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Turkmenistan - Slowly in the Right Direction

Henry Plater-Zyberk

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Key Points

- * Considering Turkmenistan's ample energy resources, President Niyazov left Turkmenistan in a very bad shape. We are yet to discover the full scale of this devastation and therefore appreciate the scope of the challenges facing his successors.
- * The reforms in Turkmenistan will take time and some mistakes will inevitably be made.
- * The Western partners of Turkmenistan have enough experience to help Turkmenistan avoid mistakes made in other Central Asian countries.
- * The stability of Turkmenistan is in everyone's interest.
- * President Berdymuhamedov is developing relationships with the west and his neighbours.

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1. After Niyazov – round one

President Saparmyrat Niyazov died unexpectedly on 21 December 2006. His death was surprising only because so little was known about him. After heart surgery performed by German doctors in September 1997, Niyazov should have slowed down and delegated some of his powers. Dr Hans Meissner, who performed the surgery, said that Niyazov could have lived longer but his excessive work-load accelerated a disease of the blood vessels and he died of heart oxygen starvation.¹ The subsequent rumours as to the mysterious nature of Niyazov's death were understandable in one of the world's most opaque countries, but have not been supported by any evidence.

Niyazov's legal successor, in accordance with Article 60 of the Turkmen Constitution, was to be the chairman of the Turkmen parliament (Majlis), Ovezgeldi Atayev. Atayev was prevented from taking the post, as the Turkmen Prosecutor-General's Office instituted criminal proceedings against him, apparently on the day of Niyazov's death.² The decision to remove Atayev was taken by the Turkmen National Security Council on 21st December. It was the council, staffed by Niyazov's security confidants, which decided that Gurbanguly Malikgulyyevic Berdymuhamedov, deputy prime minister and the minister of health and the pharmaceutical industry, would be the acting president.³

The speculations of the Turkmen foreign-based opposition as to the nature of this unexpected nomination ranged from the assertion that the new acting president was Niyazov's illegitimate son to a possible struggle over the direction of Turkmen oil and gas supplies.⁴ Atayev must have been seen by the men in charge of the power structures either as an embarrassing Niyazov clone or as a man who would immediately threaten their careers and incomes.

The king-maker of the immediate post-Niyazov period was the head of his guard organization Lt Gen Akmyrat Rejepov (59), a professional ex-KGB officer who during the Soviet era served in Niyazov's security detail and then became the head of his protection service.⁵ In February 2007, still running the powerful protection service, Rejepov was appointed the head of the Turkmen National Security Council.⁶ Berdymuhamedov was also supported by Lt Gen Geldimuhamet Asyrmuhammedov, minister of national security, Interior Minister Akmamed Rahmanov and Defence Minister Agageldi Mammetgeldiyev.

At the beginning, the new president had to keep this power quartet contented and to promise the country that things would get better. His tasks were formidable. Historians may speculate whether Niyazov would have been forced to conduct a different economic and foreign policy if his country had no substantial revenues from gas and oil. What is already certain is that even with these resources Niyazov's policies had a devastating effect on Turkmenistan.⁷ However, the people who

protected him for years were still in charge and Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov had to tread gently. In January, Berdymuhamedov praised the army and promised that the army personnel and their families would always be in the focus of his attention.⁸ In mid-February 2007, in one of his first interviews, he described Niyazov as a hero.⁹

The presidential election held on 11 February 2007, with the acting president facing 5 hopeless presidential challengers, gave Berdymuhamedov 95% of the votes. In his inauguration speech Berdymuhamedov first praised his predecessor and then announced reforms reversing some of Niyazov's more controversial rulings with immediate effect.

On 15 February, a day after his inauguration, Berdymuhamedov reintroduced the 10 year primary/secondary education system abolished by his predecessor. Berdymuhamedov also allowed the Internet to enter Turkmenistan.¹⁰ The number of road checkpoints were reduced and the permission needed to travel to border regions was abolished.¹¹

The following week the new president began the process of replacing many ministers and deputy ministers. All new presidential appointments were made with a six-months probationary period. The power quartet was left untouched for a while.¹² The first to go was Interior Minister Akmamed Rahmanov, dismissed at the beginning of April for "great shortcomings in his work".¹³ At the same time Berdymuhamedov began to make changes in regional security structures. The most important security reshuffle took place in mid-May when the president issued a decree relieving Akmyrat Kulyyevic Rejepov of his "duties of the head of the Security Service of the President of Turkmenistan".¹⁴ Officially Gen Rejepov was transferred to another job.¹⁵ According to unconfirmed reports Lt Gen Rejepov was arrested, as were his son Col Nurmyrat Rejepov and other security officers. Col Rejepov, a National Security Ministry officer, was recalled from the United Arab Emirates where he worked as a security officer in the Turkmen embassy.¹⁶ The security purge was completed the day before 18 May, Day of National Revival and Unity. The removal of Gen Rejepov was possible thanks to the support of the National Security Minister Geldimmuhamet Asyrmuhammedov and Defence Minister Agageldi Mammetgeldiyev.¹⁷

As part of a rolling programme of security reforms President Berdymuhamedov also replaced the chief of the transport police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs at the end of May.¹⁸ Almost immediately traffic control duties were transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Interior.¹⁹ In June, Lt Col Batyrmuhammet Aymyradov was relieved of the duties of First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs. He was replaced by Nuryagdy Yagmyrov, until then the deputy Minister of Interior responsible for personnel. Yagmyrov's position was taken by Muhammetdurdy Atayev,²⁰ until a then Deputy Rector of the Police Academy.

2. Reshuffles, reforms and slow democratization

On the 15th anniversary of the Turkmen constitution (18 May 1992) and immediately after the completion of the first stage of major security reforms, President Berdymuhamedov declared that human rights were one of the priorities for his country.²¹ Schools were allowed to remove Niyazov's personality cult paraphernalia, such as portraits, statues and books about him and written by him.²²

In May, the Turkmen president also replaced several ministers, deputy ministers, local officials and the mayor of Ashgabat and launched a campaign to reform the whole Turkmen educational system. The meeting of the Turkmen Council of Ministers considered several reforms covering a wide range of economic, transport, social and educational issues, including international training for local administrators.²³ In June, the president reopened the Turkmen Academy of Science, closed by Niyazov, which began once again to grant scientific titles and degrees.²⁴ Throughout the summer Berdymuhamedov kept replacing officials around the country.²⁵ He incorporated the improvement of human rights into his political agenda and allowed the US Commission on International Religious Freedom to visit Turkmenistan. The delegation was received on 20 August, the second day of their visit, by the president himself. Later, the visitors met members of the Turkmen parliament and had meetings at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs and several other state organizations.²⁶ Also in August 2007, the Turkmen president signed a resolution setting up an interdepartmental commission responsible for monitoring and coordinating the observance of international human rights standards at the highest government level.²⁷ At the beginning of September, the national security minister announced a pardon of 9000 convicts on the occasion of Ramadan's Night of Omnipotence.²⁸

All this does not mean that the world should expect Turkmenistan to become a fully fledged democracy anytime soon. The lack of democratic experience and almost a century of the Soviet and then Niyazov's dictatorships did not make Turkmenistan a particularly fertile ground for democratic experiments. In this post-dictatorial transitional period a mild cult of the new reformer is for the time being the best Turkmenistan can expect. Neither should it surprise foreign observers, partners and investors that, unaccustomed to efficient administration and democratic accountability, most Turkmen expect to be guided from above. They will also find it appropriate that their country will be ruled for a while by presidential decrees such as those ordering airports to be refurbished and radio and TV reception improved.²⁹

3. Gas and foreign relations

President Berdymuhamedov's learning curve has been very steep. Neither he nor his ministers had any real power or opportunity to learn how to operate in a normal political environment when Niyazov was alive. None of them was groomed to replace Niyazov; and if they had been trained to replace him they would probably be his clones, not fit to do the job. Joining the rest of the world is therefore a very difficult process for Turkmenistan and the new president is clearly aware of it. The Turkmen foreign policy mechanism has to be cranked up fast and the presidential workload is probably heavier than in most other countries. The Turkmen president decided to run a presidential foreign policy, which is probably the best way to proceed in the short term. Berdymuhamedov has been receiving in Ashgabat heads of states and senior business managers as well as comparatively minor foreign officials (see Appendix 1 for a list), which in the present situation may be the best method to learn and to determine the future policy of the country.

Turkmenistan is the second largest gas producer in the post Soviet area. The oil reserves of the Turkmen Caspian shelf are estimated at 11b tonnes and gas reserves at 5.5 trillion cubic metres. Turkmenistan's total gas reserves are estimated at 22 trillion cubic metres.³⁰ Had Turkmenistan been less endowed with energy resources it would probably have to accept large unsolicited doses of instruction and guidance from the West. Instead, almost immediately after President Niyazov's death, Ashgabat has been flooded by foreign visitors happy to

assist landlocked Turkmenistan to extract its energy riches and to offer solutions to transport them to distant energy consuming customers.

With more than 70 years of common history and Turkmen dependence on Russian pipeline network, Moscow is still Ashgabat's most important partner. Although Russia and Turkmenistan have no common border and only share territorial interests in the Caspian Sea, Moscow's position remains very strong as long as Ashgabat does not find alternative routes to export its gas and oil. In April 2003 presidents Putin and Niyazov signed a 25-year gas cooperation agreement in Moscow. Under this agreement Turkmenistan is to ship 50 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas in 2008 and would be expected to increase the shipment to 80bcm annually by 2028, when the agreement would expire. The present capacity of the recently restored Caspian littoral route is 4.2bcm of gas a year and it is expected to quadruple by 2012.³¹

A new Caspian pipeline is therefore to be built, of which 360km would be in Turkmenistan and 150km in Kazakhstan. The new pipeline will be linked to the Central Asian Centre pipeline at Alexandrov Gai on the Russian-Kazakh border. The cost of the project is estimated at more than 1bn USD. The construction of the pipeline is expected to begin in the summer of 2008. In 2006, Turkmenistan produced 33.68bcm of gas, of which 21bcm was exported to Russia. The gas production targets for 2007 are 71.1bcm of which 50bcm will go to Russia. By 2030, Turkmenistan hopes to produce 250bcm of gas annually.³²

The presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan announced on 12 May 2007 that the final agreement on the planned pipeline would be signed in September. No final trilateral agreements on this pipeline have been signed so far. Turkmenistan may have some misgiving about the deal. Although vital, for the time being, for Ashgabat, its long-term benefits are much less evident, particularly if Turkmenistan is able to find alternative routes to export its gas to potential customers in Europe, China and India.

How close Ashgabat remains to Moscow depends on Russia's treatment of Turkmenistan and the attitude of Western and Eastern investors and partners. The Turkmen elites were mostly educated in Russian, and in many cases in Soviet Russia. Many of their children live, study and in some cases work in Moscow. The Turkmen understand Russia better than they understand any other country. Russia's knowledge of Turkmenistan is unlikely to be surpassed by other economic competitors for decades and it can therefore be expected that Moscow will continue to be Ashgabat's major, if not the principal economic partner. Russia's educational establishments, especially those providing experts for the oil and gas industry are familiar with Turkmen oil and gas fields and infrastructure. Starting from 2008, more than 100 students will be able to study at Tyumen Oil and Gas State University and the Russian University of Oil and Gas. Tyumen University is prepared to accept 20 Turkmen students this year.³³

Russia's biggest enemy in Central Asia is its own rediscovered self-assurance, often accompanied by arrogance and a careless drive to the centre of the world international stage. Ashgabat agreed to sell Russia gas for 100 USD per 1000 cubic metres but Moscow more than doubles its price when it sells it to Europe. Turkmenistan may be forced to accept the profits made by Russia, but only for as long as is absolutely necessary. This would be the main reason why Turkmenistan may consider building an alternative pipeline at any cost. Turkmenistan stands by its own initiatives to construct Turkmenistan-China, Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipelines as well as a Turkmenistan-Europe gas pipeline via the Caspian Sea.³⁴

President Berdymuhamedov has said that the trilateral agreement with Russia and Kazakhstan does not exclude Turkmenistan's participation in possible pipeline projects which would bypass Russia.³⁵ The two most likely and much more expensive alternative pipeline routes would go westwards through Azerbaijan and Turkey and eastwards towards China via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The Turkmen president is also considering other routes for pipelines to China, Afghanistan and India.³⁶ There are plans for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline (TAPI) which would cost 3.5bn USD and transport 100 million cubic metres of gas per day, of which 60% would go to India.³⁷

Until Turkmenistan decides to build the Caspian pipeline, or in the unlikely case of a gas export agreement via Iran, Kazakhstan will be Turkmenistan's most important neighbour after Russia. Stable and with allies in all major capitals, Kazakhstan is vital for Turkmen gas export. By the end of May 2007, Presidents Berdymuhamedov and Nazarbayev had met four times. A Kazakh-language school was to be opened in Western Turkmenistan and flights from Ashgabat to Almaty were resumed.³⁸ The Turkmen leader proposed to set up a railway line from Yerakliyev in Kazakhstan to the city of Turkmenbashi on the Caspian Sea coast. The extension of this line to Iran is also envisaged. The ultimate goal of the project is to extend the rail network to Turkey and then to the Persian Gulf.³⁹ In July 2007, Kazakhstan paid the 15.8m USD debt it owed Ashgabat for electricity supplies between 1994-1996. Both countries agreed the future repayment of the remaining 2.9 m USD.⁴⁰ The cooperation of the two states has been reinforced by the visit of President Nazarbayev to Turkmenistan in mid September, when the two leaders agreed on the energy export routes. During the visit, President Nazarbayev declared that experts had held four meetings in preparation for building the Caspian gas pipeline and that the two countries are not only ready to build pipelines via Russia "but also in other directions, that is, eastwards, westwards, and southward".⁴¹

Turkmenistan's relations with Iran have been good since independence and the only significant difference between the two countries, the exploitation of Caspian oil and gas resources, has been downplayed by both sides. In a telephone conversation at the beginning of March, the presidents of Turkmenistan and Iran spoke about strengthening relations between the two countries.⁴² On 16 March 2007 Iranian Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki arrived in Ashgabat for a one day visit to meet President Berdymuhamedov. According to Iranian official sources, during the visit the Turkmen leader expressed his support for Iran's peaceful nuclear programme.⁴³ On 7 June 2007, President Berdymuhamedov received Mehdi Safari, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Pacific and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Affairs.⁴⁴ A week later, on 15 June, Berdymuhamedov flew to Iran on a two day visit. During the visit to Iran, the Turkmen leader was received by Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.⁴⁵ On the way back to Ashgabat, after signing an unspecified number of memoranda of understanding, the Turkmen leader described Iran and Turkmenistan as friendly and brotherly countries.⁴⁶ The Turkmen President emphasised the need to increase economic cooperation between the two states. In 2006 the trade turnover between the two countries was worth more than 1.326 billion USD. During the first four months of 2007, it was 668.6 million USD. Turkmen main exports to Iran are fuels and agricultural products. At the beginning of May 2007, there were 124 enterprises with Iranian participation in Turkmenistan. In June, Turkmenistan and Iran were working on 72 joint undertakings worth 510.6 million USD.⁴⁷

The return visit of Mahmud Ahmadinezhad to Ashgabat was preceded by a three day reconnaissance mission of Deputy Foreign Minister Seyyed Mohhamd-Ali

Shahidi.⁴⁸ President Ahmadinezhad arrived in Ashgabat on 14 August 2007 on a two day official visit. He described Turkmenistan as “our most reliable neighbour” and called for a joint effort to fight drugs and “acts of mischief”.⁴⁹ Both countries pledged to boost economic and cultural ties. Ahmadinezhad’s visit coincided with a Turkmen decision to pay, within 30 days, its three-year outstanding 5m USD debt to Iran’s Export Guarantee Fund.⁵⁰ If Turkmenistan begins to have serious doubts about the pipeline deal with Russia, its gas export to Iran will increase, as much as the road and rail links will allow. During the first seven months of 2007 the export of Turkmen gas to Iran more than doubled and reached 4.99bcm – a 110.4% increase.⁵¹

Until President Niyazov’s death Turkmenistan’s relations with Uzbekistan were at best tepid, but recently both sides have been trying to improve the situation. On 26 July 2007, President Berdymuhamedov received Uzbek Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov. The two men discussed the planned visit to Turkmenistan of the Uzbek President Karimov and the construction of the Turkmen – Chinese pipeline.⁵² An Uzbek delegation visited Turkmenistan at the beginning of September to discuss delimitation and demarcation of the common border.⁵³ This is one of the issues the two countries have to agree on before the visit of President Karimov to Ashgabat announced in July. The other issues which will have to be resolved before the relations between the two countries reach a satisfactory level are the problems facing the minorities on both sides of the common border and oil and gas drillings in the border areas.

China is quickly becoming one of the principal trading partners of Turkmenistan. Beijing needs Turkmen gas, has plenty of goods and services to offer and is able to undercut most other foreign contractors. Between 1998-2000 China granted Turkmen Oil and Turkmen Gaz several privileged loans. The total value of services of Chinese gas and oil companies between 1998 and 2003 amounted to about 293m USD; the Chinese delivered to Turkmenistan 15 drilling and 26 lifting units. In February 2003 President Niyazov invited Chinese companies to develop oil and gas on the Caspian sea shelf.⁵⁴ In December 2003 the two countries signed two agreements. The first covered a loan to Turkmenistan of 1.8m USD with no strings attached, the other a long term (20 years) interest free loan for 3.6m USD.⁵⁵

At the beginning of April 2006, During Niyazov’s visit to China, Turkmenistan agreed to export to China 30bcm of gas annually, starting in 2008. By 2010 the gas export to China is expected to increase to 50bcm. The Turkmen gas is to be transported to China by a pipeline passing through Uzbekistan. The importance and the scale of this project alone required closer security cooperation between the two countries. On 3 April 2006, China and Turkmenistan also signed an anti-terror agreement.⁵⁶

On 31 May 2007, President Berdymuhamedov received a deputy Chairman of China’s State Committee of Reforms and Development Chen Demin and the chairman of the Chinese Oil and Gas Corporation Tsyhan Tsemin.⁵⁷ President Berdymuhamedov’s two day visit to China (17-18 July) was focused mainly on the Chinese import of gas and oil from Turkmenistan.⁵⁸ China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) signed a contract with Turkmenistan worth 1.5bn USD during the visit. The two sides agreed that the Chinese would develop the gas field in Bagtyyaryk. Over three years, CNPC will drill 12 exploration wells at the Gunorta Eloten.⁵⁹ This is the first time Ashgabat has allowed a foreign company to develop its land gas fields. The true test of the undertaking will be China and Turkmenistan’s ability to address the technical problems and budgetary constraints of the project. Neither side published the budget of the pipeline construction or any feasibility studies for the project.

Turkmenistan is interested in a stable Afghanistan, mainly because this would allow it to export gas to Pakistan and India and to have an alternative gas pipeline to China. In 2006, in a telephone conversation, the presidents of Turkmenistan and Pakistan discussed the importance of the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline.⁶⁰ Turkmenistan is a major electricity provider to Afghanistan. At the beginning of 2007, Turkmenistan wrote off 4m USD Afghan debt for electricity deliveries.⁶¹ In March 2007 Turkmenistan supplied to Afghanistan 210 million kilowatt hours worth of electricity. This export is going to increase this year to 2387 million kilowatt hours worth 5.74m USD.⁶² At the beginning of June 2007, Turkmenistan held talks with Afghanistan on supplies of electricity and new power lines. The Turkmen president is prepared to supply Afghanistan with some electricity free of charge⁶³ and also to help to build a 550,000 USD railway line in Northern Afghanistan.

4. CIS, SCO and EU, NATO

In February 2007, President Berdymuhamedov said that he saw no practical results in the activities of the CIS and described the organisation's effectiveness as extremely low.⁶⁴ However unlike Niyazov, who had been ignoring the CIS, Berdymuhamedov accepted his first invitation to the CIS summit in St.Petersburg in June 2007,⁶⁵ only to ignore later an invitation to attend an informal summit in Rostov-on-Don.⁶⁶ In May, in an interview with the Turkmen TV network Altyn Asyr, the president said that Turkmenistan would continue to adhere only to the policy of associated membership in the CIS but would resume participation in CIS activities and take part in its meetings and forums.⁶⁷ At the present stage, the Moscow-dominated organisation has very little to offer members and the promised reforms of the organisation have not materialised. The bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the countries in the region focused on specific challenges seems to be more productive.

In April the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) secretary-general Bolat Nurgaliyev said that that the organisation would support Turkmenistan's "involvement in regional processes".⁶⁸ President Berdymuhamedov took part in the seventh session of the presidents of the SCO member countries in August. If Ashgabat decides to join the SCO, its candidature would easily be fast-streamed by the present members, although Uzbekistan may use its vote to pressure Turkmenistan on unresolved minor border disagreements. Eager to preserve its neutrality Ashgabat may first want to wait to see whether the SCO will turn into a military bloc; the Turkmen leader announced in July 2007 that Turkmenistan will never join any kind of military alliance.⁶⁹

The EU needs Turkmenistan more than Turkmenistan needs the EU. Member countries need Turkmen gas but the European Union still has to work out a coherent and realistic energy strategy and so the relations between Brussels and Ashgabat are not as close as they could be.

The day after his inauguration, President Berdymuhamedov received the EU's special envoy for Central Asian countries, Pierre Morel, who expressed interest in partnership in the energy sector, cooperation in education, healthcare, information and communication technologies and in combating drug trafficking. Both sides also discussed the process of democratization in Turkmenistan, an issue which could potentially spoil the relationship if the union expresses too loudly its dissatisfaction

with the speed of democratic reforms. In June, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner invited President Berdymuhamedov to visit Brussels.⁷⁰ So far the Turkmen president has not found the time to go, although he instructed a group of Turkmen officials to visit the EU headquarters on a fact-finding mission.⁷¹ Many decisions as to the level of cooperation with both large organisations' headquarters in Brussels will be taken after President Berdymuhamedov visits NATO and the EU in November 2007.

NATO and Turkmenistan started low level cooperation in 1994 when Ashgabat joined the PfP programme as the first country in Central Asia to do so. Relations remained nugatory, however, for a decade. On 16 August 2003, NATO representatives were invited to observe military exercise in western Turkmenistan.⁷² The secretary-general of NATO visited Turkmenistan in October 2004, during his tour of Central Asia. Turkmenistan has very little to lose and a lot to gain by learning from NATO and its individual members how to reform and educate its armed forces, even if the development of this relationship displeases some of Ashgabat's partners and neighbours. In March 2007, President Berdymuhamedov received the special envoy of the NATO secretary-general for the Caucasus and Central Asia, Robert Simmons. The two men talked about Turkmenistan's security concerns, combating drug trafficking, terrorism and commitment to long-term cooperation. NATO's Yupek Yoly [Silk Road] project aims to provide the Turkmen people and others in Central Asia with a high-speed link to the Internet.⁷³

President Berdymuhamedov's visit to the UN at the end of September, and his speech at the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly was a success. He ended it with a statement: "The permanent neutrality status not only imposes on our country important foreign policy obligations, but also obliges us to form our foreign and social policies accordingly".⁷⁴ The Turkmen president spoke also at Columbia University, emphasising the importance of education and answering honestly some potentially embarrassing questions about prisoners in Turkmen jails and Turkmenistan's relations with Russia.⁷⁵ During his New York visit Berdymuhamedov met Condoleezza Rice, and Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili, a significant event considering the cool relations between Tbilisi and Moscow.⁷⁶ He also held meetings with Lithuanian President Damkus, Croatian President Mesic and Austrian Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer.⁷⁷

5. New security for new Turkmenistan

Along with the new approach to its economic development and foreign affairs, Turkmenistan will need to modernise its armed forces and security structures and improve its security contacts around the world. Law enforcement bodies and security organs able to control a cowed population are rarely able to address problems facing a modern state. The reforms of the security sector in a quickly modernising country are particularly difficult.

As with all other issues in Turkmenistan the president has all the necessary legal powers to make such changes. The Turkmen president is the supreme commander of the armed forces and has the right to manage "the activities of the Security Council of Turkmenistan".⁷⁸ As early as March Berdymuhamedov announced that he would supervise the Defence Ministry, the National Security Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the State Border Service, the Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court and the Justice Ministry.⁷⁹ On 30 April he was allegedly given the rank of Army General.⁸⁰

The biggest long-term challenge facing all these organisations is re-educating their personnel and reforming the military and security educational system. The modernisation of all levels of the civilian educational establishments, accompanied by reforms of the military schools and the future opening of four military training departments at the National University, the Agrarian University, the Technical University and the Communication Institute were announced in March 2007.⁸¹ On 1 September, at the beginning of the school year, President Berdymuhamedov said that the security of the country depends on the education and skills of its citizens.⁸²

Like in all other ministries, the reforms in the Turkmen power structures will be difficult until newly educated personnel are given a chance to help to modernise the country and its institutions. This process may last for a decade or more and go through several iterations.

At the beginning of May, during the annual army tactical exercise Galkan (Shield) 2007, in the North Kelyata training centre, President Berdymuhamedov declared his commitment to keep Turkmenistan neutral and emphasised that his country's doctrine focuses only on defence.⁸³ He reaffirmed this policy at the meeting of the Turkmen National Security Council that same month, together with the neutral status of Turkmenistan and the defensive nature of its military doctrine, stressing at the same time the need to reform the Turkmen armed forces, reinforce its technical standards and introduce modern training and educational methods. He also promised to improve living conditions for the military.⁸⁴

Personnel changes in the armed forces began only after the purges in the security services were complete. In June 2007, Col Bayramgeldi Nuryyevic Akummedov, Lt Col Annamammedov, Maj Berdiyev and Maj Atayev were appointed as the commanding officers of four important military units. Other changes in the army and border guard structures were also announced.⁸⁵ Such personnel changes at the unit level are understandable. The fact that they came so late may indicate that the Turkmen president did not expect any problems from the Army and the new people will now take part in the initial stage of the modernisation of the Army. More changes at every level of the Turkmen Armed Forces can be anticipated as their new tasks and reforms will require new, better educated commanders.

Russia will offer education and training for officers and NCOs which none of the Western countries could match. Ukraine and Belorussia would also be very happy to pay for the Turkmen gas supplies with military hardware and training. All three countries offer military hardware known to the senior officers of the Turkmen armed forces and there is no language barrier, making training and education easier and less expensive.

According to Turkmen opposition groups, the Russians would like to access, modernise and use old Soviet military settlements, airfields and shafts for long range missiles mothballed when the USSR collapsed. These are military facilities known as "Sopka" near Serhetabad, Mary-2 in western Mary and one in the Central Karakums. The Turkmen opposition claims that Russia is prepared to send 1000 experts to upgrade the old facilities.⁸⁶ This scenario is most unlikely as it would destroy the present president's stated non aligned and neutral foreign policy. There would be no benefits from such an arrangement for Turkmenistan. However Ashgabat can be expected to buy Russian and Belorussian military equipment and send military personnel for training to both countries. The limited presence of Russian and Belorussian experts in Turkmenistan therefore should not be

surprising. There are no indications however that President Berdymuhamedov would be prepared to tolerate foreign military bases in his country.

The efforts to improve security will have to be multi-layered and multi-directional. Its importance as an energy supplier is growing and Turkmenistan should experience little trouble in improving security links with old partners and establishing contacts with new ones. Those looking for security cooperation with Turkmenistan are principally those interested in protecting their economic interests and investments, a group bound to grow rapidly in the near future. Russia will be in the best position to assist because of the size and proximity of its security apparatus, the training facilities, the understanding of the region and the absence of the language barrier. The security organisations of the CIS members states have been closely linked since their independence. Ashgabat is an observer member of the council of the chiefs of secret services of the CIS.⁸⁷ Turkmenistan has also signed, together with Azerbaijan Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan an agreement on setting up a Central Asian information coordination centre to combat drug trafficking.⁸⁸

6. Conclusion

The future of Turkmenistan looks good because it smells of gas. The only problem is how to deliver it to the customers. The very long pipelines leading to customers or distribution points have to run through some politically unstable or tense, geographically inhospitable or security sensitive areas. Turkmenistan may not be willing or capable of using its armed forces to address some of its future security problems, but it will need a modern and efficient diplomatic service and highly educated and trained services able to use brain-power rather than physical strength or fire-power.

The number of Turkmen allies grows in direct proportion to its gas production. Ashgabat's relations with Teheran are very good but an armed conflict between Iran and USA would make its position difficult and may make the plans to export gas via Turkey a very complicated task. Turkmenistan's relations with Afghanistan are excellent, mainly because Kabul needs Turkmen gas and electricity. Any other future government in Kabul will be happy to maintain the present relations for the same reason. Kazakhstan is Turkmenistan's closest ally and the minor problems with Uzbekistan far outweigh the advantages of the potential economic cooperation. Moscow courts Ashgabat because it makes money on exporting its gas and therefore can influence its income. Washington also needs the Turkmen gas and is worried about Russia's influence in the region. China is not unduly preoccupied with the political control or influence of the region as long as it can have an uninterrupted supply of gas.

In the Caspian Sea resources division dispute, Turkmenistan can do very little. The problem is downplayed by all five states involved in the dispute but 16 years after the emergence of the problem it has still not been resolved. If the Caspian Sea littoral states summit, which is to be held in Teheran on 16 October 2007, solves the differences between the member states as to who is allowed to explore what, the impact on the regional trade would be tremendous but the almost inevitable temporary lowering of oil and gas prices would not please all energy producers.

It looks like Turkmenistan has chosen the Chinese and Kazakh model of economic reforms, where the state monitors and controls the reform. Despite all its known shortcomings this system works. The free for all Russian reforms of the 1990s may

have been more attractive to some business communities and the media but in all Central Asian countries they were observed with bewilderment and disgust.

In an ideal situation Turkmenistan should rely on well educated and trained, bribe-proof, adequately paid and experienced officials and managers able to take sound decisions. For the time being this is only a dream. The best the president can do is to invest in them, wisely control them and pay them competitive salaries as the private sector's rewards go up.

Like his predecessor, Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov is in complete control of his country, but unlike Niyazov he has been using his power carefully and wisely. As the portraits of Niyazov disappear slowly from public places we will see to what extent they will be replaced by those of the new president. His 95% electoral victory in a one-sided contest is not encouraging and his 4th August 2007 statement made at the joint extraordinary session of the ruling Democratic Party that “Irrespective of how many new parties emerge on the political scene, the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan will remain a leading party in society” is even less so.⁸⁹ What is really important is how President Berdymuhamedov transforms the country over the longer term and whether in the future the Turkmen could repeat with conviction a slogan which appeared at a Turkmen students' conference in June 2007: “Blessed by God, elected by the nation”.⁹⁰

Appendix**President Berdymuhamedov's meetings with foreign officials
and business people****14 February – 1 September 2007****February**

- On 14 February, President Rakhmonov of Tajikistan was received by President Berdymuhamedov in Ashgabat.⁹¹
- Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko and President Berdymuhamedov discussed Turkmen gas supplies to Ukraine at a meeting in Ashgabat.⁹²
- Presidents Nazarbayev and Berdymuhamedov met in Ashgabat. Both presidents stressed the cordial relations between the two countries.⁹³
- Iran's First Vice President Parviz Davudi was received by President Berdymuhamedov.⁹⁴
- Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan also attended the oath-taking ceremony of the new Turkmen president. The two leaders had a meeting after the inauguration.⁹⁵
- 15 February – President Berdymuhamedov received US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher.⁹⁶
- Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov held talks with the new Turkmen President.⁹⁷
- President Berdymuhamedov received officials from Saudi Arabia and Qatar.⁹⁸
- President Berdymuhamedov met a Turkish businessman, Erol Tabanca.⁹⁹
- On 26 February, the Turkmen leader met a Boeing official.¹⁰⁰
- President Berdymuhamedov received a member of the royal family of the Kingdom of Bahrain.¹⁰¹

March

- President Berdymuhamedov received a delegation of the Omani-Canadian "Buried Hill Energy" company.¹⁰²
- Berdymuhamedov received OSCE Secretary-General Marc Perrin de Brichambaut.¹⁰³
- US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Steven R Mann was received by President Berdymuhamedov and Deputy Chairman of Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rasit Meredov.¹⁰⁴
- President Berdymuhamedov received the head of the Itera gas company.¹⁰⁵
- Berdymuhamedov received officials of the US Case farming machinery company.¹⁰⁶
- The Turkmen president received the general director of the US company Caterpillar Inc. for CIS countries, Robert Droogleever, and the head of the German Zeppelin Baumaschinen GmbH, the official distributor of Caterpillar Inc., Leo Peschl.¹⁰⁷
- Iranian foreign minister Manuchehr Mottaki was received by President Berdymuhamedov.¹⁰⁸
- Robert Simmons, the special envoy of the NATO secretary-general for the Caucasus and Central Asia and the Turkish ambassador to Ashgabat, Hakki Akkil were received by President Berdymuhamedov on 19 March.¹⁰⁹

- At a meeting in Ashgabat, Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli invited the Turkmen President to visit Georgia this year.¹¹⁰
- President Berdymuhamedov met Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources of Kazakhstan Baktykozha Izmukhambetov.¹¹¹
- The President received ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Abd-al-Aziz Bin-Ibrahim Al-Qader.¹¹²

April

- President Berdymuhamedov received the Russian foreign minister. Bilateral talks were also held at the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan.¹¹³
- The Turkmen leader received the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the UAE to Turkmenistan, Hasan Abdallah Al-Azzab Al-Zaruuna.¹¹⁴
- Berdymuhamedov received the governor of Russia's Astrakhan Region, Aleksandr Zhilkin.¹¹⁵
- The Turkmen president received the OSCE chairman, Miguel Angel Moratinos.¹¹⁶
- Berdymuhamedov received the president of the Asian Olympic Committee.¹¹⁷
- Acting Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Muttalib of Saudi Arabia bin Abdullah Al-Nafisa met Turkmenistan's president, currently visiting the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁸
- President Berdymuhamedov was received by Saudi King Abdallah Bin-Abd-al-Aziz Al Sa'ud, in Riyadh.¹¹⁹
- President Berdymuhamedov received credentials from the ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Poland, Maciej Lang.¹²⁰
- The chairman of Russia's Sistema joint-stock financial corporation, Vladimir Evtushenkov, the president of the company, Alexander Goncharuk, and the president of the Mobile TeleSystems open joint-stock company, Leonid Melamed were received by President Berdymuhamedov.¹²¹
- The president of Turkmenistan visited Moscow on 23-24 April at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin.¹²²
- Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov received the head of the Burren Energy company, Finian O'Sullivan and two other company officials. The meeting was attended by Peter Butcher, the UK ambassador to Turkmenistan.¹²³
- President Berdymuhamedov received a group of top officials of the Malaysian Petronas company.¹²⁴
- The Turkmen president met the outgoing Indian ambassador.¹²⁵

May

- President Berdymuhamedov held talks with Kazakh Prime Minister Karim Masimov, leading the Kazakh official delegation on a one-day visit to Ashgabat.¹²⁶
- The President of Turkmenistan held talks with a government delegation from the Republic of Tatarstan, headed by Prime Minister Rustam Minnikhanov.¹²⁷
- On 3 May, Berdymuhamedov received UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour.¹²⁸
- President Berdymuhamedov received the head of the French Bouygues Batiment International company, Martin Bouygues.¹²⁹
- Presidents Berdymuhamedov and Putin held talks in Ashgabat.¹³⁰
- Berdymuhamedov received a Russian singer, Diana Gurtskaya, who sang in a concert for the presidents of Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan in Ashgabat.¹³¹

- On 21 May the Turkmen President received UN Assistant General-Secretary Kory Udovicki. After her meeting with President Berdymuhamedov Ms Udovicki announced that she saw openness in the Turkmen leadership.¹³²
- Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov received the director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ambassador Christian Strohal.¹³³
- Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Gianni Vernetti was received by President Berdymuhamedov in Ashgabat on 23 May.¹³⁴
- Berdymuhamedov received the foreign minister of Azerbaijan Elmar Mammadyarov.¹³⁵
- Visiting Turkmen President Berdymuhamedov held talks with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in Astana.¹³⁶
- On 31 May, Berdymuhamedov met the deputy head of a Chinese development and reforms agency.¹³⁷
- On the same day President Berdymuhamedov received Steven R Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, South and Central Asian Affairs of the US State Department and a former US ambassador in Ashgabat. Mann expressed US interest in investment in the Turkmen energy sector.¹³⁸

June

- On 7 June the speaker of the Georgian parliament Nino Burdzhnashvili visited Turkmenistan and was received by President Berdymuhamedov.¹³⁹
- Pierre Morel, the EU Special Representative for Central Asia, was received by President Berdymuhamedov. During his visit, Morel announced EU plans to open in Ashkhabad a European Information Centre.¹⁴⁰
- The Turkmen and Uzbek presidents held a meeting in St Petersburg, at the summit of the CIS Heads of State.¹⁴¹
- President Berdymuhamedov met in St Petersburg Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili.¹⁴²
- The Turkmen president received Turkish minister of energy and natural resources Hilmi Gyuler.¹⁴³
- President Berdymuhamedov received top officials of the TNK-BP company.¹⁴⁴
- Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ednan Karabayev met President Berdymuhamedov in Ashkhabad. The Turkmen president received an invitation to visit Bishkek in 2008.¹⁴⁵
- President Mahmud Ahmadinezhad officially welcomed Turkmen President Berdymuhamedov in Teheran.¹⁴⁶
- President Berdymuhamedov received in Ashgabat the commander of the US Central Command Adm William Fallon. The meeting was attended by the US chargé d'affaires in Turkmenistan, Jennifer Brush.¹⁴⁷
- Igor Makarov, the president of the Russian energy group Itera was received by President Berdymuhamedov.¹⁴⁸
- President Berdymuhamedov received the Director of the European Regional Bureau of the World Health Organization Mark Danzon.¹⁴⁹
- The Turkmen President received the US deputy assistant secretary of state, Evan Feigenbaum.¹⁵⁰
- Yosef Maiman, head of the Israeli Merhav company, and officials accompanying him were received by President Berdymuhamedov.¹⁵¹

July

- President Berdymuhamedov and a senior executive of Wintershall company, Bernhard Schmidt, discussed gas and oil cooperation between Germany and Turkmenistan.¹⁵²

- Afghan President Hamed Karzai visited Turkmenistan on 5-6 July and signed several trade and transport cooperation agreements.¹⁵³
- Yuriy Shafranik, the head of the union of oil and gas workers of Russia, was received by President Berdymuhamedov in Ashgabat.¹⁵⁴
- President Berdymuhamedov received Russian deputy Prime Minister, co-chairman of the Turkmen-Russian inter-governmental commission on economic cooperation, Sergey Naryshkin.¹⁵⁵
- Top executives of Austrian Delta, Micro International Ltd and a representative of Virgin Islands company were received by President Berdymuhamedov.¹⁵⁶
- President Berdymuhamedov received President of the Turkish company Kotam Enterprises, who expressed his company's interest in investing in more projects in the textile and tourism industries in Turkmenistan.¹⁵⁷
- Berdymuhamedov visited China on 17-18 July.¹⁵⁸
- On 23 July, the Turkmen president received deputy director of the Asia and Pacific Division of the Department of Political Affairs at the UN Secretariat, Vladimir Goryayev, at the Hazar presidential palace.¹⁵⁹
- President Berdymuhamedov received Tajik Energy and Industry Minister Sherali Gulov.¹⁶⁰
- A Belarusian government delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister Alyaksandr Kasinets was received by the Turkmen leader in Ashgabat.¹⁶¹
- President Berdymuhamedov received Uzbek Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov.¹⁶²
- President Berdymuhamedov received the UAE ambassador, who conveyed his president's invitation for him to visit the UAE.¹⁶³
- Berdymuhamedov received officials of the French companies Bouygues and Total.¹⁶⁴
- The Turkmen leader received the executive director of the International Petroleum Investment Company (IPIC), Khadim Al-Qubaysi; the vice-president of Shell for the Middle East, Caspian & South Asia, Dr Gavin Graham; and the executive vice-president of AgroLinz Melamine International, Hubert Puchner.¹⁶⁵

August

- Berdymuhamedov received in Ashgabat the minister of oil of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Gholam Hoseyn Nowzari, and the deputy foreign minister of Iran, Mehdi Safari.¹⁶⁶
- Iran's president Mahmud Ahmadinezhad arrived in Ashgabat on 14 August for a two-day official visit. Ahmadinezhad was welcomed at Ashgabat airport and then received by President Berdymuhamedov at the presidential palace.¹⁶⁷
- Daniel Sullivan, the US assistant secretary of state for economy, energy and business affairs was received by President Berdymuhamedov.¹⁶⁸
- President of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiyev held bilateral talks with Turkmen President Berdymuhamedov, who arrived in Bishkek to take part in the seventh session of the presidents of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.¹⁶⁹
- A delegation from the US Commission on International Religious Freedom met President Berdymuhamedov on 20 August.¹⁷⁰
- President Berdymuhamedov visited the UAE to encourage investment in Turkmenistan.¹⁷¹
- President Berdymuhamedov received Andy Inglis - chief executive of British Petroleum. The Turkmen president invited British Petroleum to take part in joint exploration and development of offshore gas and oil fields and in creating a national tourist zone in western Turkmenistan.¹⁷²

- President Berdymuhamedov visited the United Arab Emirates. He met the UAE President. ¹⁷³
- President Berdymuhamedov met the deputy head of the presidential secretariat of Ukraine, Oleksandr Chalyy, and the minister of regional development and construction of this country, Volodymyr Yatsuba.¹⁷⁴

Endnotes

- ¹ ITAR-TASS in Russian, 22 December 2006.
- ² Turkmen TV first channel, Ashgabat, in Turkmen, 21 December 2006, BBC MS.
- ³ Since June 2007, the name of the Turkmen President Berdymuhamedov has been officially written with one “m” at the end.
- ⁴ Argumenty i Fakty, in Russian, 25 December 2006; Politkom.ru website, in Russian, 25 December 2006, BBC MS. Niyazov’s son Murat lives in Austria. He studied at the law faculty in Leningrad and later worked as investigator at the Moscow prosecutor's office. Niyazov’s two daughters live in Moscow.
- ⁵ The security service run by Rejepov was an overdeveloped bodyguard organization, which gradually became the main security organ in Turkmenistan.
- ⁶ Voice of Islamic Republic, in Turkmen, 16 November 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁷ For a sample of his policies see JH Saat, Turkmenistan: People ! Motherland ! Leader !, CSRC, Central Asian Series 05/16.
- ⁸ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 26 January, 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁹ Turkmenistan.ru in Russian, 17 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 15 February, 2007, BBC MS; ITAR-TASS, 14 February 2007. Niyazov reduced the length of combined primary and secondary education. This decision made it impossible for Turkmen school leavers to study abroad.
- ¹¹ Turkmenpress.com website, in Turkmen BBC MS.
- ¹² Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 20,23 and 28 February 2007; BBC MS.
- ¹³ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 9 April, 2007; BBC MS.
- ¹⁴ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen,15 May 2007; BBC MS.
- ¹⁵ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 15 May 2007; BBC MS.
- ¹⁶ Watan.ru website, Moscow, in Russian 18 May 2007; Centrasia.ru website in Russian 8 June 2007 BBC MS.
- ¹⁷ **Geldimuhmet Asyrmuhammedov**, Minister of National Security was born in 1957. Asyrmuhammedov graduated in 1979 from the Turkmen University, with a degree in physics. He began his career in 1979, as a teacher of physics in the school No2 in Hazar. Later, in 1982 he joined the KGB and went through a security course in Minsk, from which he graduated in 1983 and in Kiev in 1985. Between 1992 and 1997 Asyrmuhammedov worked in the apparatus of the National Security Committee. From 1997 to 2002, he was the Commander-in-Chief of the Turkmen Ground Forces and in 2001 completed a course at the Chinese General Staff Academy. In 2002, Asyrmuhammedov was appointed a deputy head of the National Security Committee, renamed Ministry of National Security in September 2002. In August 2004, he was appointed Minister of Internal Affairs; in December 2004, he was appointed by Niyazov Minister of National Security.
- Agageldi Mammetgaeldyiev**: born in 1946, Mammetgaldyiev graduated in the 1960s from The Saratov Medical Institute. He became professional medical doctor. In 1997 he was deputy minister of defence and in 2002 Niyazov made him the head of the Turkmen State Border Service. In September 2003, he was appointed Minister of Defence and the secretary of the State Security Council of Turkmenistan.
- ¹⁸ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 31 May 2007.
- ¹⁹ Turkmenpress.com website, clandestine, in Turkmen 3 June 2007, BBC MS.
- ²⁰ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 2, 14 and 18 June 2007, BBC MS.
- ²¹ ITAR-TASS, 18 May 2007.
- ²² Chrono-tm.org, Vienna, in Russian, 14 & 28 May 2007, BBC MS. The first reports about the official toning down of Niyazov’s cult of personality appeared outside Turkmenistan before the removal of Gen Rejepov. Also in May President Berdymuhamedov issued an order to organize a conference in September 2007, “Ruhnama is the new millenium’s philosophy”. Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 24 May 2007, BBC MS. It seems that the conference has been cancelled or it is going to be very discreet.
- ²³ ITAR-TASS in Russian, 22 May 2007; TV Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 25 May 2007; Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 22,24,26 May and 9 June 2007. BBC MS.
- ²⁴ ITAR-TASS, 12 June 2007.
- ²⁵ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 24 August 2007, BBC MS.
- ²⁶ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 19, 20 and 22 August, 2007, BBC MS.
- ²⁷ ITAR-TASS in Russian, 25 August 2007.

- ²⁸ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen 6 September 2007. BBC MS.
- ²⁹ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 22 August, 2007, BBC MS.
- ³⁰ ITAR-TASS, 11 and 12 May and 12 June 2007.
- ³¹ In his speech in Turkmenbasy, in May 2007, Vladimir Putin suggested that the capacity of the restored pipeline would be even bigger.
- ³² ITAR-TASS, 11 & 12 May 2007; Moscow Times, 14 May 2007.
- ³³ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 9 July 2007, BBC MS. Other sources speak of 70 students studying in Russian gas and oil higher educational establishment. ITAR-TASS, in Russian 16 July 2007.
- ³⁴ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 5 June 2007, BBC MS.
- ³⁵ Interfax-Kazakhstan, Almaty, in Russian, 12 May 2007, BBC MS.
- ³⁶ Moscow Times, 14 May 2007.
- ³⁷ PTI, New Delhi in English, 31 July 2007.
- ³⁸ TV Altyn Asyr channel in Turkmen, 29 May 2007, BBC MS.
- ³⁹ ITAR-TASS, 12 May 2007.
- ⁴⁰ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 12 July 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁴¹ Altyn Asyr TV, 11 September 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁴² Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Gorgan, in Turkmen, 9 March 2007; Fars in English 9 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁴³ IRNA website, Tehran, in English, 16 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁴⁴ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 8 & 11 June 2007; IRNA website, Tehran, in English, 7 June 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁴⁵ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 15 June 2007; ITAR-TASS, 17 June 2007.
- ⁴⁶ ITAR-TASS, 15 June 2007. IRNA website, Tehran, in English, 16 June 2007. BBC MS.
- ⁴⁷ Neitralniy Turkmenista, 15 June 2007; ITAR-TASS, 17 June 2007.
- ⁴⁸ TV Altyn Asyr TV, 7 August 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁴⁹ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 14,15 August 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁵⁰ Voice of Islamic Republic of Iran, In Turkmen, 14 August 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁵¹ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 8 August 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁵² Altyn Asyr TV, in Turkmen, 26 July, 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁵³ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 6 September 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁵⁴ ITAR-TASS, 17 February 2003.
- ⁵⁵ Turkmen TV First Channel, 26 December 2003, BBC MS.
- ⁵⁶ Turkmen TV First Channel, 8 and 13 April 2006. BBC MS.
- ⁵⁷ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 1 June 2007; Chinadaily.com.cn 15/16 May 2007; Times of Central Asia, May 23 2007.
- ⁵⁸ Altyn Asyr TV, in Turkmen, 26 July 2007, BBC MS; ITAR-TASS in Russian, 17 July 2007.
- ⁵⁹ ITAR-TASS, 18 July 2007; Xinhua, in English, 18 Jul 2007.
- ⁶⁰ Altyn Asyr TV, 12 march 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁶¹ Radio 2, Ashgabat, in Turkmen, 26 February 2007, BBC MS
- ⁶² ITAR-TASS, 9 June 2007.
- ⁶³ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 5 July 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁶⁴ RIA Novosti, in Russian, 17 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁶⁵ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 11 June 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁶⁶ Gundogar website, Moscow, in Russian 30 June 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁶⁷ Altyn Asyr TV, 29 May 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁶⁸ ITAR-TASS, In Russian, 2 April 2007.
- ⁶⁹ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 13 July, 2007, BBC MS. For recent discussions of the SCO see Henry Plater Zyberk, *Who's Afraid of the SCO?*, Central Asian Series, 07/09, Conflict Studies Research Centre, UK Defence Academy, March 2007.
<http://www.defac.ac.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/centralasia> and Marcel de Haas, *The 'Peace Mission 2007' Exercises: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Advances*, Central Asian Series, 07/28, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, UK Defence Academy, September 2007, <http://www.defac.ac.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/centralasia>
- ⁷⁰ ITAR-TASS in English, 8 June 2007.
- ⁷¹ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 5 September 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁷² <http://www.eurasianet.org/turkmenistan.project/index.php?page=wnb/wnb030815&lang=eng>
- ⁷³ Turkmenpress.com website in Turkmen 23 Mar 2007, BBC MS.

- ⁷⁴ <http://turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=070928a> . In July 2007, the UN decided to open in Ashgabat a regional centre for preventive diplomacy.
- ⁷⁵ Centrasia website, Moscow, in Russian, 26 September 2007, BBC MS;
<http://turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=070928b>
- ⁷⁶ Altyn Asyr, 27 September 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁷⁷ Altyn Asyr TV, 25 September 2007, BBC MS;
<http://www.wieninternational.at/en/node/5169>
- ⁷⁸ Article 7, Point 10 of the law, Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 4 July 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁷⁹ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 10 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁸⁰ Chrono-tm.org.Vienna in Russian, 4 June 2007, BBC MS. The news provided by the opposition website in Austria has not been officially confirmed.
- ⁸¹ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 16 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁸² Altyn Asyr TV, 1 September 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁸³ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 4 May, 2007, BBC MS; Defence and Security, Moscow, 14 May 2007.
- ⁸⁴ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 24 May 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁸⁵ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 22 June 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁸⁶ Dogryyol.com in Russian 6 May 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁸⁷ ITAR-TASS, in English, 22 May 2007.
- ⁸⁸ ITAR-TASS in Russian, 14 July 2007.
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- ⁹¹ Tajik president's website on 14 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁹² Interfax-Ukraine news agency, in Russian, 14 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁹³ Kazakhstan Today, in Russian, 14 February 2007.
- ⁹⁴ IRNA, 14 February, in English 2007.
- ⁹⁵ Anatolia news agency, in English, 14 February 2007.
- ⁹⁶ Turkmenistan.ru Internet newspaper website, Moscow, in Russian 15 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁹⁷ ITAR-TASS, in Russian 15 February 2007.
- ⁹⁸ Watan, 21 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ⁹⁹ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 22 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰⁰ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 27 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰¹ Neitralniy Turkmenistan, 27 February 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰² Altyn Asyr TV, in Turkmen, 1 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰³ Turkmen government website, in Russian, 5 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰⁴ US Embassy, Ashgabat, 5 March 2007.
- ¹⁰⁵ Altyn Asyr TV, 7 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰⁶ Altyn Asyr TV, 9 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰⁷ Altyn Asyr TV, 12 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰⁸ Altyn Asyr TV, 16 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹⁰⁹ Altyn Asyr TV in Turkmen, 19 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹¹⁰ ITAR-TASS, 23 March 2007.
- ¹¹¹ Altyn Asyr TV, 23 March, 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹¹² Altyn Asyr TV, 27 March 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹¹³ Altyn Asyr TV, 4 April 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹¹⁴ Altyn Asyr TV, 9 April 2007, BBC MS.
- ¹¹⁵ Turkmen government website, 10 April 2007.
- ¹¹⁶ Altyn Asyr TV, 11 April 2007, BBC MS.
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- ¹²⁰ Turkmen government website, Ashgabat, in Russian, 18 April 2007, BBC MS.
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132 <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/06/8C782C0D-BBC7-4C04-940D-E63A08BE894E.html>
133 Altyn Asyr TV, 22 May 2007, BBC MS.
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136 Interfax-Kazakhstan, in Russian 29 May 2007.
137 Altyn Asyr TV, 31 May 2007, BBC MS.
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139 ITAR-TASS, 7 June 2007.
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141 Uzbek Television First Channel, 9 June 2007, BBC MS.
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146 IRNA, in English, 15 June 2007.
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Shrivenham
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Telephone: (44) 1793 788856

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