

**AN INQUIRY INTO THE D-8 EXPERIMENT: AN INCIPIENT MODEL OF AN
ISLAMIC COMMON MARKET?**

Berdal Aral*

It is now (2005) eight years since D-8 came into existence. D-8 was founded among eight prominent Muslim countries, namely Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Egypt and Nigeria on 15 June 1997. The initial ‘D’ of D-8 refers to the word ‘developing’; in other words, this was the initiative of certain developing nations whereby economic issues were the prime motive.¹ The trade between Muslim countries in 1997 was less than 4 percent of their overall trade with the rest of the world. This miniscule rate of trade was no doubt alarming and called for remedies to sort out this anomaly. The “father”, so to speak, of D-8 was Necmettin Erbakan who served as Turkey’s prime minister in 1996-97. The idea of establishing an organization among Muslim countries gripped Erbakan during his visits to some Muslim countries in Africa and Asia as prime minister in 1996. While members of D-8 were undeniably part of the developing world, their commonality was more conspicuous in the religious front: except for Nigeria and Malaysia where Muslims made up nearly sixty percent of the population, adherents of Islamic faith constituted an overwhelming majority of the peoples brought together under the roof of D-8. This initiative was intended to establish a more liberal trading system and greater economic co-operation among the participant states.

By contrast to the wide media coverage which it received at its inception in 1997, D-8 has since faded into oblivion. Too many of the drawbacks, disadvantages and pitfalls played themselves out to subvert D-8. Political instability and turmoil in the majority of member states, including Turkey where the architect of D-8, Necmettin Erbakan, has been ousted, first, from power and, then, from politics altogether, while former deputy prime minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim was put in prison on a myriad of charges only to be released in 2004. Nawaz Sharif, the prime minister of Pakistan, was likewise toppled by a military coup, while President Suharto of Indonesia was forced to step down through a combination of domestic opposition and international pressure. Turkey and Malaysia have also been struck by devastating economic and financial crisis in the last five years with unpleasant social and political consequences. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the political will, idealism and determination behind D-8 have accordingly receded. At least during its heydays, D-8 was looked upon by many as the incipient model of a future *Islamic common market* on account of the pronounced goal of an ever-widening process of economic co-operation and deepening trade ties among the participant states that comprised a majority of Muslims worldwide. However, D-8 has thus far performed far worse than expected due largely to political and economic crisis on the one hand, and to the lack of commitment on the part of governing elites in member countries on the other. This perhaps explains to a considerable degree why D-8 does not seem to have attracted enough attention from the academia in Turkey and elsewhere. The difficulty of finding the much needed data about D-8 member states on the one hand, and the scarcity of D-8 activities, excepting technical cooperation, which are the necessary inputs for research, have all played their part in this lack of academic interest over D-8. This paper is, thus, one of the first essays which seeks to delve into the case of D-8 scheme.

The Idea behind D-8

The idea of establishing special economic links between the most populous Muslim countries, with the exception of Malaysia which was then and still is one of the most dynamic economies in the Islamic world, appears to have been inspired by the example set by the G-7. Founded amongst world's richest countries, the G-7 is not an international organization since it does not have permanent organs or a hierarchical decision-making mechanism; yet, it plays a crucial role in determining the main currents of the world economy. Its flexibility, compactness and clear sense of direction without the backing of solid institutional mechanisms, are among the underlying factors behind the effectiveness of G-7. Similarly, the framers of D-8 wanted to bring about a smooth-functioning and practical structure unhindered by institutional and bureaucratic inertia.

As is generally accepted, this century will almost certainly witness an even fiercer competition between North America, the European Union, and the Pacific rim than ever before. In order not to be marginalized, D-8 countries found it necessary to co-operate extensively in the economic, commercial and financial fronts. The founders of D-8 were aware of the dangers to its proper functioning of too much bureaucracy and outside intervention by powerful third states or political groupings which have apparently undermined the effectiveness of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). In 1997 when D-8 was founded, its members had a share of 54 percent of the total exports and 55 percent of the total imports realised by Islamic countries. The total GDP of D-8 member states constituted nearly 60 percent of the total GDP of the OIC countries at the time. The total population of D-8 countries was nearly 800 million, which meant that they made up about 65 percent of the overall population in the Islamic world.

Motivations of Individual Member States

The economic aspirations and priorities of member states aptly suited to the goal of establishing a special trading bloc. This situation is well summed up in *the Chronicle*:

*“Three of the D-8 member countries – Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia -- are major emerging markets with high growth prospects. Four others -- Iran, Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan -- are striving to unshackle their economies from state control. The eighth, Bangladesh, is climbing from the bottom rung of the world's economic ladder.”*²

At least in the beginning, the founders of D-8 avoided any resort to the language of an emerging bloc that would challenge existing international norms and institutions. Instead, they turned their attention to economics and trade. In other words, D-8 was not the product of an emotional outburst against “imperialism”; but rather was the outcome of genuine dynamics that were indigenous to the member states themselves. That there was a reasonable degree of complementarity among the founding states in respect of raw materials and industrial products surely increased the likelihood of D-8’s sustainability.³

A review of the motives behind the individual members that chose to participate in D-8 indicates that they were mostly prompted into action by their immediate concerns, priorities and interests mostly related to material rewards. Members were also content to have established a new international platform for enhancing dialogue and cooperation among Muslim countries. This was especially true of Erbakan and his associates. Some D-8 members, or, rather, some governments, also considered the D-8 as a useful channel to relieve them from international isolation.

To begin with, from the **Turkish** perspective, as represented by Erbakan, D-8 project could restore Turkey’s long-neglected ties with the Islamic world. For Erbakan, D-8 would

clearly demonstrate his commitment to the unity of Muslims worldwide. This initiative would, in his view, approve of his conviction that Turkey should assign itself the role of leadership and a locomotive in bringing Muslim nations together. However there was more a romantic streak to it than a revolutionary outburst that could in time upset the entire international system. Erbakan's desire to find new markets for Turkish exports was equally significant as a motivating factor.

As for **Iran**, since the revolution in 1979 which brought Islamic forces to power, it always pleaded its support for Islamic causes in the world. Therefore, the idea of an economic and commercial cooperation among prominent Muslim states was appealing to Iran. This country was and still is the victim of economic and political strangulation by the US since the Islamic revolution. This naturally prompted Iran to seek all avenues that provided alternative markets for its exports and ways to acquire technology.

No doubt, then, D-8 project was consistent with Iran's foreign policy preferences. As expressed by Iran's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Maleki, in 1997, Iran's first priority in matters of foreign policy was to establish cordial relations with its neighbours in the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Gulf and Afghanistan. Its second set of priorities were linked to the Islamic world, South-East Asia and Russia. Iran's third circle of interests comprised the developing world.⁴ Given that the D-8 consisted of Muslim countries and its agenda overlapped with Third World demands for a fairer share of world resources, D-8 well suited to Iranian perspectives and priorities.

In 1997 when D-8 was proclaimed to the world, Iran was the subject of USA's "dual containment" policy alongside Iraq, an initiative launched in 1993. In the view of the US, Iran was a "rogue state" that threatened "the entire region and the world."⁵ Accordingly, from 1994, the US chose to impose sanctions on foreign companies that invested on Iranian oil above certain level. By 1997, Iran saw stability on its borders as a vital precondition for

economic growth. This, Iran wanted to achieve, *inter alia*, through reaching out to new markets for its gas and oil. Hence D-8 served Iranian interests in a number of ways: first, D-8 could be read as a sign of support which the Islamic world extended to Iran against the latter's strangulation by the US as the result of an economic embargo; secondly, the D-8 represented a new outlet for Iranian exports, especially in oil and gas; finally, its membership in D-8 alongside Middle Eastern states such as Turkey and Egypt, was likely to accelerate Iran's integration into the region.

For its part, as the strongest and most populous of Arab nations, **Egypt** was pleased to take its rightful place in D-8 as the leader of the Arab world. It could not however hide its lack of enthusiasm for Turkey's extraordinary role in the materialisation of the project. Egypt had a number of misgivings about Turkey and its motivations in the context of D-8: first, it was disappointed about the military cooperation between Turkey and Israel; secondly, Egypt, like other Arab states, was displeased about Turkish military presence in northern Iraq considered as "aggression".⁶ While suspicious of Turkish motives, Egypt was hoping that D-8 could perhaps alleviate the deep economic and social problems which it had been suffering. Through D-8, Egypt could also improve ties with Iran which had been cut off in 1980, a year after the Iranian revolution.

Indonesia was the most populous of the D-8 member states. Its per capita income in 1996 was roughly 1000 dollars. However it had a reasonably diversified economy as one would expect of a country with high population (200 million) and a sizeable territory (nearly 2 million square kilometres). When D-8 was founded in 1997, Indonesia, under President Suharto's quasi-autocratic rule, was in the midst of political, economic and financial turmoil. Indonesia was internationally –meaning mostly Western states and international organizations like the UN- condemned more so than ever from the mid-1990s for its heavy handling of the East Timor crisis where the indigenous population had been struggling for independence from

the same since 1975. The flood of condemnations for human rights violations, compounded by political chaos in Indonesia was deeply disturbing for the common people and the elites alike. The Western world, the US and Australia in particular, was generally considered as the main culprits behind the chaos in Indonesia. At the time, D-8 seemed to offer a partial relief from international isolation which Indonesia had to bear with for some time. It also hoped to reap the economic benefits of a large market offered by preferential trade agreements with members of D-8.

The least populous among D-8 member states with a population of about 20 million people, **Malaysia** had been enjoying the fruits of an impressive economic growth since the 1970s. In Malaysia, nearly 60 percent of the population were Muslim Malays for whom Islam was the symbol of their identity and a major frame of reference in Malaysia's international perspectives. Malaysia also hoped to gain an outlet for its increasingly competitive industrial exports, while obtaining cheap raw materials and labour through D-8 arrangements.

Since gaining independence from (West) Pakistan in 1971, **Bangladesh** had to grapple with huge economic and political problems. This country was and still is among the poorest countries in the world with a per capita income of around 260 USD in 1996. Therefore it was befitting that Bangladesh had been taking active part in meetings between the UN and the platform of the Least Developed Countries. As made known in the Official Site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, the founding principles of Bangladeshi foreign policy overlapped with the objectives of D-8: "support oppressed peoples throughout the world waging a just struggle against imperialism colonialism or racialism", and "the State shall endeavor to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity."⁷ Being the poorest member of D-8, Bangladesh also hoped to obtain economic and financial assistance from richer members of D-8.

Aside from Israel, **Pakistan** is the only state that is founded on reason of religion, i.e. Islam. Since Islam is the *raison d'être* of this state and the unifying force among disparate ethnic and linguistic communities in the country, Pakistan has, since its independence from India in 1947, displayed a strong propensity to take part in all sorts of alliances among Muslim countries. Pakistan has also conceived of the Islamic world, alongside its powerful allies like China, as a counterweight to its archenemy, India. Pakistan also aligned itself with the US as one of those “green belts” that hindered “communist penetration” into the region. However, when the Cold War ended in the early 1990s, all of a sudden Pakistan fell out of favour with the US. This was the result of two inter-related occasions: first, the Soviet Union under the leadership of Mihail Gorbachov pulled out the Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989. Hence, the US no longer needed Pakistan's active cooperation in Afghanistan in support of resistance against Soviet occupying forces. Secondly, the Soviet Union disintegrated and the socialist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe collapse one after the other. Communism was henceforward no longer a deadly threat to the security of the Western world. Apart from the radical shift in the international context, Pakistan was blamed by the US for having produced nuclear weapons, labelled in the Western media as the “Islamic bomb”. Consequently, the US cut off military and economic assistance to Pakistan from the early 1990s. US's apparent disregard for its former ally suggested that it would henceforward back up India, formerly supported by the Soviet Union, against Pakistan. At the time, Pakistan was also disillusioned with the failure of certain Arab regimes with “special ties” to the US to lobby for Pakistan.⁸

Pakistan was among the poorest of D-8 member states with a GNP per capita not exceeding 500 USD in 1996. What is more, it was beset by dire economic conditions during this period and was heavily in debt. The army refused to reduce its budget, although the IMF and the World Bank had been demanding stringent economic and financial measures to limit

public spending. Meanwhile, relations with India remained tense.⁹ D-8 could thus reinforce Pakistan's ties to the Islamic world which could partially substitute for its feeling of isolation and lack of sufficient economic and financial resources.

Nigeria had since 1994 enacted laws to liberalize its trade regime and to remove some of the barriers to foreign investment. However since the country had been ruled by a military government from that year onwards, Nigeria was more or less ostracised by the international community when D-8 came into being in 1997. D-8 would thus give a modicum of recognition to the Nigerian regime, at least in respect of the Islamic world. Nigeria was among the poorest members of D-8 with a per capita income of around 300 USD in 1996. It thus hoped to get economic and financial back-up from better off D-8 member states. Nigeria also saw D-8 as a useful platform to echo the concerns of poor African nations, such as the demand for debt relief.

The motivations and goals of each of D-8 member states which have been examined above, indicate that they did not represent a united front with clear, well-defined and unified objectives. Rather than D-8 representing the general will of the founding members, each had its own reasons to take part in this scheme deriving largely from domestic considerations. No doubt, all the parties would rejoice in seeing a more prominent role for the Islamic world in the world political arena. They would likewise feel exuberant about the prospects of expanding trade, economic and financial ties among D-8 members. This suggests, then, that the member states would surely have been satisfied if and when the Islamic world would have gotten a greater share of world resources instead of the negligible proportion which the figures indicated then. However such overall goodwill did not translate into the common language of shared organizational principles, plan of action, and the instruments to achieve those concrete goals.

The survey above of the motivations and goals of each member of D-8 makes it abundantly clear that it was not designed to constitute the nucleus of a future “Islamic common market” or a “confederate of Muslim nations”. Erbakan repeatedly assured that D-8 was open to new comers and that it was not intended to serve as an alternative to other international organizations.¹⁰ Nonetheless, in some ways, D-8 resembles the group of non-Aligned Nations by its emphasis on equitable sharing of world resources, fair trade, emphasis on economic cooperation among member states, rejection of market domination by western economic giants, and emphasis on justice, freedom and peace instead of oppression and economic exploitation. Such discourse was not however matched by radical strategies designed to lay down the foundation of a new economic and, then, political bloc. Neither the terms of the texts adopted nor the mechanisms envisioned by D-8 occasioned such eventuality. D-8, apart from enhancing economic cooperation and stimulating trade among member states, rested on the principle of the economies of scale which would promote specialisation in areas which member states felt themselves to be advantageous. Through D-8 scheme, members hoped to reduce the disparity in income and technology among themselves and the more advanced economies of the world.

The Istanbul Declaration of 15 June 1997, the result of the inaugural summit of D-8, identified the main goals and principal areas of cooperation of D-8, as well as the principles on which this co-operation ought to be based:

*“declare the main objective of D-8 to be socio-economic development in accordance with the following principles : **peace** instead of conflict; **dialogue** instead of confrontation; **co-operation** instead of exploitation; **justice** instead of double-standards; **equality** instead of discrimination; **democracy** instead of oppression”;*

“desirous of enhancing the insufficient volume of trade among our countries, as well as increasing the Group’s exports to the outside world”;

*“recognizing the need to overcome the existing trade barriers facing our countries”.*¹¹

The summit meetings held since 1997, from Dhaka (1999) and Cairo (2001) to Tehran (2004) Summits of Heads of States and Governments, have only registered the failures in achieving these goals. The global economic, financial and trading system has been periodically subjected to criticism in D-8 gatherings given that the system failed to consider the special needs of developing countries. For instance, the Dhaka Declaration expressed member states’ displeasure with the global trading regime since it failed to “take fully into account the conditions of developing countries.”¹² The Cairo Declaration registered the call for an end to protectionist trading policies on the part of the developed economies, while stressing “the need to strengthen cooperation to improve the international financial system in a democratic and a transparent way, thereby ensuring the greater participation of developing countries.”¹³

However such criticisms of the prevailing economic and financial system and calls for action were not couched in the confrontational language that smacked of anti-Westernism. The terms of agreements and declarations adopted by D-8, *inter alia*, reminded developed economies that they should be more concerned about the plight of the developing world. In other words, they did not seek a restructuring of the existing nature of things. This is after all only to be expected, given that, with the exception of Iran, none of the founding members of D-8 were openly hostile to the imperial hegemony of the Western world in the rest of world and, particularly in the Middle East. Even Iran, in spite of its revolutionary perspective of Islam, could hardly be blamed for pursuing an aggressive foreign policy. A special report of the *Middle East Economic Digest*, which was hardly sympathetic to Iran, made the point clear in a special report on Iran in 1993: “There is no evidence of a strategy of expansionism,

particularly of a military kind. Tehran would no doubt like to see the emergence of like-minded regimes elsewhere in the Middle East, but it does not appear to be doing anything substantive to bring this about.”¹⁴ The same passage noted that Iran was seeking accommodation with the existing international order and international organizations: “In practice, Iran is already in the post-revolutionary phase – working with the World Bank and the IMF, trying to join the General Agreement on Tariffs & Trade (GATT), opening up its nuclear facilities to inspection, signing treaties to ban chemical and other non-conventional weapons, professing allegiance to UN authority, opening up its economy to outside investment and arbitration, and adopting other measures considered unthinkable in the 1980s.”¹⁵

An article surveying the Islamic world in Summer 1996 stated with no unclear terms that “most Muslim countries are cooperative allies of the West.”¹⁶ Besides, excepting Iran which was apparently an Islamic republic, none of the D-8 states was governed by pro-Shariah parties. The “political Islam”, so to speak, was, from the perspective of many Western commentators, in retreat in the mid-1990s. Roy had by then declared the death of political Islam in *The Failure of Political Islam*. He concluded his book by drawing limits to the capacity of Islam in the contemporary world: “It will neither unify the Muslim world nor change the balance of power in the Middle East.”¹⁷ At the time, the Islamist opposition and the Muslim clergy were, more often than not, either co-opted by governments posing as the servants of Islam or were put under government control in countries like Egypt, Malaysia and Pakistan.¹⁸ Malaysia and Nigeria could not possibly apply Shariah law with impunity given the presence of sizeable non-Muslim populations in these countries.

However, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, some circles in the West, and in particular in the US, expressed outright hostility to D-8 which, in their view, was unacceptably antagonistic towards the West. It was first and foremost the hawks and pro-

Zionist lobbies in the US (these two groups sometimes overlapped) did not wait long before declaring D-8 as a dangerous challenge to the privileged presence of the US in parts of the Islamic world. Although during his premiership, Erbakan acted with far more caution than one would expect from a coalition government with “Islamists” as the senior partner, the aforementioned anti-D-8 groups blamed him for harbouring “fundamentalist and anti-western” ambitions.¹⁹ The setting up of D-8, thus, eventually became the long-sought-for “evidence” of Erbakan’s Islamist and anti-western leanings. His fall from power soon after the founding of D-8 through a “post-modern coup” which was engineered by the combined efforts of the army and various other groups and institutions in Turkey, many in Turkey believe, could not have been possible without active US support for anti-Erbakan forces.

D-8 Experiment in Practice

In spite of all the talk about deepening co-operation and preferential trade arrangements, D-8 has so far failed to deliver its promises. The intra-trade among D-8 member states has not swollen in any significant degree. The extent of industrial and agricultural cooperation remained well below than expected. This failure has resulted from a number of factors, ranging from lack of clarity to the lack of firm commitment on the part of member states. The fall of the Erbakan government a few months after the first D-8 summit was held in Istanbul in July 1997, meant that the project had to proceed at the absence of its architect.²⁰ Some of the participants to the D-8 meeting of Foreign Ministers in June 1997 indeed said that this project could not move forward effectively without Erbakan as prime minister.²¹

Indeed this prophecy turned out to be true. Erbakan’s departure, coupled with more substantive obstacles such as the lack of geographic proximity among member states and the scarcity of political determination on the part of governments, have all combined to

undermine the effectiveness of D-8. The poor performance of D-8 was drawn attention to by the *Al-Ahram Weekly* before the Cairo Summit of the D-8 in February 2001:

*That the D-8's mandate lacks clarity and has limited support from its members is evidenced by the fact that few D-8 initiatives have gotten off the ground. Established in 1997, the D-8 has had limited success in increasing trade among its member countries. And its four-year existence has done little to enhance cooperation among its member states in the fields of IT, industry, agriculture and even in culture.*²²

The Report of the IV. Session of the Council of Ministers in 2000 conceded that “the pace of the progress in D-8 cooperation has not...reached the desired level.”²³ The achievements of D-8 have apparently been confined to “the successful completion of a number of projects and programmes” as expressed in paragraph 17 of the Cairo Declaration. Members of D-8 have so far shied away from reducing customs tariffs and dismantling quota restrictions in intra-trade. The available data illustrates that overall trade among D-8 countries since has not shown any appreciable increase.²⁴ The Commission that prepared the ground work for the Fourth Summit of D-8 held in Tehran on 17-18 February 2004 noted in its report that, intra-trade among D-8 member states, although showing an increase of about 50 percent between 1999-2002, was still a very small fraction of its overall trade with the rest of the world. (21,3 billion USD out of 500 billion USD)²⁵ This situation has not changed for the better since 2002.

It was initially expected by the founders and supporters alike that D-8 would, in addition to economic cooperation, eventually extend its range of activities to include cultural, social, political and even military cooperation.²⁶ This has not however materialized in any significant way. D-8 has been more skilful in expressing its dissatisfaction with the global

economic system and calling for the improvement of the disparity between the rich and the poor of the world. In this context, the Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo called on D-8 member states during the third summit of D-8 in Cairo in 2001 “to sustain the pressure on the rich industrial nations for the cancellation of debts owed them by poorer countries.”²⁷ He also drew on the significance of economic welfare as the essential prerequisite of democracy.

Identifying the Roots of Failure: Lessons from the European Union (EU)

Experience

D-8 has so far failed to follow in the footsteps of the EU. In other words, the extent of economic, social and political integration among members of D-8 has been far more limited than that of the EU. D-8 was of course not planned to become the core of a future Islamic Common Market. However even the limited objectives of devising common projects, gradually dismantling trade barriers and intensifying economic co-operation have not far materialized thus far. This suggests that apart from some “accidents”, we may perhaps need to look at some **fundamental obstacles** to meaningful integration –even if partial- among members of D-8. A number of differences between D-8 and the EU can be pinpointed in this respect.

First, the extent of economic integration among countries in Western Europe was already considerable at the time when the European Economic Community (EEC) was established in 1957. The same is not true of D-8 countries. On the contrary, the extent of foreign trade and economic links among member states was (and still is) incomparably lower than their trade with the rest of the world. The volume of trade among D-8 member states was and still is less than 5 percent of their entire trade with the rest of the world.

Secondly, the EEC was founded upon the ruins of the Second World War. The perennial animosity between Germany and France could, as was believed by many, be overcome through the establishment of economic integration and mutual interdependence

between them. However such a powerful urge did not exist in the case of D-8. There were no two states or groups of states within D-8 which were deeply hostile to one another.²⁸ Although this may be considered an asset rather than a deficiency, it also suggests that the motives and interests of the parties were not strong and urgent enough to put their full weight behind D-8. Indeed it is difficult to see what common *immediate* and *concrete* problems might be faced by this heterogeneous group of countries. That they were all "developing" and "Muslim" countries" lay short of providing them with the required stamina, enthusiasm and determination to put up with the hardships of economic integration.

Thirdly, founding members of the EEC shared similar political cultures and institutional structures which could be termed as "liberal democratic". No such commonality existed for D-8 member states which mostly sought to accommodate authoritarian political structures with parliamentary systems. Likewise, D-8 members consisted of secular (Turkey) as well as Islamic (Iran) or semi-Islamic (Pakistan) political regimes. Indeed, although all the D-8 member states were bound by the common thread of Islam, individual members' perspective of Islam and its relation to politics, law and public life on the one hand, and of the extent of the role which should be played by Islamic principles in matters of foreign trade, institutional structure, legal provisions and foreign policy on the other, widely differed. Such differences also prevailed in the area of foreign policy. While Iran strongly resisted US hegemony in the world and, specifically, in the Middle East, Turkey and Egypt were closely associated with US interests in the region. (This identification did not necessarily cease to exist during Erbakan's premiership due to the complex network of treaty commitments by previous governments and the entrenched position of the establishment) Meanwhile, both Iran and Egypt were opposed to the intimate relationship between Israel and Turkey which, in their view, gave further boost to Israel's aggressive policies in the region.

Fourthly, the borders of D-8, unlike those of the founding members of the EEC, were not contiguous, but were spread across three continents. This was an obvious handicap for the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons.

Finally, the founding fathers had a clear vision regarding the objectives of the EEC. The substantive content of the Treaty of Rome (1957), the gradual introduction of a common market, the solid and dynamic institutional structure of the EEC were the products of this vision. No such clarity of vision existed vis-à-vis D-8. This is not surprising considering that D-8 was far being a long-thought project with clear historical and intellectual roots.²⁹

Conclusion

In the light of the historical record, D-8 seems thus far to have failed to deliver its promises. It still lacks an identifiable sense of direction, while its legal and institutional structure does not rest on clear and solid foundations. The problems which we may associate with the fragility of economic and political structures in the developing world have significant bearing on the inadequate level of integration within D-8. International organizations that are founded among Third World states too often lose their sense of direction if and when members are struck by economic crises, even if they are short-lived. This has also been true of the D-8.³⁰ Political crisis are likewise common occurrence in the Third World. The crippling affect of political turmoil and social upheavals in countries like Turkey, Pakistan, Nigeria and Indonesia since D-8 was founded in 1997, has debilitated member states' ability to stay the course by diverting their energy to domestic problems. In addition to such endemic weaknesses, there have been too many domestic (in Turkey) as well as international attempts to drive a wedge between Turkey and Iran, the two leading powers within D-8. Erbakan's removal from power enabled Turkey's pro-Western and secularist ruling elites to tighten their grip on power more firmly than before. The new government chose to water down the D-8 scheme and chose to remain distant towards Iran. Finally, the reluctance of most member

states to pursue the ambition, at least, of a partial economic integration was likewise decisive. The parties have either opted for devising joint projects of a technical character or constrained themselves to expressing general objectives without clear guidelines and duties for action. As a result, then, D-8 is likely to inspire new schemes with more ambitious goals in the future if and when others in the Muslim World draw the right conclusions from its failings.

*** Assistant Professor, Lecturer in International Law, Fatih University, Istanbul.**

NOTES

¹The original name considered for D-8 was I-8. However, a more “neutral” title was chosen when Egypt warned of the dangers of provoking the Western world, considering that “I” referred to Islam. Muhammed Harb, in Bülent Alan, *D-8: Yeni Bir Dünya*, (D-8: The Search for a New World), (İstanbul, Yörünge Yayınları, 2001), p.387.

² Edward deMarco, “Islamic countries form Developing Eight economic group”, 15 June 1997, *The Chronicle*, <http://www.chron.com/content/chronicle/world/97/06/16/islamist-summit.2-0.html>

³ Hamit Ersoy, “Modern Cumhuriyet’in Üçüncü Arayışı: D-8’ler Olayı”, (The Third Venture of the Republic: The Case of D-8) *Bilim Yolu*, 1998, No.1, 209-225, pp.219-220.

⁴ *The Economist*, “Survey Iran”, January 18th 1997, p.10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

⁶ *Turkish Daily News*, June 15, 1997.

⁷ Homepage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, <http://www.mofabd.org/fundental.htm>

⁸ *The Economist*, November 23, 1991, p.21.

⁹ Richard McGill Murphy, “Changing of the Guard in Pakistan”, *The New Leader*, March 10, 1997, 7-9, p.8.

¹⁰ *Turkish Daily News*, June 15, 1997.

¹¹ İstanbul Declaration, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/D-8/İstanbuldeclaration02.htm>

¹² Dhaka Declaration, 2 March 1999, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/D-8/dhaka.declaration05.htm>

¹³ Cairo Declaration, 25 February 2001, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/D-8/developments.cairo04.htm>

¹⁴ *MEED*, Special Report: Iran, February 19, 1993, 8-11, p.10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁶ Ira M. Lapidus, “A Sober Survey of the Islamic World”, *ORBIS*, Summer 1996, Vol.40, No.3, p.391.

¹⁷ Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk, (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1996), p.194.

¹⁸ Lapidus, *op.cit.*, p.391.

¹⁹ See articles such as the following: Alan Makovsky, "How to Deal with Erbakan", *Middle East Quarterly*, March 1997, <http://www.meforum.org/article/335>; Sabri Sayari, "Turkey's Islamist Challenge", *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1996, <http://www.meforum.org/article/314>; Ann Louise Bardach, "A Real Turkey", *The New Republic*, July 7, 1997, 16-19. Alan Makovsky conceded that "Erbakan has somewhat moderated his statements since taking office..." However in spite of evidence to the contrary, Makovsky was intent on portraying Erbakan as a virulent threat to western interests on account of his attempts to improve relations with the Muslim world: "...his predilections have not changed. As prime minister, his two trips abroad have been to the Muslim world, where he visited nearly a dozen states, including, most memorably, Iran (where he signed the gas pipeline deal) and Libya. Erbakan's major diplomatic initiative has been to establish a grouping of the eight most populous Islamic states, intended to foster economic cooperation, as well as "political consultations," and serve as a Muslim counterweight to the industrialized Group of Seven (G-7)." Makovsky did not stop here. He proceeded to accuse the Western world for failing to see the radicalism of Erbakan: "Westerners...tend to overlook Erbakan's extreme statements and actions, perhaps because of his inability so far to alter basic elements of Turkey's pro-Western foreign policy." Sayari likewise admits, in the concluding section of his article, that Erbakan tended to adopt a conciliatory approach in matters of foreign policy after forming the government: "Erbakan has dropped his opposition to the Customs Union agreement with the EU..., has refrained from criticisms of the West and indicated that his party would not pull Turkey out of NATO."

²⁰ *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, 15-21 February 2001, Issue No.521.

²¹ *Turkish Daily News*, June 15, 1997.

²² *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, *op.cit.*

²³ <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/D-8/developments.cairo04.htm>

²⁴ <http://www.foreigntrade.gov.tr/ead/ekonomi/sayi7/d8.htm>

²⁵ Developments since the Third Summit in Cairo, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/d-8/developments.tehran.htm>

²⁶ Mustafa Necati Özfatura, *Türkiye* (daily), June 17, 1997, in Alan, *op.cit.*, pp.356-358.

²⁷ *Africa News Service*, February 26, 2001.

²⁸ Mehmet Ali Birand, *Sabah* (daily), November 24, 1997.

²⁹ The D-8 still lacks an identifiable sense of direction; besides, its legal and institutional structure does not rest on clear and solid foundations.

³⁰ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* (Strategic Depth), (İstanbul, Küre Yayınları, 2001), p.282.