

Between the state and cultural zones: nation building in Turkmenistan

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Introduction

Turkmenistan has been in transition from dependence to independence and from socialism to market economy since 1991. Turkmen national identity is constructed within these unstable conditions. Following the declaration of independence, the process of nation building was initiated by President Saparmurat Turkmenbashi to fill the identity vacuum and create a new homogenous Turkmen national identity.¹ Turkmenbashi uses the term ‘national revival’ instead of ‘nation-building’.² The latter, however, defines the current situation in Turkmenistan better than the former since Turkmen national identity did not occur in modern understanding until the foundation of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924.³

Paradoxically, the Soviet Union was the initiator of Turkmen nation building. Following the establishment of Turkmenistan SSR, the ‘Turkmen nation’ met Stalin’s four criteria of nationhood: unity of language, territory, economy and historical culture.⁴ Turkmen nation building, however, was not consolidated in the Soviet era. During that period, the Turkmen nation continued to be ‘a tribal confederation rather than a modern nation’, mainly because of the persistence of endogamy and dialects between tribes.⁵ One of the main reasons of the remaining efficacy of tribal identities *vis-à-vis* the national one was the internal contradiction of Soviet identity policies. Moscow, on the one hand, tried to create national identities in Central Asia to destroy overarching Islamic and Turkestani identities,⁶ while on the other, it aimed to create *Homo Sovieticus*, restricting national identities.⁷ In this regard, Moscow promoted Russian language and culture in Turkmenistan instead of authentic Turkmen values and prohibited nationalist studies and movements.

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Following the declaration of independence, to maintain national solidarity and to adapt to the inter-national system, Turkmenistan has focused on nation building, which has two main objectives; the unity of the tribes and gradual socio-cultural de-Russification. The Turkmen case provides a social laboratory to analyze the process of nation building, beyond *ex post facto* data, since Turkmen nation building is an ongoing process. The contribution of this analysis is threefold. First, the Turkmen case is useful for understanding whether the national identities are socially constructed or primordial and perennial. Second, it is suitable for analyzing the role of the state, the charismatic leader, in addition to modern institutions, such as the media and schools, in the construction of national identity in a newly independent state. Finally, it reveals the roles of international cultural factors in the identity construction in such a relatively isolated and authoritarian country.

The first part of this article focuses on two of these issues answering the questions: Is Turkmen identity a fixed and given or socially constructed phenomenon? What is the role of the state and the charismatic leader in this process? In order to answer the first question, the Turkmen case will be compared with Benedict Anderson's explanations, which regard nations as 'imagined communities' instead of primordial and perennial realities.⁸ To answer the second question, the impact of the state and the leader in Turkmen nation building will be analyzed through the lens of Anderson's models, especially about the roles of the development of vernacular language, the media, history writing, propaganda and education.

The second part analyzes the roles of Russian, Islamic, Turkish and Western cultural zones on Turkmen nation building, in addition to their relationship with the Turkmen state and their competition with each other. In the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union, many studies focus on the new 'Great Game' in Central Asia, which refers to the geopolitical struggles of several states over the Central Asian hydrocarbon reserves. This article, however, examines another aspect of international competition in Central Asia by analyzing the race between different cultural zones to impact identity construction in Turkmenistan. In this regard, it analyzes the roles of the cultural zones since international cultural factors have blurring and overlapping boundaries, and cannot be easily represented by particular monolithic entities (i.e. states), unlike international political factors.

Nation-building policy of the Turkmen state

Saparmurat Niyazov, elected as the first president in 1990 and the president for life in 1999, has ruled Turkmenistan for a decade with an authoritarian regime.⁹ He was given the name of 'Turkmenbashi' (the head of Turkmens) following independence. The legislative bodies, the *Mejlis* (Parliament) and *Halk Maslahaty* (People's Council), only rubber-stamp his decisions. The ministers do not have real power and they are frequently humiliated and sometimes fired by the President in live TV broadcasts. Military/civil bureaucrats are also unable to

limit Turkmenbashi's charismatic authority. Turkmenbashi's most significant policy, '*10 Yyl Abadançylyk*' ('10 Years Stability'), was declared in December 1992.¹⁰ This policy aims to preserve political stability and socio-economic development avoiding opposition and political crisis. As a result, Turkmenbashi's Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (formerly the Communist Party of Turkmenistan) is the only political party.¹¹

Following the declaration of independence, under the direction of Turkmenbashi, the Turkmen State initiated the nation-building policy to fill the ideological vacuum, to maintain the source of legitimacy for the new nation-state, and to adapt to the inter-national system. The nation-building policy primarily focuses on the unity of tribes. Tribal identities, especially the five largest, Teke, Yomut, Ersary, Salyr and Saryk, are still influential in social life.¹² Whether the five carpet patterns and the five five-pointed stars in the state flag of Turkmenistan represent the five largest tribes or five regions is a controversial issue. The lack of a hierarchical mechanism and leadership within the tribes is a historical legacy¹³ that weakens the current political roles and influence of the tribes. Although Turkmenbashi is from the Teke tribe, his tribal loyalty is not strong since he grew up in an orphanage. He does not seek the dominance of the culture of Teke, the largest tribe, which was politically effective during the Soviet period.¹⁴ His goal is to create a shared Turkmen culture.

Turkmenbashi defines the governmental policy on the unity of tribes as 'national revival' by returning to the real history and spiritual sources, rather than 'nation building'.¹⁵ According to him, what is happening in Turkmenistan is only the rediscovery of the forgotten national identity: 'By forming an independent and totally neutral Turkmen state, by uniting a number of tribes into a whole, we did not create a new nation; what we did was to return its national pivot, which used to be strong and powerful but has been shattered by the blows of the historical fate'.¹⁶

To understand whether the governmental policy aims to rediscover an already existing national identity or to create a new 'imagined community', it is necessary to analyze it through the lens of Anderson's explanations.

Anderson's 'imagined communities'

Anderson describes a nation as an 'imagined community' because 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.¹⁷ He emphasizes the development of vernacular languages-of-states and print-capitalism as two of the roots of nationalism. The capitalist printing press, which needs a common written language to convey its message and to sell its products, played a key role in the spread of the vernacular languages. In this regard, print-capitalism symbolizes the 'interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity'.¹⁸ Accord-

ing to Anderson, narratives and symbols, such as the tombs of ‘unknown soldiers’, are also crucial in the national imagination. Similarly, he accepts the museums and history writing as significant means for the determination of national identity. The selective interpretation of history, on the one hand, emphasizes historical heroic martyrdom, wars and genocide, in order to maintain national solidarity, while on the other, it consciously omits some events, which undermine national integrity.¹⁹

Anderson explains the historical trajectories of nationalism in three groups concerning their chronological order: creole, popular linguistic and official nationalism. ‘Popular linguistic-nationalism’ in Europe depends on the development of vernacular languages-of-states and popular nationalist movements. The features of ‘official nationalism’ in dynastic and aristocratic empires (e.g., Tsarist Russia) are official rewriting of history, state-organized propaganda, and state-controlled education. The success of popular linguistic-nationalism in Western and official nationalism in Eastern Europe has encouraged the political elite in non-Western countries, especially in the newly independent states, to use nation-building policies. The nationalism in these newly independent states is a mix of popular linguistic and official nationalism. Therefore, in the process of nation building in the new states: ‘one sees both genuine, popular nationalist enthusiasm and a systematic, even Machiavellian, instilling of nationalist ideology through the mass media, the educational system, administrative regulations, and so forth’.²⁰

Similarly, in Turkmenistan, a new state, the media and education are crucial to the advancement of the imagination of national identity. Anderson’s explanations are significant in understanding whether Turkmen national identity is a perennial and fixed or a socially constructed phenomenon. Moreover, Anderson’s models are crucial in order to analyze the role of the state in Turkmen nation building. For these reasons, governmental policies in Turkmenistan will be analyzed through the lens of four features of Anderson’s explanations: the development of vernacular language, the media, history writing, propaganda and education.

The development of vernacular language

The development of Turkmen as the vernacular language-of-state is the main pillar of Turkmen nation building. After the declaration of independence, a constitutional change made Turkmen the official language, reversing the linguistic degeneration of the Soviet period.²¹ Although Russian is still used in bureaucracy and daily life, as well as in the interethnic communication, it is diminishing.²² Turkmenbashi criticizes the widespread use of Russian and encourages its limitation. In October 1999, the state radio ceased its Russian language news broadcast.²³ In July 2000, Turkmenbashi declared that all officials must speak Turkmen. He also fired Boris Shikhmuradov, his foreign minister since 1993, criticizing his knowledge of Turkmen.²⁴

It is now popular to replace Russian names with Turkmen alternatives. The

administrative terms, such as *oblast* (province), *rayon* (district or small city), and *kolhoz* (farmer union) have been replaced with *welayat*, *etrap* and *dayhan birleşigi*. Official slogans such as *garaşsyzlyk* (independence), *bitaraplyk* (neutrality), *agzybirlilik* (solidarity), *galkynys* (development) and the names of political institutions, e.g. ‘Halk Maslahaty’ and the ‘Mejlis’, are all selected from original Turkmen rather than Russian.

The development of Turkmen as the vernacular language also results in the diminution of tribal dialects. Turkmen, especially as a written language, is spread nationwide to maintain national homogeneity as a ‘national glue’ extinguishing differences between tribal dialects. The media and the schools play key roles in this policy.

The role of the media promoting the symbols, slogans and narratives

Television, radio and newspapers are important means of governmental nation-building policy in Turkmenistan. They focus on the propaganda of nationalism and on praising the President. Turkmenbashi is accepted as the main symbol of nation building representing national solidarity. On the main TV news programme, *Watan Habarlar Gepleşigi* (national news), there is almost no news except for the President’s declarations or activities. The programme starts with a good wish and prayer for Turkmenbashi. When speaking about the President, the TV and radio commentators use epithets, such as compassionate, merciful and esteemed. Similarly, every day, large photos of Turkmenbashi cover the first page of all newspapers.²⁵ In addition to media propaganda, hundreds of places and institutions have been named or renamed ‘Turkmenbashi’ all around Turkmenistan. Turkmenbashi’s posters and sculptures decorate the main buildings of Ashgabat. His picture also appears on the national currency, *manat*.

Turkmenbashi shows respect for other national symbols, e.g. he kisses the flag on some memorial days, and architectural structures, such as the Neutrality Arch, the Earthquake Memorial and the National Museum, have been constructed as tangible symbols of national identity. They are shown in TV broadcasts as the symbols of independent, permanently neutral and rapidly developing Turkmenistan. The Turkmenbashi Palace, for instance, is regularly represented on TV programmes.

Historical figures are also used as the symbols of nation building. Magtymguly (1733–1797), for instance, became one of the significant symbols. He was not only a pious poet, but also a wise social leader.²⁶ He tried to solve socio-political problems integrating Turkmen tribes. He wrote in the Turkmen language, in folk manner and parts of his poems about tribal unity today appear on large billboards on Ashgabat’s avenues:

Bir suprada tayar kylynsa aşlar,
Göteriler ol ykbaly Türkmeniň!
(If dinner is prepared in a shared table,
The good fortune for Turkmens will appear!)

Slogans are crucial in the discourse of Turkmen nation building. TV news, for instance, starts with the slogan of the President: ‘The 21st century will be the golden age of Turkmens!’. The most widespread official motto, ‘*Halk, Watan, Türkmenbaşy*’ (People, Motherland, Turkmenbashi), can be seen in many places. The propaganda of the President also appears as slogans on highways, e.g. *Presidentin sözi kanundyr!* (The word of President is the law!).²⁷

Another important synthetic dimension of national identities in general are the narratives.²⁸ Turkmen government creates narratives to promote the imagination of national identity. The main narrative is *baki bitaraplyk* (permanent neutrality), the main pillar of Turkmen foreign policy, which provides an example of interplay between identity and foreign policy in Turkmenistan. The permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan was accepted by the UN in 1995. Given the neutrality status, Turkmenistan is committed to peace-loving principles, refusing to maintain or produce weapons of mass destruction, to participate into military pacts and to start or to take side in military conflicts.²⁹ Television and radio broadcasts frequently repeat this phrase: ‘The first country, which is accepted as permanently neutral by the UN, is our fatherland Turkmenistan. All Turkmens have the right to be proud of their fatherland. Therefore, it is compulsory for all of us to serve our fatherland.’ Television and radio broadcasts, poems, songs and speeches praise *garaşsyz, baki bitarap* (independent and permanently neutral) Turkmenistan and its *merhemetli* (merciful) President. Despite indoctrination, few Turkmens understand the political meaning of neutrality. Some of them optimistically argue that because of its neutrality status, Turkmenistan cannot be invaded and it could become the regional centre of Central Asia.³⁰

History writing

One of the pillars of Turkmen nation building is the writing of history, which focuses on the transmission of national history in schools and by the media. Official Soviet history emphasized the civilizing and progressive mission of the ‘big brother’, Russia, and tried to suppress Turkmen nationalism.³¹ After 1991, Turkmen history writing has focused on three issues: changing the Soviet paradigm, emphasizing unique Turkmen national history rather than shared Turkic history and maintaining national solidarity by uniting the history of tribes and regions. According to Anderson, national history writing aims to emphasize some historical events, which consolidate national unity, as well as to omit some others, which might threaten national solidarity. Turkmen history writing seeks these two aims. It emphasizes historical events like the Goktepe War as a part of common national history, while omitting the clashes between tribes.

National history writings generally include ‘golden ages’, which provide a vision for future. The ‘golden age’ of Turkmen history writing was the era of the Seljuk Empire (1040–1194). A large museum was built in Ashgabat to exhibit the remains of the Seljuk Empire as well as the history of independent Turkmenistan. As a part of its history policy, many places, including the streets and institutes in Ashgabat, have been named or renamed after historical figures,

such as Magtymguly, Azady (the father of Magtymguly, 1700–1760), and Gorogly (a legendary hero).

Commemorative holidays are one of the main ways to celebrate national identities.³² Turkmenistan officially accepted many memorial days honouring national history.³³ On these days, the media focuses on national and ethical values. The comment of the official press about Goktepe War's Memorial Day is a good example of the official policy on history writing:

January 12 is the most sorrowful date in Turkmen history. That day, 118 years ago, a tragic event took place near the walls of the ancient citadel, Goktepe. The outnumbering tsarist colonial troops attacked the fortress ... [Everyone] rose up to defend the fortress, homeland, and the nation's honor. All the Turkmens from Mary, Lebap, Dashkhovuz, Balkan, and Ahal joined the battle against the invaders. Since then January 12 has been a sacred day for the Turkmen people.

The victims of the Goktepe battle were the soldiers of the tsar army too, executing the imperial will of Russia ... The Presidential Decree on establishing the Memorial Day (dated December 8, 1990) says that neither Turkmen nor Russian, nor other people are guilty in the Goktepe tragedy. ... Conquerors' expansion is the true reason for the bloodshed. ... Independence, gained in the century-old search for freedom, gave the Turkmen people the right to know it, the genuine history of Motherland, their own roots, to revere the memory of heroic forefathers.³⁴

This comment emphasizes several aspects of national history writing in Turkmenistan. First, during the Soviet period, historical truth was hidden and, after the declaration of independence, 'the genuine history' started to be taught. Second, the Russian invasion was 'colonialist' and 'imperialist'. Third, the Russian people are not guilty of that colonialism and there is no enmity among Turkmens towards Russians.³⁵ Fourth, the Goktepe War was an 'honourable' and 'national' war. Finally, the Goktepe War was the shared battle of Turkmens of all *welayats* (regions), rather than only Ahal *welayat*, where the Goktepe War occurred.

Another important project of history writing is the planned book entitled *Ruhnama* (the soul book), which will include historical, cultural and other aspects of the 'Turkmen soul'. Turkmenbashi has stated that: '*Ruhnama* will be the second landmark book of Turkmens (after the Qur'an)'.³⁶ *Ruhnama* is also the name of Turkmenbashi's policy of cultural and spiritual revival. This policy sometimes results in autocratic manipulation of historical facts. For instance, in September 2000, Turkmenbashi ordered the destruction of 25,000 new history textbooks, arguing that their authors had committed treason against the country's past by ignoring 'the Turkmen origin and character' of Turkmenistan, overstating the role of other nations in its national history and writing that Turkmens originated not in what is modern Turkmenistan but in the Altai mountains. He criticized the authors as follows: 'You hardly mention the Turkmen people in your book. ... You apparently did not listen to what I said in my speeches.'³⁷ Turkmenbashi and other Turkmen politicians, however, should not forget that 'It is one thing to establish such traditions and "discover" such history; it is quite another to ensure their lasting success and popular acceptance'.³⁸

Propaganda and education

The Turkmen government focuses on the propaganda and indoctrination of national idealism and self-sacrifice to prevent egoistic tendencies, which are encouraged by severe economic problems.³⁹ Turkmenbashi emphasizes the significance of the spread of national feeling as follows: ‘The country will flourish when each person in it, young or old, strongly develops the feeling of patriotism.’⁴⁰ Turkmenbashi has attempted to set up a direct relationship with citizens in order to ignite national consciousness by using such methods as a direct mail system and visits to urban and rural areas. Another source of contact between the President and citizens is dialogue meetings. The official press reported on one of these meetings in February 1999, describing it as a ‘Presidential *lesson* of truth, courage, and love for the native land’:

Solving daily, hourly a lot of important public tasks, the President never forgets about this task too—to *educate the people*. ... He frankly says: ‘I could have put bread and butter on your table, but then nobody would like to work. And who will develop and improve the land?’ Silence is in the hall; a lofty truth is in the words of the leader.

‘We have to change our psychology’, says the President, meaning the participants of the rural meeting and the people of the country. ‘To change the consciousness’—what does this mean? First of all, to learn to rely upon ourselves in everything—on our energy, will, love for the native land and native people, beloved Motherland.

... When the hall in one breath pronounced *the sacred oath* of devotion to Motherland and President, not a shadow of doubt, no insincerity and falsity were in the of voices of participants.⁴¹

This ‘sacred oath’ (*kasem*), which is recited each day in schools and frequently in public events, aims to consolidate the loyalty of citizens to the Turkmen nation and its President:

Glorious Turkmenistan, my motherland, I would sacrifice my life for you!
For the slightest evil against you, let my hand be lost!
For the slightest slander about you, let my tongue be lost!
At the moment of my betrayal, to my motherland, Turkmenistan,
To my President, let my life be annihilated!⁴²

This oath reflects three governmental principles. First, the Turkmen motherland, for which citizens could sacrifice their own life, and its President are glorified. Second, collectivism is desired more than individualism. Finally, the concepts of obedience and betrayal are understood in a monolithic and rigid manner.

Education is crucial both to indoctrinate national imagination and feelings and to maintain social control. There is a course called ‘The Policy of Turkmenbashi’ taught in schools and universities, which aims to propagate official policies of national revival. Turkmenbashi stresses the importance of patriotic and moral education. In April 1999, for instance, he criticized the Minister of Education for his failure to attach satisfactory importance to these issues.⁴³ Turkmen national

education emphasizes the significance of citizenship to the members of the minorities. One of the history course-books, for example, stresses: 'Dear students, you can be children of different nations, Turkmen, Uzbek, Russian, Kazak, Armenian, Belorussian, Azeri; but you are all the young citizens of independent and neutral Turkmenistan. Independent and neutral Turkmenistan is your country.'⁴⁴ Despite the homogenization policies, Russian, Uzbek and Kazak minorities have their own schools.⁴⁵ Given the youth of the Turkmen population, education is very significant.⁴⁶ Of the population, 76 per cent is under 25 years of age with the average age being 23 years.⁴⁷

General evaluation

Turkmen nation building fits into many aspects of Anderson's explanations. This supports the argument that Turkmen national identity is a socially constructed, rather than a given and fixed phenomenon. Additionally, the analysis above reveals that Turkmen nation building is an 'architectural and mechanical'⁴⁸ governmental policy, instead of a national project or natural process. The Turkmen society has a very limited role in this policy, as well as other aspects of socio-political life. The dearth of civil associations,⁴⁹ free media, the bourgeoisie class and political parties result in the weakness of society *vis-à-vis* the state. The *rentier state* policies of Turkmen state (e.g. free electricity, water and gas supplies) based on natural gas income, instead of the tax of the citizens, also consolidate this uneven relation between the state and the society.

From this perspective, Turkmen nation building resembles Anderson's *official nationalism* model, which depends on central planning of political authority to maintain national homogeneity and solidarity. The Turkmen government uses the typical methods of official nationalism, to create an 'imagined community'. On the other hand, Turkmen nation building differs from Anderson's definition of *popular linguistic-nationalism* as seen in Western Europe. In the Turkmen case, the main agent is the state and the leader, Turkmenbashi, while the popular linguistic-nationalism is based on a broad elite class including the bourgeoisie. Turkmenbashi emphasizes nation building in maintaining national solidarity and in providing legitimacy to the new nation-state, while western European bourgeoisie promoted nation building for mainly economic reasons. Moreover, print, capitalism and print-capitalism have yet to develop in Turkmenistan, where the state controls all aspects of the economy and publications, and book circulation is very low.⁵⁰ The role of print media in Turkmen nation building can be defined as 'print-statism'. Turkmen nation building merely tries to emulate historical experiences, whereas popular linguistic-nationalism in Western Europe had no such model to imitate. Moreover, Turkmen social engineers have tried in a short period of time to complete a process that took centuries in Western Europe.

The Turkmen government needs to involve society in the nation-building process. Present methods of indoctrination might not be sufficient in the future when satellite technology and the Internet will restrict the influence of nation states in a globalized world. A more gradual and participatory bottom-up

process might promise more success than top-down central planning and social engineering. Therefore, the strengthening of Turkmen society, especially by the civil associations, is crucial for the consolidation of nation building. Turkmenbashi and his cadre justify the authoritarian regime with the threat of political instability. On the contrary, strong society and social participation are important factors for maintaining long-term stability.

International cultural influences on Turkmen nation building

Although Anderson's analysis has explanatory power on internal factors in the Turkmen nation-building process, it cannot completely explore this process since it does not emphasize international cultural factors. Anderson successfully explains the importance of some systemic international factors, such as the spread of print capitalism. These factors, however, are too structural to reveal the particular influence of international agents and the interaction among them and they are also too general to explain the peculiarities of national identities. In the Turkmen experiment, however, international cultural factors and the interaction among them are crucial in shaping the peculiarities of Turkmen identity.

International cultural factors have significant influences on the construction of Turkmen identity for three reasons. First, Turkmenistan is geographically located at the crossroads of Russian, Islamic and Turkish cultures. Second, it has faced a cultural vacuum and instability since the end of the Russian dominance, which allows the penetration of several cultures. Finally, globalization encourages intercultural relations and interactions mainly because communication technologies empower the cultures to flow across state borders. For these reasons, although the Turkmen state has minimized the role of society in the nation-building process, it cannot eliminate the influences of Russian, Islamic, Turkish and Western cultures. Therefore, it tries to filter and channel the effects of these cultures. In this perceptive, the interaction between the state and these cultures needs to be analyzed to grasp the construction of Turkmen identity.

Moreover, the competition among these cultures is a significant aspect of international race in Central Asia, at least as significant as the new 'Great Game' on the geopolitics of Central Asian natural gas and oil reserves. Turkmenistan provides an opportunity to analyze this cultural competition in Central Asia. The units of analysis in this competition are the cultural zones, rather than particular states, for three reasons. First, some of these zones (e.g. Russian and Islamic) have strong internal extensions within Turkmenistan. Second, some actors (e.g. Turkey) play a role in more than one zone. Finally, some agents (e.g. international non-governmental organizations [NGOs]) cannot be easily defined concerning particular states. In this paper, the terms 'culture' and 'cultural zones' are used as *dynamic* phenomenon, instead of *fixed structures*, which are represented and propagated by several agents (e.g. states, institutions and individuals).

Consequently, four cultures, which can be mutually exclusive in some degree, try to shape Turkmen national identity by contributing their own values to the

process of nation building. The means by which these cultures influence Turkmen nation building are very similar to those used by the Turkmen state: language, the media and education. In the next sections, the impact of these cultures on Turkmen nation building will be analyzed in addition to their interactions with Turkmen governmental policies.

Russian influence

Russian culture, which impacted Turkmen culture and identity during the Soviet era, is still influential. Those who are currently middle-aged, especially the political elite, were educated in the Soviet period and were strongly influenced by Russian culture. Although Turkmen is developing as the vernacular language, as mentioned above, the Russian language is still used in state bureaucracy, universities, courts and even daily life. Most members of the Russian minority and *Russophones*, who are ethnically Armenian, Azeri, or Turkmen, do not know the Turkmen language. Since the declaration of independence, the Russian minority population decreased from 10 per cent to 7 per cent, while Turkmens increased from 72 per cent to 77 per cent and Uzbeks remained as 9 per cent.⁵¹ The members of the Russian minority, especially those who do not know the Turkmen language, have faced an alienation process since the declaration of independence.

The main internal source of Russian cultural influence are the public Turkmen schools, which use Russian as the medium of language. Although their number (55 in 1998/99)⁵² is fewer than other Turkmen schools, they are effective in providing education in important cities. Another significant means of Russian cultural influence in Turkmenistan is the TV channel, ORT, which belongs to the Russian Federation and also broadcasts on the Turkmen TV system. The Turkmen government imposed restrictions on this channel for financial and ethical reasons. Given this limitation and the unsatisfactory programmes of Turkmen TV channels (TMT I-II), many Turkmens have bought satellite dishes. ORT and other Russian channels, as well as the Turkish channels, are watched in Turkmenistan via satellite dishes. The Russian channels, however, have a greater advantage in this competition than the Turkish ones, because of the familiarity of the Russian language in Turkmen society.

Russian cultural influence is decreasing in Turkmenistan because of the resistance of the Turkmen state and the challenge of other cultural zones. Russian culture reminds Turkmens of the old colonial days, including the exploitation of Turkmen natural resources, Russian settlement in Turkmen cities and cultural assimilation.⁵³ Therefore, the Turkmen government has implemented a gradual de-Russification policy. Since this is a gradual policy, the Turkmen government still publishes a newspaper, *Neytralniy Turkmenistan*, in Russian. Additionally, the weekly official news reports, *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, is published in Russian, English and Turkmen. Russian culture is at a disadvantage in Turkmenistan because it represents neither global values like

Western culture nor is it related to authentic Turkmen values like Islamic and Turkic cultures.⁵⁴ Western cultural influence is spread mainly with English, which has begun to replace Russian as an international language in Turkmenistan. Islamic and Turkic cultures are likely to find a social basis in Turkmen society because of their historical ties with Turkmen culture.

Islamic influence

Turkmens tried to preserve Islamic customs during the Soviet era in spite of state pressure. Independence brought freedom to Islamic life. Today, traditional Islam is based on Islamic customs, such as respect for religious holidays, the *türbes* (tombs) of *öwliyas* (saints), and family values. The increasing number of mosques in Turkmenistan, from four in 1979,⁵⁵ 30 in 1990⁵⁶ to 223 (nine in Ashgabat) in 1999,⁵⁷ shows the rise of Islamic practice. Foreign aid is crucial in this increase. United Arab Emirates, for instance, sponsored two mosques, *Azady* and *Şehidler*, in Ashgabat. Turkey's Foundation of Religious Affairs (TDV) also donated a large mosque, *Ertogrul Gazi Metjidi*, in Ashgabat. This mosque also has a cultural centre where TDV distributes free religious books. This is significant since there is a scarcity of Islamic books⁵⁸ and other publications in Turkmenistan. In the mosques, *ýaşulus* (old men), who do not know Islam sufficiently, provide limited Islamic education. Turkmenbashi supports Islamic education as a basis of national revival:

The history of our civilization and our people has been combined with Islam for centuries. It is impossible to analyze and understand the history, civilization and politics of the Turkmen nation without knowing the history of Islam and the Holy Qur'an. Therefore, I propose that lessons on Qur'anic wisdom and the history of Islam be taught in our schools. Magtymguly also glorified the Qur'an, therefore our young generation needs to learn this holy book.⁵⁹

This proposal was partially materialized. Islamic knowledge has been taught in a limited manner in history and *edep* (ethics) courses. Because of the dearth of Islamic education and scholars, Uzbek *medreses* and *mollas* have been the main source for Turkmen since the pre-Soviet period.⁶⁰ To satisfy the need for religious scholars and officials, TDV opened a theological college in Ashgabat, in 1996, in addition to an Islamic high school. This college, where the mediums of education are Turkmen, Turkish and Arabic, is the main Islamic educational institution in Turkmenistan. Its students were offered official positions before graduation because of the immediate need for religious officials.⁶¹ Additionally, some Turkmen students are educated in theological colleges and high schools in Turkey. Iran has tried to spread its culture in Turkmenistan by founding an educational institution in Ashgabat. Iran's Shiite cultural and religious influence, however, is unlikely to spread in Turkmenistan, where the majority of population is Sunni Muslim.

Although Turkmenistan is a secular state, it officially accepts Islamic holidays, i.e. *Ramazan* and *Kurban Bairam* (anniversaries) and directly controls and

regulates religious affairs via the highest religious authority, the *Kazi*, Nasrulla ibn Ibadulla, and the Council of Religious Affairs. *Yaşulularyn Maslahaty*, which is led by Turkmenbashi, is a forum for the interaction between state officials and traditional Muslims. There are neither *molla* classes nor influential Sufi orders (*tariqats*) independent of the government. One of the main reasons for the harmony between the state and Islamic culture is the lack of a political Islamic party and Islamic organizational networks to form a source of opposition. As Turkmenbashi points out:

When we are asked about fundamentalism, we honestly don't understand the question. ... Turkmen carefully refer to Islam as the religion, which has saved the nation, helped to realize itself, to start building a life on the basis of superior spiritual and moral ideas and principles. ... Yes, now we are trying to restore our religion, but there is no threat because the aim of this work is the revival of our culture and history.⁶²

The Turkmen state supports Islamic revival for two reasons. First, Islam has been a significant part of national identification in Turkmenistan since the Soviet period⁶³ as Nasrulla bin Ibadulla emphasizes: 'The awakening of the national self-awareness is characterized by the revival of popular interest in the religion of Islam'.⁶⁴ Second, having a good Muslim image became a source of legitimacy for rulers and symbolizes their respect for national identity. Turkmenbashi, for instance, went to the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) with the entire cabinet of ministers in 1992.⁶⁵ The large mosque in Goktepe, which is called *Haji* (who went to pilgrimage) *Saparmyrat Türkmenbaşy* and nicknamed *Türkmeniň Kabesi* (Kaaba of Turkmen), was built as a memorial to this *hajj*. This mosque honours the Goktepe Wars with its location, Turkmenbashi's respect for Islam with its name and Turkmen nationalism with its nickname. In *hutbes* (speeches in Friday prayers) in Ashgabat mosques, Turkmenbashi is blessed and thanked for opening the mosques. The role of Islam is increasing in the socio-cultural life of Turkmenistan to fill the ethical vacuum.

Turkish influence

There is a strong ethnic tie between Turks and Turkmen, who both belong to the Oghuz group of Turkic nations. Historically, the Seljuk Empire is the common ancestor of Turks and Turkmen. Moreover, within the Central Asian languages, the Turkmen language is the closest to Turkish. The transformation from Cyrillic to Latin alphabets strengthens the linguistic ties though Turkmen Latin is different from the Turkish variety. Turkey supports Turkmen education, donating school textbooks and providing scholarships for Turkmen students to study in Turkish universities.⁶⁶ The number of Turkmen students educated in Turkey was 1700 in 2000.⁶⁷ The Turkish government also opened a language centre and a high school in Ashgabat.

Thousands of Turkish businessmen, workers and educators live in Turkmenistan, especially in Ashgabat. A Turkish weekly newspaper, *Zaman*, is published in Turkmenistan with nationwide circulation of more than 10,000.⁶⁸

This newspaper is also published in other Central Asian republics, except Uzbekistan. Additionally, the Turkish public TV channel, TRT Eurasia, broadcasts on a limited basis through the Turkmen TV system. Other Turkish channels can also be watched via the satellite dishes.

The main pillar of Turkish cultural influence in Turkmenistan are the private schools sponsored by a Turkish NGO, Bashkent Education Corp. (BEC). BEC has strong ties with a Turkish social movement lead by Fethullah Gülen. Gülen has encouraged and channelled several NGOs and foundations to open more than 250 modern schools in more than 30 countries. BEC coordinates 19 schools in Turkmenistan. In these schools, instruction is offered in four languages: Turkish, English, Turkmen and Russian. Although the courses are generally based on English, Turkish is the dominant language in these schools since the students and teachers communicate in Turkish, especially in extra-curricular activities and dormitories. In 1998–1999 academic year, 242 teachers educated 3328 students in the primary and secondary Turkish private schools.⁶⁹ BEC also opened the International Turkmen–Turk University (ITTU), the first university in Turkmenistan with Internet connection, in addition to a language and computer centre in Ashgabat. Because of the modern education in ITTU, 5000 students applied for the 200 contingencies in the fall semester of 2000.⁷⁰

Turkish cultural influence is consistent with Western influence. Turkish schools, for instance, spread English education in Turkmenistan. The results of a recent survey analysis of Turkish schools in Turkmenistan points out that these schools contribute to: (1) the training of future leaders and bureaucrats of Turkmenistan (particularly developing a notion of being a nation and serving the unity of their countries); (2) the development of Turkmen society and the increase of education in the transition period; (3) integration with the capitalist world; and (4) the development of relations between Turkey and Turkmenistan.⁷¹

Turkish influence does not contradict governmental nation-building policy because of the ethnic, historical and cultural ties between the two nations. For that reason, the Turkmen government allows Turkish schools. Turkmenbashi appreciates them because of their success in International Science Olympiads⁷² and stresses that the Turkmen educational system should copy these schools.⁷³ However, the Turkmen government aims to preserve and emphasize the uniqueness and authenticity of Turkmen culture *vis-à-vis* Turkish culture. Because of this objective, for example, Turkmenistan chose a different type of Latin alphabet, rather than the Turkish version, despite Turkey's manoeuvres to share a common alphabet.⁷⁴

Western influence

The impact of the Western culture on Turkmen nation building, unlike the other three cultures, is intensified by globalization and the international system. The main tool of Western cultural influence in Turkmenistan is the English language. Turkmen TV channels broadcast some news programmes in English. The English language is also starting to be used in business, universities and bureaucracy as the international language.

The American Council for International Education has co-ordinated educational exchange programmes for students, teachers and scholars since 1992. With this programme, 400 Turkmens have visited US schools, colleges and universities.⁷⁵ The Peace Corps, an American NGO, which is officially supported by the US government, has also implemented a number of educational projects, including summer camps, since 1993.⁷⁶ Similarly, German and French education and cultural centres are functioning in Ashgabat, which provide language courses, library services and student exchange programmes. The German Academic Exchange Agency, for example, has provided scholarships for continuing scientific work in Germany to more than 100 Turkmens.⁷⁷ The influences of German and French cultures, however, are considerably weaker than that of American culture.

The Turkmen government supports Western influence in order to assist it in adapting to international system. Turkmenbashi stresses: 'The alphabet transformation, from Cyrillic to Latin will make it easy to learn English, in the same way that Cyrillic made learning Russian easy, and learning English will result in the adaptation to world civilization.'⁷⁸ On the other hand, the Turkmen government rejects the Western influence based on democratic ideas and political culture. Turkmenbashi stresses that Turkmenistan will not copy the Western experience on democracy: 'Every country has its way of democracy. ... The East has its own customs, traditions and rules and behavior.'⁷⁹ As mentioned above, Western culture, as the representative of the international system, is replacing the role of Russian culture in Turkmenistan, particularly in language issues. American music and films are spreading. However, they do not constitute a monopoly—Turkish and Russian music and films are also popular.

Conclusion

This article does not possess any normative viewpoint about controversial issues such as whether nation building is an evolutionary step in linear historical progress or an unhealthy 'nation-destroying'⁸⁰ process that demolishes ethnic and cultural diversity. What it does is reveal the constructed aspect of national identity and the roles of the state and cultural zones on this construction. The Turkmen case points out synthetic and dynamic aspects of national identities. The Turkmen nation-building process, which focuses on the construction of a Turkmen nation as an 'imagined' [or 'imagining'] community, fits into many aspects of Anderson's explanations. This shows that Turkmen national identity is a socially constructed concept, instead of a primordial and fixed phenomenon. Similarly, the Turkmen case reveals the efficacy of political authority on identity issues in a newly independent and authoritarian country. Anderson's official nationalism model is helpful in uncovering the role of the state in Turkmen nation building. The Turkmen state, under the direction of Turkmenbashi, implements nation-building policy, including the development of vernacular language; channelling the media to promote slogans, symbols and narratives;

using history-writing; and shaping propaganda and education, to homogenize national identity.

Anderson's analysis, however, is not adequate to completely examine Turkmen nation building because it does not deal with international cultural factors, the interaction among these factors and their particular influences. Notwithstanding the Turkmen state has an absolute efficacy in internal affairs; it can not pursue a nation-building policy in isolation. Russian, Islamic, Turkish and Western cultures influence Turkmen nation building, via methods similar to those used by the Turkmen state, such as language, the media and education. The Turkmen state has tried to control and filter these influences. These cultural zones, on the one hand, seek good relationships with the Turkmen government, and on the other, compete with each other to contribute their own values to Turkmen identity. Turkmen government accepts gradual de-Russification as one of its main objectives. However, because Islamic values are embedded in traditional Turkmen culture and are accepted as a part of national revival, the Turkmen government supports the rise of Islamic culture. Turkish and Western cultural influences are also partially welcomed since the former is related to historical and original Turkmen values and the latter is crucial in adapting to Western civilization.

Since the declaration of independence, Russian cultural influence in Turkmenistan has been challenged by the three other cultures. The impact of Turkish and Islamic cultures is based on synergy rather than competition, since Turkish culture includes Islamic values and traditions. Turkish cultural influence is also compatible with Western influence mainly because the Turkish private schools educate in English. With the language issue, Russian is used because of the Soviet legacy, Turkish because of its similarity to Turkmen and English as it is an international language. In the media, Russian and Turkish cultures have more outlets (e.g. television, radio and newspapers) than Western culture has. With regard to education, Russian culture still primarily depends on Turkmen public schools, Turkish depends on private schools and governmental scholarships, and Western culture mainly depends on exchange programmes. Islamic cultures cannot compete with other cultures, because of the weakness of Islamic publications, television and radio programmes, and education. However, Islamic culture is influential with its *sui generis* institutions, i.e. the mosques, and its direct relations with Turkmen socio-cultural life and cognitive and normative mapping.

The analysis of the nation-building process also reveals the state-society relations in Turkmenistan. The Turkmen state has the efficacy to shape the identity of the society mainly because it has a relatively modern apparatus, while its society has remained within a traditional structure. The Turkmen state, so far, has achieved success in the unity of tribes and maintaining political stability without any tribal tension.⁸¹ However, whereas an authoritarian regime maintains stability in the short-term, it cannot guarantee order in the long term. Silence does not mean consensus. In the future, several groups may become politically active in the public sphere, although today they act 'as if'⁸² they are loyal to the regime. Furthermore, in a worst-case scenario, after Turkmenbashi's authori-

tarian rule, economic problems might ignite tension between tribal loyalties. These kinds of potential problems could be resolved now by a more participatory socio-political system instead of authoritarianism. Therefore, democratization and liberalization, in addition to socio-economic development, are necessary to consolidate Turkmen nation building.

The new generation, especially 4000 young Turkmens currently being trained in 24 countries abroad,⁸³ may strengthen Turkmen society in future. On the other hand, the bureaucratic *nomenklatura* may prevent the influence of the new elite by preserving the *rentier state* regime, depending on the profits of natural gas in common with many Middle Eastern countries. It is not certain which of these two possibilities will materialize. Nevertheless, it is certain that the Turkmen identity of the 21st century will be, and in some aspects already is, different from the Turkmen identity of the 20th century.

Notes and references

1. See for nation-building in other Central Asian republics, Azamat Sarsembayev, 'Imagined communities: Kazak nationalism and Kazakification in the 1990s', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 18, No 3, 1999, pp 319–346; Shahram Akbarzadeh, 'Nation-building in Uzbekistan', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 15, No 1, 1996, pp 23–32; William O. Beeman, 'The struggle for identity in post-Soviet Tajikistan', *MERIA Journal*, Vol 3, No 4, 1999; Pal Kolsto, 'Nation-building in the former USSR', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol 7, No 1, 1996, pp 118–132.
2. *Turkmenistan: Stability, Reforms, Neutrality: The Fragments of Speeches, Interviews and Talks by Saparmurat Turkmenbashi* (Ashgabat: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, 1996), p 13.
3. Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic was founded in 1924 based on the Turkmen populations of Bukhara and Khiva People's Socialist Republics and Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Adrienne Lynn Edgar, 'Nationality policy and national identity: the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, 1924–1929', *Journal of Central Asian Studies*, Vol 1, No 2, 1997, pp 2–20. See also Shahram Akbarzadeh, 'Narrative of independence in Central Asia. A case study: Turkmenistan', *Journal of Arabic, Islamic, and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol 2, No 2, 1995, p 92. See for the history of Central Asian Turkic populations, Zeki Velidi Togan, *Bugünkü Türkleri (Türkistan) ve Yakın Tarihi* (Istanbul: Arkadaş Basımevi, 1942–1947).
4. Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, 'From tribe to *umma*', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 3, No 3, 1985, p 21.
5. Alexander Benningsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (London: C. Hurst, 1985), pp 95, 98.
6. Nazif Shahrani, 'Central Asia and the challenge of the Soviet Legacy', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 12, No 2, 1993, pp 128–131. See also Olivier Roy, *La Nouvelle Asie Centrale ou, La Fabrication des Nations* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).
7. Olivier Roy, 'La nouvelle Asie centrale', *Esprit*, No 1, 1997, p 83; Gökhan Bacık, 'Türk Cumhuriyetleri'nde kimlik sorunu', in Mim Kemal Öke (ed.), *Geciş Sürecinde Orta Asya Türk Cumhuriyetleri* (Istanbul: Alfa, 1999), pp 92–102. See for identity transformation in Central Asia, Kemal Karpat, 'The old and new Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 12, No 4, 1993, pp 415–425.
8. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1998).
9. See for the authoritarian regime in Turkmenistan, Semih Vaner, 'Le Turkmenistan: pouvoir personnel et ressources énergétiques', *Défense Nationale*, Vol 55, No 8–9, 1999, pp 139–141; John Anderson, 'Authoritarian political development in Central Asia: the case of Turkmenistan', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 14, No 4, 1995, pp 509–527; Witold Raczk, 'Le Turkmenistan, futur Koweït de la Caspienne?', *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, No 23, 1997, pp 183–206.
10. *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, 11 November 1998.
11. Following the declaration of independence, two opposition parties were constituted: *Agybirlik* (Solidarity) and the Democratic Party. These parties have been suppressed and are now banned. The Peasant Party was planned as a non-opposition party. Although it was registered, this party became inactive.
12. Some of the other tribes are; Ogurcaly, Çowdur, Gökleñ, Nohurly, Mürçeli, Alili, Sakar, Yemreli, Garadaşly, Hydyr ili, Ata, Hoca and Sih. Marat Durdyýew and Şohrat Kadyrow, *Dünyedeki Türkmenler* (Aşgabat: Harp, 1991), p 15.

13. See, Mehmet Saray, *The Turkmens in the Age of Imperialism: A Study of the Turkmen People and Their Incorporation into the Russian Empire* (Ankara: TTK, 1989). See also, Paul Georg Geiss, 'Turkmen tribalism', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 18, No 3, 1999, pp 347–357.
14. Lemercier-Quellejay, op cit, note 4, p 23.
15. *Turkmenistan: Stability, Reforms, Neutrality*, op cit, note 2,p 13.
16. *Ibid*, p 19.
17. Anderson, op cit, note 8, p 6.
18. *Ibid*, p 43.
19. *Ibid*, pp 9, 199–206.
20. *Ibid*, pp 113–114.
21. See David Nissman, 'Turkmenistan: just like old times', in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp 644–645.
22. Myratgeldi Söyegow *et al.*, *Türkmen Dili* 6 (Istanbul: MEB Basımevi, 1996), p 5.
23. 1999 Country Report on Human Rights Practices Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, 25 February 2000.
24. *RFE/RL Turkmen Report*, 30 July—5 August 2000.
25. Most of the well-known newspapers, such as *Turkmenistan*, *Neýtralniý Turkmenistan (Russian)*, *Galkynys*, and *Adalat* are sponsored by Turkmenbashi.
26. S.A. Niyazov (ed.), *Türkmenistan: Kiçi Ensiklopedya* (Aşgabat, 1996), p 333.
27. This slogan is written by a highway near to Buzmein City.
28. Dennis-Constant Martin, 'The choices of identity', *Social Identities*, Vol 1, No 1, pp 8, 10.
29. Permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan was accepted by the UN with the unanimous support of 185 countries on 12 December 1995. Muhammed H. Abalakov (ed.), *Turkmenistan: Today and Tomorrow* (Ashgabat, 1999), p 18. Turkmenistan is committed not to start military conflict or war except in self-defence; to refrain from political, diplomatic, or other moves that might lead to armed conflict or to take side in a conflict; not to participate into military pacts; not to maintain, produce, or transfer nuclear, chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction; and to refrain from leasing its territory for the deployment of foreign military bases. *The Constitution of Turkmenistan* (Articles 5 and 6).
30. Interviews conducted by the author, Ashgabat, February—June 1999.
31. See for Soviet history writing in Central Asia, John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), pp 86–88.
32. Fred Halliday, 'Nationalism', in John Baylis and Steve Smith (eds), *The Globalization of World Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p 368.
33. Some of these days are Anniversary of Turkmenistan Independence, The Renaissance and Unity Day, Holiday of the State Flag and the Birthday of the President, and Day of Turkmenistan Neutrality. There are also many special days that are not official holidays, such as the Election Day of the First President of Turkmenistan, the Turkmen Horses Holiday, the Magtymguly Poetry Day, and the Turkmen Carpets Holiday (Abalakov, op cit, note 29, p 25).
34. *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, 11 January 1999.
35. For instance, there is still a sculpture of Lenin in Ashgabat and Soviet monuments in Mary. Furthermore, the day of the defeat of Nazi Germany by the USSR is still a memorial day, the Victory Day.
36. *Adalat* (newspaper), 16 April 1999.
37. Paul Goble, 'Turkmenistan: analysis from Washington. Rewriting the future', *RFE/RL Newslines*, 2 October 2000.
38. Anthony Smith, 'The nation: invented, imagined, reconstructed', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol 20, No 3, 1991, p 359.
39. The average monthly salary is between US \$10–50 and the per capita GNP is US \$992. *EIU Country Profile: Turkmenistan 1997–1998*, p 59.
40. *The Policy of Saparmurat Turkmenbashi: Achievements and Prospects* (Ashgabat: Archives Fund of the President of Turkmenistan, 1996), p 236.
41. *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, 8 February 1999. Emphases added.
42. I partially changed the official English translation of the 'oath', because, it is softer than the original Turkmen version.
43. *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, 19 April 1999.
44. Taçnazar Myratgeldiýev, *Türkmenistanyň Taryhy*–8 (Aşgabat: Magaryf, 1997), p 6.
45. During the 1998/99 academic year there were 1589 Turkmen, 99 Uzbek (in Dashhowuz and Lebap), 55 Russian (mainly in Ashgabat and Mary), 49 Kazak (distributed all over the country) and 138 mixed schools. *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, 12 April 1999.
46. The former Minister of Education, Prof. Recepdurdy Karayev, explains that following the declaration of

- independence, Turkmen school programmes have been changed and Turkmen language courses have been added into even Russian minority school programmes. Personal interview with the author, Ashgabat, April 1999.
47. Abalakov, op cit, note 29, p 5.
 48. See for the 'architectural and mechanical' aspect of nation-building, Karl W. Deutsch, 'Nation-building and national development: some issues for political research', in Karl W. Deutsch and William J. Foltz (eds), *Nation-Building* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966), p 3.
 49. It is officially argued that there are NGOs in Turkmenistan, such as The National Center of Trade Unions, the Council of the Elders, the Youth Union named after Magtymguly, and the Women's Union named after Gurbansoltan-eje. Abalakov, op cit, note 29, p 24. These organizations, however, are under governmental control.
 50. There are a few middle-sized bookstores in Ashgabat, the only cultural centre of Turkmenistan, which sell only a very limited number and low diversity of books. Turkmens are proud of Karl Marx library (in Ashgabat), which has more than 6,000,000 books. This library, however, can not fill the gap of new book circulation. Moreover, about 5,300,000 of these books are written in Russian. Büşra Ersanlı Behar, 'Azerbaycan, Özbekistan ve Türkmenistan'da eğitim ve kültür politikaları', in Büşra Ersanlı Behar (ed.), *Bağımsızlığın ilk Yılları* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1994), p 213.
 51. Niyazov, op cit, note 26, pp 119, 122.
 52. *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, 12 April 1999.
 53. See for the colonial period of Turkmenistan, Orazpolat Ekayev, 'İlk Türkmen Devletleri ve Turkmenistan'da İstiklal Mücadeleleri', in Büşra Behar (ed.), *Türkmenistan'da Toplum ve Kültür* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999), p 38.
 54. See Ahmet T. Kuru, 'Uluslararası ortam ve bölgesel entegrasyon teorileri ışığında Türk Birliği meselesi', in Mîm Kemal Öke (ed.), *Geçiş Sürecinde Orta Asya Türk Cumhuriyetleri* (İstanbul: Alfa, 1999), p 177.
 55. Benningsen and Wimbush, op cit, note 5, p 101.
 56. Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Zed Books, 1994), p 45.
 57. BISNIS Country Reports and NIS Market Contacts, 'Country Commercial Guides FY 1999: Turkmenistan', http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/com_guides/1999/europe/turkmen99_10.html.
 58. Nedim Polat and Hydyr Amangeldi, the translators of many Islamic books from Turkish to Turkmen, emphasize that translations are the single source of Islamic knowledge in Turkmenistan. Personal interview with the author, Ashgabat, May 1999.
 59. Niyazov, op cit, note 26, p 387.
 60. See Nadir Devlet, *Çağdaş Türkler* (İstanbul: Çağ Yayınları, 1993), p 360. See also, Myratgeldiyev, op cit, note 44, p 149.
 61. The Turkish professors of the Faculty, Drs Kamil Yaşaroğlu and Ali Köse emphasize that TDV not only opened theological faculties and mosques in Turkmenistan, but also some in other former Soviet republics. Personal interview with the author, Ashgabat, May 1999.
 62. *Turkmenistan: Stability, Reforms, Neutrality*, op cit, note 2, p 17.
 63. See Nazif Shahrani, "'From tribe to umma": comments on the dynamics of identity in Muslim Soviet Central Asia', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 3, No 3, 1985, pp 27–38. See also, M. Hakan Yavuz, 'The pattern of political Islamic identity: dynamics of national and transnational loyalties and identities', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 14, No 3, 1995, pp 352–353.
 64. Quoted in Shahram Akbarzadeh, 'National identity and political legitimacy in Turkmenistan', *Nationalities Papers*, Vol 27, No 2, 1999, p 284.
 65. Michael Ochs, 'Turkmenistan: the quest for stability and control', in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p 338.
 66. See for the relationship between Turkey and Turkic Republics, Ahmet Kuru, 'Türkiye'nin Orta Asya'ya yönelişi: dokuz asır sonra politika değişimi', *Türkiye Günlüğü*, No 51, 1998, pp 78–88.
 67. *Hürriyet* (newspaper), 18 October 2000.
 68. Ramazan Aydemir, the general director and editor of *Zaman* in Turkmenistan, stresses that *Zaman* is the only foreign newspaper in Turkmenistan. It is also the only newspaper that focuses on international news. Personal interview with the author, Ashgabat, May 1999.
 69. Nuh Ozdil, the co-ordinator of chemistry education in these schools, explains that more than 90 per cent of their graduates are admitted to the universities in Turkmenistan and abroad. This ratio is very high, considering the fact that in Turkmenistan, the average ratio of entrance to universities after secondary schools is about 10 per cent. Personal interview with the author, Ashgabat, May 1999.
 70. *Turkmen News Weekly*, 5 June 2000.
 71. Cennet Engin Demir, Ayşe Balcı and Füsün Akkoc, 'The role of Turkish schools in the educational system and social transformation of Central Asian countries: the case of Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol 19, No 1, 2000, p 154.

72. Kadir Dikbaş, *Değişen Türkmenistan* (Istanbul: İŞHAD, 1997), pp 73–78.
73. *RFE/RL Newslines*, 29 August 2001.
74. Interview with Myratgeldi Söyegow, the Professor of Turkmen language and literature, and former Vice-Minister of Education, Ashgabat, February 1999. See also: Günay Göksu Özdoğan, ‘Sovyetler Birliği’nden bağımsız cumhuriyetlere: uluslaşmanın dinamikleri’, in Behar (ed.), op cit, note 50, p 74.
75. *Turkmen News Weekly*, 2 October 2000.
76. *Turkmenistan News Weekly*, 30 November 1998.
77. *Turkmen News Weekly*, 3 April 2000.
78. Myratgeldi Soyegow *et al.*, *Türkmen Dili* 5 (Istanbul: MEB Basımevi, 1996), p 6.
79. Quoted in O. Musaev, ‘Developing democratic institutions in independent and neutral Turkmenistan’, *Democracy and Law*, No 1, 1998, p 160.
80. See Walker Connor, ‘Nation-building or nation-destroying?’, *World Politics*, Vol 24, No 3, 1972, pp 319–355.
81. See David Nissman, ‘Turkmenistan (un)transformed’, *Current History*, Vol 93, No 582, 1994, p 186.
82. For acting ‘as if’ in an authoritarian country, see Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).
83. Abalakov, op cit, note 29, p 101.