

# THE CHANGING NATURE OF TURKISH TRADE UNIONS SINCE 1980

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## Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to examine the contemporary Turkish unions and their struggle in the context of the changing economic, political and social structure of Turkey since 1980. The year of 1980 has been chosen as the starting point for the article because the 1980s was a crucial turning point in the history of the country's trade union movement as it marked the implementation of another round of more restrictive labour policies of the governments due to, first, the military intervention of the 1980 and, second, the government's austerity policies.

An explicit and theorised understanding of internal and external pressure on the trade union movements as they emerge in many countries in the last decade is of fundamental significance to the Turkish trade unions. While some of the developments seem to have been similar, factors which could be given for the weakening union power and union's responses may have been somewhat different in Turkey. During the period from World War II until the 1960s and partly the 1970s, due to sustained capitalist expansion, reasonable concession between state, employers and unions was witnessed in many countries. This period is widely accepted as "institutionalisation of conflict" in industrial relations through "integration" or "collaboration" and sometimes by "social contract". In a somewhat similar way, although the capital expansion or development and labour movement were weak compared with many other countries, the governments in Turkey also pursued labour "inclusive" policies. However, in the Turkish context, in comparison with some other countries, the emergence of corporatism did not become a significant notion as a part of social democratic ideologies of macroeconomic policies. Rather, it appeared as a consequence of the pragmatic needs of government to come to terms with the national industrialisation development projects. In other words, the trend in the Turkish labour relations in the 1960s and 70s seemed to be the co-operation of unions in the formulation of policies, related to national economic performance and social stability in politics. Therefore, unions were tolerated to provide both economic and social stability at macro level and manageability and certainty at micro level in the light of the industrialisation process.

In this context, Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) was the model of capital accumulation, which required trade unions to become integrated within the new

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economic and political policies in order to secure an economically and politically stable industrial relations framework. In this respect, the Turkish unions played a mediating role between the state, employers and workers. However, the emergence of novel, changing and frequently difficult economic and political circumstances for trade unions in the 1980s and 90s has opened the question of the relationship between unions and their environments and their changing role once more to discussion not only in the industrial relations arena but also in society as a whole. The changing system of capital accumulation (a move from ISI to “market liberalism”) in the 1980s has endangered the traditional institutional arrangements. The traditional role of interest representation for unions, particularly as mediation between the governments, employers and workers, has become problematic. The anti-labour policies seems to have been the outcome of strategic intervention of the governments and employers. It can be argued that in the Turkish case, unions have not been faced with a complete policy of exclusion. In other words, the material conditions of “integrative” “collaborative” or “corporatist” policies have been reduced, however, they have not been completely eliminated. The reasons for this might be that although the economic power of the major union Confederation, TURK-IS, was no longer so important for the government, the political mediating role of unions became significant in the period of the 1980s, which included the transition to democracy, the process of integration of Europe, the implementation of austerity policies and the fear of the possible failure of the parliamentary regime.

The article argues that under the painful and complex process of economic and political reconstruction and the development of democracy the Turkish trade unions have been faced with a number of tactical and political options in the rapidly evolving the issue of European Integration and of democracy and the increasing uniformity amongst members of TURK-IS. The article suggests that trade unions can achieve a position of influence in industrial relations systems as long as they pursue politically motivated strategies by setting a new agenda for members, articulating the broad long-term interests of the working class and finally displaying collective responses and collective responsibility. This argument might be developed through discussion of the changing role of unions, collective bargaining and industrial conflict policies in the context of Turkey. The article begins with the evolution of Turkish industrial relations before the 1980s and 1990s. This part will look at the historical roots of the institutions and actors that affected the nature of the development of this system; subsequent parts will examine the challenges of the 1980s and its impact on the unions. And finally The paper will focus on Turkish unions’ responses by analysing unions tactics in collective bargaining and industrial actions in the same period.

### **Historical background**

It is intended in this section to give some significant account of the history of Turkish industrial relations. Some of the important historical dimensions in its development will

be discussed, in particular as they affect the present structure of the institutions and influence the attitude of social partners, unions, employers and government. It is argued that the role of industrial relations actors in Turkey and industrial relations practices and policies such as collective bargaining, industrial conflict etc. have historically grown in tandem with an interventionist tradition of industrial relations through state intervention and extensive legislative regulation. The establishment of the industrial relations system in general was regarded by government not as an instrument of collective representation for interest groups (workers etc), but rather as an essential part of the apparatus of the government's industrialisation strategy and economic development of the country. The emphasis on the state's role in Turkish industrial relations system from Ottoman times to the present, suggests a continuity which runs through the history of virtually every nation and there is rarely a total break with the past. Therefore, the historical roots of modern Turkish industrial relations provide a better and deeper understanding of present institutions and practices.

The legacy of Ataturk's regime and of the period of military interventions and transition to democracy has shaped the Turkish industrial relations system with an unique set of characteristics.

### **The challenges of the 1980s and after and its impacts on Turkish unions.**

The military intervention of 1980 and after that, the election of the conservative Ozal government in 1984 is widely accepted as marking a turning point in Turkish economic, social and political structure. Since 1980 Turkey has undergone a radical transformation of its political economy. Foreign-oriented economic policies have replaced the mixed economy and import substitution policies in Turkey. Considering increasing international competition, the adaptation of free market principles and foreign economic relations of Turkey have become more significant. The application for full membership of the European Community on 14 April 1987 has further increased these needs. The new economic situation in the light of free market principles has had a considerable impact on the Turkish industrial relations system. Therefore, the main argument to keep in mind is that the 1980s also registered a dramatic change in the Turkish trade union movement. Unions were influenced and reacted to such factors as economic deregulation in the public sector and restrictive labour policies, anti-labour legislation, mass unemployment (through lay-offs and compulsory retirement), privatization, contracting-out and, more recently, new employer strategies. In this context, an immediate concern is now to discuss the implication of these political and economic transformations for organised labour.

#### *The 1980 Military Intervention Period.*

Before looking at significant changes in Turkish trade unions in the 1980s and after, some significant points should be made concerning the impact of the military intervention

of 1980 on the country and the trade union movement as a whole. Like other countries, Turkey experienced a relative period of growth through the 1960s until the first oil crises of 1973. As a matter of fact, before entering the 1980s, Turkey faced undesirable economic and political circumstances. For instance, inflation was accelerating and reached an alarming triple digit level, to over 100 per cent; unemployment was increasing; and fiscal problems of the 1970s tripled external debt, eventually resulting in the cancellation of external sources and comprehensive rescheduling agreements with the IMF between 1978 and 1980 (Marquies and Yildizoglu, 1989).

In fact, the problems which Turkey faced were not only economic but also political. As in England, in Turkey in the late 1970s an increasingly militant and organised working class movement was said to be a main obstacle to the success of the government's crisis management policies. What is more, there was a great deal of violence in the streets between left and right groups. In other words, the increasing unrest in the political and social life of Turkey made governments unable to rule. The response to the crisis of the economy was to impose stabilisation policies. In connection with this, a package of economic measures was published in January 1980, just before the 12 September 1980 military intervention. The 1980 austerity programme was not simply due to the consideration of economic problems but also it was designed to implement some necessary political and legislative changes. The stabilisation policies were likely to be resisted particularly by labour (Marquies and Yildizoglu, 1989). These developments eventually led the military to intervene in 1980, the third such intervention in 30 years.

The inability of the civilian government to implement these policies seemed to be one of the main reasons for the military take over of 12 September 1980. This can be clearly seen from the continuity of economic policy before and particularly after the coup. Therefore, the military intervention of the 1980 had economic objectives. In other words, it aimed at a closer integration with international capital by encouraging export-oriented monetarist policies as well as providing an order and stability for Turkish political life. By doing so, the main economic task was to reduce the size of the public sector, to open the economy to free trade and to reduce wage increases. That is to say that less state involvement in economic activities became significant. The deregulation policies such as privatisation, contracting-out and market orientation were the primary priority in government strategies. Regulating income distribution against labour in general was also one of the main purposes of the structural adjustment programme of the 1980s.

Moreover, combined with an identifiable economic programmes the political system was restructured by setting up a new constitution. This constitution was designed to eliminate all the progressive institutions and movements which had been the legacy of the 1961 constitution.

During this period, while the Military government often stressed social peace and political consensus in the country, some factors including anti-democratic legislation,

depoliticisation of public life and de-unionisation appeared to be the main framework of the political system. Shortly after 12 September 1980 Military take-over, the National Security Council abolished the 1961 constitution, and closed down three union confederations DISK, HAK-IS and MISK. TURK-IS was not shut down but it could not engage in trade union activity, DISK was outlawed and its leaders were imprisoned and prosecuted with the death penalty. Wages were also immediately frozen. Until the new trade union legislation was passed, collective bargaining activities were undertaken by the Supreme Arbitration Council established by the National Security Council. The arbitration council agreed with the view that high rate of inflation in the 1970s was caused by wage increases. The government-controlled arbitration council kept nominal wage increases deliberately and consistently below annual inflation rates for about four years (1980–1984). And no strikes were recorded between 1980 and 1983 (Koc, 1986). In this sense, it can be argued that changing and reshaping the structure of the economy and politics and of Turkish Industrial Relations against labour in general was one of the key goals of the 1980 military regime.

### *Transition period towards democracy*

The military government of 1980 gave Ozal, the architect of the stabilisation measures, the chance to prepare the ground for export-oriented industrialisation without a struggle with interest groups like unions. Ozal was appointed in charge of the economy by the military after 1980, and then he won the general election and became prime minister by advocating Margaret Thatcher style economic policies. The new government's policy has been designed to encourage economic growth especially in view of the developing integration of Turkish and international markets and the country's application for full membership of the European Union.

It was on the basis of this economic and political framework that a gradual return to democracy took place. However, returning democracy in the end of 1983 did not bring significant changes for Turkish unions. In spite of the fact that the Ozal government was in favour of the principles of free market forces, in practice it was highly interventionist in labour relations. It aimed to limit the role of trade unions and the influence of collective bargaining so as to create a flexible labour market at every level. Therefore, it can be argued that Ozal's Motherland Party's economic arguments challenged the whole economic history of Turkey. Taking the new process of capital accumulation into account, the economic policies of the 1980s succeeded in satisfying the interests of employers, particularly through the lowering of real wages and restoration of labour discipline. The government attempted to limit working class activity for the success of the economy at the expense of substantial human and environmental costs.

The 1982 Constitution was designed to limit further trade union rights. It covered a great number of details concerning trade union activities. Trade unions and employers' organisations and their confederations are governed by the provisions of the Trade

Unions Act of 1983 No. 2821, and the Collective Agreements, Strikes and Lockouts Act of 1983 No. 2822. The new labour legislation was a continuation of the 1982 constitutional restrictions (set up after the military take-over of 1980). It can be argued that the new laws limit many trade union rights which the Turkish unions enjoyed before 1980. The 1983 legislation seems to be designed as part of political and economic choices made in the 1980s. Particularly in terms of trade union freedoms the legislation has various negative aspects including imposing certain restrictions on union membership, excessive restriction on the right to strike, and on collective bargaining, implementing heavier penalties for violators of the laws and expanding the scope of the compulsory arbitration mechanism, and interference in the administration and activities of trade unions. The restrictive and even suppressive measures in the Turkish legislation in the 1980s seemed to hit the trade union movement in many ways. Trade unions were not only banned from involvement in political activities but also prohibited from receiving or giving support to political parties. Legal restrictions on union membership were also extended. For instance, civil servants, the employees of essential services and certain public employee personnel, such as public school teachers, postal employees and police, are not allowed to organise in unions.

The government also created another non-union category in the public sector, termed the “contract employees”. The implementation of new employment practice in the public sector seems to have brought “contract employees” closer to the civil servants status, denying them the right to join unions and to strike and consequently causing interest division within the working class. Similarly, some 2 million public servants are denied the right to organise. Before 1980 the size of the unionisable workforce (meaning workers who are legally able to join unions) was about 5 million, and this figure dramatically dropped to around 3.5 million (Buyukuslu 1995). The government also created the concept of the “coverage of collective agreements”. According to the Trade Union Act No 2821, any persons with varying degrees of managerial authority who can legally join unions are excluded from the scope of collective agreements. Any workers authorised to have the right to manage are considered as the employer’s representative. For instance, supervisors and foremen are treated as workers who can join unions but not be covered by collective agreement. While labour legislation was designed mainly to weaken the power of the unions in relations with employers, various attempts were also made to reduce the institutional regulation of conflict so as to expose labour relations more directly to market forces, particularly in the public sector.

In short, the government and employers, apart from the vast resources provided by the legislation, did not miss any opportunity to undermine Turkish trade unionism. The methods exercised by the government and employers have been wide and varied. A cultural and ideological offensive was launched, for instance, an ideological attack on unions and their leaders has been blamed for the disruption caused by prolonged strikes. Anti-union campaigns, centred on allegations of malpractice and corruption inside unions and the blame for displaying no respect for national economic interests and social

stability was also launched by the media, mostly owned by large companies in Turkey. This of course affected the public image of unions. Employers also closed down their businesses permanently or temporarily, divided their companies into small units so as to reduce labour costs – and make it difficult to unionise, to practice collective bargaining and organise strikes. The Government assisted by implementing a privatization programme in public enterprises and contracting out certain work to outside firms. Massive lay-offs were also witnessed, particularly in the state companies. The increase in reported lay-offs cases before and during the privatisation process is also noteworthy.

All this gave rise to loss of membership and of unions' bargaining status and their power at the same plants. For instance, dismissals reported by TURK-IS affiliated unions in 1992 were 39,609 workers in all sectors, and out of this total around 28,000 workers were laid off in the public enterprises alone – sometimes through "compulsory retirement". Turkey has also faced an unemployment problem; the level of unemployment was estimated at more or less 3 million in the beginning of 1990s (TURK-IS 1996).

Combined with the restrictive labour policies, the government pursued wage regulation in accordance with its Friedman type stabilisation programmes, involving restraint especially in the public sector. The result was a radical decline in workers' real wages. As a report prepared by TURK-IS indicated, the real wage index which was 100 in 1979, fell to 43.68 in 1988. During the same period the drop in the real wages of civil servants was from 100 to 52.4 (TURK-IS 1989). Having examined the impact of the changes of the 1980s and after on Turkish unions, the main question is now whether trade unions can respond to the pressure for change by mobilising workers' resistance, or can they participate to influence the nature of the new strategies?

## **Turkish trade unions' responses in a hostile environment**

### *The changing role of Turkish unions*

From the beginning of the establishment of the industrial relations system in Turkey in the 1960s unions pursued militant wage and social policies. As a result of ideological developments, attempts to achieve centralisation of union structure and make militant wage claims drove on efforts towards a "social contract" in the late 1970s. In this period, Turkish unions seemed to be neutral in party politics. They did not have a direct or close links with any political party, though despite the policy of "supra-party unionism", there were some informal links between the unions and the parties). Traditionally, Turkish unions sought to maintain co-operative and orderly relations with the state and employers. In other words, Turkish unions have always tried to establish close co-operation with the government of the day. Thus political unionism did not carry much weight in Turkish union history. The unions usually did not possess an overtly political approach in dealing with either the policies of the state and employers or the exercise of managerial authority in regulation of conditions of employment. This can be attributed to the strong state tradition in labour relations. The role of unions in Turkey

was, thus, marked by a strong emphasis on legalism and government intervention. Turkish unions under this system operated within detailed legal regulations and the structuring of these legal rules reflected a procedural emphasis in collective bargaining. This strong state tradition in industrial relations encouraged the attitude in unions that the solution of labour problems should come from above.

In the 1980s despite the hard time resulting from the 1980 military intervention, unions restructured themselves and total union membership reached its pre-1980 level of more or less 2 million. In terms of the total labour force, which is around 21 million, union density was at about 10 per cent. On the other hand, OECD's figures show the union density around 18.7 in Turkey, which is higher than in Spain (16 per cent) and France (12 per cent) and lower than in Portugal (30 per cent) and Greece (25 per cent). (EIRR 212, September 1991:17) After three years of military government, the option available for TURK-IS (which remained the only strong and effective labour organisation after the return to democracy) was the traditional one: reliance on good relations with government. Therefore, TURK-IS retained its traditional policy of "dialogue" with the new civilian government. However, unlike the labour policies of the governments in the 1960s and 70s, in the 1980s the attitude of government was no longer a tolerant one. The reluctance of the government to respond to crucial calls by TURK-IS for a "dialogue" was particularly evident during the conservative Ozal government.

Within TURK-IS there was a more general confusion and uncertainty about how to respond to the problems of a radical challenge from above by the government, combined with the apparent ambivalence of the membership below. Individual unions within TURK-IS agreed with the need for "unity" to oppose the government's policies. So in the mid-1980s TURK-IS began to re-examine its stance after several talks with government about the legislation ended up without any concession. TURK-IS came to the view that it should reconsider its previous dependence on government co-operation, and seek instead to produce new tactics against the government's policies. The new policy was a significant transformation mainly due to the spontaneous resurgence of the rank and file movement as a reaction to the rapid decline in the purchasing power of the workers salaries. In some cases, industrial action and protests took place at workplace level without union approval or control. In this sense, the leaders of TURK-IS were under heavy rank and file pressure. There were still disagreements among different factions (between conservative and social democrat unions) about the way in which TURK-IS should act. Although there was a widely-shared view about the need for a change in the strategies of the confederation among all factions, the significant question was still whether the wage-struggle should be combined with an anti-government political struggle. However, further difficulties between the government and TURK-IS associated with a growing pressure from "below" forced the confederation to change its traditional stand in favour of more radical policies. On the other hand, the question of "legality" in the face of "illegal actions", (most conservative unions being cautious about this) was secured by a strategic new slogan: "We are fighting for Western pluralist

democracy with full rights for the unions” (Tercuman, 22 May 1987).

The wage struggle of unions combined with the new line of political activity under the new title of “demand for democracy” continued after 1987. These developments not only demonstrated considerable changes in the traditional corporatist image of the Turkish unions but also provided its strength in taking independent political action in relation with the government. This was more evident when TURK-IS’s unions stood up against the Conservative Party during the 1987 general election, the referendum for the political freedom of the pre-1980 political leaders in 1988 and local elections in 1989. The confederation and its member unions thus began to use their “political power” as an important weapon. This was strengthened by extending the confederation’s international relations, because Turkish unions became aware of the new reality that since Turkey made an application for full membership of the EU, the Turkish government became vulnerable on issue like democracy and human rights. By establishing new communication channels with international bodies such as ILO, ICFTU, ETUC and the council of Europe, the confederation and individual unions aimed at putting “international political pressure” on Turkish governments. In short, the key policy after mid-1980 seemed to abandon the soft attitudes and adopt new tactics based on the use of “political pressure” at both national and international platforms. These policy changes can also be attributed to the strength of the Turkish trade union movement in terms of increased unity and continued capacity to mobilise Turkish workers.

### *Changing strategies in collective bargaining and industrial action.*

The late 1980s registered as years of an increase in strikes and the curve of workers’ and other labourers’ struggles; it was, mainly, the beginning of deepening conflict with the government. For the first time in Turkish working class history, workers of different political affiliation, different religious and ethnic roots and various geographical regions, raised a legal and independent mass movement in order to pursue more broad economic and politic interests of the working class. This mass movement, which first emerged outside unions among the rank and file, ultimately forced the unions towards a new position in relation to the government and employers. Workers particularly in the public sector carried out widespread action in 1989 and the period is now well known as the “Spring Mobilisation” in Turkish trade union history: 600,000 public sector workers engaged in actions and mobilisation including street demonstrations with the purpose of tipping the scale in their own favour in collective bargaining. In response to the denial of their right to take strike actions, the different unions in the public sector adopted a series of new tactics for “collective action” that fell within the law – such as slowing down the work, lunch boycotts, false requests for medical examinations, boycotting works transport, not working for over-time, sit-ins and even refusals to shave! For example, all workers at the Yenisan company in Istanbul let their beards grow for about 64 days as a sign of protest against the pay and conditions (Petrol-Is, 1995).

This development brought about a set of collective bargaining agreements which enabled workers to make up for the post-1980 losses. In 1990 the real wages of unionised workers increased above the pre-1980 level. Despite every obstacle put up by the government and employers, real wages rose considerably in 1989 compared with 1988. Taking 1983 as the base year the index for real wages increased from 62.4% for 1988 to 81.7% for 1989. As a result of successive collective bargaining in 1990 and 1991, workers continued to fully compensate for the income losses of the post-1980 period (Petrol-Is 1995).

In this period, multiplant bargaining with single enterprise agreements was widespread and collective bargaining tended to be more centralised particularly in the public sector. One of the important reasons behind the successful conclusion of the 1989, 1990 and 1991 collective bargaining agreements was the collective action of trade unions affiliated to the TURK-IS confederation. In other words, the unions responded by a disciplined display of unity under TURK-IS's directive. All public sector unions agreed to enter the negotiations as one unit promising that no union would sign an individual agreement. A special four member co-ordinating committee was established, and unions agreed not to sign agreements without the prior approval of this committee (TURK-IS 1992).

In connection with this, another major development within the unions has been a move from "decentralisation" to "centralisation" particularly in the decision-making process. In other words, with regard to union government, the decision-making process, especially in general, collective bargaining policies and industrial action, has taken place at national level. On the other hand, there have been also some clear signs in unions demands for the new agenda at the bargaining table, particularly, for more non-pay issues such as demands for more employee involvement, health and safety committees etc. For instance, committees at the workplace have been called, for example, the High Council of Labour Peace at Caykur (the State Tea Corporation) and the Committee of Collaboration at MKE (The Machinery Chemical Industries). The most common type of committees set up by collective bargaining agreements decide on matters such as discipline, the resolution of rights disputes, the duties of shop stewards and the implementation of the agreements (Koc 1991).

In short, it can be argued that unions this time particularly at the political level, through mass industrial action and renewal of the confrontation, were effective in discouraging the government's restrictive labour policies. It should be mentioned that the demands of unions not only tended to concentrate on wage issues but also centred on issues like lifting restrictions of trade union rights, an end to the government austerity policy, to all forms of repression and exploitation of workers, and speeding up processes towards true democracy. Turkish unions have been also able to produce solidaristic projects among the different industries and sectors. This was evident during the 1990 Zonguldak miners' strike and the one day general strike on 3 January 1991 when TURK-IS called for protest against continuing denials of human and trade union rights and for

support for ongoing industrial action. Despite being declared illegal, the strike was supported by 1.5 million workers (Turk-Is 1991).

### **Conclusion: Defining a new role for Turkish unions and “political solutions” in an Era of uncertainty**

It can be argued that the external and internal pressures have forced the Turkish unions to make some crucial changes in their policies as well as their democratic and political rationalities. This has, eventually, resulted in the unions reviewing their traditional role in industrial relations in favour of more confrontational relations with the government and employers as opposed to their traditional corporatist image.

Although they have continued being concerned almost exclusively with economic issues, there have been significant moves to broaden the union agenda, emphasising broader political ambitions such as the issue of democracy. It is a fact that the Europeanisation trend in Turkey has presented considerable opportunities for unions to improve their situation. The Turkish government has become vulnerable to a new social environment since its own freedom of action has been increasingly subject to international developments. Thus, it was not so easy for the government to exercise complete “labour exclusive” policies without taking “political contingency” into account. On the other hand, Turkish unions displayed a great deal of strength and the capacity to utilise the external opportunities and pursued significant solidaristic policies in shaping a broader social and political agenda. Generally speaking, TURK-IS and its members have redefined their policies and objectives to pursue the material interest of their members as well as a broader and more generalised social and political agenda. This has also produced new forms of struggle, of demands in collective bargaining within unions themselves. Furthermore, different trade unions in different industries have displayed similar responses to changes in the economic and political environment. These unifying responses have been recently combined with the “democracy movement” and “solidaristic policies” within the labour movement.

All these developments led the government to have different degrees of toleration for workers’ organisation. Therefore, there has been some development towards political exchange or concession bargaining at macro level by “centralised political negotiation”. This “centralisation” of the collective bargaining process might allow us to talk about “political economism”, in particular in the public sector. In addition to this, coalition governments in Turkey in the 1990s have tried to encourage a national system of concertation through a “new tripartite economic council” (Economic and Social Council) almost as much in order to stabilise political democracy and industrial conflict as to implement the IMF austerity programmes for controlling inflation and the country’s growing foreign debt problem. In this context, TURK-IS and its member unions are still considered as valued interlocutors by the government. The basis of national authority undermined in the 1980s may have been reversed at the beginning of

the new decade. In this sense, the government and employers' organisations may require trade union mediation once more, again through social partnership since the government's economic and political stability has been insecure due to external and internal pressure and problems. A new intermediary "political mediation" role, especially for the public sector unions, might become important. In short, Turkish unions' ability to meet the challenges arising from the changing external environment has been determined by their endowment with the new reactive strategies of the unions. The Turkish case suggests that there is still a significant scope for a more active initiating and coordinating role for central labour organisations, and unions can pursue more comprehensive and tenable trade union policies through displaying collective responses and collective responsibility. It seems that the rise of a new role for Turkish unions opens an important new era in the history of trade unionism in Turkey.

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