

New strides forward in Eurasian land-bridge policy

by Muriel Mirak Weissbach

In a period in which organizations, alliances, and structures are crumbling under the impact of economic and financial crises, it is lawful that new institutions should arise, as the result of efforts to build stable foundations for the future. Such is the case of the new union which came into being on Jan. 4-5, in Istanbul, known as the D-8, or "Developing 8." Following on the initiative of Turkish Prime Minister Ecmettin Erbakan, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Egypt (represented by its deputy foreign minister) met, and agreed to create a new economic and political union. Erbakan opened the two-day meeting by announcing that the new grouping of Islamic states would pursue a "combative cultural-political aim," according to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the organ of Swiss banking and intelligence circles. The D-8, he said, should "put an end to the Western industrial nations' domination over the developing sector." The pre-condition for this is a "powerful economic and political union," in the *Zeitung's* understanding.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati made clear that the new union, initially constituted of eight Islamic nations, would welcome further members, as soon as procedures for membership were finalized, and that it would soon emerge as a major factor on the world economic scene. Velayati said that the aim of the initiative, was to promote development. "Macro-economic issues and international trade remain . . . the main concerns of the developing states," he said. "A large number of developing countries continue to face an uneven development due to the immense problems related to their terms of trade, external debt, insufficient development resources, widespread poverty, impediments in transfer of technology and limitations for human resources development."

Velayati recommended that the D-8 develop new strategies in the context of the globalized economy, and that it strengthen the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which groups more than 50 Islamic nations. Velayati said that the D-8 should use the lessons gained in the OIC to create new areas of cooperation. In the context of the increase, in past years, of cooperation among neighboring developing countries, he said, "the new alliance is required to encourage regional and sub-regional cooperation as a basis for broader cooperation among developing countries," and named the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the South African Development Community (SADC) as bodies to be mobilized. This means, that the D-8 sees itself as the seed crystal for a larger combination of national economies, representing the totality of the developing sector.

Origins of the D-8

As Lyndon LaRouche pointed out in a radio interview with "EIR Talks" on Jan. 8, the Erbakan initiative was "an attempt to fill a vacuum which was left by the post-1989 final dissolution" of the Non-Aligned Movement. It came in response to the actual injury being done to Iran, Turkey, and other countries, by the Samuel Huntington "clash of civilizations" policy pursued by London and particularly the Republicans in the United States. Velayati made a similar point, euphemistically saying that the "current international environment is not supportive of the development process" among the so-called Third World, although developing countries have tried to remove obstacles to progress. Velayati explained that the D-8 would be able to aid economic and social

development of members by expanding multilateral cooperation in various fields, as well as through political consultation. He said the group, which represents almost 800 million people, should encourage cooperation among the private sectors and central banks of member countries, and should launch joint ventures in third countries.

The union, as presented at the Istanbul meeting, is, however, not to be considered a closed body, concentrated on the internal economic needs of the member countries only. As both Erbakan and Velayati underlined, the D-8 is to be a negotiating vehicle in relations with other organizations. “[The] principle of cooperation instead of exploitation would guide us to work for a favorable international environment,” he said, according to reports in the Persian press. The D-8, as a new economic pole, is to form organized relations with groups like the G-7 (Western industrial nations plus Japan), because, according to the report issued by the Iranian press agency IRNA, “without cooperation with other economic groups, there would be no chance of progress.” The *Zeitung* understood this to signify that the D-8, as interlocutor of the G-7, would “represent the rights of the developing countries in Asia and Africa, which are identical to the Islamic world. In the name of these developing countries, the D-8 should even co-determine the birth of a new world order.” As LaRouche put it, the D-8 initiators are essentially announcing to the G-7, “Okay, we have our clout, we have our club, you have your club. Let’s get together, and, now, renegotiate the deal.”

Erbakan’s idea for such an Islamic union is not new. According to the *Zeitung*, “The vision of a Muslim union had been proposed at the beginning of the 1960s by the Turk Erbakan and the Indonesian B.J. Habibi, at the Aachen University in Germany.” Habibi is known today as the “architect of the booming Indonesian economy.” Reportedly, the two hatched the idea of such a union, in recognition of the fact that “the underdevelopment of many countries was the result of Western imperialism and the world order which had been proposed by the U.S.A., Great Britain, and the U.S.S.R. after the Yalta conference of 1945.” Erbakan has been quoted recently to the effect that the West created “artificial tensions in the Islamic world, in order to dominate it.”

It was Erbakan’s accession to the prime minister position in Turkey, which brought the vision closer to realization. For his first trip abroad, Erbakan broke with tradition, which would have him visit a power in the West, and travelled to Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia—all the countries which have since become D-8 members. During that tour last summer, the Turkish prime minister held detailed consultations with his interlocutors on the new formation.

Although this design was not publicized at the time, what did make news was the groundbreaking agreement Erbakan signed on his first stop, in Teheran, on Aug. 10-11, 1996 (see *EIR*, Aug. 23, 1996). The agreements involved gas, transportation, and electricity deals, which enhanced the infrastruc-

ture links between Turkey and Iran. Erbakan stressed that this signalled a cooperative effort between Ankara and Teheran—which the British geopoliticians had been pitting against one another in a contrived “race for influence” over the Central Asian republics. At the center of the August agreements was a \$20 billion deal, over 23 years, for Iranian and Turkmen gas supplies to Turkey, via a pipeline to be built by 1997, along with Iranian electricity supplies and an extension of rail connections.

Foreign sabotage, domestic opposition

Plenty of obstacles have been placed in the way of this Iranian-Turkish cooperation, but both governments seem determined to see their grand design through. The most obvious obstacle has been the sanctions policy adopted by the United States against Iran, which threatens to punish third parties for economic relations with Teheran. Responding to questions on such hostility, Velayati said, “Iran and Turkey have common history, religion, and traditions, and the Western countries’ views toward Teheran-Ankara relations are not the same. For example, the European states welcomed development of cooperation between the two countries.” During a visit to Turkey in December, to sign seven economic agreements, Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told journalists that

EIR on the Internet

EIR News Service has announced the launching of a new World Wide Web site, www.larouchepub.com. The site will include a repository of some of Lyndon LaRouche’s writings, which were kept at his Presidential campaign’s website, which has now shut down.

Once it is fully operational, the new website will contain many new features, including:

- Table of Contents and selected articles from the latest issue of *EIR*.
- A search engine, allowing visitors to search the entire website for keywords and phrases.
- Links to all other LaRouche-related Internet sites, including a transcription of LaRouche’s interviews with the weekly “EIR Talks” radio broadcast.
- On-line subscriptions to *EIR*, *New Federalist*, and other items, with secure, encrypted credit card transactions.
- A searchable index of *EIR* articles by title, subject, and author, eventually going back to the magazine’s first issue over 20 years ago.
- Special services for subscribers to *EIR*.

the deals were not to be read as an anti-U.S. gesture, though he acknowledged U.S. attempts to spoil relations—attempts he said were doomed to fail. On the same occasion, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel defended his country's policy, saying, "To those who criticize Turkey for purchasing Iranian gas, we can only respond that Turkey is an independent country. We are determined to develop our cooperation with Iran further."

Inside Turkey, the critics have been loud. First, Erbakan was attacked for the itinerary of his first foreign tour, which was considered too "Islamicist"; now, following the D-8 meeting, some press have accused him of delusions of grandeur, dreams of re-establishing Turkish hegemony in the region. Countering these attacks, both he and Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller have ridiculed the charge that the D-8 is an "Islamic" formation, any more than the European Union is exclusively Christian.

The hysteria which has broken out in response to these developments, is not only a reaction to closer Iranian-Turkish ties or to a new Islamic grouping, but is part of the continuing attempt to sabotage the Eurasian land-bridge economy, of which these developments are an integral part. All the nations in the D-8 lie along the Eurasian land-bridge routes (even Nigeria would be linked to the land-bridge, once the transportation grid is extended into Africa, via Egypt). During Rafsanjani's visit to Turkey, he and Demirel "also made agreements on introductory measures for the reconstruction of the Silk Road," according to *Iran Report*. There is no doubt that the Turkish and Iranian foreign policy is consciously part of the grand design for revival of the Silk Road, which the Beijing government has been implementing for the last decade.

Russian foreign policy is increasingly orienting toward this reality, as the economic and political center of the future world. The latest indication is a statement on Jan. 6, by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin, to the effect that Moscow will look more to Asia in 1997. As LaRouche explained in "EIR Talks," the Russians have been supporting Iran for some time, because they realize that "there is no such thing as development of Eurasia, without Iran," because the most convenient route from China, Central Asia, to the Indian and Pacific oceans, to the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and to Europe, passes through Iran. Russia has gone ahead with plans to help build the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran, which is to be completed in three years, despite pressures from the West not to.

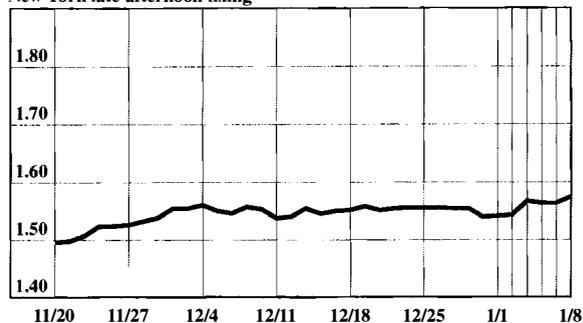
For its part, Iran is intervening to prevent the Afghan war from destabilizing the entire region, which threatens Russia. In fact, it was in the context of the D-8 meeting in Istanbul, that the Iranians and Turks met with the Pakistanis, to seek a solution to the crisis.

In June, there is to be a summit meeting, during which the D-8 is to become a reality. It can be expected, that many more steps will be taken in the interim, to establish that reality on the ground.

Currency Rates

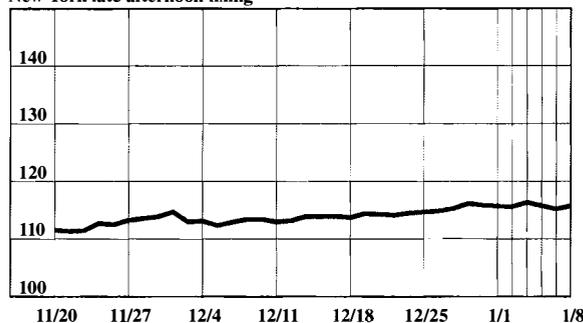
The dollar in deutschmarks

New York late afternoon fixing



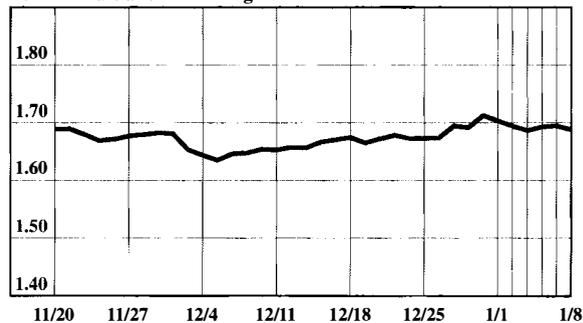
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

