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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

Rainer Hampp Verlag

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Koçer, R. G. (2007). "Trade Unions at Whose Service?" Coercive Partnerships and Partnership in Coercion in Turkey's metal sector. *Industrielle Beziehungen : Zeitschrift für Arbeit, Organisation und Management*, 14(3), 245-269. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-357300>

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Rüya Gökhan Koçer*

“Trade Unions at Whose Service?” Coercive Partnerships and Partnership in Coercion in Turkey’s metal sector**

Abstract – *Partnership in coercion* is defined as cooperation between trade unions and employers at the expense of workers’ interests. It differs from *coercive partnership* by trade unions’ not mandatory but willing participation for furtherance of their own interests that are detached from those of their members. The legal changes after 1980 in Turkey created the basic conditions for both of these partnerships patterns. The analysis of the metal industry bargaining system reveals that there are three additional factors which rendered partnership in coercion possible in this sector: employers’ needs, weak trade union internal democracy and competition among trade unions. However the examination of some other industries in Turkey shows that partnership patterns in the metal sector cannot be easily used to make generalizations. Yet it possible to consider them as extreme forms which reveal a fundamental feature of partnership clearly: the nature and outcome of partnership are determined by complex interdependencies which are beyond the immediate control of those who are actually becoming partners.

„Gewerkschaften – zu wessen Diensten?“ Partnerschaft zwischen Zwang und Kollaboration in der türkischen Metallindustrie

Zusammenfassung – *Partnerschaftliche Kollaboration* als Zusammenarbeit zwischen Arbeitgebern und Gewerkschaften zu ihrem beiderseitigen Nutzen und auf Kosten von Arbeitnehmerinteressen ist zu unterscheiden von der *erzwungenen Partnerschaft*, die Gewerkschaften mit Arbeitgebern aus Überlebensgründen, ohne direkte Vorteile für sich und losgelöst von den Interessen ihrer Mitglieder, eingehen. Die türkischen Gesetzesänderungen nach 1980 haben die Basis für beide Partnerschafts-Modi geschaffen. Eine Analyse des Verhandlungssystems in der Metallindustrie ermittelt drei weitere Faktoren, die die partnerschaftliche Kollaboration in diesem Sektor möglich gemacht haben: die Bedürfnisse der Arbeitgeber, der fragwürdige Zustand der innergewerkschaftlichen Demokratie und der Wettbewerb zwischen den Gewerkschaften. Der Vergleich mit anderen Sektoren ergibt, dass die Partnerschaftsmuster in der Metallindustrie sich nicht ohne weiteres verallgemeinern lassen. Art und Ergebnis von Partnerschaften werden vielmehr durch komplexe Abhängigkeiten bestimmt, die jenseits der Kontrolle derer liegen, die die Partnerschaft eingehen.

Key words: **Partnership, Legal Framework, Union Power, Employers’ Interests, Coercion**

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I am very grateful to Bernhard Kittel, Jelle Visser, Ayşe Buğra, Annette Freyberg-Inan, Marcel van der Linden and two anonymous reviewers from Industrielle Beziehungen for their comments and suggestions. I am responsible for any errors.

** Artikel eingegangen: 30.12.2006

revidierte Fassung akzeptiert nach doppelt-blindem Begutachtungsverfahren: 7.7.2007.

Introduction

Partnership between employers and trade unions has been one of the prominent topics in contemporary industrial relations (see for example: Edwards et al. 2006; Bacon/Blyton 2006; Lucio/Stuart 2005; Ashwin 2004; Terry 2003; Haynes/Allen 2001; Marks et al. 1998; Kelly 1997). The essence of partnership can be described as the determination of employers and trade unions to take joint action towards realization of their mutually recognized interests. Although this description seems to be clear, the exact usefulness of partnership for a trade union can be represented in different ways. It can be considered as one of the revitalization strategies that trade unions may adopt together with recruitment, mergers, coalitions, political action and international links (Frege/Kelly 2003). However it is also possible to argue that, trade unions can satisfy workers' needs only through successful engagement with employers in an environment where both the state and employers do not envisage a crucial role for them. Thus under certain conditions partnership may become the precondition for trade union effectiveness rather than one of the strategies for being effective (Boxall/Haynes 1997: 568-571). Thus one can see that for trade unions partnership may appear as *an optional choice* or as *necessity*. Yet in either situation, partnership is not considered as an impediment to the ability of trade unions to represent the interests of their members.

However the examination of the relationship between trade unions and employers in ex-Soviet states (Ashwin 2004; Kubicek 2002) leads one to ask whether trade unions involved in partnership with employers can remain as representative entities if their existence depends on their usefulness for employers and/or willingness of employers to tolerate them. Obviously under such conditions the relationship between trade unions and employers can be best named as *coercive partnership* in the sense that trade unions would be part of such a relationship reluctantly and only for mere survival (Lucio/Stuart 2005: 809). The defining feature of coercive partnership is that in such a relationship trade unions are "incorporated into making concessions" for benefit of employers. (Bacon/Blyton 2006: 225-229).

In this article by focusing on the bargaining system in Turkey's metal industry I will show that there is another variant of partnership, that is, *partnership in coercion* which is based on not reluctant but willing cooperation of trade unions with employers at the expense of workers' interests.

Theoretical Framework

Partnership in coercion as a union strategy can be described as trade unions' collaboration with employers not merely for survival but for furtherance of their own interests which are detached from those of their members. I argue that this kind of relationship may emerge under conditions that are likely to generate coercive partnerships. Thus partnership in coercion can be understood by first exploring the nature of coercive partnership and its influences on the union behavior.

Coercive partnership and its determinants

The possibility that trade unions may be forced into coercive partnerships by employers has been acknowledged in the literature (Bacon/Blyton 2006; Frege/Kelly 2003;

Boxall/Haynes 1997; Kelly 1997). However, it is not easy to identify the exact conditions which may lead to coercive partnerships. In this respect, observations such as “partnership often takes place on a terrain where labor’s power is limited” (Edwards et al. 2006: 127), “partnership need not to be underpinned by equivalence of power” (Haynes/Allen 2001: 178) or “it is undeniable that partnership reflects union weakness” (Terry 2003: 468) hint that power inequality between trade unions and employers alone would not necessarily lead to coercive partnerships. However the ability and willingness of trade unions, despite power inequality, to oppose employers while being involved in partnership is suggested as an indicator of non-coercive type of partnership (Ashwin 2004: 42). This means that a partnership relation would not be coercive as long as trade unions are able and willing to “create both opportunity and threat for the employers” (Haynes/Allen 2001: 182).

Job insecurity appears to be the primary factor which prevents trade unions from posing a serious threat to employers (Bacon/Blyton 2006; Edwards et al. 2006; and see also Gennard 2007: 96). However, as in Germany, institutional support may enable trade unions to acquire the capacity to pose threats without being occupied with recruitment, thus may reduce the impact of job insecurity on union strength and in this way prevent coercive partnerships (Frege/Kelly 2003; but see also Hassel 2007). On the other hand, certain institutional arrangements in a high unemployment environment may also render trade unions very vulnerable to coercive partnership as in Russia where, due to Soviet inheritance, trade unions function as welfare departments of enterprises and thus their existence become very dependent on employers’ consent (Ashwin 2004: 32-33; Kubicek 2002: 613). However it is possible to face confusing mixes of institutional support and job insecurity: for example it is difficult to judge if and when a partnership relation becomes coercive in the post-1997 Britain where partnership is encouraged by the Labor government via positive incentives (Terry 2003: 463), the legal framework tends to protect non-representative trade unions (Smith/Burton 2006: 408) and unemployment might be a regionalized problem (Bacon/Blyton 2006).

Taking these into account one should only make a cautious observation: coercive partnership is *likely* to occur in an environment where there is no job security and the institutional/legal structure does not provide any protection for trade unions, thus trade unions are deprived from the ability to pose a serious threat. To this one should add Lucio/Stuart’s argument: trade unions would be involved in coercive partnership relations with employers only when they have no other alternative and, as they acquire strategic information, they would gradually transform this relationship so as to represent their members properly (Lucio/Stuart 2005: 809).

This overall assessment has a basic implication: trade unions would be part of coercive partnership only as a last resort due to *necessity* resulting from job insecurity and legal/institutional environment, and, coercive partnership is a dynamic relationship which would, through the actions of involved trade union, evolve into something more advantageous for workers. Therefore for trade unions coercive partnership would never be *an optional choice*.

Partnership in coercion and its limits

The very name *coercive partnership* implies a relationship between employer and trade union in which the trade union is forced to accept conditions which are beneficial for the employer but unfavorable or irrelevant for trade union members. The expectation that trade unions would try to change this situation is probably derived from the idea that unions are "organizations with explicit commitment to democratic policy determination" (Hyman 2001: 211) thus their interests cannot be fundamentally detached from those of their members. For partnership (coercive or otherwise) "may lead to a diminution of union/member relationship" (Terry 2003: 470) while providing gains only for the union itself and thus may cause grass roots alienation or revolt (Hyman 1996: 71). However given that partnership involves comparison and management of various risks (Lucio/Stuart 2005) it should theoretically be possible that, for a trade union, the risks generated by remaining within coercive partnership may always be lower than risks emanating from any other alternative strategy, especially if those risks are evaluated from the point of view of union leadership rather than that of the rank and file. In other words, despite the expectation to the contrary, there is no theoretical impediment to envisage coercive partnership being *an optional choice* for a union rather than *necessity*. Indeed from entirely rational choice perspective, one can envisage an institutional/legal environment in which, as long as rank/file resentment is contained, retaining coercive partnership may serve a trade union better in terms of organizational strength and material gains than any other form of relationship with employers. This kind of partnership then should be called *partnership in coercion* in the sense that the only party which is not gaining anything, and thus which is 'coerced', would be the members, while the employer and trade union become partners who benefit from this situation. Obviously there is a limit to this. For, if trade unions lose all their credibility among their members they will also lose their central utility to employers (Terry 2003: 470). Therefore, to be useful for employers and thus to be able to further their own interests, trade unions involved in *partnership in coercion* must retain a degree of credibility in order to prevent a rank and file revolt. Consequently, as a defining feature of partnership in coercion, employers involved in such a relationship should actively help trade unions to contain rank and file resentment.

No doubt, imagining a trade union which systematically serves its own and employer's interests rather than serving its members while enjoying employers' aid is counter-intuitive for anyone with a notion of industrial relations derived from the Western European experience. However it is crucial to remember Hyman's warning that "what is a trade union?" and "what does it mean to be a trade union member?" will receive different answers according to national context (Hyman 2001: 211).

In this paper, by focusing on bargaining dynamics of Turkey's metal industry, I will reveal how an anti-union legal environment, combined with persistent job insecurity, may generate *coercive partnerships* and *partnership in coercion* simultaneously in accordance with employers' demands and the degree of trade unions' internal democracy.

Data

The analysis presented here is based on 35 semi-structured interviews which were made during the fieldwork in Turkey in 2006. All the interviews were made on the

condition of anonymity and they took between 45 minutes to 2 hours. Interviewees include the officials of all three bargaining trade unions, two employers' organizations and important sectoral associations in the metal sector, officials of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, general managers of two metal sector firms and some industrial relations experts. Moreover in order to compare the metal sector with other sectors interviews were also made with the officials of employers' organizations in the construction, chemicals, and textile/clothing industries, the officials of two textile trade unions, two experts of the public sector employers' organization and the officials of two peak employers' associations. In addition to this material, the publications of trade unions and employers' organizations in the metal, textile and construction sectors, daily newspapers, bargaining agreements, various statistical sources and prior academic research on Turkey's industrial relations have been examined and used.

In the following pages first I will give a short overview of industrial relations in Turkey with special focus on the post-1980 legal environment which created the conditions generating coercive partnerships and partnership in coercion. Second, I will analyze the metal industry from the employers' perspective and reveal the logic behind the simultaneous and interdependent existence of coercive partnership and partnership in coercion in this sector both at sectoral and workplace levels. Finally, in discussion section, I will try to explain why some trade unions become partners in coercion while others become coerced partners and try to make some inferences about the other sectors in Turkey by using the features of the metal sector bargaining system as reference. The paper ends with possible conclusions that can be drawn from this analysis as to the notion of partnership between employers and trade unions in general.

Industrial relations in Turkey: a brief history

Establishing trade unions has been allowed in Turkey since 1947, but the right to strike was granted and collective bargaining was properly legalized only in 1963 by the enactment of new industrial relations laws. According to these laws, which shaped the industrial relations of Turkey until 1980, trade unions could conduct collective bargaining at workplace or sectoral level provided that they represent the majority of workers at chosen level (Talas 1992: 176). The right to strike could be used when bargaining negotiations fail or when employers infringe collective agreements. This permissive legal structure created "a very favorable climate for the development of trade unionism" and already by 1967 more than 300 new trade unions were established (Jackson 1971: 72-73). The number of trade unions reached to 733 in 1980 (Tokol 1997: 112). Similarly the total number of unionized workers increased from 295.000 in 1963 to 5.721.000 in 1980 (Tokol 1997: 109) and union density reached 27 percent in 1979 (Cam 2002: 98). In the period of 1963-1980 the majority of collective agreements were signed at workplace level and employers' attempts to accomplish more encompassing agreements met fierce resistance of trade unions (Tokol 1997: 135-136). Obviously, in this period, trade unions enjoyed quite a powerful position at workplace level *vis-à-vis* employers.

During the 1960's majority of trade unions were affiliated with national confederation TÜRK-İŞ (Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu) which was promoting the

idea of "remaining above the politics" and was encouraging cooperative approach in collective bargaining (Jackson 1971: 73; Talas 1992: 176). However, gradually some politically autonomous and class-based trade unions distanced themselves from TÜRK-İŞ and established the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions DİSK (Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu) in 1967. Consequently during the 1970's the monopoly of TÜRK-İŞ on trade union movement was increasingly challenged by DİSK and some other smaller confederations. In fact in the 1970's cooperative approach of TÜRK-İŞ lost its credibility, and as the economic situation deteriorated, strikes became widespread across the country (Sönmez 1992: 125; Cizre 1991: 58-59).

1980 was the turning point for Turkey: in January new stability measures were introduced in order to cope with high inflation and unemployment (Herslag 1988: 38-44) and thereby the hitherto prevailing policy of import substitution was replaced by the project of creating an open market economy (Aydın 2005: 43-44). In September the army assumed the political power by organizing a coup and declared its full commitment to the new economic programme (Yıldızoğlu/Marguiles 1988). During the following three years of military dictatorship all trade unions with exception of those affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ were either temporarily closed or completely banned, collective bargaining and strikes were prohibited while the legal system of Turkey was substantially altered. As a part of this legal restructuring, industrial relations laws of 1963 were repealed and much more restrictive laws were enacted (Boratav 2005: 147-164; Aydın 2005: 52-56).

Comparing the pre and post-1980 legal environments

The post-1980 legislation replaced the previous accreditation condition for conducting collective bargaining (which was based on simple majority) with a very strict threshold obligation: in order to become the bargaining agent for a certain workplace trade unions were to represent at least 10 percent of the workers in the relevant sector and more than 50 percent of the workers at the workplace. It is important to note that, due to the check-off system, membership fees would be paid to trade unions only when they were recognized as official bargaining agents. Thus in the post-1980 period, failure to meet the thresholds meant complete bankruptcy for trade unions. This implied that, unlike in Germany where legal environment minimized the importance of recruitment (Frege/Kelly 2003; Hassel 2007), trade unions in Turkey would be permanently engaged in the search for new members.

In order to understand the real implications of this accreditation procedure on partnership dynamics, we must also consider the individual labor law of the post-1980 period: this legislation, which was initially enacted in 1971, had granted employers the right to dismiss workers as they saw fit without any explanation or justification (Bakırcı 2004: 49). However, according to the pre-1980 version of the individual contract law, employers had to make severance payment to the dismissed workers in proportion to the length of their employment. Owing to the large sums imposed on employers by this system and the prohibition to establish any form of solidarity fund, large-scale lay-offs were prevented to a certain extent (Talas 1992: 111). However, during the period of the military dictatorship (1980-83), the individual contract law too was altered so that severance payments were subjected to an upper limit, which

restricted the amount of severance payments regardless of workers' length of employment (AJANS TÜBA 1989: 19-24). This alteration substantially undermined the pre-1980 role of severance payments as disincentive against lay-offs, and rendered workers very vulnerable to the threat of dismissal during the post-1980 period. Although the new individual contract law enacted in 2003 obliged employers to provide a 'just cause' for dismissals, the rise in unionization expected to be triggered by this law had not yet taken place by 2006 (interview #20 / 29.03.2006). The difficulties involved in legal procedure and persistent high unemployment kept ensured that job security remained a permanent concern for workers despite new legal protection.

Obviously these conditions put trade unions in a very weak position *vis-à-vis* employers: while the threshold system forced trade unions to be permanently occupied with recruitment, the lack of employment security for individual workers created various routes for employers to avoid or manipulate unionization. For example employers, by using the threat of dismissal, could always diminish the willingness of workers to unionize or could force them to affiliate with a cooperative union, thus undermining assertive unions' ability to qualify as bargaining agents for a particular workplace (Sugur/Sugur 2005: 279; Cam 1999: 704).

Another important difference between the pre- and post-1980 legal environments, which was crucial for partnership dynamics, is that according to the pre-1980 laws trade unions could organize strikes during the disputes arising from the bargaining process and they could also strike in order to deal with employers' infringement of collective agreements (Jackson 1971: 72). However the post-1980 legislation only allowed strikes which were related to collective bargaining negotiations (Cizre 1991: 61). It was no longer possible to use strikes in order to prevent infringement of collective agreements (Nichols/Sugur 2005: 32). Obviously, this restriction undermined unions' ability to pose threats considerably and also, as in Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia (Gennard 2007: 99), reduced the attractiveness of trade unions for workers who could no longer expect serious support from trade unions against arbitrary management decisions.

One can see that, in the post-1980 legal environment, in order to survive, trade unions were permanently obliged to recruit new members so as to be able to remain above the thresholds, while all potential and actual members were subjected to job insecurity resulting from high unemployment and lack of proper legal protection. Moreover attractiveness of membership was further reduced due to limited ability of trade unions to pose threats against infringements of collective agreements. Obviously these were the conditions which were likely to generate *coercive partnerships* between employers and trade unions given that trade unions' existence was largely depended on their ability to render themselves useful or at least not dangerous for employers instead of solely focusing on representation of workers' interests. Not surprisingly of more than 700 unions of the pre-1980 period only about 90 did survive in the new legal environment, and many of these survivors remained dangerously close to the sectoral threshold (Tokol 1997: 112-237; ÇSGB 1994b: 71). Consequently by 1997 the union density declined to around 15 percent, almost half of the 1979 level (Cam 2002: 98).

However, from purely pragmatist perspective one can argue that the predicament of achieving *permanent expansion under constant job insecurity* which leads to *coercive partnerships* can be transformed by trade unions in order to develop a winning strategy: securing employers' support so as to use *the constant job insecurity as an instrument of recruitment*, and thereby using the conditions which likely to generate *coercive partnership* to establish *partnership in coercion*. Obviously pursuing such a strategy would be possible only for elite led trade unions which could be very receptive to the needs and demands of different employers while containing rank and file resentment by using authoritarian measures. In the next section, by examining the post-1980 developments in Turkey's metal industry from employers' perspective I will reveal how *partnership in coercion* and *coercive partnership* have simultaneously developed in the post-1980 legal environment in accordance with employers' demands and trade union strategies.

Metal sector: what did employers need and what could unions deliver?

During the pre-1980 period in an environment characterized by hundreds of unions and workplace level collective agreements, the employers' organization of the metal sector, the Metal Industry Employers' Union, MESS (Türkiye Metal Sanayicileri Sendikası), was the leading proponent of sectoral collective bargaining. The MESS has become famous for its strict opposition to small trade unions, to existence of more than one trade union in a single workplace and to industrial action of any kind. According to the MESS, workplace unionism caused leap-frogging wage increases as each new workplace bargaining took the previous ones as its reference. Although sectoral agreements could be attained in the metal sector during the 1970's, these were accomplished only after fierce struggles with trade unions (MESS 1999: 390-479). Not surprisingly the MESS welcomed the new legal framework of the post 1980 period which realized many of its goals: due to thresholds workplace unionism was no longer possible and industrial action was strictly restricted.

However, the new legal framework had a peculiar feature: workplace unionism was prohibited but the workplace was still defined as the natural unit of bargaining. Collective agreements could be signed either for a workplace or for a group of workplaces while trade unions could only be sectoral. Hence, in theory it was possible for sectoral trade unions to ask for different terms for each workplace and thereby continue workplace bargaining. Obviously given the vulnerability of trade unions, the more likely outcome would be that employers would benefit from this situation by dictating the conditions of bargaining in their workplaces as they saw fit regardless of harmonization attempts across the sector. In this environment only way for the MESS to attain sectoral agreements was to convince as many employers as possible to act collectively so as to form a very large *group of workplaces* and sign a single agreement on behalf of this group. In other words, the MESS had to persuade employers that they would be better off by joining the group and thereby forgo the right to bargain individually with trade unions in spite of the fact that most employers had achieved a dominant position in their workplaces *vis-à-vis* trade unions.

This predicament of the MESS was exacerbated further: for given that not all the workplaces in *the MESS group* will be organized by the same union, the MESS would have to convince different trade unions to accept identical collective agreements in

order to attain a *de facto* sectoral agreement. Obviously, trying to convince trade unions to agree to identical agreements would create a fertile ground for (not-necessarily-cooperative) trade union alliances. Consequently, the emergence of non-cooperative trade union alliances would jeopardize the unity of employers and thereby undermine the harmonization attempts across the sector given that, individual employers, instead of confronting an alliance of unions collectively, could easily dominate or get rid of single trade unions at their own workplaces.

Indeed one can see that the new legal framework has substantially altered the logic of collective action for metal sector employers: while during the pre-1980 period they were motivated to act collectively in order to counter increasing strength and militancy of trade unions with which they could not cope with individually, the legal environment of the post-1980 period has provided them, at least in theory, sufficient individual strength to prevent or manipulate unionization. Therefore, so far as wages were concerned, the new logic of collective action for metal employers could be premised on three grounds: 1) prudence (i.e., pre-empting re-emergence of militant unionism among skilled metal workers), 2) preventing the use of wages in competition among established firms 3) precluding new firms from entering the market by careful manipulation of labor costs.

Under these conditions, in order to establish a sustainable sectoral bargaining system the MESS needed a union which, during the sectoral bargaining negotiations, would refrain from any assertive attitude and refuse to cooperate with other unions while being strong enough in the entire sector not to be endangered by threshold conditions and thus not to be intimidated by employers who might want to deunionize their workplaces in case they did not want to comply with MESS' bargaining policy.

When the threshold procedure for unionization was introduced in 1983 at the end of the military dictatorship, only 4 of the 23 trade unions in the metal sector were qualified as bargaining agents with which the MESS had to negotiate (MESS 1999: 396; ÇSGB 1994a: 77) Of these Türk-Metal proved to be the trade union which was capable of and willing to serve employers' interests. It would become the partner that the MESS was looking for.

Türk-Metal has been a staunch supporter of ultra-nationalist ideology since its establishment in 1973. However in the pre-1980 period it was affiliated with the bread-and-butter oriented and "non-political" confederation TÜRK-İŞ (Talas 1992: 158; Nichols et al. 2002: 34) instead of the ultra-nationalist confederation MİSK. Owing to this affiliation, Türk-Metal managed to continue its activities without interruption during the period of military dictatorship (1980-1983). During this period Türk-Metal also recognized the needs of the MESS, and revealed its willingness to cooperate by declaring that it did not see "any contradiction between the interests of capital and labor" (Nichols/Suğur 2005: 215).

Consequently when collective bargaining resumed in 1984 under the new legal framework, the MESS and Türk-Metal established a system of bargaining in which, while all other trade unions were part of *coercive partnership* with the MESS, Türk-Metal and the MESS had become *partners in coercion*. Despite some challenges, this system has

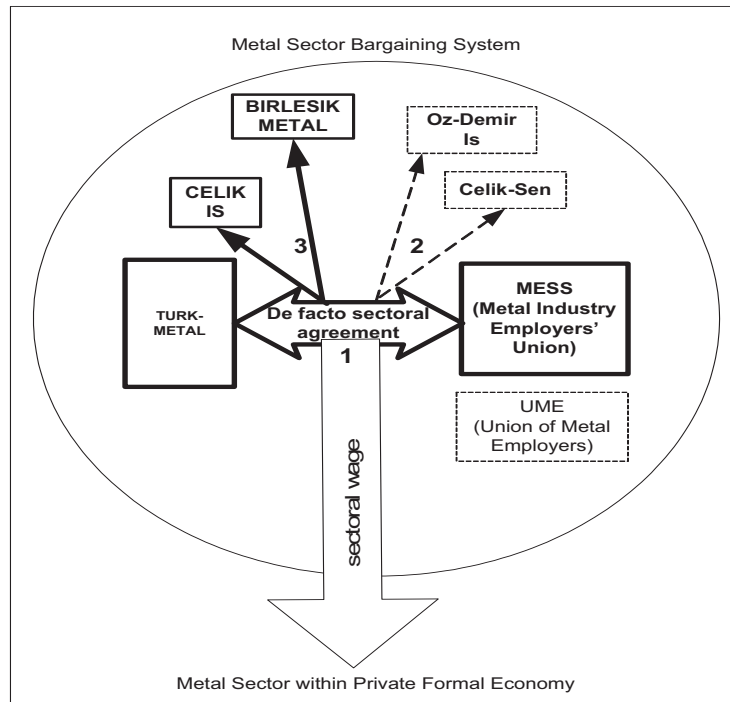
remained intact until today. In the next two sections I will show the mutual gains of Türk-Metal and the MESS within this system and the way in which they cope with sporadic challenges created by the other trade unions and Türk-Metal's rank/file.

Metal sector bargaining system:

Coercive partnerships and partnership in coercion

Actors (see figure 1): There were in total five bargaining unions between 1984 and 2006 in the metal sector. Of these Öz-Demir-İş and Çelik-Sen have disappeared due to amalgamations in the early 1990's¹ while, only three unions, leftist Birleşik-Metal, liberal-Islamic Çelik-İş and ultra-nationalist Türk-Metal remained as the threshold meeting bargaining entities. On the employers' side, the MESS would be the only bargaining actor through the entire period. Although some rebelling members of the MESS established another employers' organization, The Union of Metal Employers, the UME (Metal Sanayicileri İşveren Sendikası: Mesis), this entity failed to grow.

Figure 1:
Metal sector bargaining system



¹ The exact amalgamation story is rather complex: facing the danger of falling under the sectoral threshold both Çelik-Sen (in 1988) and Çelik-İş (in 1991) joined Öz-Demir-İş which then changed into Öz-Çelik-İş. However, in 2003 Öz-Çelik-İş changed its name into Çelik-İş in order to revive the spirit of Çelik-İş. On the other hand Birleşik Metal was the name which was assumed by Otomobil-İş after its rather symbolic amalgamation with Türkiye Maden- İş, which was quite a famous union from the pre-1980 period and was banned by the military government. When Türkiye Maden- İş was re-established in 1993; Otomobil-İş amalgamated with it and the new entity was called Birleşik (i.e United) Metal.

Functioning (see figure 1): At the beginning of each bargaining period, that is, every two years the MESS starts negotiating with Türk-Metal (1) on behalf of those firms in “the group” (i.e. firms affiliated with the MESS) whose workplaces are organized by Türk-Metal. Once an agreement is attained, the MESS enforces the other trade unions to accept this agreement unconditionally (2/3). Therefore all the firms included in the MESS group have the same collective agreement regardless of the trade unions which organize their workplaces. The wage level determined by this *de facto* sectoral agreement (1) is binding for all those firms affiliated with the MESS with few exceptions while it is considered as the wage-ceiling in non-unionized workplaces. However, in those firms which are unionized by Çelik-İş or Birleşik-Metal but which are not affiliated with the MESS there is a small possibility of exceeding this sectoral wage.

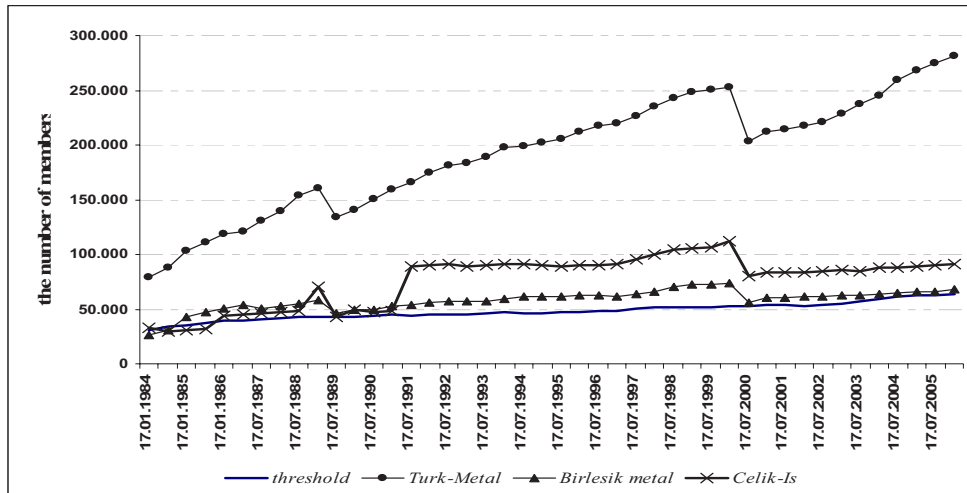
From MESS’ perspective, this bargaining system has two merits: Firstly MESS can dictate its own terms quite easily while negotiating with Türk-Metal thanks to the latter’s principles of “considering the interests of the country more important than those of the union” and endorsing “dialogue and compromise” (Türk-Metal 2007: 8, 22). Secondly the strict refusal of Türk-Metal to cooperate with the other unions prevents the emergence of formidable and assertive union alliances that might jeopardize unity of employers. Indeed, Türk-Metal’s adherence to the policy of permanent appeasement with employers, and the determination of MESS for “not changing even a single line of the Türk-Metal/MESS agreement while negotiating with other trade unions” (interview #14 / 21.03.06) have precluded the other unions (Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş) from refusing to sign an agreement, the terms of which were actually decided by Türk-Metal and the MESS. Consequently the MESS managed to impose a *de facto* sectoral collective agreement and achieve a degree of harmonization across the sector.

The most important advantage provided by this system for Türk-Metal has been the permanent support from almost all the MESS employers which ensured that Türk-Metal’s membership would expand and its finances would remain secure. For this pattern of bargaining could only persist if Türk-Metal becomes the strongest union in the sector so as to keep the workforce obedient and the other unions in check. To underpin this, the MESS members adopted a policy of closed shop: in the MESS workplaces which are unionized by Türk-Metal any new employee is forced to affiliate with Türk-Metal in order to start working (Nichols/Suğur 2005: 221), and members of Türk-Metal who contemplate leaving the union are threatened by employers with dismissal (interview #30 / 20.04.06). In this way entering Türk-Metal workplaces is rendered extremely difficult for the other trade unions. In other words Türk-Metal managed to obtain permanent support from employers so as to use *the job insecurity as an instrument of recruitment*. In exchange for this support Türk-Metal allows the MESS to pursue a sectoral wage policy in accordance with employers’ interests without being challenged by workers (interview #29 / 20.04.2006, interview #33 / 25.04.2006, Nichols/Suğur 2005: 209-211, Nichols *et al.* 2002: 29-31) Therefore one should call the relationship between Türk-Metal and the MESS as *partnership in coercion*.

Consequently as depicted in figure 2, during the post-1980 period Türk-Metal’s strength kept on growing while the other unions remained dangerously close to the sectoral threshold. Thus they increasingly refrained from assertive attitudes during

their negotiations with the MESS in order to avoid employer retaliations which may lead to losing their workplaces to Türk-Metal or even to complete bankruptcy if they fall under 10 percent sectoral representation threshold. Accordingly the main preoccupation of these trade unions has become trying to organize public enterprises and firms which are not affiliated with the MESS while retaining their MESS affiliated workplaces by accepting the MESS/Türk-Metal agreement unconditionally (interview #30 / 20.04.06, interview #33 / 25.04.06). In other words for Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş cooperating with the MESS is for mere survival. However, as expected by Lucio/Stuart from coerced trade unions (Lucio/Stuart 2005: 809), both Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş have tried (in vain) to challenge the MESS in order to articulate workers' demands properly (interview #29 / 20.04.06, interview #33 / 25.04.06). Therefore the relationship between the MESS and the other unions should be considered *coercive partnership*. Obviously, these coercive partnerships which have been crucial components of the post-1980 metal sector bargaining system, could continue as long as the MESS and Türk-Metal retained their *partnership in coercion*.

Figure 2: The sectoral threshold and strengths of metal sector unions²
(Source: ÇSGB 2006)



In order to sustain this system the MESS had to pursue a wage policy which would satisfy all the affiliated firms without entirely undermining Türk-Metal's ability to contain workers' discontent. For, as pointed out by Terry, a trade union (i.e., Türk-Metal) would be useful for employers (i.e., the MESS) so long as it retained a degree of credi-

² In order to ensure that they always exceed the sectoral threshold unions deliberately inflate their membership figures. The sudden falls in the membership figures of all the unions at 1989 and 2000 are due to the Ministry of Labor's insistence on using the notary-approved membership records in estimation of the official statistics in these two years. These falls may provide some clue as to the magnitude of forgeries in membership figures.

bility among workers (Terry 2003: 470). The MESS could ensure this either by restoring Türk-Metal's credibility via sporadic wage concessions and thereby risking its own credibility among the affiliated firms, or by repressing rebelling members of Türk-Metal before they can mobilize large part of the rank and file against Türk-Metal leadership. In the next section I will show how both of these strategies were used in practice.

The limits of partnership in coercion: concessions and repressions

The monopolization of domestic market by few firms has been the characteristic feature of the manufacturing sector in Turkey (Kepenek/Yentürk 2005: 377; Yeldan 2001: 85) and metal industry is no exception. Accordingly, it is possible to identify two main groups within the MESS with different preferences for the sectoral bargaining policy: On the one side, large firms mainly from automotive, iron/steel and white goods industries with substantial share in the domestic market; on the other side, primarily export-oriented middle size foundry and auto-components industry firms. The firms in the export-oriented group, which accept declining margins of profit in order to remain competitive in international markets have been proponents of low wage agreements while the firms in the domestic-oriented group which have more secure profits could afford or even propose high(er) wage agreements in order to enhance or benefit from their monopoly (interview #14 / 21.03.2006, interview #25 / 12.04.2006, interview #26 / 12.04.2006). In fact one can argue that the logic of collective action for these two groups was different: the firms in the domestic-oriented group were affiliated with the MESS in order to prevent the use of wages in competition among themselves or precluding entry of new firms into the market while the firms in the export-oriented group were participating in order to prevent re-emergence of militant unionism and to avoid costs of confrontation with workers. Although the composition of these two groups might have changed through the post-1980 period - automotive industry for example has become increasingly export oriented during the late 1990's (interview #25 / 12.04.2006) – these two groups seems to have remained as the two main protagonists within the MESS.

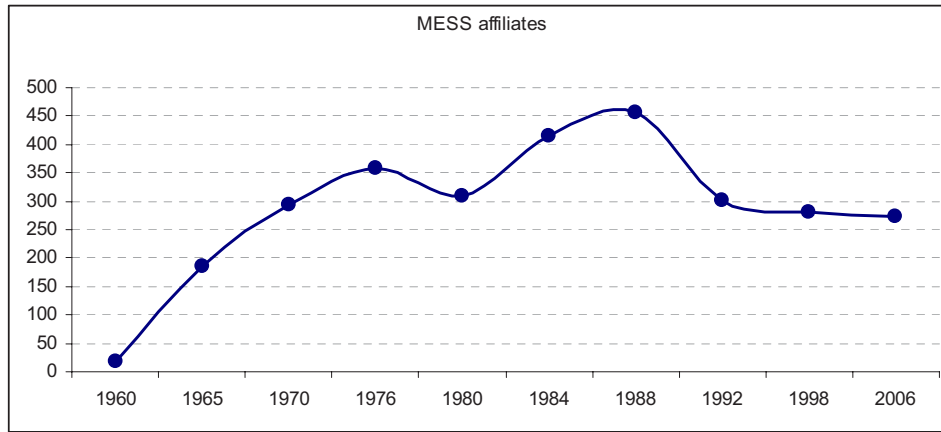
The MESS opted for low wages in its sectoral agreements during the 1980's in order to please the export-oriented group and to expand its membership base. Accordingly, it has managed to increase the number of its affiliates to its historical maximum of 455 (see figure 3).

However, towards the end of the 1980's the ability of Türk-Metal leadership to contain workers' discontent resulting from low wages was undermined and Türk-Metal was repeatedly accused of being a "yellow union" (Sönmezsoy/Aslıyüce 1991: 123). Moreover from 1988 onwards large-scale wildcat industrial actions started to spread to whole country as manifestation of public resentment against the staunch neo-liberalism pursued since 1980 (Koç 1998: 154-158). This situation encouraged Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş not to follow the usual pattern. In 1990, they refused to sign the agreement imposed by the MESS. As the other unions in the metal sector formed an alliance and indicated their willingness to take industrial action against the MESS in order to obtain higher wages, Türk-Metal leadership was also compelled to organize strikes in order to retain its credibility.

Obviously, by the late 1980's as strikes and protests were permeating all sectors and whole country, Türk-Metal was not capable of keeping its workers in line unless concrete gains were provided. Consequently the entire bargaining system in the metal sector seemed in jeopardy. Under these conditions in two successive agreements, in 1988 and 1991 the MESS accepted the highest wage increases of the entire post-1980 period (see figure 4). These agreements indicated that the export-oriented middle size firms within the MESS have been defeated and the MESS, instead of satisfying all of its affiliates, preferred to protect the bargaining system by helping Türk-Metal via wage concessions at the expense of its own credibility. Although these wage increases did not satisfy Türk-Metal's rank and file (MESS 2000: 469), they had devastating impact on the MESS; in 1989 under the leadership of one of the oldest MESS members, 17 affiliated firms resigned in protest and established another employers' organization, The Union of Metal Employers, the UME (Metal Sanayicileri İşveren Sendikası: Mesis, see figure 1), in order to challenge the MESS (Dünya, 29.06.1989) and to promote low-wages in the metal sector (see for example, MESİS 2001). Indeed after 1988 MESS' membership level started to decline so that, as depicted in figure 3 by 1992 the MESS had already lost almost half of its affiliates. However, the bargaining system was saved: Türk-Metal remained as the strongest union in the sector and the system kept on functioning as usual.

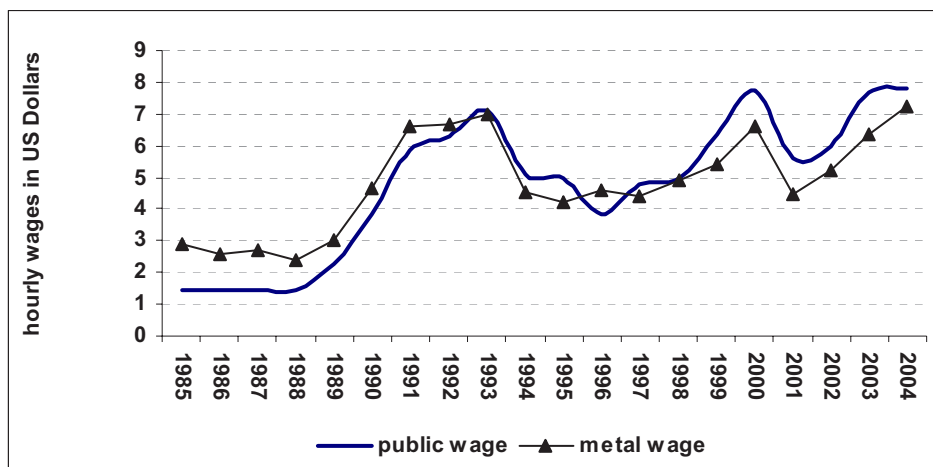
In 1998 the metal industry bargaining system was endangered once again. By this time the wage gains of the early 1990's were lost due to high inflation and in order to contain workers' discontent, and to stop other unions' attempts of recruitment Türk-Metal gave explicit promises to its rank and file members not to sign any agreement unless a satisfactory wage level was attained (interview #31 / 20.04.2006). However Türk-Metal leadership did not keep the promise and signed an agreement with the MESS which provided meagre wage increases (Radikal, 21.09.1998). As a reaction thousands of Türk-Metal members revolted against the leadership. They stopped working and walked together to the closest public notary, resigned from Türk-Metal and joined the other unions (Nichols and Suğur 2005: 219). In this incident, the MESS helped Türk-Metal by repressing the rebel workers rather than making wage concessions: It urged affiliated firms to take counter measures to suppress the rebellion; accordingly workers were presented with a straightforward choice by their employers: those who refused to re-join Türk-Metal would be dismissed. Many workers who just joined the other unions grudgingly went back to Türk-Metal in order to save their jobs (interview #30 / 20.04.2006, interview #33 / 25.04.2006). Obviously, in this incident, the internal dynamics of the MESS, which should have been influenced by increasing export orientation of the automotive sector (interview #25 / 12.04.2006), precluded further wage concessions. Indeed as depicted in figure 4 after 1998 the wages in the metal sector would always remain under the public sector wages. In 2006 at least some high ranking Türk-Metal officials were concerned with increasing resentment among the rank and file as a result of this wage policy (interview #32 / 25.04.2006).

Figure 3: The MESS membership levels
(Source: MESS 1999 /MESS 2000/MESS 2006)



Indeed, by examining these dynamics one might conclude that any decline in the membership level of the MESS should be considered as a worrying development for Türk-Metal due to the support it receives from the MESS and its affiliates. However, paradoxically Türk-Metal managed to establish *partnerships in coercion* also with those firms that decided not to affiliate with the MESS or those that quitted. The next section offers an explanation.

Figure 4: Hourly wages in US dollars in metal and public sectors
(Source: TISK Statistics/my own estimations)

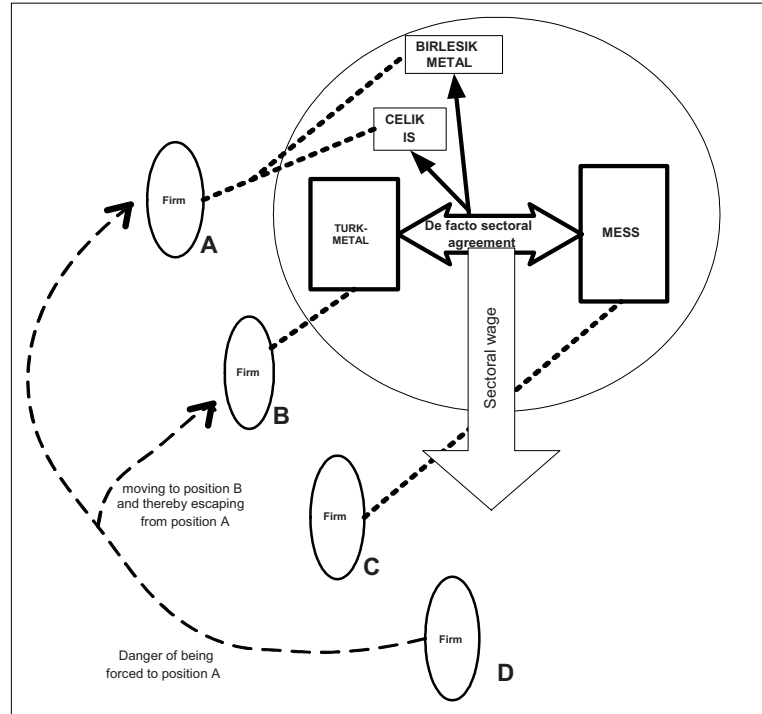


Predicament of opponents and subtle opportunities for Türk-Metal

Usually the firms, which disaffiliated from or never joined the MESS, that is, the opponents of the sectoral bargaining, consider the *de facto* sectoral-wage determined by the bargaining agreement between Türk-Metal and the MESS as wage-ceiling, meaning that they would usually pay less. However, these firms are permanently under the threat of being unionized either by Birleşik-Metal or Çelik-İş (see figure 1), and then being forced to pay wages approaching to the sectoral wage or even higher. Although, the usual reaction of these firms to unionization attempts is to fire all affiliated workers, this strategy is not always affordable especially when they produce under the "just in time" deals with foreign firms that oblige them to pay the costs of delays and thereby render them very vulnerable to any disturbance in the workplace (interview #28 /18.04.2006). Obviously affiliating with the MESS and thereby being protected from workplace level disturbances is not a solution because, for these firms, MESS' sectoral agreements are already too expensive.

This predicament provides another expansion opportunity for Türk-Metal: Offering protection from disturbance to those firms which neither could afford to affiliate with the MESS nor able to remain completely out of the bargaining system due to unionization threats of Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş. Türk-Metal's proposal is obvious: ensuring that the wage level would always remain under the sectoral wage and the other unions would be kept out of the workplace. This offer and its relative advantage are depicted in figure 5:

Figure 5:
Possible positions for firms in terms of wage determination



The circled entities in figure 5 represent the components of the wage bargaining system in the metal sector (see also figure 1). It is important to remember that bargaining may take place in two ways after a trade union organizes workers: employers may choose to bargain with the union alone or they may choose to affiliate with the MESS and let the MESS bargain with the union. In the latter case the firm is included in MESS' group, that is, the MESS bargains with the union for all the workplaces it represents not only for a single workplace. Hence if a firm affiliates with the MESS it cannot legally undertake collective bargaining independently; the MESS would do it on firms' behalf (thus position C in figure 5 is not linked with any trade union: this link is provided by the MESS).

In this system, the firms in position D (i.e. having no direct links with the bargaining system) are in danger of being forced to position A by the other unions (that is, being unionized by Birleşik-Metal or Çelik-İş), which would increase their labor costs and reduce their flexibility. However, position C does not offer better prospects since it requires relinquishing the bargaining rights to the MESS and paying the sectoral wage. Türk-Metal offers these firms position B providing permanent protection from the challenge inherent in position A without risking the labor costs and loss of control over wage bargaining associated with position C. Given this background, the relationship between Türk-Metal and employers in position B should be considered *partnership in coercion*. Obviously this type of partnership will persist as long as there are other trade unions, which unlike Türk-Metal, do not follow a policy of permanent appeasement with employers. Thus, curiously, Türk-Metal's interests require the continuation of the existence and sporadic successes of its competitors Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş so as to keep employers frightened. In other words, Türk-Metal's partnership with employers who are not affiliated with the MESS usually depends on these two unions' ability to pose threats. Interestingly this situation provides a sort of protection for these unions: Türk-Metal seems to refrain from informing the Ministry of Labor as to possible forgeries in the membership figures of Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş which might cause these unions to be disqualified from bargaining due to failure to meet 10 percent sectoral representation threshold (interview #32 / 24.04.2006)

The story of KERUT, an export oriented foundry firm employing around 1000 workers, is a good example of how Türk-Metal uses the threats posed by other unions for its own benefit: KERUT, shortly after its disaffiliation from the MESS in 1989 (i.e., from position C) in protest against the wage concessions of 1988, decided to force the union (Türk-Metal) out of its workplaces in order to free itself from any restriction regarding the wages (thus it moved to position D). After years of non-union existence, the general manager of KERUT was informed about the attempts of Birleşik-Metal to unionize its workers (facing the danger of being forced to position A). He "immediately fired all the leaders of this attempt" but at the end in order to prevent further incursions from other trade unions he made all his workers members of Türk-Metal (moving to position B) (interview #11 / 14.03.2006). According to Türk-Metal, KERUT and Türk-Metal have "a perfect relationship" ever since (interview #6 / 08.03.2006).

Another example is the auto-supplements producer WOLVIL which employs around 100 workers and produces half-finished auto parts mainly for foreign contrac-

tors. According to WOLVIL's manager affiliating with the MESS is senseless given that "Türk-Metal ensures much lower wages than the lowest possible with the MESS" (interview #28 / 18.04.2006).

Here it is important to note that this is not the only way Türk-Metal enters the workplaces. There were also genuine struggles undertaken by Türk-Metal to unionize firms (forcing them to choose between position C and B), whereas these firms prefer to preserve position D at all costs and thus fire any worker who joins any union including Türk-Metal (interview #32 / 25.04.2006). However, it is clear that Türk-Metal remains the first choice of employers if they can no longer avoid the bargaining system (either in position C or in B).

Therefore one can see that, during the post-1980 period Türk-Metal was not entirely depended on the support it received from the MESS, it also managed to become attractive for those employers who were not participating in MESS' sectoral bargaining. In other words Türk-Metal has established *partnerships in coercion* with employers both at *sectoral* and *workplace levels*.

Although, this ultimate employer friendliness of Türk-Metal creates tension between Türk-Metal leadership and the rank and file, up to now Türk-Metal has been able to convince and/or coerce its members to retain their membership by using four strategies: 1) offering positive incentives to its supporters such as free holidays in luxury Türk-Metal residences (Nichols and Sugur 2004: 222), 2) appealing to nationalism in order to justify concessions, 3) threatening revolting workers with dismissal 4) occasionally resorting to actual physical violence (interview #30 / 20.04.2006).

Discussion

This analysis leads to two important questions: why did Türk-Metal become the *partner in coercion* but not the others? And, to what extent partnership patterns in the metal sector can be used to make generalizations about other sectors in Turkey? I will try to discuss these questions one by one:

Explaining trade union strategies

In order to understand the strategic choices of trade unions it is essential to make a sensitive analysis of the politics of leadership (Boxall/Haynes 1997: 570-571). Therefore in order to answer the question of why Türk-Metal becomes the *partner in coercion* while Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş remain as *coerced partners*?, we should first examine the relative power of leadership in these trade unions.

Unlike Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş, Türk-Metal has been governed by the same president during the last 32 years. Mustafa Özbek, never-changing president of Türk-Metal since 1975, rules with an "iron hand" by appointing his men to all the key posts and portrayed as a great leader (Nichols et al. 2002: 37). Not surprisingly Türk-Metal is sometimes referred to as "Özbek's trade union" (Sönmezsoy/Aslyüce 1991). Similarly, while both Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş emphasize their strict adherence to democratic elections at workplace level (interview # 29 / 20.04.2006, interview # 30 / 20.04.2006, interview # 33 / 25.04.2006), Türk-Metal leadership strictly controls the elections of delegates in workplaces who in turn determine local branch officials

(Nichols *et al.* 2002: 39). In this way the domination of the Türk-Metal leadership over rank and file is ensured at workplace and local levels.

Taking these into account one can argue that Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş could not be *partners in coercion* with employers due to their democratic internal governance which has prevented the emergence of a ruling group whose interests can be detached from those of rank and file. The exact opposite is true for Türk-Metal: lack of internal democracy created an elite group which, in turn, further undermined internal democracy by using authoritarian measures ranging from the threat of dismissal to actual physical violence. Consequently, the interests of the leadership have become separable from those of the members, and this situation rendered *partnership in coercion* a preferable and tenable strategy for Türk-Metal.

However, it is important to note that although the lack of internal democracy distinguished Türk-Metal from other unions and made it *a* candidate for partnership in coercion, Türk-Metal has become *the* partner in coercion both at sectoral and workplace level because employers were actually looking for such a relationship. Thus Türk-Metal's strategy cannot be explained without reference to the employers' motives for sectoral and workplace level partnership: for "it takes two to tango" (Franzosi 2004: 3). One can argue that the relative protection of large metal industry firms from international competition due to their monopoly rendered employers' collective control over labor costs (either for preventing competition or precluding new competitors' entry to the market) a feasible employer strategy, and thereby created the need for a partnership in coercion with a trade union at sectoral level. However the opposite is true for the workplace level: as shown above, due to their exposure to international competition, some firms were permanently concerned with labor costs and industrial peace but they were disturbed by Birleşik-Metal and Çelik-İş's unionization efforts. Hence they too needed a trade union as their partner in coercion.

Obviously without the restrictive legal environment of the post-1980 period which enforced trade unions to be permanently occupied with recruitment under constant job insecurity, neither Türk-Metal's lack of democracy nor employers' motives would suffice to create partnerships in coercion in the metal sector. In fact most likely outcome of repealing the threshold conditions (the backbone of the post-1980 laws) would be quick disintegration of Türk-Metal given that both Türk-Metal and employers consider any such legal change as disastrous and unacceptable (interview #10 / 13.03.2006, interview # 32 / 24.04.2006, *MESS İşveren Gazetesi*, 01.07.2000).

Therefore, although Türk-Metal's role as the only *partner in coercion* can be explained by its lack of democracy, *the partnership in coercion* in general cannot be accounted for without referring to legal environment and employers' motives.

Patterns of partnership in other sectors

The emergence of *coercive partnerships* should be considered likely in all industries in Turkey given that the legal environment which generates the necessary conditions remains the same across 28 official sectors (with some exceptions in agriculture, banking, healthcare, transport and arms industries). But can we make a similar generalization for *partnership in coercion* by drawing on the findings in the metal sector?

I would argue that, for sake of prudence, one should use conditions prevailing in the metal sector as reference only to establish some hypotheses for other sectors to be tested by further inquiry. Accordingly, at the risk of oversimplification, one can argue that, in the post-1980 legal environment, the existence of a strict sectoral bargaining policy and more than one trade union in a sector may generate *partnership in coercion at sectoral level* between sectoral employers' organization and one of the trade unions. On the other hand, if exposure to international markets can be added to this sectoral picture, *partnership in coercion at workplace level* between individual employers and a trade union can also be considered a likely outcome. Clearly, the necessary ingredient for both variants is to have a trade union with dubious internal democracy. In Turkey trade unions are affiliated to one of the three national confederations. Two of these TÜRK-İŞ and DİSK are already mentioned; the third one is liberal-Islamic HAK-İŞ (for details see Duran/Yıldırım 2005; Buğra 2002). The trade unions affiliated to TÜRK-İŞ (like Türk-Metal) have a tradition of never-changing presidents (Nichols and Sugar 2005: 214-215), and therefore, perhaps, TÜRK-İŞ affiliation may be taken as rough indicator of relative lack of internal democracy. Thus, once again at the risk of simplification, one can argue that the trade unions affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ are more likely to have dubious internal democracy than the DİSK and HAK-İŞ affiliates.

By taking all these factors into account, one can generate some hypotheses: if in a sector, a: there is a sectoral bargaining policy; b: there are more than one bargaining trade unions the biggest of which is affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ, and c: sector is exposed to international competition, one may expect partnerships in coercion to emerge both at sectoral and workplace level between TÜRK-İŞ affiliated trade union and employers. If only a and b are satisfied then partnership in coercion at sectoral level is to be expected. However, if only b and c are satisfied then partnership in coercion at workplace level seems to be likely.

The application of this scheme to three important sectors in Turkey, namely, construction, chemicals, and textile/clothing sectors, which together with metal industry, employ approximately 45 percent of the entire formal workforce (see figure 6 panel 1) is as follows:

Construction sector (see figure 6 panel 2b)

Unlike the MESS, employers' organization in the construction industry, the İNTES (İnşaat Sanayicileri Sendikası) neither has a sectoral bargaining policy nor interested in establishing one. There is only one bargaining union in this sector Yol-İş which is affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ and construction firms in Turkey are not exposed to international competition (interview # 2 / 22.02.2006). Obviously none of the specific conditions of metal sector (that is, a, b and c) exists in the construction sector; thus partnership in coercion is not likely to emerge in this sector at any level.

Chemicals sector (see figure 6 panel 2a)

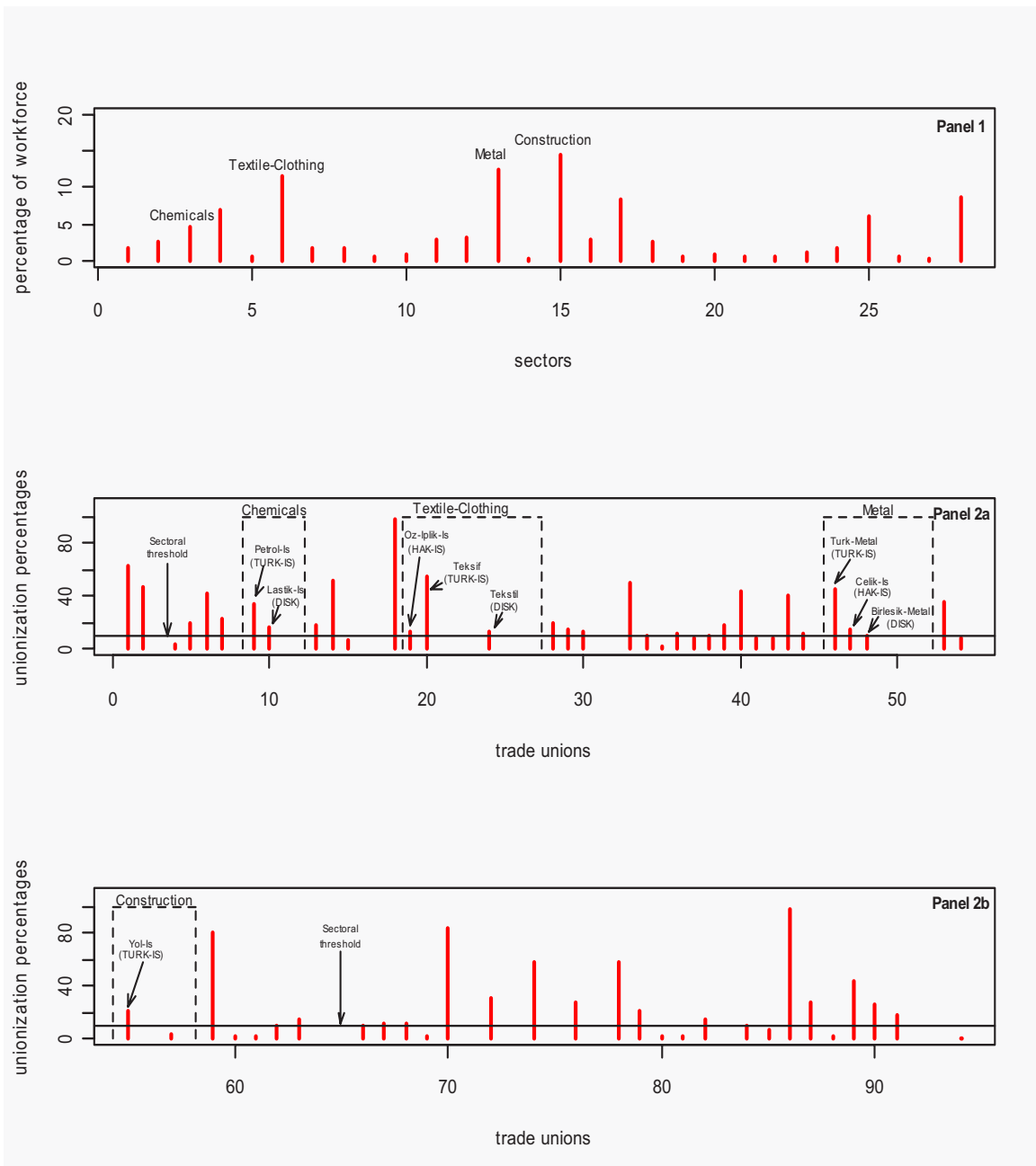
The employers' organization in the chemicals industry, the KIPLAS (Türkiye Kimya, Petrol, Lastik ve Plastik Sanayii İşverenleri Sendikası) does not pursue a sectoral wage policy either. It just provides guidelines (interview # 16 / 27.03.2006) and firms in the chemicals industry can be considered relatively sheltered from international competi-

tion due to increasing domestic demand for their products (DPT 2004: 36, 50). There are two trade unions in this sector biggest of which is TÜRK-İŞ affiliate Petrol-İş. Obviously, only condition b is satisfied but this is not sufficient to expect partnership in coercion to emerge either at workplace or sectoral level.

Figure 6: Industrial relations in Turkey in 2006:

Panel 1: relative employment share of sectors

Panel 2a/2b: sectoral thresholds and official representation capacities of trade unions across sectors, note that some trade unions are not visible because of their very small representation capacity (Source: ÇSGB 2007)



Textile/clothing sector (see figure 6 panel 2a)

Like the MESS, employers' organization in the textile/clothing industry, the TÜTSİS (Türkiye Tekstil Sanayii İşverenleri Sendikası) has a very strict sectoral bargaining policy (interview # 20 / 29.03.2006). There are three bargaining unions in this sector biggest of which, Teksif, is affiliated with TÜRK-İŞ and textile/clothing firms are exposed to fierce international competition especially after 2005 when quotas were globally removed (DPT 2004: 22-23). Obviously all of the conditions (that is, a, b and c) are satisfied in the textile/clothing sector, thus one may expect partnerships in coercion to emerge both at sectoral and workplace level. But how accurate are these hypotheses? Indeed at first glance the textile and clothing and metal sector bargaining dynamics appear to be quite similar: the TÜTSİS, like the MESS, first reaches a sectoral agreement with Teksif (a TÜRK-İŞ affiliate like Türk-Metal) and then forces the other unions (Öz-İplik-İş and Tekstil) to accept this agreement unconditionally (interview # 20 / 29.03.2006). However the examination of trade unions' behavior in the textile/clothing sector reveals discrepancies between the metal and the textile/clothing sectors; for example unlike metal sector, there is no fierce hostility between trade unions in the textile/clothing sector (interview # 31 / 20.04.2006, interview # 34 / 27.04.2006) Moreover Teksif, unlike Türk-Metal, occasionally cooperates with other trade unions in order to challenge TÜTSİS (Tekstil İşveren, 01.12.1998). Indeed Teksif's cooperation with the TÜTSİS resembles to *coercive partnership* rather than *partnership in coercion*. Thus despite similarities with the metal sector, the exact nature of partnership relations in the textile and clothing sector can be thoroughly understood only by further inquiry on employers' demands and internal governance of trade unions in this sector.

This brief examination of three other sectors in Turkey shows that, there is quite a variation in the sectoral bargaining dynamics, thus the partnership patterns, especially the *partnership in coercion* prevailing in the metal sector should not be used to make generalizations about other sectors without detailed sector-specific inquiries.

Conclusion

In this paper, I examined a particular variant of partnership between employers and trade unions: *partnership in coercion*, a relationship which serves the interests of employers and trade unions while ignoring or infringing those of workers. It is shown that this type of relationship between employers and trade unions may emerge under conditions which are likely to generate coercive partnerships, namely, job insecurity and anti-union legal environment. However the distinctive factors that make partnership in coercion possible appear to be threefold: employers' demands resulting from their market positions, weak trade union internal democracy and competition among trade unions.

The analysis of partnership in coercion confirms an important proposition: if trade unions entirely lose their credibility among workers they also lose their utility for employers (Terry 2003: 470). It is shown that the trade union, Türk-Metal, which is involved in partnership in coercion both at sectoral and workplace level, faced at least two such crises during the post-1980 period and on both occasions employers aided Türk-Metal to restore its credibility and authority. Therefore there is a paradoxical

cal outcome: although the detachment of the interests of union leadership from those of members is one of the preconditions which render partnership in coercion possible, the complete disregard of members' interests would make partnership in coercion untenable in the long run. Thus both employers and trade unions involved in such a relationship must be aware of and carefully calculate the limits of the rank and file's tolerance.

Two assumptions as to partnership, however, are not confirmed by the analysis of partnership in coercion: First, it is shown that the assumption that the ability and willingness of trade unions to oppose employers would prevent partnerships between employers and trade unions from becoming unfavorable for workers (Ashwin 2004: 42; Haynes/Allen 2001: 182) is based on a simple understanding of partnership relations which disregards the interdependency between the strategies of different trade unions. For, as presented above, Türk-Metal's partnership in coercion with employers at workplace level usually depends on the seriousness of the threat posed by other trade unions which are competing with Türk-Metal. This means that threats posed by some trade unions may be used by others in order to establish partnerships which are unfavorable for workers. Second, the claim that trade unions would be only reluctantly and temporarily be involved in partnerships which are detrimental to furtherance of workers' interests (Lucio/Stuart 2005: 809) proved to be inaccurate in this analysis. For it is revealed that trade unions may voluntarily choose to establish such a partnership with employers, like Türk-Metal, which has become and remains as partner in coercion by its own will, while other trade unions try to challenge employers' domination.

Obviously, it is possible to consider *partnership in coercion* as a peculiarity prevailing only in Turkey's metal sector which is difficult to find elsewhere. However, it may be more useful to consider this pattern as an extreme form of partnership which may reveal some aspects of 'usual' partnership more clearly. If this claim is tenable, then it is possible to argue that the mutual dependency between *partnership in coercion* and *coercive partnership*, and how both of these modes are simultaneously generated by the legal framework, employers' demands, competition among trade unions and trade unions' internal governance, point out that the nature of partnership between employers and trade unions is determined by complex interdependencies. Thus it cannot be accounted for by focusing only on power relations and intentions at any single level such as workplace. Accordingly, one may argue that the dynamics of a partnership relation between a particular employer and trade union is likely to be influenced by factors and actors that are different from and beyond the immediate control of actual partners. In other words the form of partnership is an outcome of the interdependencies within a bargaining system so that it is not something whose evolution and merits are determined entirely by the parties directly involved. Therefore, perhaps the outcome of partnership itself, too, should be considered as not entirely predictable from, and dependent on, the partners most directly involved.

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