Reconnecting with the Leftwing Political Parties and Social Movements as a Working Class Strategy: The case of Trade Unions in Turkey in a Context of Political Repression and Social Inequality since 2002 under the AKP rule

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Introduction

The circulation of resources between the political field and the trade union field and between the social movements sphere and trade unions since 2002

« How can the relations between the political field and the trade union field be transformed by the State and to what extend can the trade unions create new strategies against repression? »

Brief introduction on the trade union field and the historical and political context under the AKP rule

1. Political parties, groups and trade unions
   • The recruitment strategies of left-wing trade unions
   • Vote and elections: Constraints and opportunities

2. Collective action and trade unions
   • Local strategies and alliances
   • Connecting with social movements: The role of trade unions in Gezi Movement in 2013

• Conclusion
Brief introduction on the trade union field and the historical and political context under the AKP rule

The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi-AKP)

1. The Confederation of Civil Servants Trade Unions
2. The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu-DİSK)
3. The Confederation of Real Trade Unions (Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu-Hak-İş)
4. The Confederation Public Workers’ Unions (Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu-KESK)
The reconstruction of the trade union field under the AKP rule
- The instrumentalisation of law by the AKP
- The creation of a «good unionism» against a «marginal» unionism: The case of Hak-İş and Memur-Sen

The president of Hak-İş with the prime minister, the ministers and two former presidents of Hak-İş
The bipolarization of the trade union field

May Day 2013 in Taksim/Istanbul- Hak- İş

May Day 2013- Leftwing Parties and DİSK Istanbul
1. Relations between political parties, groups and trade unions
   - The recruitment strategies of left-wing trade unions
   - Vote and elections: Constraints and opportunities

2. Collective action and trade unions
   - Local strategies and alliances: Dockers’ Union in Istanbul
   - The role of trade unions in social movements: The case of Gezi Movement in May 2013
Recruitment strategies of left-wing trade unions

The profile of the trade unionists:

DİSK:
*Member of a political party, movement or association*
*Member of a socialist, social democratic party, movement or association*
*Supporter of a socialist, social democratic party, movement or association*

Hak-İş:
*Member of a political party, movement or association*
*Member of the AKP*
*Supporter of the government/the AKP*
Vote and elections: Constraints and opportunities

• Electoral strategies of trade unionists
  
  Candidate in local elections
  
  Candidate in parliamentary elections

• Parliamentary activities of the former trade unionist deputies
• Indirect financial aid during electoral campaigns
Social Movements and Trade Unions

Local strategies and alliances: The case of Limter-İş (The Trade Union of Dockers) in Istanbul

The Socialist Party of the Oppressed (Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi- ESP)
Mobilization Strategies of the dockers on local level in Tuzla/Istanbul
The employers kill, the government watches. Minister of Labor, resign.

Strike is a right. Those who defend the right to life cannot be on trial. The employers, responsible for occupational murders, should be on trial.
The role of trade unions in Gezi Movement in 2013: Opportunities and Limits

• The Mobilization of DİSK and KESK

• Impacts of the bipolarisation of the field: The Stance of Hak-İş and Memur-Sen

• Limits and future of the role of trade unions in social movements
The Mobilization of DİSK and KESK

-Declaration of a general strike on 17th of June

«Çapulcu teachers marching», «Marginal teachers marching»

«With the legacy of 15-16 June, we are resisting against the AKP dictatorship, we will win»
Resources and direct and indirect support of DİSK during the Gezi Movement

«Tayyip, this is the beginning of the end»
The Stance of Hak-İş and Memur-Sen on the Movement

Call for «common sense and prudence»

«Common call from NGOs: They warned about the demonstrations of Gezi Parkı» (President of Türk-İş, Hak-İş, Memur-Sen standing with the presidents of TOBB, TESK and other employers’ associations)
Adoption of a critical attitude by the trade unionists in Hak-İş and the impact of the bipolarisation of the field

«If the aim of the protestors was just about protecting the environment and nature, we would have supported too. But the movement went towards another direction, trying to make the government resign and put Turkey into an instable and powerless situation» (Interview with a trade unionist in Hak-İş in Ankara, Female, 37 years old, Summer 2014).
«We do not understand why DİSK makes a big deal out of this movement. A trade union’s duty is to protect its members’ rights. So they should be defending workers’ rights, not shouting in order to support a caos in the country or meddling with issues other than workers’ rights» (Interview with a trade unionist in Hak-İş in Ankara, Male, 45 years old, Summer 2013).

«DİSK is undermining the trade unionism. They think that it is just marching and crying and shouting and protesting. Trade unionism is no longer about organizing demonstrations and getting violent. You should propose projects, real plans and programs for the future in order to solve problems of the workers. However, what do they do? Just burning down the city, vandals..» (Interview with a trade unionist in Hak-İş in Ankara, Summer 2014).
Limits and future of the role of trade unions in social movements

• The high bipolarization of the trade union field
• Oppression and authoritarian practices: State violence and economic constraints
• The role of trade unions during elections and social movements remain essential while the evolution of political stance and strategies of different unions is uncertain and still to be defined and put into practice.
• Possible consequences for the future: The case of Soma mine disaster
Soma Mine Disaster: More than 300 workers killed on May 2014

Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of the AKP government right after the disaster (Standing next to him, former president of one of the trade unions affiliated to Hak-İş and former deputy of AKP)
Different Strategies

President of Hak-iş with the State representatives

The demonstrations of DİSK for Soma Disaster
In memory of workers killed in Soma and around the world