Turkmenistani leadership referred to as stability on the border with Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. In summer 1997, the Taliban carried out various acts of ethnic cleansing which also affected two villages populated by ethnic Turkmens. On 20 June 1997, some 1,500 refugees entered Turkmenistan, a number which in the subsequent week rose to 8,000. However, Turkmenistan chose not to accept the refugees and Turkmenistani border guards had them returned into Afghanistan.⁷⁵ In addition, in April 1997, and possibly on other occasions as well, Taliban units reportedly moved through Turkmenistani territory in a flank march to bypass the front lines of their Northern Alliance enemies.⁷⁶

Turkmenistan accordingly ignored the position of the international community with regard to the Taliban movement. Her foreign policy isolated her from the other Central Asian states and conflicted with their security interests. In addition, Turkmenistan has not been able to guarantee her own security. Although Niyazov may have hoped that his positive attitude to the Taliban would prevent them from sponsoring security threats to the Turkmenistani leadership, Turkmenistan's armed forces are too weak to safeguard the country's sovereignty. In fact, state security has already been violated, not only by direct military or subversive action but also through the increasing volume of drug trafficking from Afghanistan across Turkmenistan's territory. Turkmenistan is currently under threat from organised drug traffickers as well as Islamic extremists, all until recently operating from sanctuaries within Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. A United Nations-recognised neutrality will not protect Turkmenistan from these threats. Nor can Turkmenistan due to her accommodating policy towards the Taliban be certain of military support from the West. A future NATO involvement in any Turkmenistan conflict appears

distinctly unlikely,⁷⁷ despite the fact that Niyazov has frequently, and often with great success, attempted to drum up moral and financial support in the West. He has visited many of the leading Western states, including the United States in early April 1994, when Niyazov underwent surgical treatment there, and April 1998, when he was invited by President Bill Clinton.⁷⁸ Russia might offer assistance, but it is equally unlikely that Niyazov would be willing to pay the price of any such assistance.

Neither could Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates be of much assistance. Saudi Arabia has directed considerable financial aid to Turkmenistan, apparently primarily to her religious institutions and to encourage Islamic worship, and Turkmenistan has joined the Saudi-dominated Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). The United Arab Emirates too has provided funds for various sectors of the Turkmenistani economy.⁷⁹ It should be noted, however, that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were, with Pakistan, the only states that recognised the Taliban government of Afghanistan, and their support of Turkmenistan may to a large extent have been dependent on the latter's positive behaviour with regard to Pakistan and the Taliban.

The highly personalised nature of Turkmenistan's foreign policy makes it hard to predict her responses to different initiatives or security threats. However, it should be noted that the numbers and state of Turkmenistan's armed forces offer little hope of an efficient defence against any real, external threat, should one materialise. A neutral position in great power politics can be regarded as an eminently suitable strategy for a country such as Turkmenistan. Besides, Turkmenistan's neutrality allows her to play Uzbekistan, Turkey, Pakistan, Russia, Iran, and indeed, before its fall, the Taliban movement of Afghanistan against each other.

Despite Turkmenistan's preoccupation with Pakistan, her geographical position means that she cannot ignore maintaining good relations also with Iran. In May 1996, a new railway link connecting Turkmenistan and Iran was inaugurated, joining Tejen in Turkmenistan to the Iranian city of Mashhad through the twin towns of Serakhs in Turkmenistan and Sarakhs in Iran. The project was eventually expected to form part of a larger transport and energy corridor to connect Kazakhstan and the whole of the former Soviet railway system with the Persian Gulf and, equally ambitiously, China with Turkey and the Middle East, thus also forming a second entry point into Europe bypassing Russia.⁸⁰

Neither is Turkmenistan in a position completely to ignore Russia, even though Niyazov has directed the occasional snub at her. Military co-operation was first agreed and defined by the 1992 Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, which handed over to Turkmenistan a considerable part of the Soviet armed forces and its weaponry and equipment. Further agreements on for instance the training of Turkmenistani military personnel at Russian military schools and academies, joint border control, and - perhaps then of considerable importance - exchange of intelligence were concluded in September 1993. In December 1994, Turkmenistan's Committee for National Security (KNC) and the Russian Federation's Foreign Intelligence Service signed a five-year agreement for co-operation in state security and mutual protection of the political, economic, and technological interests of the two states.⁸¹ In February 1995, it was agreed to establish a CIS Joint Air Defence System under Russian control. This included an estimated 2,000 Russian servicemen, probably divided into two surface-to-air missile (SAM) regiments (70 fixed SAM launchers), based at Ashgabat and expected

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to remain there until the country's defences improved. These units were exclusively concerned with the air defence of the southern approaches to the CIS in general and Russia in particular. In addition, the Turkmenistani air force depended on Russian support as well as Russian aircrew and technical personnel. Some Russian air force units may have remained in Turkmenistan until quite recently.⁸² However, relations deteriorated, most Russian military units in Turkmenistan were withdrawn, and Turkmenistan declined to join the CIS Collective Security Treaty at the CIS summit in Moscow in April 1999. Niyazov until the November 2001 jubilee summit also declined to take part in CIS meetings, apparently being convinced that Turkmenistan had little to gain from integration within the CIS framework. According to the blueprint for Turkmenistan's new military doctrine, foreign forces will not be allowed bases on Turkmenistani territory. Nonetheless, Russian President Vladimir Putin paid a one-day visit to Ashgabat on 19 May 2000, together with minister of foreign affairs Igor Ivanov, minister of defence Igor Sergeyev, and Gazprom head Rem Vyakhirev.⁸³

Russia is also a key player in the complicated diplomatic game on how to divide the Caspian Sea among its coastal states, in which Turkmenistan is one part.⁸⁴ While a highly important issue for Turkmenistan, it does not, so far, appear to have had any appreciable impact on either Turkmenistani internal or security policy. Turkmenistan does not have the military resources to defend her position in the Caspian, should a military conflict break out. Niyazov in recent years indeed appears to have been forced to re-evaluate his position and seek enhanced relations with Russia. Turkmenistan has slowly moved towards the position held by Russia on the question of the division of the Caspian Sea. Niyazov attended the ten-year jubilee CIS summit meeting in Moscow on 30 November 2001 and the CIS Almaty meeting on 1 March 2002, although he had failed to attend most previous CIS summits.⁸⁵

Potential Causes Of Internal Unrest

Popular Unrest

Widespread popular unrest may break out in any authoritarian state with a stagnant economy, and Turkmenistan is no exception. However, while Turkmenistan has a young population (38 per cent below the age of 15 according to current estimates),⁸⁶ which is typical of those authoritarian states in which popular movements engage in violent opposition to the regime, the country has no tradition of popular opposition and in particular no tradition of student activism on university campuses. Besides, Niyazov's many welfare programmes - in conjunction with the activities of the powerful security service - may well be sufficient to keep the public in check. Limited amounts of excessive public discontent can perhaps be channelled according to the policy to encourage nationalism ("nation-building"). So far, Niyazov appears successfully to have bribed and guided the public into acceptance of his government, or put in other words, through his economic and political policies gained the confidence of the majority of the population.

As the Turkmens in the past were a gathering of nomadic tribes very similar to other Central Asian nomads and recognized no hereditary dynasty as overlords, it is sometimes argued that they have little reverence for titles. After all, the heads of clans and tribes were traditionally chosen for their abilities, not appointed from above, and their authority was based on conduct.⁸⁷ The herding economy relied on by nomads works as an equaliser and generally prevents rigid social stratification,

as when seen over for instance a ten-year period, each herding family will experience substantial changes in herd size, with the herd increasing in good years and substantially decreasing, sometimes disastrously so, in bad years. For this reason, while some herding households tend to be more skilful and socially optimised and therefore wealthier, distinction between rich and poor is never static.⁸⁸ However, while certain of these traditions may remain in public memory, Turkmen society has changed since Russia in the nineteenth century assumed control over the territory that now constitutes Turkmenistan. The Turkmens are no longer nomads, and 45 per cent of the population live in urban areas.⁸⁹ The material incentives of a welfare society appear to find far more support among the population at large than any historical ruminations among the intelligentsia.

Niyazov's welfare programmes deserve some comment. In December 1992, Niyazov announced the economic programme "Ten Years of Stability"⁹⁰ according to which the government since January 1993 has provided the public with free water, heating gas and electricity.⁹¹ The distribution of free supplies is a stabilising policy the efficiency of which has been proven at least since the Roman Empire. A further incentive not to rock the boat is the fact that most families in Turkmenistan derive the bulk of their income from state employment.⁹² The health service too is free, although it is currently in serious financial difficulty and medicines, medical equipment and supplies often suffer shortages. Besides, physicians and staff are frequently undertrained, facilities underequipped and as often as not plagued by chronic sanitation problems. Turkmenistan at least to some extent retains Soviet-style benefits such as child and family allowances, old-age pensions and disability benefits. It should be noted that some basic necessities as well are provided free of charge, and other vital commodities (limited quantities of, among others, meat, flour or bread, rice, tea, cooking oil, sugar, salt and vodka) are available at low prices in state shops on ration coupons.⁹³

However, even the small quantities allocated each person are often not available. Food shortages have been noted.⁹⁴ Such shortages could eventually ignite popular unrest, if the situation deteriorates sufficiently far - although the Turkmenistani population can be expected to withstand severe shortages before they go as far as to revolt. Food riots were in fact reported from western Turkmenistan (Balkan province, with Nebitdag as capital) in March 1995 and Lebap (with Charjew, in 1999 renamed Turkmenabad, as capital), Mary and Balkan provinces in February 1996. Protest demonstrations took place in Ashgabat on 12 July 1995, and in Mary at about the same time.⁹⁵ On 12 September 1998, a mutiny took place among soldiers in Gazanjik, western Turkmenistan.⁹⁶ Most of them were soon hunted down and killed.

The scale of public discontent has, in fact, intensified in recent years. In June, August and October 2002, protesters in several incidents in Ashgabat, Mary and Türkmenbashi (former Krasnovodsk) demonstrated against the Niyazov regime. On some occasions, they burnt portraits of Niyazov in public, and once, about two hundred women gathered outside Niyazov's palace to protest about policies that had left their families unemployed and impoverished. Sometimes activists distributed leaflets appealing to the population to struggle against the Niyazov regime.⁹⁷

Turkmenistan may be a democratic state according to the constitution, but the political elite headed by the president relies on several means to safeguard its political power, among them a powerful repression mechanism centred on the security service, the ability to flood the country with official propaganda through the

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media, and censorship to protect the nation against foreign publications, TV and radio programmes and personal contacts. Everybody leaving or entering the country is currently believed to be under the close scrutiny of the KNB, which keeps personnel at the main border stations in the same way as the Soviet KGB did. Turkmenistan requires entry visas of CIS citizens, and even before the visa regime was introduced, all Turkmenistani citizens who had travelled to the CIS countries were reported as being placed under close control.⁹⁸

The political opposition to Niyazov has, so far, played a marginal role in Turkmenistan. The first opposition group, a limited number of intellectuals who called their group *Agzybirlik* ("Unity of Voice"), originally registered in the USSR in 1989. Their goal was described as the formation of a multiparty democratic system on the Turkish model. After being banned in January 1990, members of *Agzybirlik* founded a second group called the Party for Democratic Development, which in its turn was banned in 1991. The original *Agzybirlik* group and its offspring party have since remained abroad, in particular in Moscow, where they for instance jointly published a newspaper called *Daynach* ("Support"), distribution of which was prohibited in Turkmenistan. In 1991, the two opposition groups joined with others in a coalition called *Gengesh* (meaning "Conference" or "Council").⁹⁹ Neither group has had any appreciable effect on Turkmenistan.

In Turkmenistan, opposition parties that "encroach on the health and morals of the people" as well as ethnic or religious parties are prohibited, and the special services are reported to discontinue any attempts to set up new political parties. The protection of the people's health and morals is also the justification used to confiscate opposition publications and practice censorship. An unofficial, small opposition movement exists to some extent underground as well as in exile.¹⁰⁰ This, however, appears to be of marginal importance and unlikely to be a serious threat to the ruling elite. According to its new programme, Niyazov's DPT serves as a "mother party" that dominates political activity and yet promotes the activity of a loyal political opposition. Whilst following a proposal of Niyazov, a token opposition group, the Peasant Justice Party, composed of regional secretaries of the DPT, was registered in July 1992 and since seems to have languished, this should not be confused with a genuine political opposition.¹⁰¹

An opposition leader of some international repute is Avdy Kuliev, a former career official in the Soviet ministry of foreign affairs and independent Turkmenistan's first minister of foreign affairs. He lives in Moscow and holds Russian citizenship, which gives him more freedom to agitate than other members of the opposition. Kuliev formed an exile organisation known as the Unified Democratic Opposition of Turkmenistan.¹⁰² Apparently barred from returning to Turkmenistan, Kuliev in an obvious provocation flew into Ashgabat on 17 April 1998, six days before the Turkmenistani president was scheduled to meet President Bill Clinton in the United States (on 23 April).¹⁰³ Kuliev was arrested on capital charges (charged with trying to organize a coup, extortion and organizing the unauthorized protest rally on 12 July 1995) but was released after four days under international (Russian and no doubt also American) pressure and returned to Moscow.¹⁰⁴ While Kuliev enjoys a certain amount of moral support from the international community, his popularity among the Turkmenistani general population, if any, remains unknown.

Islamic Extremism

Although the risk of an outbreak of widespread popular unrest based around the opposition currently appears small, there is, however, a long-term potential for religious popular unrest. Turkmenistan has so far been little affected by Islamic

extremism. The various extremist groups active elsewhere in the region apparently neither plan nor hope for either the introduction of a Salafi-inspired Islamic state or the assumption of control over vital smuggling routes.¹⁰⁵ The Turkmen do not have a tradition of religious rigidity or fanaticism. Turkmen society was based on a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle that carried on many traditional tribal beliefs after their nominal conversion to Islam. Religion accordingly had a less profound influence on Turkmen culture than that of their sedentary neighbours: the Persian, Afghan, and Uzbek Muslims. The Turkmen were less subject to the religious fanaticism that frequently swept through settled areas. The state-supported atheism of the Soviet period no doubt reinforced this state of mind.¹⁰⁶

Since independence, the Turkmenistani government has continued the policy of the Soviet government to subject Islam and the only other approved religion, Russian Orthodox Christianity, to strict control. The mechanism for this is the Council for Religious Affairs, set up in early 1994 and since headed by the country's leading Muslim cleric, until 10 January 2003 an ethnic Uzbek named Nasrullo Ibadullaev (Nasrullah ibn Ibadullah). The Council for Religious Affairs is also responsible for hiring, promoting and sacking clerics of either approved religion.¹⁰⁷ New mullahs have been trained in Turkey as part of a government-sponsored programme that also included other civil servants, bank staff and customs personnel. In February 2000, it was announced that the government would pay Muslim clergy a monthly salary, thus fully integrating them in the civil service as is the case in most Sunni Islamic countries.¹⁰⁸ It should be noted that the ulama are dependent on the state for their upkeep in most Sunni countries, including Saudi Arabia.¹⁰⁹ Besides, unlike the other former Soviet Central Asian republics, the Islamic Renaissance Party never gained more than a trifling role in Turkmenistan.¹¹⁰

The key factor that nonetheless puts Turkmenistan at risk of Islamic extremism is the relative youth of the Turkmenistani population, a problem shared with most neighbouring countries. This, in combination with the stagnant economy, might in one decade of privations induce a significant, although probably not very large, part of the young generation into religious extremism and eventually violent unrest. If so, it can be expected to be Salafi extremism of the same kind that has appeared in Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹¹¹

The fact that the population of Turkmenistan (both Turkmen and minorities such as Uzbeks and Kazakhs) belong to Sunni Islam heightens this risk. Indeed, the Turkmen diaspora in the Middle East may yet prove dangerous to secular Turkmenistan, as Middle Eastern Turkmen with Salafi beliefs might attempt to return to the old homeland to introduce religious extremism in the same way as Middle Eastern Chechens did in Chechnya.¹¹² It should furthermore be noted that Turkmenistani military personnel has been trained in Pakistan or by Pakistani military instructors in Turkmenistan. Although the Pakistani armed forces, so far, remain disciplined and professional, Salafi extremist views have spread throughout the ranks, including the higher ones.¹¹³ This too may be a potential source of Islamic extremism in Turkmenistan. While the risk for extremism entering Turkmenistan through her exposure to the Pakistani military might appear negligible compared to the risk caused by a young, economically deprived population, any extremism introduced into the armed forces must be viewed as a serious threat to the stability of the Turkmenistani state.

Organised Crime & International Smuggling

Vital smuggling routes, especially of narcotics, cross Turkmenistan but whether these are currently controlled by Afghan or Turkmen criminal groups remains unclear.

In itself, organised crime is typically secular in nature and far more interested in maintaining the status quo than in causing any form of unrest. However, organised crime frequently plays a major role in providing extremists of any kind with a ready supply of military hardware. Another risk is that the smuggling routes fall into the hands of Islamic extremists.

Turkmenistan is increasingly used as transshipment point for illicit drugs from Southwest Asia and Afghanistan to Russia and Western Europe. Turkmenistan has also been a transshipment point for acetic anhydride destined for Afghanistan. There is also a limited illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis within Turkmenistan, most of which is aimed for domestic consumption.¹¹⁴ Turkmenistan suffers from a growing domestic drug problem.¹¹⁵

The powerful organised criminal groupings operating in Turkmenistan are reputed to be linked to Niyazov's circle of the most powerful Turkmen clans, the Mary and Ahal Tekke. The Mary Tekke are believed to control the natural gas industry,¹¹⁶ apparently since Niyazov in July 1994 dismissed Nazar Soyunov, a Yomud Turkmen, as minister for the oil and gas industry on the basis of evidence that Soyunov had misappropriated funds obtained from the sale of state-owned resources.¹¹⁷

In 1998, a curious development occurred. After reports that Niyazov had agreed to free a number of political prisoners, he in October 1998 signed a presidential pardon freeing from prison many who were not convicted of murder, terrorism, rape, or drug-related crimes. Although at least two smaller presidential amnesties had occurred earlier (two thousand prisoners were pardoned to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Niyazov's election as president in June 1997, and seven thousand were released on Niyazov's birthday on 19 February 1998), this was probably a move to deflect international criticism of Turkmenistan's human rights record. President Niyazov had concluded his first official visit to the United States in April 1998.¹¹⁸ On 14 April 1998, Niyazov had also pardoned those jailed after the July 1995 demonstration.¹¹⁹ The purpose of the visit was probably at least in part to attract American business for Niyazov's natural gas and oil projects. However, as the key company Unocal withdrew from the project in August 1998 (although for domestic reasons unrelated to the human rights issue), Niyazov may have felt it necessary to offer yet more concessions to the human rights lobby. In January 1999, Turkmenistan also announced a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and by December 1999 it was decided to abolish capital punishment (yet, Turkmenistani political prisoners have been known to die in prison accidents).¹²⁰

Another, more prosaic explanation may be that Turkmenistani prisons are chronically overcrowded. However, the freeing of tens of thousands of prisoners in this presidential amnesty and several subsequent ones in 1999 and 2000 led to a serious rise in the crime rate, as a substantial majority of Turkmenistan's prisoners were released. Ordinary people were reported to have been afraid to venture out at night. This is hardly surprising, as according to some reports, as many as 80,000 out of a total of 150,000 prisoners were eventually released.¹²¹ On 9 August 2002, yet another presidential amnesty was announced. An estimated fifteen thousand prisoners were to be set free on the evening of 1 December 2002. Official

broadcasts noted that this would be the 24th amnesty since independence and that a total of 112,000 people had already been set free under the various amnesties.¹²²

A third, more conspiratorial but still possible explanation is that the amnesties at least in part may have been a device to pardon certain individuals (Turkmens or Afghans) connected to organised crime. If so, and it must be pointed out that there is no evidence for or against such speculation, this would indicate that organised crime groups have a greater influence within the Niyazov government than has hitherto been suspected.

Foreign Intervention Or War With A Neighbouring State

A foreign intervention in Turkmenistan is very unlikely due to Turkmenistan's United Nations-approved neutral status and inability to pose a military threat to any of her neighbours. Mere repression is insufficient to warrant any kind of military action by the international community; for this to occur, there must also be something substantial at stake for the leading NATO members. This is not the case in Turkmenistan, and the situation is unlikely to change in the near future.¹²³

Russia has currently even less cause for military involvement in Turkmenistan. With the exception of the Caspian's status and other energy transit route issues, adequately handled at a diplomatic level, the country is insignificant to Russian interests.¹²⁴

Although Uzbekistan once asserted territorial claims on Turkmenistan, this claim was, as noted, technically dropped in June 2000. However, Turkmenistan in December 2002 accused Uzbekistan of complicity in the alleged assassination attempt on Niyazov in the previous month. Uzbekistani officials dismissed these charges as groundless.¹²⁵ Yet one could, perhaps, make a case for a future Uzbekistani military adventure in Turkmenistan, especially if the latter were to suffer internal unrest and the break-down of presidential control so that the intervention could be justified on humanitarian grounds or as a means to fight terrorism (currently the two most popular pretexts worldwide for engaging in warfare). One could also speculate that Uzbekistan, which is ruled by a president as powerful as his counterpart in Turkmenistan, might foment unrest in Turkmenistan in order to provoke this kind of situation, perhaps not so much in a quest for territorial gains as a way to rally the Uzbekistani population behind himself. Yet, there have so far been no signs of active Uzbekistani agitation in Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan may well be far too preoccupied with her own internal problems to consider such means.

There does not appear to have been any similar controversies with Turkmenistan's other neighbours: Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Iran.

The chance that Turkmenistan itself would risk a military adventure is so small as to be negligible. Turkmenistan simply does not have the military potential.

Coup d'Etat Within The Ruling Elite

The likelihood of a coup d'etat within the ruling elite appears to be far greater than a popular uprising, whether of secular or clerical origin.

Political life in Turkmenistan revolves around the Soviet-trained party elite and intelligentsia, educated in and with the values of Moscow or Leningrad rather than those of the Turkmenistani desert. Most of the elites within the government as well as the members of the few opposition groups originate from and are supported by

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the intelligentsia. This elite to a large extent shares background and values with the majority of educated professionals in Ashgabat and other urban areas and can accordingly typically rely on support from this influential population group.¹²⁶

Turkmenistani politics are also influenced by a combination of regional and, perhaps, tribal factors. The importance of regional ties should not be underestimated, being, for instance, evident in the opposing power bases of the capital Ashgabat and Mary, which is regarded as the centre of an organised crime structure that controls the narcotics market and illegal trade in a number of commodities. Both areas are settled primarily by Turkmens of the Tekke tribe, but some in Ashgabat apparently still express resentment and distrust of the Mary Tekke for failing to come to the aid of the Ahal Tekke when the Russian army finally captured the fortress of Gök Tepe in 1881.¹²⁷

The importance of tribal factors in Turkmenistani politics, however, often seems to have been exaggerated by outside and local observers alike. Ties that elsewhere would be referred to as family connections or associations of those with a common background play a role in appointments to positions of power, for sure, but they are sometimes not easily distinguishable from regional ties and may in fact depend on purely regional rather than tribal factors. The more than a century of Russian rule encouraged regional ties at least as much as, and probably more than any earlier tribal affiliations. Tribal identity accordingly does not appear to be the determining factor in current politics. Although most Turkmens still know the tribal association of their parents, it appears unlikely that the majority would regard this as of higher importance than other connections, and in particular professional or other links to the ruling elite.

There is, so far, no evidence that the government will lose control of the situation in the near future. The *hakims* (governors) of each of the country's five provinces are selected from the dominant local clan, on account of their loyalty to Niyazov as well as their rivalries with each other.¹²⁸ In light of the traditional rivalry between Tekke and Yomud Turkmens, some Turkmens have speculated that if Niyazov falls, power will shift to members of the Yomud tribe;¹²⁹ however, there appears to be no particular leader among the Yomud who is sufficiently powerful to challenge Niyazov.

To identify members of the elite who possess sufficient power to challenge Niyazov one must first identify those with access to armed troops or sufficient prestige to attract support from abroad, as the ability to use violent force rather than moral righteousness is the prerequisite for any successful coup. However, those appointments are typically reserved by the president for his most loyal - or dependent - followers. Niyazov no doubt realises the risk of a coup. Few government ministers accordingly last long before being replaced.

Prior to the creation of the Turkmenistan ministry of defence, the republic's military establishment belonged to the Turkestan military district of the Soviet armed forces. When the ministry of defence was formed in January 1992, most ethnic Turkmen appointees were former communist party and government officials as there had been few Turkmen senior officers in the Soviet armed forces. In Turkmenistan, the chief military policy-making body, the Supreme Defence Committee, consists of the president, who chairs the committee, the ministers of defence and internal affairs, the chairman of the Supreme Court, the procurator general, and the governors of the five provinces.¹³⁰ The Supreme Defence Committee controls the three main armed organisations: the ministry of defence, ministry of internal affairs, and

security service. Niyazov, however, at independence appointed himself commander-in-chief of all Soviet military units and formations in Turkmenistan and as president continues to act in this capacity with regard to the Turkmenistani armed forces. In December 1992, he also assumed the rank of army general. To further emphasise Niyazov's supreme military command, a number of elite military units and formations were at the same time awarded the honorific "President Niyazov" as part of their name (for instance, the elite "Zimovnikov" Guards Motor Rifle Division, now 84th "S A Niyazov" Motor Rifle Division in Gyzylarbat (Kizyl-Arvat)). The president, in addition to being supreme commander-in-chief of the armed forces, also controls appointments to all senior commands and posts and promotes or dismisses senior officers. Operational and administrative control over the Turkmenistani armed forces is exercised by the minister of defence and the chief of staff of the armed forces.¹³¹

Key members of the elite, among whom any possible coup leaders might be searched for, would be the holders of the following posts, although not necessarily in this order:

- Minister of Defence
- Minister of National Security
- Minister of Internal Affairs and Commander of Interior Forces
- Commander of Turkmenistan's All Arms Army
- Chief of the General Staff
- Commander of Border Forces
- Mayor of Ashgabat
- Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The search is further complicated (likely by design rather than chance) by Niyazov's habit of appointing deputy chairmen of the cabinet of ministers with responsibility for fields that otherwise belong to ordinary cabinet members. It is thus possible to have a deputy chairman of the cabinet with responsibility for defence who is not at the same time the minister of defence. This, no doubt, assists Niyazov in dividing his cabinet members, thereby minimising the chance of a coup.¹³²

Due to the importance to Turkmenistan of the gas and oil industry, a case could perhaps be made for including the holder of ministerial rank in this field too among the possible contenders for power. However, power over this industry is divided among several posts, among which those of the deputy chairman of the cabinet of ministers responsible for energy, the minister of energy and industry, and the minister of oil and gas industry and mineral resources appear to be the most important. It should be noted that these posts are not held by the same individual. The fragmentation of power may thus indicate the possibility of corruption and influence of organised crime groups rather than any hold of real state power.

It is often difficult to define exactly when Niyazov appointed or dismissed a certain individual. Sometimes changes are not publicly announced for several weeks, for instance when a new replacement is not immediately appointed. At other times, the post may remain vacant for a considerable period.

Case studies of a few key individuals within the Turkmenistani government who may have been demoted or replaced due to coup rumours suggest that at least two coups against Niyazov (in September 1998 and February 2001, with then minister of defence Danatar Kopekov and then former minister of foreign affairs Boris Shikhmuradov, respectively, each playing a key role) may have been planned,

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though not actually carried out. In addition, a widely publicised attempt on Niyazov's life on 25 November 2002 may have formed part of another attempted coup. While it is important to point out that in no case before 2002 was any evidence for involvement in a coup ever made public, it is unclear whether either of these individuals still retains a power base in Turkmenistan. A closer study of the appointments and replacements of powerful Turkmenistani leaders correlated to changes in Niyazov's policy may well expose similar patterns, for instance in June 1996 when major changes of key personnel took place in the ministry of defence, soon followed by the replacement of the chairman of the KNB.¹³³ If any coup was planned or actually attempted before 2002, it certainly failed and no details on it were ever released to the public.

The numerous demotions and replacements of key officials have led to a variety of rumours about possible coups being prepared, or forestalled, in Turkmenistan. There is currently no obvious successor to Niyazov, who has been careful not to groom a possible contender. Foreign diplomats are reported to have discussed possible challengers for the presidential authority, including Avdy Kuliev in Moscow, but without an obvious candidate. In case of a violent coup or the assassination of Niyazov, analysts have predicted the possibility of a civil breakdown along regional or tribal lines, or both. Some believe that the currently dominant Tekke may find itself confronted by members of other tribes, although this seems less likely. Niyazov, if ousted by less violent means, may well decide to retire to his villa in Turkey.¹³⁴

Case Studies

Danatar Kopekov

Lieutenant General Danatar Kopekov served in the powerful role of minister of defence from 1991 until late 1998, with only a short break from 1993 to early 1994, an unusually long period for a Turkmenistani minister. Kopekov was formerly chairman of the TSSR Committee for State Security, KGB.¹³⁵ He accordingly can be expected to have had amassed much inside information regarding the Turkmenistani elite.

Following the 12 September 1998 mutiny among soldiers in Gazanjik, western Turkmenistan,¹³⁶ Niyazov on 17 September dismissed minister of defence Kopekov and chief of the general staff Akmurad Mulkamanov. Niyazov also fired two prominent security officials: Farid Atamuradov, first deputy chairman of the KNB, and Vladimir Efanov, deputy chairman of the KNB in charge of the department for military counter-intelligence. A number of other officials were demoted.¹³⁷ Niyazov replaced Kopekov with General Gurban Muhammet Kasymov, until then minister of internal affairs and commander of interior forces.¹³⁸ In other words, the minister of defence and former chairman of the security service was replaced by the commander of the third and only remaining organisation of substantial security forces in Turkmenistan: the interior forces.

These replacements were clearly a response to the mutiny. Unusually in Turkmenistan, information on the incident was not suppressed. The press service of the president, in an unprecedented act, instead issued a detailed press release that played down the incident, stating that no more than five men led by a lowly lieutenant had been involved - and that forces of the ministry of internal affairs had neutralised them. Kopekov and the KNB officials may have been fired because they had failed by allowing conditions that resulted in a mutiny, or the mutiny may have

been a far more serious affair than reported and possibly connected with an attempted coup against Niyazov.

Boris Shikhmuradov

Boris Orazovich Shikhmuradov, a half Armenian born on 25 May 1949 in Ashgabat, was for a period of several years another of the few members of the government in Turkmenistan, besides the president, who appeared to have a stable power base. Shikhmuradov, who in 1992 was appointed first deputy minister for foreign affairs, appears to have been responsible for the plan to revive Turkmenistan's stagnant economy by exporting natural gas through Afghanistan to Pakistan. For this reason, he may have enjoyed for a Turkmenistani minister unprecedented foreign relationships, from Pakistan, probably China, and perhaps - considering his area of responsibility, although there is no evidence for it - from elements within the Taliban as well as certain organised crime groups. Shikhmuradov had, after graduating from Moscow State University, spent considerable time on Soviet diplomatic service in India and in particular Pakistan,¹³⁹ which no doubt helps to explain why he favoured Pakistan over the former Soviet Central Asian republics. Because of his ability to speak English, he was in the West usually regarded as a pro-Western and pro-democracy influence in Turkmenistan - a wishful conclusion for which there was little if any evidence.

Niyazov probably noted Shikhmuradov's power base and duly sacked him on 28 July 2000. Shikhmuradov, who already the year before had been demoted from the post of deputy chairman of the cabinet, was instead named as head of the Institute for Sport and Tourism and ambassador-at-large reporting to the president.¹⁴⁰ In August, Shikhmuradov was furthermore appointed Niyazov's special envoy on issues relating to the Caspian Sea and Afghanistan.¹⁴¹ Afghanistan in particular was obviously connected to Turkmenistan's increasingly important relations with Pakistan and China.

Few Turkmenistani government ministers last long, and Shikhmuradov had already served for an unusually long period. He might have been expected to accept his demotion and carry on the work in his specialised field. However, later events as related in the media indicate that something more than mere presidential jealousy of a younger man's power may have been at stake.

In February 2001, it appears that Niyazov's hold on power had to weather a severe crisis. Niyazov, who had been made president for life in 1999 and according to news reports was busy preparing for his 61st birthday on 19 February 2001, an event long planned to be celebrated in a very extravagant way, on 18 February 2001 - the day before the event - surprisingly declared that he would step down in 2010 and make way for a younger leader.¹⁴² This was hardly the behaviour the world had come to expect from the increasingly despotic Niyazov, despite rumours of widespread discontent regarding the president's extravagant celebrations. In March 2001, Niyazov announced that he had dismissed Shikhmuradov from his present post as well, and instead appointed him ambassador to China.¹⁴³ Exactly when this dismissal had taken place remained unclear to outside observers. Not long after, Niyazov also criticized workers in the cultural sphere and the media for a variety of failings, naming in particular minister of culture Oraz Aidogdyev and Kakajan Ashirov, responsible for theatres and TV and radio broadcasting, as culprits.¹⁴⁴

Niyazov may have expected radio and TV to be used to his disadvantage in any possible coup. It is also conceivable that he suspected any coup to be engineered, if not led, by Shikhmuradov, who unlike any other Turkmenistani leader probably

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could have counted on widespread international support after the event, if successful. Shikhmuradov's appointment as ambassador to Beijing is interesting. On the one hand, this put him sufficiently far away from Ashgabat to eliminate him as a serious contender for presidential power. In Beijing, he was forced to operate under the control of his successor's ministry of foreign affairs. On the other hand, the appointment might have been due to China's influence in Turkmenistan, in effect saving the man whom the Beijing government perhaps saw as the key to any future pipeline across Afghanistan and Pakistan to China.

By October 2001, Niyazov had removed Shikhmuradov from the post of ambassador to China. Shikhmuradov fled to Russia from which he on 1 November 2001 issued a public condemnation of Niyazov and his policies.¹⁴⁵ In January 2002, Shikhmuradov created an exile opposition organisation called the Provisional Executive Council of the People's Democratic Movement of Turkmenistan. He attracted a number of high-level defectors who had fallen out with Niyazov, including Khudaiberdy Orazov, the former chairman of the Central Bank and a deputy chairman of the cabinet of ministers, Nurmuhammed Khanamov, Turkmenistan's former ambassador to Turkey, Pirjan Kurbanov, Turkmenistan's former ambassador to the United Arab Emirates, and Chary Annaberdiev, former minister-counselor at the embassy of Turkmenistan in the United States.¹⁴⁶ His subsequent involvement in the November 2002 coup attempt is discussed below.

Batyr Sarjaev

On 7 May 2001, not long after Shikhmuradov was sent off to China, yet other demotions of key personnel followed. Most important was perhaps that Niyazov removed Batyr Sarjaev from the post of deputy chairman of the cabinet (in which role he had been responsible for first the military and law enforcement agencies, then energy, then defence).¹⁴⁷ Sarjaev was also minister of defence, but by the end of June, Niyazov removed him from this post as well and instead appointed Gurbanberdy Begenjov, the deputy head of the KNB in charge of the department for military counter-intelligence, as minister of defence. Sarjaev, a civilian, was instead ordered to head the country's railways.¹⁴⁸

Niyazov had on 7 May 2001 also named the 40-year-old deputy chairman of the Milli Majlis, Rashid Meredov, as chairman.¹⁴⁹ Soon after Sarjaev's replacement as minister of defence, Niyazov in addition sacked his minister of foreign affairs, Batyr Berdiev,¹⁵⁰ eventually replacing him with Meredov, who before his appointment as chairman of the Milli Majlis had been first deputy minister of foreign affairs.¹⁵¹

Many observers by then formed the conclusion that Niyazov mainly ruled through the power of his security service, the KNB. Not only had Niyazov replaced his minister of defence with a KNB man, the first deputy of the minister of internal affairs, Hajimurat Ojarov, was the former deputy chairman of the KNB. Rumours were that he would eventually replace the minister.¹⁵²

Ashiberdy Cherkezov

Yet another influential official was sacked when Niyazov on 21 August 2001 demoted Ashgabat mayor Ashiberdy Cherkezov to the post of deputy head of the city administration because of various shortcomings. Cherkezov, who formerly had been communications minister, was widely although not necessarily correctly believed among foreign observers to have been the third most powerful official in Turkmenistan, after the president and the chairman of the KNB. He was replaced as mayor of Ashgabat by the deputy premier for transportation and communications, Berdymurad Rejepov.¹⁵³

The KNB Purge

The rumours that Niyazov mainly ruled through the power of his security service, the KNB, died when Niyazov purged the KNB in early March 2002.

In the aftermath of the 1998 Kopekov affair, Niyazov had promoted a number of KNB officers. On 6 January 1999, Turkish Tyrmyev was appointed first deputy chairman of the KNB. He also became commander of the border forces. At the same time, Gurbanberdy Begenjov (KNB head in Balkan province) was appointed deputy chairman of the KNB in charge of military counter-intelligence. As noted, he subsequently was appointed minister of defence. At the same time, Khayyut Kakaev (KNB head in Mary province) was also appointed deputy chairman of KNB, assuming responsibility for Ashgabat.¹⁵⁴

All three lost their positions in the purge that began on 4 March 2002. KNB chairman Muhammet Nazarov was first demoted in rank and relieved of his duties as chief legal advisor to the president and co-ordinator of law enforcement and the military (although he for the time being retained his position as KNB chairman). In addition, Niyazov dismissed Colonel Kakaev, KNB head in Ashgabat, Colonel Gurban Annaberdiyev, KNB head in Balkan province, Colonel Bayramkuli Khudaikuliev, KNB head in Mary province, and Lieutenant Colonel Orazmuhammed Berdiyev. On 5 March, Niyazov also dismissed the commander of border forces, Tyrmyev, who was reassigned to a less important post. On 14 March, Niyazov removed Nazarov from his post as KNB chairman. On the same day, he also dismissed minister of defence Gurbanberdy Begenjov, who was replaced by parliament speaker Rejepbay Arazov. More important was no doubt the fact that the former minister of internal affairs, Colonel General Poran Berdiyev, replaced Nazarov as KNB chairman. Poran Berdiyev was also appointed deputy chairman of the cabinet of ministers responsible for oversight and co-ordination of the three power ministries, a post earlier held by Arazov who then had been removed for incompetence.¹⁵⁵

As in the Kopekov affair, the ministry of internal affairs again prevailed. Niyazov reduced the KNB leadership, diminished its influence, and for good measure placed a less than desirable individual as head of the ministry of defence: Rejepbay Arazov who earlier had been formally fired from a higher post for "incompetence". Even the KNB-affiliated border forces lost out. Although some observers inevitably concluded that Niyazov initiated the purge to pre-empt a coup,¹⁵⁶ there is no real evidence to support such a conclusion. Both those purged and those elevated were Niyazov clients without any real power base inside the country or influence outside Turkmenistan.

A further indication of this was the subsequent sacking of Poran Berdiyev on 10 September 2002. Berdiyev was replaced by the former deputy chief of the Presidential Guard, Colonel Batyr Busakov.¹⁵⁷

The Yklymov Affair & The Arrest Of Boris Shikhmuradov

On 25 November 2002, an attempt to assassinate Niyazov reportedly took place in Ashgabat. Niyazov's motorcade was first blocked by a KamAZ truck, then came under fire from a number of assailants armed with light weapons. Niyazov, who was not injured, immediately afterwards blamed a number of exiled opponents, including Boris Shikhmuradov, Khudaiberdy Orazov and Nurmuhammed Khanamov, all of them leaders of the opposition People's Democratic Movement of Turkmenistan, for being the financial and ideological inspirers of the attempt. In addition, Niyazov at first claimed that a former deputy minister of agriculture

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named Saparmurat (or Imamberdy) Yklymov, who had fled from Turkmenistan in 1994, was directly responsible for organising the attack. Dozens of people were subsequently detained in Ashgabat.¹⁵⁸ Turkmenistani security forces on 16 December even entered and searched the Uzbekistani embassy in Ashgabat.¹⁵⁹ On 25 December, Boris Shikhmuradov, after several weeks in hiding in Turkmenistan, was arrested in Ashgabat. He was subsequently sentenced to life in prison for being a key organiser of what the Turkmenistani government described as a planned coup attempt.¹⁶⁰

At the time of writing, exactly what happened in the incident remains unclear to outside observers. Yet, the fact that Shikhmuradov clandestinely and at considerable personal risk entered the country and remained there for some time suggests that something out of the ordinary was brewing. Whether his purpose was to enlist popular support for peaceful protests against the Niyazov regime, as some Turkmenistani dissidents claim,¹⁶¹ or to prepare for a violent coup that possibly included the assassination of Niyazov or his key supporters, remains unproven. Most likely is perhaps that Shikhmuradov attempted to drum up support among leading Turkmen for an attempt to force Niyazov out of power in a palace coup. If so, the purpose of the conspirators was not necessarily to assassinate Niyazov. Yet, the attempt failed, and Niyazov took the opportunity to arrest and/or convict large numbers of dissidents and personal enemies.

Conclusion

While on the surface a stable if despotic state, Turkmenistan is a classical case of a country ripe for take-over by the fomenting of internal unrest and the judicious use of monetary encouragement to those key actors within the ruling elite who would wish to assume presidential power in exchange for the extension of favours to any foreign power that assists them in the venture. Niyazov lives on borrowed time and might well eventually be overthrown, although his so far effective technique of appointing, removing, and dividing other key leaders ensures that this may yet take some time. Considering Niyazov's age, he may even have time to die from natural causes - which might cause an unprecedented and possibly quite violent power struggle as Niyazov never groomed a successor.

Due to Turkmenistan's potential importance as a source of raw materials (natural gas and oil), and failure in most other fields of economic activity, the country can with some levity be classified as a typical banana republic. Turkmenistan's territory has no particular strategic value, except possibly as a buffer state between the far more powerful and to the international community more important Iran, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

However, the country's neighbours currently prefer regional stability to meddling in Turkmenistan's internal affairs. This, which speaks in favour of Niyazov's continued rule, seems unlikely to change in the near future. It is thus more likely that any viable plots against Niyazov, if such were to occur, would be connected to internal power struggles possibly in conjunction with Turkmenistani organised crime or outside commercial interests within the energy sector.

While popular unrest also remains a distinct possibility, especially due to the economic decline, any instability caused by popular turmoil appears somewhat more likely to be connected to religious extremism than a genuine demand for democracy. Islamic extremism has yet to gain a prominent role in Turkmenistani

society, however, so such a development is unlikely to take place in the immediate future.

ENDNOTES

¹ Mariya Rasner, "Learning to Love Turkmenbashi", *Transitions Online* (www.eurasianet.org), 19 September 2000.

² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: Turkmenistan, Jane's Information Group, 30 May 2002.

³ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 28 August 2001; 28 September 2001.

⁴ The committee for national security (KNB, the Turkmenistani successor to the Soviet KGB) originally employed an estimated 1,000 people. Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000. In January 2001, it was announced that the KNB would be increased by almost 1,000 people, taken from the other services. *The Times of Central Asia*, 27 January 2001. By May 2002, the KNB was stated as consisting of 5,000 people, and that this number would be increased and the status of the service raised as well. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), *Central Asia Report 2*: 18, 9 May 2002. The KNB has since been formally raised to the level of ministry and is currently known as the ministry of national security (MNB). Not all personnel within the Presidential Guard are soldiers. "Smena karaula: Dosie na spetsssluzhby Turkmenii", Agentura.Ru, 27 August 2002, (www.agentura.ru); International Crisis Group (ICG), *Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship* (Osh/Brussels, ICG Asia Report 44, 17 January 2003), 8.

⁵ See, for instance, RFE/RL, *Central Asia Report 3*: 48, 2 January 2003. The report should more correctly be referred to as 2: 48 or 3: 1.

⁶ Erich Follath, "Stalins Disneyland", *Der Spiegel*, 3, 2001, 130-136, on 130 and 136.

⁷ Comparatively few recent academic studies have been devoted to contemporary Turkmenistan. See, for instance, John Anderson, "Authoritarian Political Development in Central Asia: The Case of Turkmenistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 14:4 (1995), 509-27, or (a work not used for this survey) Roland Goetz and Uwe Halbach, *Informationen über eine unbekanntete Republik 1-2* (Cologne: Berichte des Bundesinstituts für ostwissenschaftliche und internationale Studien, 1995).

⁸ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000.

⁹ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000; Edward A Allworth (ed), *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), 147-8.

¹⁰ Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Zed Books, 1994), 191.

¹¹ Niiaz Saparov, "'The Turkmen Model of Democracy': Specific Features", *Central Asia and the Caucasus 2* (2000), 178-184, on 184. See also Allworth, *Central Asia*, 52-3, 212, 147-9. The comments of Anthony Jenkinson in 1558 remained valid until the Russian conquest: "All the land from the Caspian Sea to the city of Urgenj is called the land of the Turkmen ... (The Khan) is little obeyed saving in his own dominion and where he dwells, for everyone will be king in his own portion and one brother always seeks to destroy another ... And when there are wars between these brothers (as they are seldom without), he that is overcome, if he is not slain, he flees to the field with such company of men as will follow him ... and there he lives in the wilderness resorting to watering places, and robs and spoils as many caravans and merchants as he is able to overcome, continuing this sort of wicked life until such time as he may get power and aid to invade some of his brethren again." Richard Hakluyt (ed), *Voyages and Discoveries: The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (London: Everyman's Library, 1907), 450.

¹² Allworth, *Central Asia*, 242; Rashid, *Resurgence of Central Asia*, 192-3.

¹³ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000, referring to 1996 figures; Turkmenistan's official US website, www.turkmenistanembassy.org, not specifying year so presumably regarded as current (which would make the figures valid for 2000). For information on Armenians, see RFE/RL Newline, 17 July 2000.

¹⁴ Allworth, *Central Asia*, 587.

¹⁵ RFE/RL Newline, 17 July 2000.

¹⁶ Allworth, *Central Asia*, 174.

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- ¹⁷ Jan Myrdal, *Turkmenistan: En revolutions övergångsår* (Stockholm: PAN/Norstedts, 1972), 69, 77-8.
- ¹⁸ Based on various, usually conflicting sources, including Glenn E Curtis (ed), *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Country Studies* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Area Handbook Series, 1997); Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2001* (Internet edition). See also Rashid, *Resurgence of Central Asia*, 189; Ralph H Magnus & Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 93.
- ¹⁹ Allworth, *Central Asia*, 212; Magnus & Naby, *Afghanistan*, 41.
- ²⁰ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 296, 354-6.
- ²¹ This biographical data is collated from various sources but ultimately based on public announcements from the Turkmenistani government. See, for instance, Agence France Presse (AFP), 8 May 2000; RFE/RL Newline, 21 February 2000; Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000, 26 September 2000; Erika Dailey, "King Niyazov: A Cautionary Tale of Stability in Turkmenistan", *Eurasia Insight* (www.eurasianet.org), 21 January 2000.
- ²² Reuters, 18 February 2001.
- ²³ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 357.
- ²⁴ Turkmenistan's official US website, www.turkmenistanembassy.org; Reuters, 18 February 2001.
- ²⁵ Turkmenistan's official US website, www.turkmenistanembassy.org; Follath, "Stalins Disneyland", 132.
- ²⁶ ICG, *Cracks in the Marble*, 8.
- ²⁷ RFE/RL Turkmen Service, August 1, 2000.
- ²⁸ Lena Jonson, *Russia and Central Asia: A New Web of Relations* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), 9-10; Michael Fredholm, *Afghanistan and Central Asian Security* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2002; Asian Cultures and Modernity Research Report 1). See also Murad Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy and Its Impact on the Regional Security System", *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 1, 2001, 50-57. Esenov is a member of the Turkmenistani political opposition in exile. For the question of Turkmenistani oil and gas, see also Azhdar Kurtov, "The Turkmenistan Fuel and Energy Complex: Problems and Prospects", *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3 (9) (2001), 51-65; Sergei Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Fuel and Energy Complex: Present State and Development Prospects", *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 6 (12) (2001), 160-179. For the Turkmenistani economy, see also Sergei Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Economy Today", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 3 (15), 2002, 169-78.
- ²⁹ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 50-51.
- ³⁰ RFE/RL Newline, 26 June 2000.
- ³¹ RFE/FL Newline, 21 September 2000; BBC World Service, 22 September 2000.
- ³² International Crisis Group, *Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Asia Report 20, 4 July 2001), 17.
- ³³ Faruk Turaev, "Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan: Central Asia's New Cold War?", *Transitions Online*, 6 January 2003.
- ³⁴ See, for instance, the website of the World Bank (www.worldbank.org), which is involved in the rehabilitation of the pumping cascade.
- ³⁵ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 51.
- ³⁶ Jonson, *Russia and Central Asia*, 9-10, 35.
- ³⁷ Niyazov had already assured his strong devotion to the principles of the United Nations at the General Assembly on 22 October 1995. Ertan Efegil, Ayse Mine Olcay & Huseyin Kýdyk, "Cooperation between Turkmenistan and International and Regional Organizations", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 3 (2000), 87-99, on 89; Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 51. Turkmenistan claims to interpret her neutrality more comprehensively than elsewhere. Not only does Turkmenistani neutrality mean to stay away from military pacts or military confrontations, it is claimed. Instead Turkmenistani neutrality has three meanings: political, economic, and humanitarian. Turkmenistan claims to aim to be a centre of peace-making and international negotiations, a regional financial centre, and a country whose primary aim is to create conditions conducive to the development of social, cultural, and political rights. Efegil, Olcay & Kýdyk, "Cooperation", 88-9. Turkmenistan has, for instance, at times hosted negotiations between the warring

Afghan factions, beginning in February 1999. This, however, led nowhere. See, for instance, Efeğil, Olcay & K dyk, "Cooperation", 90-91; International Crisis Group, *Central Asia*, 17.

³⁸ Jonson, *Russia and Central Asia*, 9-10, 35; Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 51.

³⁹ Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: Pipeline Dream II", *Caspian Crossroads Magazine*, 1 (Winter 1995), Internet edition; *Economist*, 8 January 2000; Jonson, *Russia and Central Asia*, 63-4, 72. See also Fredholm, *Afghanistan and Central Asian Security*.

⁴⁰ Rashid, *Resurgence of Central Asia*, 203.

⁴¹ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 51-2. See also John K Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 146.

⁴² Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 152; Peter Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 131, 136.

⁴³ Rashid, *Taliban*, 151, 160-61, 168, 171, 201.

⁴⁴ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 51-2; Rashid, *Taliban*, 151-2; Marsden, *Taliban*, 131, 136.

⁴⁵ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 51-2.

⁴⁶ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 52.

⁴⁷ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000; 26 September 2000; 30 May 2002; Dailey, "King Niyazov"; Sergei Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 4 (16) (2002), 75-85, on 84.

⁴⁸ Turkmen TV, 5 May 2001.

⁴⁹ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 52; Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 77; Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000. At least some of the cargo was listed as used motorcycles and associated spare parts, exported from Japan. Personal observation, Tokyo, 1994.

⁵⁰ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 53-4. See also Rashid, *Taliban*, 172-4, 236-42.

⁵¹ RFE/RL Newline, 21 August 1998.

⁵² Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 54.

⁵³ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 54-55.

⁵⁴ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 55.

⁵⁵ Ahmed Rashid, "Central Asia Summary: Recent Developments in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan", *Eurasia Insight* (www.eurasianet.org), 18 January 2001.

⁵⁶ RFE/RL Newline, 16 May 2000. See also RFE/RL Newline, 8 December 1998 and 7 March 2000.

⁵⁷ *The Times of Central Asia*, 9 November 2000.

⁵⁸ Rashid, "Central Asia Summary". Whether the electrical grid being built is yet completed is unclear. Radio Voice of Shari'ah, Kabul, in Pashto 1500 GMT, 5 July 2000; Anonymous, "Turkmen Warm to the Taliban", *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia* 57 (22 June 2001, www.iwpr.net).

⁵⁹ Magnus & Naby, *Afghanistan*, 231.

⁶⁰ Magnus & Naby, *Afghanistan*, 230.

⁶¹ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 362-3.

⁶² "Question and Answer with Avdy Kuliev", *Eurasia Insight* (www.eurasianet.org), 21 March 2000.

⁶³ President Niyazov in October 2001 proposed to the United Nations, which he by then perhaps regarded as the future rulers of Afghanistan, to consider the possibility to lay the trans-Afghan gas pipeline to Pakistan as a means of creating employment opportunities in Afghanistan. RIA Novosti, 22 October 2001.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Fredholm, *Afghanistan and Central Asian Security*; Michael Fredholm, "The Tatmadaw: Burma's Armed Forces and Prospects for the Future", *The Democracy Movement in Burma since 1962* (conference on 25-26 September 1999 organised by the Center for Pacific Asia Studies at Stockholm University).

⁶⁵ See, for instance, Mark Burles, *Chinese Policy Toward Russia and the Central Asian Republics* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1999), 5; Fredholm, *Afghanistan and Central Asian Security*.

⁶⁶ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 347.

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- 67 Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000, 26 September 2000.
- 68 Ahmed Rashid, "Central Asia Summary", apparently based on RFE/RL Newline, 1 September 2000; Rashid, *Taliban*, 232.
- 69 Follath, "Stalins Disneyland", 132.
- 70 Personal observation on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, 1984. See also Cooley, *Unholy Wars*, 68-75.
- 71 RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 6 (14 February 2002), Internet edn. The United States has, so far, been cautious in expressing political support for the project. See, for instance, Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 78.
- 72 Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 26 September 2000.
- 73 Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 53.
- 74 Michael Fredholm, *Islamic Extremism and Terrorism as a Regional Security Threat in Central Asia*, unpublished paper, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, spring 2001; Michael Fredholm, "Osama bin Laden and Salafi Islam: More Than a Mere Terrorist Threat", *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst Biweekly Briefing*, 24 October 2001 (www.cacianalyst.org).
- 75 Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 53.
- 76 Jane's World Armies: Turkmenistan, Jane's Information Group, 7 February 2001.
- 77 Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 55-6.
- 78 RFE/RL Newline, 21 April 1998; 24 April 1998.
- 79 Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000.
- 80 Anette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), 48; Jonson, *Russia and Central Asia*, 13-14, 49-50; Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000.
- 81 Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 371.
- 82 Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 28 September 2001.
- 83 RFE/RL Newline, 22 May 2000.
- 84 See, for instance, RIA Novosti, 17 October 2001. It should be noted that the positions of the various parts are constantly changing. See also Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 82.
- 85 RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 1: 20, 6 December 2001; RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 9, 7 March 2002; Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 75-85.
- 86 Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*.
- 87 Niiiaz Saparov, "'The Turkmen Model of Democracy': Specific Features", *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 2 (2000), 178-184, on 184.
- 88 Ole Bruun, "The Herding Household: Economy and Organization", Ole Bruun & Ole Odgaard (eds), *Mongolia in Transition* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), 65-89, on 83. See also Herbert Harold Vreeland, *Mongol Community and Kinship Structure* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1962), 311.
- 89 Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000.
- 90 Also at times translated as "Ten Years of Welfare" or "Ten Years of Prosperity".
- 91 www.turkmenistanembassy.org; Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 2 January 2001, 31 October 2000. See also Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 338.
- 92 Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 326.
- 93 Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000.
- 94 Ibid, 2 January 2001.
- 95 Ibid, 26 September 2000; opposition leader Avdy Kuliev's Svobodnyi Turkmenistan website, www.kuliev.virtualave.net.
- 96 *Krasnaya zvezda*, 16 September 1998; RFE/RL Newline, 14 September 1998; Turkmen Press, 24 September 1998. Although the mutineers were named as men of the 212th Infantry Division, due to their geographical location instead may have belonged to the elite 84th "S A Niyazov" Motor Rifle Division.
- 97 RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 31, 15 August 2002; Ata Amanov & Ovez Muradov, "Turkmenbashi Axes Popular Minister", *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia* 140 (23 August 2002, www.iwpr.net); Nyazik Ataeva (pseudonym), "Niazov Critics Flex Their Muscles", *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia* 156 (30 October 2002, www.iwpr.net).
- 98 Saparov, "Turkmen Model of Democracy", 180.
- 99 Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 358.

- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 357; Saparov, "Turkmen Model of Democracy", 181; Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*. See also various reports from Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org) and Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org).
- ¹⁰¹ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 26 September 2000; Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 357.
- ¹⁰² Reuters, 18 February 2001; Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 26 September 2000. See also Kuliev's Svobodnyi Turkmenistan/Erkin Turkmenistan websites, www.kuliev.virtualave.net; www.erkin.net.
- ¹⁰³ RFE/RL Newslines, 21 April 1998; 24 April 1998.
- ¹⁰⁴ RFE/RL Newslines, 20 April 1998, 22 April 1998, 23 April 1998; "Question and Answer with Avdy Kuliev"; Dailey, "King Niyazov".
- ¹⁰⁵ Fredholm, *Islamic Extremism*; Fredholm, "Osama bin Laden and Salafi Islam".
- ¹⁰⁶ See, for instance, Saparov, "Turkmen Model of Democracy", 184; "Question and Answer with Avdy Kuliev". As for religions, see also Sergei Demidov, "Religion in Post-Soviet Turkmenistan", *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 4 (10) (2001), 48-58.
- ¹⁰⁷ RFE/RL Turkmen Service, 13 July 2000. On the dismissal of Ibadullaev, see BBC, 10 January 2003.
- ¹⁰⁸ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000.
- ¹⁰⁹ Dilip Hiro, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Paladin, 1988), 119.
- ¹¹⁰ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 31 October 2000.
- ¹¹¹ See, for instance, "Question and Answer with Avdy Kuliev".
- ¹¹² Michael Fredholm, "The Prospects for Genocide in Chechnya and Extremist Retaliation against the West", *Central Asian Survey* 19: 3/4 (September-December 2000), 315-27.
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- ¹¹⁸ See, for instance, RFE/RL Newslines, 24 April 1998.
- ¹¹⁹ Opposition leader Avdy Kuliev's Svobodnyi Turkmenistan website, www.kuliev.virtualave.net.
- ¹²⁰ Saparov, "Turkmen Model of Democracy", 181; Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 26 September 2000.
- ¹²¹ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 26 September 2000; RFE/RL Newslines, 17 February 2000; Turkmen Television First Channel, 25 October 2000; AP, 23 December 2000; Saparov, "Turkmen Model of Democracy", 181.
- ¹²² RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 31, 15 August 2002.
- ¹²³ Esenov, "Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy", 57.
- ¹²⁴ Fredholm, *Afghanistan and Central Asian Security*.
- ¹²⁵ RFE/RL, *Central Asia Report*, 2: 47, 29 December 2002.
- ¹²⁶ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 353.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid, 353; Allworth, *Central Asia*, 148.
- ¹²⁸ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 26 September 2000.
- ¹²⁹ On this rivalry, see, for instance, Rashid, *Resurgence of Central Asia*, 191.
- ¹³⁰ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 365, 367-8.
- ¹³¹ Jane's Sentinel: Turkmenistan, 26 September 2000; Reuters, 18 February 2001.
- ¹³² The deputy chairmen of the cabinet are conspicuous for meriting a Mercedes 500 each as official vehicle, while mere cabinet ministers have to be satisfied with a Mercedes 320. Follath, "Stalins Disneyland", 136. President Niyazov himself drives an exclusive, one-of-a-kind armored 2000 model of Mercedes Benz CL Coupe. RFE/RL Turkmen Service, 8 August 2000.
- ¹³³ This particular chairman of the KNB, Saparmurat Seidov, was imprisoned as a traitor on 21 January 2003. RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 3: 4, 23 January 2003. The KNB (now MNB) is responsible for internal security in the military.
- ¹³⁴ See, for instance, Sybil Schwartz, "Turkmenistan Tremors", *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst Biweekly Briefing* 18 July 2001 (www.cacianalyst.org); M A Polaris, "Last Days of

The Prospects For Internal Unrest In Turkmenistan

King Niyazov?", *Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst Biweekly Briefing*, 12 September 2001 (www.cacianalyst.org).

¹³⁵ Curtis, *Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan ...*, 367-8.

¹³⁶ *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 16 September 1998; RFE/RL Newline, 14 September 1998; Turkmen Press, 24 September 1998.

¹³⁷ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report Turkmenistan, 2nd Quarter 1999* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 17 April 1999).

¹³⁸ RFE/RL Newline, 18 September 1998; Interfax, 17 September 1998.

¹³⁹ Official biography (since removed) on www.turkmenistanembassy.org.

¹⁴⁰ Shikhmuradov was replaced by his first deputy Batyr Berdiev, a 40-year-old philology graduate of the Turkmenistan State University who began his career as a journalist writing for *Komsomolets Turkmenistana* and subsequently became that newspaper's chief editor. Berdiev served as deputy minister of foreign affairs in the early 1990s and as Turkmenistan's ambassador to Austria from 1994 until July 2000. RFE/RL, Reuters, 28 July 2000.

¹⁴¹ Ahmed Rashid, "Central Asia Summary".

¹⁴² Reuters, 18 February 2001.

¹⁴³ AFP, 13 March 2001.

¹⁴⁴ RFE/RL Newline, 28 March 2001.

¹⁴⁵ Alec Appelbaum, "Turkmenistan's Niyazov Lambasted by Former Minister", *Eurasia Insight* (www.eurasianet.org), 2 November 2001; RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 1: 16, 8 November 2001.

¹⁴⁶ Rustem Safronov, "Turkmenistan Purge Indicative of Instability", *Eurasia Insight* (www.eurasianet.org), 27 March 2002; Rustem Safronov, "Latest Round of Sackings Portends More Instability in Turkmenistan", *Eurasia Insight* (www.eurasianet.org), 27 March 2002; Nazik Ataeva (pseudonym), "Turkmenbashi Purges Inner Circle", *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia*, 115 (12 April 2002, www.iwpr.net). See also ICG, *Cracks in the Marble*, 12-14.

¹⁴⁷ RFE/RL Newline, 9 May 2001.

¹⁴⁸ RFE/RL Newline, 27 June 2001. Sarjaev was dismissed from this post as well in August 2002. Amanov & Muradov, "Turkmenbashi Axes Popular Minister".

¹⁴⁹ RFE/RL Newline, 9 May 2001.

¹⁵⁰ BBC, 7 July 2001. Berdiev was on 21 January 2003 sentenced to 25 years in prison as a traitor. RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 3: 4, 23 January 2003.

¹⁵¹ RFE/RL Turkmen Report, 7 July 2001.

¹⁵² "Smena karaula"; Polaris, "Last Days of King Niyazov?"

¹⁵³ RFE/RL Newline, 23 August 2001.

¹⁵⁴ Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Report Turkmenistan, 2nd Quarter 1999*.

Tyrmyev is mistakenly referred to as Kirmiev in this source. Tyrmyev was also made commander of border forces. Safronov, "Turkmenistan Purge Indicative of Instability". Safronov refers to Tyrmyev as Termaev.

¹⁵⁵ RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 10, 14 March 2002; "Smena karaula"; Safronov, "Turkmenistan Purge Indicative of Instability"; Safronov, "Latest Round of Sackings".

Nazarov was later sentenced to twenty years in prison on charges of corruption and plotting to assassinate Niyazov. RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 18, 9 May 2002; RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 45, 5 December 2002. The supposedly "incompetent" Arazov is since 2 January 2003 not only minister of defence but also secretary of the State Security Council, which itself was only created on 30 December 2002. RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 3: 2, 10 January 2003.

¹⁵⁶ See, for instance, Ataeva, "Turkmenbashi Purges Inner Circle".

¹⁵⁷ Roger N McDermott, "Shake-up in Turkmen Spy Agency Hints at Pending Crisis", *Eurasia Insight* (www.eurasianet.org), 30 September 2002. Among the more than sixty KNB officers arrested were Major General Farid Atamuradov, head of the Methodology Department and probably the same officer who had already been sacked once following the 12 September 1998 mutiny, and Colonel Ismail Amanov, deputy KNB head in Mary province.

¹⁵⁸ Interfax, 25 November 2002; 26 November 2002. For a useful summary of the conflicting reports of the incident, see RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 45, 5 December 2002, compiled by Adam Albion. Shikhmuradov, Orazov and Khanamov all held Russian

citizenship. RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 3: 2, 10 January 2003. Yklymov received asylum in Sweden in 1997 and currently holds Swedish citizenship.

¹⁵⁹ Akhmed Nazarov & Galima Bukharbaeva, "Tashkent Protests at Embassy Raid", *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia*, 171, 20 December 2002 (www.iwpr.net); RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 2: 47, 29 December 2002.

¹⁶⁰ RFE/RL *Central Asia Report*, 3: 48, 2 January 2003.

¹⁶¹ Personal communication, 11 February 2003.

The first version of this paper was written in 2001. The present version has been revised with regard to events in Turkmenistan during 2002 and early 2003. The author, Michael Fredholm, is a defence analyst working for the Swedish government. The views presented in this article do not necessarily represent those of the Swedish government.

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