CHAPTER 5

Conclusion
The above mentioned study on Turkmenistan-Russia relations 1991-2001, highlights their relationship in historical perspective, the economic and the military co-operation between the two countries and the role of external powers in influencing the relationship.

Historically, the relationship between Russia and Turkmenistan has been very strong. The Russian Czar Peter the Great sent the first Russian expeditions into Turkmenistan. Peter was seeking a route for Russian trade with Southern Asia and the Middle East. Trade between Turkmen merchants and Russians continued and was helped by the building of a port on the Caspian sea at Krasnovodsk, (modern Turkmenbashi). In 1802, members of several Turkmen clans officially became Russian subjects. During the 19th century, the Turkmen also asked for Russia's help during their frequent rebellions against the Khans and against the Shahs of Persia. The Russians were seeking new markets for their goods, fertile land for the growing of cotton, and access to Turkmenistan's natural resources. As a first step in the conquest of the region, the Russians agreed to provide arms and food to the Turkmen rebels. Russia began sending military expeditions into Turkmenistan in the second half of the 19th century. From 1863 through to 1868, Russian armies defeated and annexed the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva. The people of western Turkmenistan, who were seeking independence from the Khans, willingly joined the Russian empire.

But the Turkmen of eastern and southern Turkmenistan fiercely resisted Russian annexation. In 1879, at Geok-Tepe near Ashkabad (modern Ashgabat) Turkmen warriors of the Tekke Clan stopped a large Russian force. Two years later, the Russians besieged GeokTepe, eventually capturing it as well as Ashkabad. By 1885, all the Turkmen clans had submitted to Russian control. The Russians annexed Mary (Merv) and pushed across Turkmenistan to the borders of Persia and Afghanistan. The building of the Transcaspian railroad, which connected Krasnovodsk (modern Turkmenbashi), Mary, and trading centers to the east, opened
up the region for economic development.

The Turkestan province became a socialist society at its very inception in 1918. Village societies and People's Courts, composed of people of local nationalities who knew the native languages, customs and traditions were set up almost everywhere in the period 1918 to 1924. Representatives of the local population constituted the majority in the administrative bodies. Soviet power became genuinely popular.

Lenin's principle of nationalism was based on the core idea of democratic centralism. Although he preferred state administration and management with the basic ideals of centralization of power at the centre, however, his sole aim was to create a socialist state not forcibly but on the basis of voluntary and free consent. In this context Turkestan autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was the first step towards the formation of national states in Central Asia. Contrast to the policy of nation-state propagated by Tsarist regime, the Soviet government put forward a policy which aimed at building a number of republics with an adequate degree of internal autonomy.

Turkmenistan's accession to the Soviet Union in 1924 proved to be the major boost to the country's economic development due to the following three factors;

1. Construction of Kara-kum Canal
2. Evaluation of the industrial enterprises during the world war II.
3. Large-scale exploration of gas and oil deposits.

In the years after the World War II was over, the Soviet government put minimal priority on the development of industry in Turkmenistan pursuing what was later officially called the regionalization policy that gained popularity under Khrushchev, but which in fact was the means of ensuring the maximal extent of integration with the Soviet Economy.
In 1985 Saparmurad Niyazov- a Gorbachev supporter - replaced the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkmenistan, M. Gapurov, who had been at the helm of the republic for 15 years. Niyazov was serving as first secretary of the Ashkhabad city party council when he was noticed by Moscow and invited to work at party headquarters in Moscow. He returned as the next leader of Turkmenistan. The new Turkmen leader supported perestroika and never questioned Gorbachev's actions. His stable position was in sharp contrast to the political chaos in neighbouring Central Asian republics, which often changed leaders.

Based on national identity that survived during the decades of Soviet rule and by Gorbachev's policy of perestroika, Turkmenistan seemed to have found, as the first Central Asian republic, a clear position between nationalism and Islamism, the two major ideological currents in the whole of Central Asia. This unique way was closely connected with the person of the first President Saparmurat Niyazov who, as first among all party leaders in the Soviet republics, understood to use the political vacuum under Gorbachev for establishing his own power. Saparmurat Niyazov originated from communist party apparatus. He was elected President of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic on 14 October 1990, and thus the first President of a Soviet Republic directly elected by his people. Already two months earlier, on 23 August 1990 the Parliament of Turkmenistan - also among the first Soviet Republics - had declared the Republic's sovereignty regarding legislation and natural resources. Nevertheless Turkmenistan was far from being a protagonist in fighting for independence from the U.S.S.R. President Niyazov originally supported Gorbachev's idea of signing a new Union Treaty and underlined that Turkmenistan could not survive outside the Soviet Union.

Turkmen people voted in a referendum for independence, which was declared on 27 October 1991 by Parliament. On 16 December 1991 the former Communist Party was renamed Democratic Party of Turkmenistan and on 18 May 1992 a new constitution was passed in the parliament aimed at enlarging presidential power. On
June 21, 1992 presidential elections took place and Saparmurat Niyazov was re-elected with 99.5 percent votes for a period of 10 years. As the last step within this first period of consolidation, parliamentary elections were held in autumn 1992. Within a short period of time, Niyazov successfully effected a new communist pattern of action almost without changing any representatives and started to build up, based on these old structures, a new independent republic.

Since 1991, the Russian federation has always considered Turkmenistan as an area of interest in terms of strategic and economic linkages reflected in the long cherished historic connections, closer location and the presence of a large Russian Diaspora. Russia has always reacted to the attempts at changing the status quo and security arrangements. Several regional experts and scholars share a view that a combination of interests, power and accessibility will make Russia a natural choice for exercising influence and underwriting the regional security of Central Asia and Turkmenistan in particular. Even after losing its superpower status, Russia still is an influential player at the regional and global level. However, the evolving pattern of regional diplomacy and allied security, the slowly intruding United States and its allies and the growing influence of China in the region has got a very significant impact and Russia can not afford to be a bystander to the changing military and strategic balance of power in its backyard.

Since independence, Russia has considered the Central Asian region a buffer zone against any external threats whatsoever. Russia has gradually evolved a whole range of objectives and strategic interest in order to deal with these concerns:

1. Russia wants to transform the region into politically and economically viable states with very friendly policies towards itself.
2. Russia also wants to maintain and further strengthen its role in the system of intergovernmental political and economic relations.
3. It wants to extend its institutionalized integration pattern among the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States.
4. It wants to secure Russian economic interests in the region.

5. It wants to maintain its hold over regional energy resources, in addition to Caspian oil transportation routes that will be of advantage to Russia.

6. It wants to counter the threat of religious extremism while encouraging the prevention of drug trafficking and arms smuggling.

7. Ensuring Central Asian ecological security, especially concerning environmental disasters in the Aral and Caspian Sea region is Russia’s top priority.

8. Protecting the rights and other issues related with the ethnic Russians in the near abroad has also been on the Russian agenda.

Coordination of competing energy suppliers is a key aspect of Russia’s strategy to maintain and build upon its dominant position as an energy empire in relation to Europe. Nowhere is this more apparent than its hold on Central Asia’s export routes for its vast energy supplies, which, if at once unleashed in free and fair competition with Russia, would reduce Russia’s ability to deploy the energy weapon as a foreign policy tool, and would significantly increase energy security not only for Europe, but also for China.

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 a vernacular language, 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 share of Russian minority population decreased from 10 percent to 7 percent and that of Uzbeks remained as 9 percent. 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 and the introduction
The main internal source of Russian cultural influence is the Turkmen schools which use Russian as the medium of instruction. Although their number (55 in 1998-99) 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 Russian Federation and also broadcasts on the Turkmen TV System. The Turkmen government imposed restrictions on this channel for financial and ethical reasons. Given the limitation and the unsatisfactory programmes of Turkmen TV channels (TMT 1-11) 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 quality and the familiarity with the Russian language in Turkmen society.

Turkmenistan's geo-strategic importance, bordering Afghanistan and Iran, is increased by its vast energy resources and the central role of energy exports in European energy security. The export of natural gas generates up to 85 percent of Turkmenistan's annual revenue. Turkmen gas is also essential for Russia; exports from Turkmenistan provide energy to major portions of southern Russia, thus allowing Russia to meet its income generating export demands in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, as the production decreases in Russia's main gas fields due to a combination of older infrastructure and a lack of investment, Turkmen gas allows Gazprom to meet mounting European energy demands. Russia is the source of nearly 50 percent of Europe's total gas imports, European demand is set to double in the next 30 years. Gazprom's ability to meet those demands would depend a lot on the continued access to Turkmen gas.

Geopolitical significance of a country depends mainly on the geographical location of a country, which forms its border and defences with its immediate
neighbours. Turkmenistan is an important country because of rich gas resources and being a transit route from Turkey and Iran to the east. Turkmenistan has some of the world's largest deposits of natural gas, with proven natural gas reserves of approximately 101 trillion cubic feet (tcf). The largest natural gas fields are in the Amu-Darya basin, with perhaps half of the country's natural gas reserves located in the giant Dauletabad Donmez field. In addition to Amu Darya, Turkmenistan has large natural gas reserves in the Murgab basin, particularly the giant Yashar deposit, which contains an estimated 27 tcf. During the last 10 years Turkmenistan had also discovered 17 new natural gas deposits in the Lebanshy, Maryinsky, and Deashoguzsky regions of the country. And all the industrially developed countries in the world are trying to play a major role in extracting gas and oil out of Turkmenistan. Since 1994, the United States and an international consortium of western oil companies have started to shift their focus away from the Persian gulf to the Caspian and the Central Asian region. According to some estimates the region around the greater Caspian sea contains somewhere between 90 billion to 200 billion barrels of oil and about 46 percent of world's gas reserves.

The struggle among outside powers to tap the vast hydrocarbon resources has already begun. In this new game, the geo-political consideration are becoming crucial factors in winning contracts and routing the gas/oil pipelines. The increasing Western thrust for exploiting the oil and gas deposits in the region has significantly challenged Russia's claims on its traditional sphere of influence. The entry of multinational companies is changing both economic and political dynamics in the region and the US could ultimately manage to establish an independent energy supply system. Consequently, the US would act in order to protect the exporting countries and the supply lines. The existing pipelines to export gas from Turkmenistan runs through Russia and now Iran. Several outside powers including Russia, Iran, Turkey, China and the United States are trying to have a share in the natural gas and oil resources.

The United States seeks to exploit natural resources in this region and to prevent any other power centre from gaining dominance here. It is in the interest of
the United States to ensure that no other power gains total control over this geopolitical space and that the world community has unimpeded access to the region. The United States has some military and political interests in the region; in particular it seeks to supervise nuclear munitions, enterprises that can produce fissionable materials, testing grounds and research facilities that earlier had a military function, and components in the missile and space infrastructure. The United States has devoted much effort to drawing the new Central Asian States into the Western military sphere. Significantly, the change in the plan of the Unified Command of the Armed Forces of the United States in October 1999 shifted responsibility for the Central Asian one to the Central command of the Armed Forces of the United States.

Although the United States has some interest in preserving the independence and viability of countries in this region, Central Asia has not reached the threshold of constituting a vitally important interest. In the long term, the United States would hardly appear willing to make great sacrifices in the defence of Central Asian States or agree to provide a guarantee for their security. Indeed the United States lacks the interest and resources to exercise full blown influence in the region and to ensure its stability. From the perspective of security, the United States regards this region at most as an object of secondary interest. That posture derives from a broader understanding of security and its relations with Russia, China and South Asia, even when taking into account an aggregate of global problems (such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organized crime and narcotics).

U.S. relations with and security interests in the states of Central Asia have changed dramatically since September 11, 2001 as a result of the US commitment to counter terrorism and campaign in Afghanistan. The US military has been much more proactive, recruiting states into the counter terrorist coalition and expanding its security co-operation and direct military assistance programmes. In the long term, this increased military to military contact and Western exposure to the region's operational environment will improve the US military's ability both to conduct combat operations in the target countries and to use these areas to project and sustain
military forces in nearby countries or regions.

The geographical position of Iran is of great significance in providing the Central Asian Republics an outlet to the sea. Iran is naturally interested in making use of its geo-political, economic and cultural influence in the new republics. Iran is also cautious and wants to avoid hurting Russian interests in Central Asia. In view of persistent US hostility and antipathy to Iran, ties with Russia, particularly in the military-technological field are considered to be very important. The victory of Pakistan supported Islamic fundamentalist Taliban forces in Kabul in September 1996 further aggravated Iranian and Pakistan rivalry in the region. It has tended to bring India, Iran and the Central Asian countries closer. Iran has preferred to emphasize economic diplomacy more in dealing with the Central Asian Republics rather than seeking to export its version of Islam into the region.

It has provided road and rail links to the Central Asian Republics through neighboring Turkmenistan and an outlet to the sea through its port of Bandar-Abbas. India, Iran and Turkmenistan have entered into a tripartite agreement providing for the surface transportation of goods from India to Central Asia via Iran and vice versa. Iran has also constructed as has been mentioned earlier, a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Iran which will be further extended to Turkey for the export of Turkmen gas to the European markets. However, the Iranian capacity to provide investments and technology to the new republics is limited and remains a constraint on its goals and diplomatic endeavour in the region.

China, being the world's second-largest oil consumer after the United States is attaching high priority to accessing oil and gas reserves in the Central Asian Republics. The Chinese government wants to diversify energy imports and lower dependence on West Asia. China's energy security comprises the following elements: to diversify the sources of energy imports and increase the share of oil and gas imports from Russia and Central Asia; increase overseas investments by state oil companies; broaden ways of trade to avoid transactions risk; enhance the investments
in oil and gas infrastructure and open more channels to imports; establish government controlled strategic petroleum reserves; adjust energy consumption and production structure and reduce dependence on oil through coal gasification; liquefaction and development of nuclear power; and actively participate in the formation of a regional community and establish a regional energy system.

The close and friendly relations between India and the Central Asian Republics have deep historical roots. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, visited these republics in 1955 and 1961 when they were part of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991 and five independent and sovereign states emerged, this led to a strengthening and expansion of politico-economic-cultural ties between New Delhi and the Central Asian Republics. The political dialogue has since been regular and mutually beneficial. High-level exchanges have indeed set the tempo to chart out the scope and direction of cooperation, and have also laid the foundation for understanding each other's interests and core concerns. India and the Central Asian Republics subscribe to common principles of inter-state conduct, peaceful settlement of differences, rejection of extremism in all forms, as well as the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. The cooperation between India and the Central Asian Republics spans many areas, including economic and commercial collaboration, cultural, education and technical training in diverse disciplines, information technology, science and technology, agriculture and civil aviation, to name a few.

Pakistan falls within the second category of Central Asia's neighbours, but its deep involvement in Afghanistan make it intensely preoccupied with Central Asia's evolution. Pakistan also wants a share of potential economic gains in the region. Since the time of glasnost under Gorbachev, Pakistan has actively marketed itself to Central Asia as a valuable partner, an alternative model of development to Iran and Turkey, and an outlet to the outside world. Pakistan's liabilities have been its inadequate transport infrastructure, its limited financial resources, and its role as competitor in resource base and economy with Central Asia. Pakistan and most
Central Asian countries are major producers of cotton and competitors in the textile industry.

Turkish engagement in the Caspian remains substantial, and the long term prospects are promising for increased bilateral cooperation and a steady, if unspectacular, expansion of Turkish influence given the ethnic and cultural bonds that exist and the number of young Central Asians who are being trained in Turkey. Turkey is operating in a crowded playing field, however, and it is unlikely that Ankara will emerge as a dominant player, much less attain regional hegemony. For now, accordingly, Ankara has a more realistic appreciation of the difficulties it faces and has trimmed its policies and expectations to fit these realities. Indeed, Russia has enjoyed some success in thwarting a significant expansion of Turkish influence in the region, especially in Kazakhstan, and Turkey has been careful to avoid challenging important Russian interests. However, there is a long term potential for a serious Turkish-Russian confrontation in the south Caucasus, particularly if Ankara is unable to resist the rising tide of Turkish nationalism and pressure from public opinion and ethnic groups for a more assertive Turkish posture in the region.

In the years since the establishment of an independent Turkmenistan, the oil and gas factor has become a major component of its geopolitics. This has been triggered by the extraordinary prominence of hydrogen sulfide raw materials in the development of its national economy. The active inclusion of Turkmenistan in the process of establishing a new legal system for the Caspian has undoubtedly raised the foreign policy status of this state. The internationalization and diversification of the search for and exploitation of oil and gas promotes Turkmenistan's importance in the foreign policy priorities of external powers. The political instability in Afghanistan and the Caspian Sea disputes, however, had led Turkmenistan to still rely on Russia to export its gas to the world energy market.

Following independence in 1991, the economy of Turkmenistan experienced a steep decline. Between 1992-97, it is estimated that real G.D.P fell cumulatively by
about 50 percent, comparable to that experienced by other CIS countries. Over the past few years, however, the economy has experienced a sharp economic upswing and continued growth in the near term is likely, based on Turkmenistan’s significant hydrocarbon endowment and larger public investment in roads, oil refineries, textiles and construction.

Turkmenistan’s real GDP in 2001 was still only 70% of its 1990 level, and economic and political reforms were stifled under the autocratic leadership of President Saparmurat Niyazov, a former communist who has ruled Turkmenistan since independence and was named President for life in 1999. The country’s unemployment rate, although down to 14% in 2001 from a high of 24.2% in 1998, is still problematic and foreign direct investment, over 90% of which into the country’s oil and natural gas sectors, has slowed over the past few years because of the restrictive conditions that Turkmenistan attaches to foreign investment. Privatization goals remain limited and the country has not taken steps to diversify its economy to reduce its dependence on natural resource exports.

The government retains an absolute control over the national economy. Turkembashi (Father of the Turkmen, a title assumed by Niyazov) emphasized that Turkmenistan will not follow the example of those CIS states which have placed their economies in neglect under the pretext of moving towards a market economy. Little privatization has occurred till date. The natural resources sector infrastructure, most state farms and industrial enterprises are not privatized at all. Even presumably privately owned retail shops are subject to arbitrariness of ministerial and municipal staff. The Presidential decree on land privatization has been suspended and peasants can hope at best for the long lease of an allotment. Niyazov was not prone to liberalize the economy in the slightest degree which could weaken his grip over the country.

The state exercises full control over the two key sectors of the Turkmen economy, the energy sector and agriculture. All enterprises in the gas and oil sector
are fully state-owned and are not subject to privatization. Five state enterprises constitute the sector. Turkmen Neftegas is responsible for exports, domestic sale and distribution of gas and oil. Turkmen Gas and Turkmen Oil operate the extraction facilities and must sell their output to Turkmen Neftegas. Construction works in the sector are the responsibility of Turkmen company Neftegasstroy, while the determination of new deposits is implemented by Turkmengeologia. Neither one of these bodies, however, is entitled to making independent decisions on development priorities so that every key decision pertaining to the sector requires the issuance of a presidential decree.

Since independence, Turkmenistan has sought to attract foreign investment and has developed several joint ventures with international companies involved in the oil and gas industry, transportation and agriculture. The government continues to look for interested parties, who could build business relations with Turkmenistan in other industries such as agriculture, infrastructure, communication, food processing and packaging and many others.

While Turkmenistan was just as eager as any other country in the region to take advantage of the potential markets for its own financial security, the country has one more reason to look for markets for the Central Asian region, and encourage the building of the infrastructural mechanisms to increase trade and investment. Turkmenistan would benefit not only from its own direct market growth, but also from the financial interactions of the markets around Central Asia that would need Turkmen communication and transportation support. Therefore, it is important that the players analyze what new and current markets are ripe for trade in energy, mining and agriculture, and also how the various markets will interplay.

The government at the time of independence was anxious to attract foreign investment to meet the huge needs for capital and technology to develop its oil and gas industry. Turkmenistan has also proven its commitment to the growth of its energy markets by implementing favourable foreign investment laws. In 1993,
Turkmenistan enacted the law on foreign investment. It defined opportunities for foreign investment, and allowed foreign investors to act as depositors, creditors and buyers. It protected foreign investors against changes in Turkmen legislation and provides equal protection for property.

Turkmenistan was one of the few countries with substantial tax incentives for foreign investment. Investors are fully exempt from a profit tax. In the first year at least, 70 percent of their total revenue came from production or processing of agricultural goods, production of consumer goods, or production of construction materials. This profit tax exemption could also be extended for up to three years. A comprehensive hydrocarbon law was passed in March 1997. This law regulated projects, licenses and contracts with foreign companies. It set out duties for the government, such as defining a development strategy and organizing statistical reports on hydrocarbon resources. The law brought Turkmenistan's regulations into line with international petroleum project standards. Several major companies took advantage of the positive investment environment in Turkmenistan and other sectors as well.

Like other Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan is highly trade dependent. While natural gas and processed cotton fiber are the country's most important export items, Turkmenistan is heavily dependent on imports for industrial equipment, industrial raw materials. Although Turkmenistan's foreign trade potential is affected by serious external uncertainties, the articulation of a trade system will have an important influence on its success in the world economy. A liberal foreign trade regime could facilitate the transition to a market economy. Import competition would impose discipline on domestic markets that are in general less than competitive by virtue of the past concentration of production. Whether international trade plays this facilitating role depends to a large extent on the policies adopted towards the foreign transactions of domestic enterprises. The liberalization of foreign trade is a part of broader domestic transition to a decentralized market economy in which the behaviour of enterprises, rather than government decisions, determines the conditions.
under which enterprises buy and sell domestically and abroad.

Turkmenistan, a newly independent state, has a challenging future in terms of stability, international recognition, economic independence and turbulent political developments within and outside its territory. It has potential reserves of oil and natural gas. Turkmen government is looking for exploration and development of oil and natural gas. Problems of production in terms of lack of skilled labour, lack of finances for investment in this sector, outdated and poor infrastructure and machinery, erratic relationship with the CIS countries, economic recession, decline in overall demand of oil and gas etc. are the major reasons which will influence the Turkmenistan's economy in future as well. This shows that Turkmenistan cannot depend exclusively on the oil and gas industry. It must make efforts to develop the other sectors of the economy such as light industries, textiles and transportation.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, both the Russian Federation and the new states of Central Asia felt the need to cooperate in the military sphere. Both sides have different reasons for this and they identify some common threats to their national security. Thus, in time cooperation in the military field between the Russian Federation and the Central Asian states was realized through bilateral agreements. In a geopolitical context like that of Central Asia, it's quite natural that Russia seeks all possible ways of establishing friendly relations with all Central Asian countries. Both sides have common security concerns like the prevention of the spread of military conflicts in Central Asia, and the possible growth of Islamic fundamentalism. Through its military doctrines, Russia appeared to have taken upon itself the defense of external borders of the former Soviet Union. Russian security experts pointed out that the former Soviet borders were well fortified and guarded. Russia’s new borders were not formalized through treaties. Several important radar bases and other facilities crucial for defense were located on the territory of the other Soviet republics. It was not easy to create such systems on Russian territory in a shorter period. Security of external borders of the CIS as well as the maintenance of peace and stability in the entire region came to be regarded as being crucial for the
Another point that increases the importance of Central Asia for Russia is that the Central Asian zone of the CIS is located in the so-called ‘arc of instability’ that includes the southern borders of the Commonwealth and separates Russia from countries raising security concerns such as Afghanistan and China. Thus political-military cooperation with the countries of this “buffer region” in the interests of long-term prevention of real and potential threats along the southern borders is to Russia’s benefit. The necessity for joint efforts to settle the Tajik conflict in the 1990s was another reason for cooperation between the Russian Federation and Central Asian states. The issue of a Tajik settlement was a subject of constant consultation between Russia and Central Asian states at the highest political levels including of ministries of foreign affairs, defense, border guards and other departments. In accordance with August 1992 agreement between Russia and four Central Asian states, a twenty-five thousand strong Russian-Central Asian force was created to protect the Tajik-Afghan border and protect Tajikistan from the threat of Islamic militants.

During the Soviet era, Turkmenistan was regarded as a crucial border region because of its proximity to Iran and other strategic areas such as the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan. For this reason, a large number of Soviet army troops were stationed in the republic. Since independence and the formation of a national armed force, Turkmenistan has maintained neutrality and isolationism, while at the same time pursuing a bilateral military alliance with the Russian Federation. Former Turkmen President Niyazov maintained close ties with Russia. At the same time, Russia continues to regard Turkmenistan as a key element in its sphere of military interests. Russia has signed agreements with Turkmenistan for stationing border guards and air defense forces in Turkmenistan. Russia also supports the building of the national armed forces by providing training for officers and sharing force maintenance costs.

President Niyazov acknowledged Russia’s legitimate military interests in the region, stating that his country’s security interests would be better served through
cooperation with Russia than through participation in multinational military organizations. Membership in the latter contradicts its foreign policy of non-interference, as well as its military doctrine that the principal function of Turkmenistan's army is to protect the country from external aggression. Another military doctrine holds that local wars, border conflicts, and military build ups in adjacent countries are the main source of danger to Turkmenistan. Although Turkmenistan has no disputed borders, its doctrine is based on concerns about the civil conflicts in Tajikistan and the instability in northern Afghanistan, especially after the collapse of its pro-Soviet regime in 1991, as well as on traditional tensions with Iran. On the other hand, Turkmenistan's leadership completely discounts the fear that Islamic fundamentalism would spread from Iran into the republic, a prospect of low probability considering that Iranian fundamentalists adhere to the Shia branch of Islam, while the state controlled Islam of Turkmenistan belongs to the Sunni branch.

Turkmenistan officers are trained in military educational establishments of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Defense, while Russian officers in Turkmenistan train draftee sergeants and specialists. Some limited training is provided in the military faculty established at the Turkmenistan State University. The Turkmenistan Armed Forces Personnel are trained according to Soviet military doctrine, using Soviet training methods. Recruits receive a four-year basic training and then take an oath of allegiance. This is followed by months of specialist training appropriate to the arm in which the personnel will serve. There after the soldiers are assigned to their definitive units.

In the long term the links with Moscow will remain the cornerstone of Turkmenistan's defence policy. During 1992, three important agreements were concluded between the Russian Federation and the republic: a treaty of Friendship and co-operation; a treaty governing joint measures in connection with the creation of Turkmen Armed Forces; and a Border Treaty. The first agreement was based on a formula adopted by the Soviet Union in the 1930's that governed relations with all friendly states until 1991, and was the subject of negotiations in Moscow and
Ashgabat throughout the first half of 1992. The Treaty was finally ratified by the Supreme Soviet (Majlis) on 30 September and governs cultural, political, economic, trade and diplomatic ties.

The second agreement, concerning the armed forces, provided for handing over to Turkmenistan of more than half of all military formations and installations of the former Soviet Army within Turkmenistan in five years. Until that time, all nationalised formations would remain under the operational control of a joint Russo-Turkmen command: aviation and air defence units, together with border troops detachments, would be subject to Russian control. Meanwhile 50 Russian officers were offered contracts by the Turkmen Defence Ministry and in some cases by presidential decree. In 1992 over 300 former Soviet Army units and formations, totalling some 120,000 men, were deployed in Turkmenistan. Agreement on the transfer of former Soviet assets was reached in June and ratified by the Majlis on September 1992.

Turkmenistan lacks senior trained native personnel to command and administer its armed forces and at present few facilities provide higher military training and education. In early 1993 about 95 percent of all officers serving in Turkmenistan were representatives of the Slav nations, or came from other republics of the CIS.

Consequently, both sides recognize the need for a lengthy handover period, allowing Moscow to make provisions to withdraw the force under its jurisdiction, restructure its defence posture in the region, and lend valuable assistance in the evolution of Turkmen armed forces. The treaty between the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan of June 1992 recognises that the total troops on the republic's territory exceeded defence sufficiency. Consequently, 70 units and formations remained under Russian jurisdiction while 30 were disbanded, the remaining 200 were handed over to Turkmen Defence Ministry. The treaty provided for a provisional joint Russo-Turkmen command to control and administer the reorganization, training and the
creation of a maintenance and supply infrastructure.

Russian interest centers on the fact that Turkmenistan is a large country in the southern periphery of the former Soviet Union, of great economic potential, its rich natural resources, a sparse population and a watershed between Islamic fundamentalism and the Slav world. Moreover, its role in the strategic defence cordon of the Russian Federation remains paramount.

Below mentioned are some of the important hypotheses that have been tested and proved in my research.

- Turkmenistan is an important country for Russia’s geopolitical interests due to its geographical location near radical Islamic countries like Iran and Afghanistan.
- Russia has gained maximum economic and political advantage compared to any other external actor in Turkmenistan due to Putin’s aggressive economic diplomacy.
- Turkmenistan’s positive treatment of Russian minority population has created conducive atmosphere for stable relations with Russia.
- Though it is not a part of any regional security grouping Turkmenistan’s strong military and defence ties with Russia has strengthened its sense of security.
- Turkmenistan authoritarian leadership has benefited from relations with Russia which has chosen to ignore the issues of democracy and human rights while dealing with the near abroad.
- Turkmenistan continued dependence on Russia for energy exports is a result mainly of its search for alternative routes through Iran and Afghanistan which find few takers.