

THE RUSSIAN VECTOR IN TURKMENISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

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By keeping away from practically all mechanisms of regional integration and cooperation, Turkmenistan stands apart from its Central Asian neighbors. One of the CIS founding members, it gradually reduced its involvement in the Commonwealth to purely nominal: nowadays the CIS is regarded as a structure that passes general non-obligatory decisions, while the U.N. is declared to be the republic's priority for ideological reasons. At the same time, the very specific nature of Turkmenistan's ruling regime is keeping the world community away from the country's domestic affairs. For the same reason,

Turkmenistan refused to grasp the opportunity offered by the events of 9/11, which riveted the world's attention on the region, to extend its ties with the West, something that other Central Asian countries did not miss. On the whole, Turkmenistan can be described as a closed country devoid of any geopolitical ambitions, opting for voluntary self-isolation. Inside the country, this is described as "positive neutrality."

The constitutional Law on Turkmenistan's Permanent Neutrality of 27 December, 1995 serves as the legal cornerstone of the country's foreign policy. It describes Turkmenistan's Con-

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stitution, rights, and obligations as those of a neutral state. In the military-political sphere, in particular, it is expected to pursue a peace-loving foreign policy based on the principles of equality, mutual respect, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states and keep away from military blocs, unions, and inter-state alliances that impose strict functions on or presuppose collective responsibility of its members. Under the law, the republic pledges not to start wars and armed conflicts, not to take part in them (self-defense being the only exception), and not to do anything that might provoke a war or a conflict. The country does not allow other states to set up military bases on its territory or use its territory for military purposes, nor does it possess, produce, or take part in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In the economic sphere, the republic is expected to develop international mutually advantageous economic cooperation on the basis of equality and with due account of the interests of all the sides involved; to keep open its financial-economic expanse; and to avoid economic pressure as a political tool (the "open doors" strategy is a foreign economic component of the "positive neutrality" conception). Finally, in the humanitarian sphere, the republic pledges to recognize and respect the basic generally accepted human and civil rights and democratic freedoms; to promote international exchange of spiritual values; and to cooperate with the world community on the humanitarian issues.¹ Certain Turkmenian lawyers insist that besides being set forth in the country's domestic legislation, their country's neutral status rests on the firm basis of international law.² This sounds like an overstate-

¹ See: "Konstitutsionnyi zakon Turkmenistana 'O postoiannom neytralitete Turkmenistana,'" *Vecherniy Ashgabad*, 3 January, 1996.

² See: E.A. Kepbanov, "Status Turkmenistana kak postoianno neytral'nogo gosudarstva," *Moskovskiy zhurnal mezhdunarodnogo prava*, No. 4 (32), 1998, pp. 35-47; Ia.

ment: the problem belongs primarily to the context of nation-building and the development of Turkmenistan's national ideology.

For historical reasons, more equal relationships with the former Center remain a priority at the level of bilateral relations. On 8 April, 1992, Turkmenistan and the Russian Federation established diplomatic relations, the main principles of which were consolidated in the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation of 31 July, 1992. The document envisaged the need for close interaction in the foreign policy and defense spheres while preserving a common military-strategic expanse and including mutual assistance in the event of aggression against one of the sides. Equal and mutually advantageous economic cooperation was also envisaged to create a free trade area, customs union, and common economic expanse as well as cooperation on a wide range of humanitarian issues, including the guarantee of basic human rights and the rights of national minorities.³ In practice, however, the desired level of communications has not been achieved in any of the spheres. On 23 April, 2002, as a result of President Putin's visit to Turkmenistan, the two countries signed a new basic treaty that envisaged fewer mutual rights and obligations of the sides.⁴ The vague wording of the new document notwithstanding, it much more adequately reflects the present level of relations as well as the fundamental changes that have recently taken place in the relations between the two countries.

Kochumov, "Postoianni neytralitet Turkmenistana: mezhdunarodno-pravovoy aspekt," *Neytral'nyi Turkmenistan*, 11 July, 2000; M. Khaitov, "Istochniki mezhdunarodnogo gumanitarnogo prava (opyt gosudarstv Tsentral'noy Azii)," *Belorusskiy zhurnal mezhdunarodnogo prava i mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, No. 1, 2001, pp. 17-24; etc.

³ See: "Dogovor o družbe i sotrudnichestve mezhdur Turkmenistanom i Rossiiskoy Federatsiey," *Turkmen-skaia iskra*, 3 August, 1992.

⁴ See: "Dogovor o družbe i sotrudnichestve mezhdur Turkmenistanom i Rossiiskoy Federatsiey," *Neytral'nyi Turkmenistan*, 24 April, 2002.

Military-Political Ties

Military development came to the fore after 1991 in relations in the military-political sphere. Cooperation in this sphere is rooted in the talks between the military delegation of the Russian

Federation headed by Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and the government of Turkmenistan that took place in Ashgabad on 7 and 8 June, 1992.⁵ A set of military agreements that included a Treaty on Joint Measures in Connection with the Creation of the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan signed during the official visit of President of Turkmenistan Saparmurat Niyazov to Moscow on 31 July, 1992 formed the legal basis of the military agreements. Under the treaty, it was decided to create the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan on the basis of units and formations of the Turkestan Military District of the former Soviet Union stationed on the territory of Turkmenistan. During the transition period, operational command of the Armed Forces was exercised by the united Russian-Turkmenian command headed by the commander as well as the headquarters subordinated in operational terms to the Russian Federation.⁶ In accordance with other agreements, the Russian side pledged to finance the military units stationed in Turkmenistan and provide them with material-technical support.⁷ Special conditions were extended to air defense and the air force, which organizationally belonged to the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation stationed in Turkmenistan under a special agreement.⁸

At first Moscow's leading role in the process of military development was ensured not only by the united command, but also by the staff. The Treaty on Joint Measures established, among other things, that Russian citizens serving in the formations and units of the former Soviet army deployed in Turkmenistan were considered Russian servicemen serving in the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan. In this way, the formations and units preserved their numerical strength to make stable functioning of the military formations in Turkmenistan possible under conditions where professional servicemen among the local people were practically non-existent.⁹ At the same time, the Russian servicemen functioned only under an Agreement on the Military Service of Citizens of the Russian Federation in the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan and Their Status signed on 1 September, 1993.¹⁰ Moscow, in turn, was prepared to help Turkmenistan train military specialists from among those who served under conscription and educate officers for the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan in the military educational establishments of the Russian Federation, if all other, including financial, issues were settled. Ashgabad was not ready to shoulder the burden of paying for its Armed Forces; on 1 January, 1994, the united command was replaced with a less taxing form of cooperation realized by an operational group of Russian troops at the Defense Ministry of Turkmenistan functioning on the basis of annual plans.

On 25 March, 1994, Turkmenistan published its military doctrine, which set forth the main trends of military development for several years to come.¹¹ Based on the "positive neutrality" conception, the doctrine was of significant importance for the republic's further relations with Russia. On 1 April, 1994, it was announced that the military structures would be reorganized.¹² Meanwhile, as the insti-

⁵ See: "Protokol rabochey vstrechi Pravitel'stva Turkmenistana i voennoy delegatsii Rossiiskoy Federatsii vo glave s ministrom oborony P.S. Grachevym," *Turkmenskaia iskra*, 9 June, 1992.

⁶ See: Dogovor mezhdu Rossiiskoy Federatsiei i Turkmenistanom o sovместnykh merakh v sviazi s sozdaniem Vooruzhennykh sil Turkmenistana (see: URL [http://www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow_DocumID_41296.html], 26 November, 2003).

⁷ See: "Soglasenie mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Rossiiskoy Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Turkmenistana o printsipakh material'no-tekhnikeskogo i trgovno-bytovogo obespechenia Vooruzhennykh sil Turkmenistana, voysk PVO i VVS Rossiiskoy Federatsii na territorii Turkmenistana," *Biulleten' mezhdunarodnykh dogovorov*, No. 8, 1994, p. 27.

⁸ See: "Soglasenie mezhdu Rossiiskoy Federatsiei i Turkmenistanom o pravovom statuse i usloviakh prebyvaniia chastey PVO i VVS Rossiiskoy Federatsii na territorii Turkmenistana," *Biulleten' mezhdunarodnykh dogovorov*, No. 8, 1994, pp. 20-26.

⁹ According to certain estimates, at the time when the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan were set up, ethnic Turkmen accounted for no more than 10 percent of the total number of officers (see: *Krasnaia zvezda*, 3 September, 1993).

¹⁰ For the texts of the Agreements see: *Biulleten' mezhdunarodnykh dogovorov*, No. 12, 1994, pp. 24-29.

¹¹ See: "Osnovnye polozhenia Voennoy doktriny Turkmenistana," *Turkmenskaia iskra*, 26 March, 1994.

¹² See: "Ukaz Prezidenta Turkmenistana 'O sozdanii Soveta oborony i natsional'noy bezopasnosti Turkmenistana'," *Turkmenskaia iskra*, 26 March, 1994.

tutional structure developed and became stronger, the Defense Ministry of Turkmenistan started transferring the air defense and air force formations and units deployed on its territory from the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and bringing them under the jurisdiction and control of Turkmenistan.¹³ During the next eighteen months, Turkmenistan, eager to prove its neutrality on the international scene, denounced most of the agreements under which Russian forces, military intelligence included, were stationed in the republic, as well as Russia's use of corresponding infrastructure. On 31 December, 1999, the above-mentioned agreement on the military service of the Russian citizens in the Armed Forces of Turkmenistan and their status expired. Russia's military presence in Turkmenistan came to an end.

Turkmenistan developed its border guards in the same way. Cooperation in the sphere of guarding the state border rested on the inter-state agreement of 27 August, 1992, under which, very much in line with the previous agreements, the border guards of Turkmenistan were based on the formations and units of the Central Asian Border District of the former Soviet Union stationed in Turkmenistan. Coordination was entrusted to the newly created united command of border guards staffed with people from both countries' competent structures. On 23 December, 1993, during President Yeltsin's visit to Ashgabad, the two countries signed a new inter-state treaty, under which the two countries guarded the so-called "outer border" together.¹⁴ In March 1994, an operational group of the Federal Border Guard Service with over 3,000 servicemen replaced the united command abolished by the treaty. However, since Turkmenistan was gradually mastering the situation on the border and the ruling regime had tightened its control over the flow of commodities from Afghanistan, the number and sphere of operation of the Russian border guards in Turkmenistan gradually shrank. On 20 May, 1999, the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan informed the Russian side of its intention to discontinue the treaty; by the end of 1999 the last units of the Federal Border Guards had left Turkmenistan.¹⁵

In this way, between the last day of the Soviet Union and the present the two countries concluded over twenty treaties and agreements related to a wide range of issues in the sphere of defense and national security. The practical results, however, look doubtful in the long term. Since the mid-1990s the intensity of the contacts and, accordingly, their quality have been steadily deteriorating; today, the level is comparatively low. Turkmenistan's isolationist foreign policies limit its contacts with Russia. Ashgabad, however, wants much more vigorous cooperation with Moscow in the sphere of interests of the special services. On 10 April, 2003, during Turkmenbashi's visit to Moscow, the sides signed an inter-state Agreement on Cooperation in the Security Sphere that envisaged, among other things, coordination of the security services in the anti-terrorist struggle up to and including deportation of people who perpetrated or were preparing to perpetrate terrorist acts on the territories of the sides.¹⁶ However, recently the two countries have drawn closer together to a certain extent. This is expected to become part of a set of agreements in the economic and humanitarian sphere. However, it is not quite clear how they can be implemented; it is equally hard to predict the future of the two countries' cooperation in the military-political sphere.

¹³ Despite this, for some years after these units were brought under Turkmenistan's exclusive jurisdiction and control, Moscow continued to contribute to the functioning and battle-worthiness of the air defense complexes in Turkmenistan under the intergovernmental agreements on military-technical cooperation of 18 May, 1995.

¹⁴ Dogovor mezhdru Rossiiskoy Federatsiye i Turkmenistanom o sovместnoy okhrane gosudarstvennoy granitsy Turkmenistana i statuse voennosluzhashchikh Pogranichnykh voysk Rossiiskoy Federatsii na territorii Turkmenistana (according to my information, that text was never officially published).

¹⁵ See: *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 24 December, 1999.

¹⁶ See: Soglashenie mezhdru Rossiiskoy Federatsiye i Turkmenistanom o sotrudnichestve v oblasti bezopasnosti (see: URL [<http://www.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2003/04/42885.shtml>], 11 April, 2003).

Trade and Economic Ties

As part of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan was a source of raw materials and produced more raw cotton than its neighbors. Gradually, after the war of 1941-1945 as its huge hydrocarbon riches were discovered (natural gas in the Amu Darya basin and oil on the Caspian shelf, though in smaller quantities), the republic laid the foundation for its basic industry, mainly composed of the fuel and energy branches.¹⁷ Today gas extraction and gas export are the two most important economic branches: they create nearly half of the GDP and earn up to 90 percent of the country's hard currency incomes. The gas industry obviously predetermines the republic's economic dynamics as a whole.¹⁸ The range of estimates of the country's explored recoverable gas reserves is fairly wide: from 1.7 bcm (IMF) to 2.9 bcm (BP) and 44 bcm (Niyazov) of natural gas.¹⁹ Any of these figures is large enough to move the country into the front ranks of potential gas exporters. To preserve its economic independence, Turkmenistan should be able to consistently and freely move its resources, energy resources in particular, to the world markets.

Before 1990, the republic's gas sector was part of the Soviet fuel and energy complex. At that time, its gas integrated into the united gas pipeline system was mainly used to cover a large part of Ukraine's needs for fuel and energy. Nearly all the gas produced in the republic, with the exception of relatively small amounts used inside Turkmenistan, went to the all-Union network through the Central Asia-Center system of main pipelines that connected the gas-producing areas in the southeast of Turkmenistan across Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan with the center of Russia. There the gas entered the pipeline system leading to Ukraine and (potentially) to Europe. It was the only gas route used for export purposes. Since 1991, gas has been pumped to the Far Abroad as part of the Russian monopolies' export under the annual quota Russia gave Turkmenistan. Under the intergovernmental agreements of 11 November, 1992, Turkmenistan's quota for 2003 contained additional 11.3 bcm (the republic continued to produce the planned amount of 80.6 bcm, which included the 28.6 bcm sold to Ukraine).²⁰ The short-term nature of the contracts made it necessary to renew them fairly often—the same applies to the gas-transit agreements. In this way, Moscow acquired a wide range of tools for regulating the volumes and directions of fuel flows along the pipelines on its territory.

In October 1993, Russia, as represented by Gazprom, denied Turkmenistan access to its pipelines: the republic could no longer sell its natural gas to Europe, but could very much as before sell its fuel to Soviet successor states, its traditional markets. Deliveries to Ukraine and the Transcaucasus,

¹⁷ About the economy of Turkmenistan see: R. Pomfret, "Turkmenistan: From Communism to Nationalism by Gradual Economic Reform," *MOCT-MOST: Economic Policy in Transitional Economics*, No. 11 (2), 2001, pp. 165-176.

¹⁸ About the FEC of Turkmenistan see: S. Kamenev, "Turkmenistan's Fuel and Energy Complex: Present State and Development Prospects," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (12), 2001 (see: URL [<http://www.gundogar.com/014.htm>], 20 December, 2001).

¹⁹ See: Turkmenistan: Recent Economic Developments, IMF Staff Country Report No. 99/140. International Monetary Fund, Washington, D.C., December 1999; BP 2004 Statistical Review of World Energy, p. 20; "Vystuplenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana Saparmurata Turkmenbashi na vstreche s sotrudnikami Posol'stva Turkmenistana v Moskve," *Neytral'nyi Turkmenistan*, 3 December, 2001.

²⁰ See: "Soglashenie mezhdru Pravitel'stvom Rossiiskoy Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Turkmenistana o postavkakh prirodnogo gaza v 1993 godu," *Biulleten' mezhdunarodnykh dogovorov*, No. 4, 1994, p. 71; "Soglashenie mezhdru Pravitel'stvom Rossiiskoy Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Turkmenistana o torgovo-ekonomicheskom sotrudnichestve v 1993 godu," *Biulleten' mezhdunarodnykh dogovorov*, No. 3, 1994, p. 49; "Soglashenie mezhdru Pravitel'stvom Turkmenistana i Pravitel'stvom Ukrainy o postavkakh prirodnogo gaza v 1993 godu," *Turkmenskaia iskra*, October 1992 (*Author's archives*).

however, could not close the gap left by the discontinued export to Europe. The shift to hard currencies and world prices left many of the post-Soviet republics insolvent. Kiev alone owed Ashgabad over \$700 million for the deliveries of strategic energy fuels Ukraine received in 1993. In the winter of 1994, after registering negative tendencies in cash flow, Turkmenistan suspended its gas deliveries.²¹ In November 1994, Kiev reached an understanding with Ashgabad with the help of international financial institutions on the need to restructure its debt into a state loan and resume gas deliveries. Relations were no longer transparent: some of the gas supplied under the contract was delivered by the hitherto unknown “international” ITERA company. Still, the payment discipline of Turkmenistan’s trade CIS partners remained deficient.

The Kremlin’s ability to effectively control Turkmenistan’s gas exports made the republic more responsive to Russia’s geopolitical interests. During Turkmenbashi’s visit to Moscow on 17 and 18 May, 1995, the sides reached an agreement under which Russia was invited to develop its natural resources through a joint venture. It was decided to develop several hydrocarbon fields in Turkmenistan to export fuel through newly created pipeline systems.²² Later, in November 1995, it was specified that the exported volumes for 1996 were to be handled by the Turkmenrosgaz, a newly created Russian-Turkmenian joint stock company.²³ Gazprom and ITERA, two companies that founded the JV on the Russian side, pledged to help Ashgabad reach the European markets in 1997.²⁴ The hopes Ashgabad pinned on the project were dashed: in March 1997, when the total debt of the users of Turkmenistan’s natural gas (Ukraine and Georgia in particular, as well as two of Russia’s partners) exceeded the figure of \$1.5 billion, the republic annulled the agreements on Turkmenrosgaz and discontinued gas export.

Throughout the 1990s, Turkmenistan, while maintaining a maximally high level of its north-bound fuel deliveries, actively sought new markets by diversifying its export routes. The results were modest. In December 1997, it commissioned a low-productive Korpeje-Kurtkui pipeline that connected the western gas fields with the neighboring northeastern provinces of Iran. This symbolically ended Russia’s monopoly on oil transit from Turkmenistan. The line, however, remained of very limited importance—Iran is one of the largest gas producers itself, trying to reach the same markets as Turkmenistan. Meanwhile, in October 1997, Turkmenistan, which maintained cordial relations with the Taliban, signed a protocol in Ashgabad under which the Turkmen government transferred its exclusive rights on a consortium that was expected to build a trans-Afghan pipeline to Pakistan to UNOCAL, an American oil and gas concern.²⁵ Finally, in November 1999, in Istanbul, the heads of the four states approved the activities of the international PSG consortium expected to build a trans-Caspian gas pipeline from Turkmenistan across Azerbaijan and Georgia to Turkey.²⁶ So far, because of the very complex geopolitical situation in the Caspian-Central Asian re-

²¹ See: “Srochnoe reshenie Pravitel’stva Turkmenistana,” *Turkenskaia iskra*, 22 February, 1994. In April 1994 Turkmenistan applied the same measures to Azerbaijan.

²² See: Soglashenie mezhdru Pravitel’stvom Rossiiskoy Federatsii i Pravitel’stvom Turkmenistana o sotrudnichestve v neftianoy i gazovoy oblastiakh (see: URL [http://www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow_DocumID_37289.html], 26 November, 2003).

²³ See: Soglashenie mezhdru Rossiiskim aktsionernym obshchestvom “Gazprom” i Pravitel’stvom Turkmenistana o vzaimnom sotrudnichestve v 1996 godu (see: URL [<http://npa-gov.garweb.ru:8080/public/document.asp?no=1020015>], 28 May 2004).

²⁴ See: Soglashenie mezhdru Pravitel’stvom Turkmenistana, Rossiiskim aktsionernym obshchestvom “Gazprom” i Mezhdunarodnoy energeticheskoy korporatsiei “Itera” o vzaimnom sotrudnichestve v 1997 godu (*Author’s archives*).

²⁵ For more detail about the project revived in 2002 in the context of the Turkmenian-Afghan ties see: M. Esenov, “Turkmenistan’s Foreign Policy and its Impact on the Regional Security System,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (7), 2001 (see: URL [<http://www.gundogar.com/015.htm>], 21 December, 2001).

²⁶ See: “The Intergovernmental Declaration on Transcaspian Gas Pipe-line Implementation Principles between the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Turkey and Turkmenistan in Connection with the Transcaspian Gas Pipe-line Project Implementation,” *Press-kurier Turkmenbashi*, Issue 16, 1999 (see: URL [http://www.tmpress.gov.tm/vol16_declaration.html], 10 October, 2000).

gion none of the planned steps has progressed beyond the designing stage. In view of the failed alternative gas export projects, the latest of which Washington actively lobbied, Ashghabad had to resume negotiations with its traditional partners in the post-Soviet area. Starting with 1999, Turkmenistan has been gradually increasing supplies. When its protracted talks on a long-term agreement with Moscow failed because of disagreements over the prices, on 14 May, 2001, during the Turkmenian president's visit to Kiev, the two countries signed an agreement on trade and economic cooperation, including gas deliveries to Ukraine for the period of 2002-2006.²⁷

It was only during the Moscow summit of 10 April, 2003 mentioned above that the two countries achieved a breakthrough in their relations; they signed an intergovernmental agreement on cooperation in the gas sphere, under which the volume of gas supplied to Russia would increase to reach an annual figure of up to 80 bcm during the next twenty-five years.²⁸ It was an important agreement for Ashghabad: by building up its export to the maximum within a relatively short period of time—and falling into one-sided dependence by the same token—the country ensured a stable flow of hard currency, on which the ruling regime depended for its continued existence. Moscow, likewise, profited from the deal: re-export of cheap Central Asian gas will allow Moscow to meet Gazprom's growing obligations, not only on the domestic market but also on the profitable West European markets. In the geopolitical context, the deliveries of Central Asian gas along the only main pipeline to Gazprom undermined Kiev's negotiation position. In future, Ukraine will be forced to talk to Moscow about gas deliveries; this will greatly affect the Eurasian energy market. Thus, it can be said that so far Moscow has been winning the game around Turkmenian gas. At the same time, the reputation of all the sides involved in the game leaves much to be desired, so difficulties and changes cannot be excluded.

Humanitarian Contacts

For historical reasons, the large Russian diaspora in Turkmenistan remains the key factor of the humanitarian contacts between both countries. As early as the 1880s, the first Russian settlers reached the territory of contemporary Turkmenistan. This happened after the victory of General Skobelev at Geok-Tepe in 1881 when the resistance of the Turkmenian tribes was finally crushed. However, the Slavs did not hasten to move to the inhospitable deserts in great numbers, where epidemics were another menace. In the early 1930s, forced collectivization brought more Slavic people there; later, during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, Slavs from the occupied parts of the Soviet empire joined them. In the 1950s, the share of Russians began to decline; in the 1970s, the number of Russians dropped because of re-emigration and their relatively low birth rate compared with the local people. Despite this, until the downfall of the Soviet Union, Russians remained the second largest ethnic group in the republic. According to the all-Union population census of 1989, there were 330,000 of them, or about 9.5 percent of the total population. Nevertheless, since 1991 Russian re-emigration has become a mass

²⁷ See: Jan S. Adams, "Russia's Gas Diplomacy," *Problems of Post-Communism*, May-June 2002, pp. 14-22; Uгода mizh Ukrainoiu i Turkmenistanom pro postavki prirodnogo gazu iz Turkmenistanu v Ukrainu v 1999 rotsi (in Ukrainian) (see: URL [<http://www.rada.kiev.ua/cgi-bin/putfile.cgi>]); Uгода mizh Ukrainoiu i Turkmenistanom pro postachannia prirodnogo gazu iz Turkmenistanu v Ukrainu u 2000-2001rokakh (in Ukrainian) (see: URL [<http://www.rada.kiev.ua/cgi-bin/putfile.cgi>]), 8 February, 2002); "Soglashenie mezhdru Turkmenistanom i Ukrainoy o postavkakh prirodnogo gaza iz Turkmenistana v Ukrainu v 2002-2006 godakh," *Neytral'nyi Turkmenistan*, 17 May, 2001.

²⁸ See: Soglashenie mezhdru Rossiiskoy Federatsiey i Turkmenistanom o sotrudnichestve v gazovoy otrasli (see: URL [<http://www.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2003/04/42886.shtml>]), 11 April, 2003).

phenomenon. In 2001, in his “holy book,” Turkmenbashi wrote that the share of Russians in Turkmenistan was about 2 percent: this looks plausible even though not all statistics of Turkmenian origin can be relied upon.

The republic’s leaders were aware of the painful nature of the issue and the possible negative repercussions caused by the large-scale exodus of highly skilled specialists working in the science-intensive branches. At first, they made certain concessions to Moscow: during the Ashgabad summit of 23 December, 1993, the two countries signed agreements on the regulation of migration and defense of the migrants’ rights and an agreement on dual citizenship, under which each of the sides pledged to recognize the right of its citizens to acquire the citizenship of the other side without losing its own citizenship.²⁹ On 18 May, 1995, during the summit in Moscow, the sides signed a package of interstate treaties in the humanitarian sphere designed to create conditions for continued existence and unimpeded development of ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious specifics of the ethnic minorities on their territories. This gave Moscow not only indispensable legal guarantees, but also a very much-needed legal precedent in the form of dual citizenship to be applied when dealing with the other CIS countries. But as a tool for protecting the rights of Russians in Turkmenistan and Russia’s continued influence there, these acts proved useless. It is very hard to describe in detail the very special process of state and national development in post-Soviet Turkmenistan, but even an overview of certain aspects will provide the reader with an idea about the nature and scope of the ethnopolitical processes in the country.

Liquidation of the educational system is the saddest chapter in Turkmenistan’s post-communist existence. In 1993, the presidential Education Program was introduced, which envisaged, among other things, nine, instead of eleven years, of secondary education.³⁰ This deprived the younger generation of receiving a higher education abroad. Later, in 1994 all Russian secondary schools were transformed into mixed Russian-Turkmen schools.³¹ Then the system of post-graduate education was reformed (later, in 1998, the Academy of Sciences was disbanded). The term of higher education was reduced to two years—students were expected to practice for two more years at enterprises and in offices. Specialized secondary schools, colleges, and other types of secondary educational establishments were closed down. This was not all: to realize the nation’s “spiritual revival,” “alien,” even fundamental, subjects in school curricula were replaced with new “disciplines” such as “the teaching of Great Saparmurat Turkmenbashi about independence,” “the teaching of Great Saparmurat Turkmenbashi about neutrality,” and “The Holy *Rukhnama* of Great Saparmurat Turkmenbashi.”³² Under an intergovernmental agreement of 21 January, 2002, a joint Russian-Turkmen school named after Pushkin was opened in Ashgabad. This is the only school that provides an 11-year complete secondary education in Russian according to the federal curricula. It is intended mainly for children from foreign missions and cannot accept all those wishing to study.

The same can be said about the other social spheres. In June 2004, it was officially demanded that all diplomas and educational certificates issued abroad should be re-registered in Turkmenistan;

²⁹ See: “Soglashenie mezhdru Rossiiskoy Federatsiyey i Turkmenistanom o regulirovaniy protsesssa pereseleniya i zashchite prav pereselentsev,” *Diplomaticheskiiy vestnik*, No. 1-2, January 1994, pp. 24-27; “Soglashenie mezhdru Rossiiskoy Federatsiyey i Turkmenistanom ob uregulirovaniy voprosov dvoynogo grazhdanstva,” *Diplomaticheskiiy vestnik*, No. 1-2, January 1994, pp. 27-29.

³⁰ See: “Vystuplenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana S.A. Niyazova na soveshchaniy rabotnikov obrazovaniya Turkmenistana,” *Vecherniy Ashgabad*, 5 May, 1993.

³¹ On 1 September, 2002, all 49 remaining mixed secondary schools in Turkmenistan were transformed into purely Turkmen schools. See: Turkmenistan. Iz doklada Ministerstva inostrannykh del Rossiiskoy Federatsiiy “Russkiy iazyk v mire,” Moscow, 2003 (see: URL [www.in.mid.ru], 1 November, 2004).

³² About this see: S. Kamenev, “The Current Sociopolitical Situation in Turkmenistan,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (14), 2002 (see also: URL [http://www.gundogar.org/ruspages/270.htm], 2 April, 2002).

³³ See: RFERL. Turkmen Report, 7 June, 2004. To confirm an old diploma, each person was expected to pass an exam on Turkmenbashi’s “holy” book *Rukhnama*.

this caused a wave of dismissals of Russian speakers from the public sector.³³ The health care system was almost completely ruined by the efforts to “rationalize” it by replacing trained medics with free workforce (young men serving in the army on conscription), or by closing down regional and district hospitals.³⁴ In April 2001, Turkmenbashi banned ballet and opera in the republic and closed the opera and ballet theaters on the grounds that the Turkmen “had no ballet in their blood.”³⁵ Turkmenistan is one of the few post-Soviet countries in which religious activities not sanctioned by the state are criminally persecuted.³⁶ Even though the above measures are mostly repressive or are spearheaded against the intelligentsia as the potentially most active and, therefore, most dangerous segment of society,³⁷ the echo mostly reverberates against Russian speakers as a whole and ethnic Russians in particular, because of the specifics of the local social structure.

The “Turkmenization” policy consistently applied in the last fifteen years has gradually removed members of the non-titular ethnoses from the most important fields and contracted, to a great extent, the sphere of the Russian language. Starting on 1 January, 2000, all official documents in the republic are written in the state (Turkmen) language.³⁸ The information sphere is also changing: in July 2004, broadcasting of the Russian radio station Maiak was suspended. In a country where the media is completely controlled and from which foreign publications are banned, this means that Russian-language radio and TV broadcasting was also removed. The names of months were changed to rid them, according to Turkmenbashi, of the last traces of 110 years of slavery. Restrictions imposed in foreign relations likewise disrupted ties with the Russian language sphere: there is no longer international railway and bus communication; and a visa regime is applied to CIS citizens. Predictably, the CIS members responded by introducing visas for Turkmen citizens; and the borders were fortified. In this way, the regime has achieved almost complete isolation from the outside world.

In the spring of 2003, when Turkmenistan unilaterally abolished dual citizenship, the position of the Russian diaspora worsened. On 10 April, 2003, as soon as the agreements on cooperation in the gas sphere were finalized, Turkmenistan issued a Protocol on Discontinuation of the Dual Citizenship Agreement, after which Turkmenbashi used the fact to publish a special decree under which all people with dual citizenship were “granted the right” to choose one of them. After two months, those who had failed to do so were considered either citizens of Turkmenistan or the Russian Federation depending on their place of permanent residence.³⁹ The legal nature of the president’s decisions are doubtful, still the very fact that the decree was published proved enough to trigger a campaign by the state security bodies to identify those who had two passports. The Russians panicked. Under pressure from the public and the State Duma, which called on the Kremlin to take measures against the arbitrary steps of the Turkmenian authorities that might, according to the Russian side, affect up to 100,000

³⁴ See: “Po ukazaniu Niyazova gotovitsia uvol’nenie 15,000 rabotnikov zdravookhraneniia,” *Press release PTs Memorial*, 19 January 2004.

³⁵ “Vystuplenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana Saparmurata Turkmenbashi vo Dvortse Mekan na soveshchaniia s tvorcheskimi rabotnikami (3 apreliia 2001 goda),” *Neytral’nyi Turkmenistan*, 11 May, 2001.

³⁶ For more detail, see: S. Demidov, “Religion in Post-Soviet Turkmenistan,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 4 (10), 2001 (see: URL [http://www.gundogar.com/018.htm], 21 December, 2001).

³⁷ The Law on Selecting State Managers and Officials for Public Service in Turkmenistan of 9 August, 2002 is the most typical example of discriminatory legislation. It envisages checking three generations of those claiming posts in the structures of state power and administration (see: *Neytral’nyi Turkmenistan*, 24 August, 2002).

³⁸ See: Postanovlenie Khalk Maslakhaty Turkmenistana “O navechnom utverzhenii turkmenskogo iazyka i turkmenskogo natsional’nogo alfavita v deiatel’nosti organov gosudarstvennogo upravleniia, vo vsekh sferakh zhizni nezavisimogo Turkmenistana,” *Neytral’nyi Turkmenistan*, 30 December, 1999.

³⁹ See: Protokol o prekrashchenii deystvia Soglasheniia mezhdru Rossiiskoy Federatsiei i Turkmenistanom ob uregulirovanii voprosov dvoynogo grazhdanstva (see: URL [http://www.businesspravo.ru/Docum/DocumShow_DocumID_84507.html], 29 October, 2003); Ukaz Prezidenta Turkmenistana “Ob uregulirovanii voprosov dvoynogo grazhdanstva mezhdru Turkmenistanom i Rossiiskoy Federatsiei,” *Neytral’nyi Turkmenistan*, 23 April, 2003; Polozhenie ob uregulirovanii voprosov dvoynogo grazhdanstva mezhdru Turkmenistanom i Rossiiskoy Federatsiei.

people, Russia, together with the world community, began a procedure of introducing international sanctions against Ashghabad. As a concession by Ashghabad, an inter-state commission on settling the controversial issues was set up several months later⁴⁰; however, the results of its activities or, rather, of its only sitting vanished without a trace.

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Turkmenistan's foreign policy is a unique case of overcoming post-imperial dependence through voluntary self-isolation. Ashghabad is convinced that its extreme foreign policy orientation is the only way to create and preserve favorable external conditions to achieve the ruling regime's consolidation or rather conservation. In fact, the regime is unlikely to outlive its creator: its foreign and domestic policies are too closely intertwined with the country's leader. The republic is plunging into international isolation, therefore we can expect exacerbation of the problems that have been ignored far too long.

⁴⁰ See: "Zaiavlenie Gosudarstvennoy Dumy Federal'nogo Sobrania 'O sobliudeni prav grazhdan Rossiiskoy Federatsii v Turkmenistane'" (see: URL [<http://wbase.duma.gov.ru/ntc/vdoc.asp?kl=12605>], 26 November, 2003).