

THE METAL STORM:  
2015 WAVE OF STRIKES IN THE TURKISH AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE METAL STORM: 2015 WAVE OF STRIKES IN THE TURKISH AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR**

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This study analyzes politicization processes of workers in light of the wave of strikes called as the Metal Storm. Hence, Turkish industrialization strategy in the post-1980 era was investigated along with the transformation of the legal framework regulating the individual and collective employment relations by considering their effects on the automotive industry. In pursuant to this transformation, it is contended that the dominant way of trade-unionism in the sector before the resistance had been the symbiotic unionism, which is non-democratic and distant from representing the workers' demands on the basis of the cooperation with employers. In 2015, there occurred wildcat strikes in the sector extending to 15 days in 7 workplaces as well as many other protests spanning a lot of workplaces such as dining hall protests, marches and slowdown strikes. Workers mainly demanded wage improvement and abandonment of the authorized union from workplaces. At the end, they achieved some remuneration improvements whereas they forced union to a restoration. The preliminary process of the strike, strike days and the outcomes were examined through the method of process tracing. So, attitudes and statements of involved actors were investigated in detail. For the sources, the previous studies on the events as well as media organs of the actors, reports, researches and official documents were extensively utilized. Consequently, it is observed that workers' demands were limited

to economic concerns, and they did not develop an alternative and explicit political framework to be based on class-consciousness. However, it is also identified that this corresponded to the political reality of the class struggle in the neoliberal era.

**Keywords:** Türk Metal, Metal Storm, Symbiotic Unionism, Automotive Industry, Class Based Politics.

## ÖZ

### METAL FIRTINA: TÜRKİYE OTOMOTİV ENDÜSTRİSİNDE 2015 GREV DALGASI

Taştekin, Ulaş  
Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü  
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Bu çalışma metal fırtına olarak adlandırılan grev dalgası deneyimi ışığında neoliberal dönemde işçilerin politikleşme süreçlerini ele almaktadır. Bu çerçevede Türkiye’de 12 Eylül sonrası sanayileşme stratejisi ve buna koşut olarak bireysel ve kolektif çalışma süreçlerini belirleyen yasal çerçevenin dönüşümü ele alınmış, tüm bu gelişmelerin otomotiv sektöründe yarattığı etki analiz edilmiştir. Bu dönüşüm çerçevesinde, grev dalgası öncesinde sektörde egemen olan sendikacılık tarzının işverenle iş birliğine dayalı, işçilerin taleplerini temsil etmekten uzak ve demokratik olmayan simbiyotik sendikacılık olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Sektörde 2015 yılında, 7 işyerinde 15 güne uzanan fiili grevlerin yanında çok sayıda işyerinde yemekhane protestosu, yürüyüş, iş yavaşlatma gibi bir dizi başka eylem gerçekleşmiştir. İşçiler başlıca ücret iyileştirmesi ve yetkili sendikanın iş yerinden ayrılmasını talep etmiş; bunlardan ilki bakımından çeşitli maddi kazanımlar elde etmiş, ikincisi açısından ise sendikayı bir restorasyona zorlamışlardır. İşçilerin grev kararı almasına giden süreç, grev günleri ve ertesinde yaşanan gelişmeler süreç takibi yöntemiyle incelenmiş, olaya dahil olan aktörlerin tutum ve açıklamaları detaylı olarak araştırılmıştır. Kaynak olarak konu üzerine daha önce yapılmış çalışmaların yanında olayın aktörleriyle ilişkili medya araçları, raporlar, araştırmalar ve diğer belgeler kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda işçilerin eylemlerinin ekonomik taleplerle sınırlı olduğu ve sınıf

bilincine dayalı alternatif ve belirgin bir politik çerçeve geliştirmedikleri gözlemlenmiş; ancak bunun sınıf mücadelesinin neoliberal dönemde aldığı biçimin bir tezahürü olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Türk Metal, Metal Fırtına, Simbiyotik Sendikacılık, Otomotiv Endüstrisi, Sınıf Temelli Siyaset.

*To My Dear Mother and Father who always supported my education,  
and To My Beloved Hülya.*



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	iv
ÖZ.....	vi
DEDICATION .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	x
LIST OF TABLES .....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	xiv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. TRANSFORMATION OF TURKISH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM .....	7
2.1 The Transformation of the Industry .....	7
2.2 The Flexibilization of Individual Labor Relations.....	15
2.3 Transformation of Trade-Unionism.....	21
3. INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM IN TURKISH AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY.....	36
3.1 An Overview of Automotive Sector in Turkey.....	36
3.2 Conditions of Working Classes in the Sector.....	43
3.3 Trade Unionism in the Sector .....	48
3.4 Türk Metal and Symbiotic Unionism.....	55
4. THE METAL STORM.....	60
4.1 An Overview of the Events .....	63
4.2 The Reasons of the Events .....	65
4.3 Attitude of the Actors in the Sector.....	68
4.3.1 Unions .....	68
4.3.2 Employers.....	71

4.3.3	The State .....	73
4.4	The Features of the Movement .....	75
4.4.1	Balance Sheet.....	75
4.4.2	Wildcat Strikes and Legal Aspects .....	76
4.4.3	Spontaneity of the Movement and the Role of Social Media .	77
4.5	The Outcomes of the Movement.....	80
4.5.1	Material Gains and General Outcomes .....	80
4.5.2	Outcomes in Terms of Unionization in the Workplaces.....	82
4.5.3	Perseverance of Türk Metal .....	85
5.	CLASS-POLITICS AND TRADE-UNIONISM IN LIGHT OF THE METAL STORM .....	90
5.1	The Evaluations on the Metal Storm.....	92
5.2	Considerations on Türk Metal.....	99
5.3	A Wave of Contentious Labor Movements?.....	102
6.	CONCLUSION .....	107
	REFERENCES.....	110
	APPENDICES	
A.	CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE EVENTS.....	145
B.	THE CHART OF WORKPLACES INFLUENCED BY THE METAL STORM.....	160
C.	LOCATION OF PROMINENT WORKPLACES ON THE MAP.....	163
D.	TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET .....	164
E.	TEZ İZİN FORMU/THESIS PERMISSION FORM .....	175

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Import and Export Performance of Turkish Automotive Sector (2008-2017).....	39
Table 3.2 The Main Companies of Automotive Sector in Turkey .....	41
Table 3.3 Labor Productivity and Real Wages in Turkish Automotive Sector (2005-2015).....	46
Table 3.4 Exploitation Rates in Some Workplaces of the Sector between 2010-2014.....	47
Table 3.5 Some Selective Figures from Turkish Labor Relations System 2013-2019.....	49
Table 3.6 Certain Dynamic Sectors in terms of Various Mobilization Categories..	50
Table 5.1 Comparison of Workers' Identity Belongingness in 2008 and 2017.....	91
Table 5.2 The Type of Actions Mostly Observed in Labor Demonstrations in Turkey .....	105

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Union Density in Turkey between 1986-2018.....	30
Figure 3.1 Number of Total Outputs in Automotive Sector of Various Countries (2017).....	37
Figure 3.2 Structure of Turkish Exports (1963-2009) .....	38

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	American Federation of Labor
Birleşik Metal-İş	Iron, Steel, Metal and Metal Ware Workers Union and United Metal Workers' Union ( <i>Birleşik Metal İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
CGT	The General Confederation of Labor ( <i>Confédération générale du travail</i> )
Dev-Yapı İş	Revolutionary Construction Workers' Union ( <i>Devrimci Yapı İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
DİSK	Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions, also (in the advance of 1980) "Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions" ( <i>Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i> )
Eğitim-Sen	Education and Science Workers' Union ( <i>Eğitim ve Bilim Emekçileri Sendikası</i> )
EMİS	Industrial Metal Employers Union ( <i>Endüstriyel Metal İşverenleri Sendikası</i> )
EOI	Export-Oriented Industrialization
ESC	Economic and Social Council ( <i>Ekonomik ve Sosyal Konsey</i> )
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
Genel-İş	Public Services Employees Union of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Genel Hizmet İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
Hak-İş	Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions ( <i>Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i> )
Hizmet-İş	All Municipal and Public Services Worker's Trade Union ( <i>Tüm Belediye ve Genel Hizmet İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
IEMF	International Eurasian Metal Workers Federation
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Money Fund
ISI	Import-Substitution Industrialization
ISO	Istanbul Chamber of Industry ( <i>İstanbul Sanayi Odası</i> )

ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
IVA	Industrial Value Added
İnşaat-İş	Construction Workers' Union ( <i>İnşaat İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
İyi-Sen	Construction Workers' and Builders' Union ( <i>İnşaat ve Yapı İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
JDP	Justice and Development Party ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> )
KAP	Public Disclosure Platform ( <i>Kamuyu Aydınlatma Platformu</i> )
KESK	Confederation of Public Employees Trade Union ( <i>Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i> )
Lastik-İş	Turkish Oil, Chemical and Rubber Industry Workers' Union ( <i>Türkiye Petrol, Kimya ve Lastik Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
Maden-İş	Mining, Hardware, and Machinery Workers' Union of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Maden, Madeni Eşya ve Makine Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
Memur-Sen	Confederation of Public Servants Trade Union ( <i>Memur Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i> )
MESS	Turkish Employers' Association of Metal Industries, also (in the advance of 1980) "Metalware and Industrialists' Association" – ( <i>Madeni Eşya ve Sanayicileri Sendikası</i> )
MGK	National Security Council ( <i>Milli Güvenlik Kurulu</i> )
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party ( <i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> )
MİB	Metal Workers Association ( <i>Metal İşçileri Birliği</i> )
MİSK	The Confederation of Nationalist Workers' Unions ( <i>Milliyetçi İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i> )
MoLSS	Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services ( <i>Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı</i> )
MSP	National Salvation Party ( <i>Milli Selamet Partisi</i> )
Nakliyat-İş	Revolutionary Road, Air and Railway Workers' Union of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Devrimci Kara, Hava ve Demiryolu Taşımacılığı İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OICA	International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers

OİB	Uludağ Automotive Industry Exporters Association ( <i>Uludağ Otomotiv Endüstrisi İhracatçıları Birliği</i> ),
OSD	Automotive Manufacturers Association ( <i>Otomotiv Sanayicileri Derneği</i> )
Otomobil-İş	Turkish Automotive Manufacturing and Assembly, Iron-Steel, Machinery and Metal Hardware Industry Workers' Union ( <i>Türkiye Otomotiv İmal ve Montaj Demir-Çelik Makina ve Metalden Mamul Eşya Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
Öz Büro İş	Office, Education, Fine Arts, Trade and Cooperative Workers' Union ( <i>Öz Büro, Eğitim, Güzel Sanatlar, Ticaret ve Kooperatif İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
Öz Finans İş	Bank, Finance and Insurance Employees' Union ( <i>Öz Banka, Finans ve Sigorta Çalışanları Sendikası</i> )
Özçelik-İş (Çelik-İş)	Iron, Steel, Metal and Metal Ware Workers Union ( <i>Demir, Çelik, Metal ve Metal Mamulleri İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
Petrol-İş	The Oil, Chemical and Rubber Workers' Union ( <i>Türkiye Petrol, Kimya, Lastik İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
R&D	Research and Development
SME	Small- and Medium-Scale Enterprises
SMS	Short Message Service
TAYSAD	Association of Automotive Parts and Components Manufacturers ( <i>Taşıt Araçları Yan Sanayicileri Derneği</i> )
Tek Gıda-İş	Turkish Food and Supplementary Industry Workers' Union ( <i>Türkiye Gıda ve Yardımcı İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
TEKSİF	Turkish Textile, Knitting, Clothing and Leather Industry Workers' Union ( <i>Türkiye Tekstil, Örme, Giyim ve Deri Sanayi İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
TİSK	Turkish Confederation of Employer Association ( <i>Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i> )
TKİP	Communist Workers' Party of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Komünist İşçi Partisi</i> )
TOBB	The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği</i> )



TOMİS	Automotive and Metal Workers' Union of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Otomotiv ve Metal İşçileri Sendikası</i> )
TSKB	Industrial Development Bank of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Sınai Kalkınma Bankası</i> )
Türk-İş	The Turkish Confederation of Workers' Unions ( <i>Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu</i> )
Türk Metal	Turkish Metal Workers Union ( <i>Türkiye Metal, Çelik, Mühimmat, Makina, Metalden Mamül Eşya ve Oto, Montaj ve Yardımcı İşçiler Sendikası</i> )
TÜSİAD	Turkish Industry and Business Association ( <i>Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği</i> )
UN	United Nations
US (USA)	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

It is more than 35 years since *Farewell to the Working Class* (Andre Gorz) was published whereas more than three decades lasted after Ellen Meiksins Wood's response, *The Retreat from Class*. In the meantime, the discipline of politics witnessed many significant events; dissolution and decline of the states, occupations, wars, uprisings, civil wars and sort of revolutions. The notion of class has been insignificantly considered as an agent of change or a social category to analyze the political behaviors and developments. On the other hand, the question of "what happened to the class-based politics?" has remained unattended except some scholars who were particularly keen on the problem of social inequalities, its aggravation and the influence of class struggle in this picture. This study, everything aside, got inspired from this question. However, as its scope is quite wide, the notion of class and class-based politics must have been studied on the basis of a more tangible question.

This reserve brought along the necessity to think on the question of "what kind of political behaviors do the members of working classes adopt?". Here, political behavior is not limited to the voting behavior since it is already well-known that supporting the neoliberal government party in Turkey is a common attitude of working classes. More than a decade, the hegemony project that was developed by Justice and Development Party (JDP) had almost no problem to get the consent of the working classes in terms of voting behaviors<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, it is supposed that deviation moments in the behaviors of workers may provide much more precise insights about their conditions and interaction with the politics.

In the political participation literature, social movements and public demonstrations, just as voting behavior, are commonly considered as an ordinary way of political

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<sup>1</sup> What is more, the elections were even considered as an emergency button by the government thanks to this support.

participation in western countries (cf. Uysal, 2017, p.19). In the Turkish context, it is claimed that such kind of mobilizations have not been considered as an ordinary practice, and hence, remained as an alternative way of political participation (Uysal, 2017, p.19 and 139). When the prohibitive legal-institutional framework is taken into consideration; the exercise of some basic rights such as getting organized at a union, going on a strike, freedom of speech and making demonstrations have been curtailed to a significant extent through various legal enactments and executive practices even if they are guaranteed by the constitution of Republic of Turkey. That being the case, workers, just like other social groups, ordinarily apply this type of political means when the chips are down. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe the emergence of some prominent mobilizations to seek their rights, and in some cases, such mobilizations even challenge this prohibitive framework in different respects.

A recent example of such a mobilization has been the Metal Storm<sup>2</sup>, the wildcat strikes of metal workers at Renault, TOFAŞ, Ford Otosan, Türk Traktör, Mako, Ototrim and Coşkunöz workplaces during 2015. In terms of the number of participants and its level of militancy, this wave of strikes is considered as one of the most exceptional mobilizations in the recent political history of the country. When the retreat of the ‘class’ from the political sphere in the recent decades of Turkish political history is taken into consideration, this mobilization of the workers occupies a significant place with its size and influences albeit it has not been studied comprehensively yet.

With a motivation to better comprehend the current dynamics influencing the relations between conditions of the working class and their political orientations, this study attempts to search for an answer to the question of “to what extent the Metal Storm experience displayed a politicized character?”. It is presumed that to examine this movement’s interrelation with the political sphere would be suggestive in order to get an idea about working classes’ politicization especially in more dynamic and organized segments. While seeking an answer to this question, the process tracing

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<sup>2</sup> Even though there are views propounding to name it as “a wave of strikes” (Dölek, 2016, s. 61), This wave of strikes and demonstrations is likened to “a sort of storm of workers’ protests” (Çelik, 2015b) which is called as the ‘Metal Storm’ (Metal Fırtına). This phrase connotes the name of a popular Turkish novel authored by Orkun Uçar and Burak Turna. On the other hand, the theme of this novel deals with a fictional US-Turkey war and is a completely different story even though these two nomenclatures are homonymic. To differentiate these two completely irrelevant stories, you can see for English review of the novel; Widmer, 2005.

method was used so as to include the preliminary events, the beginning of protests and strikes (April 14-June 3) and the following outcomes of the strikes. Process tracing necessitates the investigation of “the sequence of the events, the specific actions taken by various types of actors, public and private statements by those actors about why they took those actions, as well as other observations” (Hall, 2006, p.28). Thus, identifying actors of the event is crucial for the precise application of this method. In the study, employer organizations, government officials, labor unions (Türk Metal, Birleşik Metal-İş and Çelik-İş) and workers who went on strike in the aforementioned workplaces are deemed as the actors of the events. Moreover, the statements of Metal Workers Association (*Metal İşçileri Birliği - MİB*) are paid attention with a critical view. Daily statements and actions of all these actors can be found in Appendix 1, and the workplaces which were somehow involved in the wave of protests even though they did not go on strike are also listed in Appendix 2. As for the materials, previous studies which focused on this event have been utilized. Furthermore, legal documents, governmental and semi-official reports and strategy documents are frequently utilized. For the layout of the Metal Storm events, the publications of the addressees of the issue, i.e. Türk Metal and workers’ grassroots organization Metal Workers Association (*Metal İşçileri Birliği - MİB*), along with the media organs that published daily reports of the demonstrations were investigated with a critical view.

As it is discussed in detail below, by considering the research conducted in the context of this study, it is difficult to mention a conscious labor movement of which members gathered around certain class objectives vis-à-vis other classes. During their resistance, workers demanded wage increase as well as free choice of unions, abandonment of Turkish Metal Workers Union (Türk Metal - *Türkiye Metal, Çelik, Mühimmat, Makina, Metalden Mamül Eşya ve Oto, Montaj ve Yardımcı İşçiler Sendikası*) from workplaces and the ability to choose their own shop stewards freely (Çelik, 2015b). On the other hand, it should be taken into consideration that such ‘limited’ character of the movement just “corresponds to the realities of capitalism” (Wood, 1995, p.20). To the extent that the spirit of the neoliberal hegemony is defined as “the attempt to put an end class-based politics” (Yalman, 2009, p. 308), the notion of class has been excluded from the political sphere.

That being the case, in order to support the investigation of the aforementioned question, it was necessary to trace workers' demands by considering "what kind of sources triggered such a significant mobilization?". In this context, it is observed that workers' recent mobilizations are related to their wage demands and working conditions. As the wage increase demand is strongly related with the working conditions, an examination of the developments in the labor regime predominating the industry would be necessary. The process of global integration between the different segments of the economy influenced both central and peripheral economies. Turkish automotive industry was among the sectors which attracted capital inflows during the process, and significant amount of investment was made since the mid-1990s. It can be suggested that main thruster of these investments became the suppression of labor in order to provide benevolent conditions to the investors. As a result, the previously advantageous conditions of formal segments of labor force deteriorated in the last decade. Under these circumstances, automotive workers could not stand their aggravating working hours and decreasing real wages. In this respect, it can be suggested that the Metal Storm experience, as a deviation from the usual daily-routine of the conduct in the workplaces, has revealed many facts regarding the *modus operandi* in the sector and aggravation of the employment terms.

This suppression of the labor and exclusion of working classes from the policy-making processes also made great impacts on trade unionism. In order to get consent to this suppression, it is expected that a proper trade union apparatus would be useful. Hence, the activities of the unions are restricted "with the aim of preventing the formation of barriers to capital accumulation" and workers' struggle is restrained to the workplace (Akkaya, 2002, p. 136). So, it is not a coincidence that workers' reaction revealed itself as an embodiment of the rage against the entitled union, Türk Metal, in the case of the Metal Storm. In light of the case examined in this study, Türk Metal is investigated in the frame of symbiotic trade-unionism. Symbiotic trade-unionism normally refers to a recent development in Turkish industrial relations system<sup>3</sup> (cf. Çelik, 2015a; Gürcan & Mete, 2017). Especially after the 2008 crisis,

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<sup>3</sup> In the industrial relations literature, the term "industrial relations system" usually refers to the system theory developed by John Thomas Dunlop (1958). In the study, the term of industrial relations system is not used in this way but refers to the Turkish industrial relations patterns.

Justice and Development Party governments adopted an orientation to colonize the labor movement rather than completely busting and eliminating them. In that vein, some trade-unions which are affiliated to Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions (Hak-İş - *Hak İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*) and Confederation of Public Servants Trade Union (Memur-Sen - *Memur Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*) are supported and encouraged by the government in exchange for political support by the unions. On the other hand, various mutualist collaborations between trade-unions and employers or governments are not a quite recent phenomenon. Even if they had not predominated the industrial relations system, it is possible to observe emergence of a type of trade-unionism which serves to control and develop containment strategies and transforms such collaborations into a winning strategy. Especially in the aftermath of the 1980 coup d'état, the legal framework that regulates the industrial relations system enabled proliferation and growth of these unions. Türk Metal can be considered as a clarifying example of such trade-unions as it will be examined throughout the following chapters.

Another supportive observation generated from the research was about the exercise of *de facto* strikes. In the recent decades, many restrictions were enforced over the right to strike. In many sectors such as petro-chemicals, urban transport and civilian personnel of the armed forces, the strike is forbidden by the relevant law. Furthermore, the government either postponed or banned seventeen strikes involving more than 190,000 workers since 2002 (Birelma, 2018, p.8). During the state of emergency between 2016-2018, the right to strike was completely disregarded<sup>4</sup>. The workers, who are not able to utilize this right, cannot find any response to their complaints in the courts since the legal framework has been transformed in favor of the employers<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The President Erdoğan clearly attested that by saying “We are enforcing emergency laws in order for our business world to function more easily. So, let me ask: have you got any problems in the business world? Any delays? When we took on power, there was again a state of emergency enforced in Turkey but all factories were under the risk of strikes. Remember those days! But now, by making use of the state of emergency, we immediately intervene in workplaces that pose a threat of strike. Because, you can’t shake our business world. We use state of emergency for this” (Çamur, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> The President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB – *Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği*), Rıfat Hisarcıklioğlu, gladly attests that “We have identified the obstacles facing the business and investment environment and removed them together with the government. We have made it possible to reduce employment costs, the subject of many complaints. The legislation on occupational health and safety brought great burdens to our SMEs of which we liberated them. (...)

In this context, workers do not have proper tools which enable them to ‘duly’ seek their rights. In this regard, directly and immediately stopping the production in the workplace in order to negotiate with the employers has started to be a common practice applied by the workers in recent years. When the workers cannot find any remedy to their concerns as a result of the curtailment of their rights, they apply more direct methods by disregarding the procedures. Whereas the Metal Storm constitutes a good example of such practices, it is also possible to observe the proliferation of such actions in other workplaces and sectors.

The background and findings of the study are presented in six chapters. The second chapter following the *Introduction* starts with main lines of the developmental strategies, especially in the area of Turkish industrialization to better understand the context in which trade-unionism after the 1980 military intervention evolved. This chapter also includes the restructuring of the legal-judicial framework establishing the individual and collective labor relations in Turkey in pursuant to the shift from an inward-oriented strategy to an export-oriented neoliberal industrialization. After that, third chapter investigates the background of the case by providing the details of automotive sector and the examination reveals that the automotive sector displays most of the structural characteristics indicated in the second chapter. Accordingly, Türk Metal portrayed as an example of symbiotic union under the rubric of “partnership in coercion” which is interpellated by this mode of accumulation. The fourth chapter outlines the events that gave birth to the Metal Storm and evaluates its causes and outcomes in terms of the gains and transformative effects in the industry. It would be plausible to say that the resistance did not only affect the relations in the sector but also had impacts over the distributive norms of the economy in general. Finally, the fifth chapter of the study makes miscellaneous evaluations over the class-politics and trade-unionism in light of reflections provided by the Metal Storm experience.

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Another area where we suffered great distress was the judicial system. Especially in the cases of the Labor Courts, 99% of which unfairly punished employers. In order to address this, the mandatory mediation system was put into practice. Cases which lasted months, even years, are now resolved in days and weeks.” (TOBB, 2018).

## CHAPTER 2

### TRANSFORMATION OF TURKISH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM

Current Turkish industrial relations system can be considered as an output of the regulations implemented in the aftermath of the September 12, 1980 coup d'état. In this regard, this framework greatly differs from the dynamics determining the conditions of working classes valid before the 1980 coup d'état. Since then, there occurred significant transformations in terms of modes of articulation of Turkey to the World economy, industrialization and the capital accumulation strategies. In this respect, it seems necessary to investigate the main lines of this transformation in order to better understand the context in which trade-unionization after the military intervention grew. This chapter initially summarizes this transformation, and then, inquires the developments in the employment relations and trade-unionism since the 1980s. The underlying argument in this chapter is that Turkish industrialization experience in the post-1980 environment is characterized by a mode of capital accumulation based on the surplus extraction via suppression of labor rather than a meaningful recovery of industrial activity.

#### 2.1 The Transformation of the Industry

A study conducted on TEKEL workers' 2010 resistance against precarization of their employment conditions had defined the debilitated trade unions as a serious obstacle against initiating and mobilizing a collective struggle (Yalman & Topal, 2017, p.13). In compliance with this observation, following years witnessed that workers' reactions emerged with a rage against the unions among other things. Furthermore, this phenomenon did not only emerge in Turkey but also in various developing economies around the world<sup>6</sup>. Such an appearance of the issue brings the question of

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<sup>6</sup> In Chinese automotive sector, the world leader in the industry, workers went to strike in 2010 with the demand of re-election in their trade unions, changes in occupational health and safety compliance and increases in the wages (Butollo and ten Brink, 2012). In Mexican automotive industry, wildcat



what kind of sources may generate this type of debilitated or degenerated trade-unionism. Under the imperative of neoliberal globalization project, constituent parts of the world economy started to integrate with each other and with international markets (Boratav et al, 2000, p. 2). On the part of central economies, this is considered “as a new form of crisis management emerging during crises of the capitalist mode of production” to provide counter-tendencies so as to balance the “tendency to rate of average profit to fall” (Yıldızoğlu, 2010; cf. Poulantzas, 1974). Such an integration would enable to decrease labor costs to transfer surplus to the corporations and governments in the central economies through offshoring, outsourcing, international subcontracting and contact manufacturing practices (Kurtulmuş & Tanyılmaz, 2017).

On the side of peripheral economies, most of which had applied inward-oriented import-substitution industrialization model; the protectionist, national and statist-interventionist way of development was replaced with an outward-oriented and integrationist strategy emphasizing export-led growth based on free market (Boratav; 2018, pp. 285-305; Kirkpatrick & Öniş, 1991, p. 14). The rationale was to increase value-added technology-intensive production capacities and to enhance “structural or systemic” competitiveness by articulating these economies to the world market as industry was discursively considered “as the engine of growth for the rest of the economy” (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 85). It should be kept in mind that, in each case, these models operate under the verdict of certain architecture of political regimes, relevant configuration of domestic distributional relations and balances of class-forces. Nevertheless, the latter strategy is commonly interrelated with the repression of wages and other labor costs under the pressure of foreign competition along with the establishment of legal-institutional framework required to achieve that motive (Boratav, 2018, pp. 293-296; Jessop, 2003; cf. Ozan, 2011, p.165). Accordingly, it is expected that the host economies must be restructured in order to meet the needs of incoming capital when commodities or capital are exported into new economic geographies (Yıldızoğlu, 2010, p. 44). In this sense, the state becomes

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strikes were organized by the means of clandestine activities of workers. These strikes, which were against precarious working conditions in Honda and Fiat-Chrysler Group workplaces, share striking similarities with the experience in Turkey (Marinero, 2018). In another example of confrontation between the precarious workers and the rail union Unión Ferroviaria in Argentina, a young activist was murdered by the union leadership (Zorzoli, 2018).

responsible for a range of activities from the construction of new technological infrastructures, introduction of new legal and judicial regulations, structure of new consumption patterns in order to attract international capital into its region, to regulate employment regimes, disorganizing labor classes, convince them to need to deinstitutionalize and de-substantialize all previous forms of consensual negotiation of redistribution through its ideological and repressive functions and using various combinations of these two according to local dynamics of a given unit (cf. Yıldızoğlu, 2010; Poulantzas, 1974; Tsoukalas, 2002).

In this theoretical framework, a brief overview on Turkish experience of export-oriented industrialization would be explanatory to contextualize Turkish trade-unionism in which Türk Metal, as a union operating in the industrial sectors, has grown up. The fact, which can be deduced from this overview, would be that industrialization in Turkey in the post-1980 environment is characterized by a mode of capital accumulation based on the surplus extraction via suppression of labor rather than a meaningful recovery of industrial activity (cf. Boratav et al, 2000; Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012; Türel, 2014). In advance of the 1980s, the growing demand towards durable consumer goods caused by the developing production norms in the developed economies required the establishment of the production of such goods in the country. Such production activities, which started with the assembling industry, gained a relatively modern form in time. With the active participation of the public sector, a similar import substituting strategy was implemented in the production of intermediate goods in sectors such as iron-steel, copper, aluminum, petrochemicals and construction. In this period, however, the investments in capital goods industry grew slower in comparison with intermediate and consumer goods. As a result, technology and main inputs of the production maintained its external-dependent character; and the scale, cost per unit and the quality of the production could not reach at the western standards (Boratav, 2018, pp. 131-155).

Under these circumstances, the world economy experienced a stagnation in parallel to the dramatic hike in the oil prices in 1974. By the second half of the 1970s, Turkey tried to make do with the effects of the stagnation through remittances, short-term debts and some other palliative measures. In 1977, the trade balances severely

deteriorated, and Turkey's inability to meet her external commitments precipitated this crisis and Turkey's external debts increased from \$3 billion in 1973 to \$15 billion in 1980 (Kirkpatrick & Öniş, 1991, p. 10). In order to access desired sources to solve this balance of payments crisis, the remedy would be to apply to International Money Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). Upon the involvement of IMF and WB, the strategy based on sustaining ISI strategy via public investment and foreign borrowing had to be abandoned, and a new Economic Stabilization Program was announced in January 1980 which is known as the January 24 decisions. Among other promises such as limitation of state intervention in the economy, liberalization of trade, a new tax regulation etc. (Ozan, 2011, pp.85-107); one of the claims raised by the January 24 Programme was the incompatibility of 'high' level of wages with the aim to boost exports (Boratav, 2018, p.163). However, implementation of the program was not possible under the verdict of then-existing "balance of class-forces" and by the means of then-valid legal framework. Thus, military rule upon the September 12, 1980 coup d'état would provide the proper environment for the exercise of the Programme's motives. One of the main motivations of this Programme was to overcome the drawbacks of import-substitution industrialization model by enhancing manufacturing and exportation and to decrease the dependency of the economy on intermediate- and capital-goods import and indebtedness. However, when the outcomes emerged in the post-1980 era are taken into consideration, it is observed that neither import-dependency nor indebtedness of the economy seem alleviated although export-promotion was achieved to some extent.

The trajectory of industrial policies in Turkey since the 1980s is traced in three periods (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, pp. 83-113): (i) from trade liberalization (1980) to financial liberalization (1989), (ii) from financial liberalization (1989) to the eve of JDP period (2001) and (iii) JDP years after the 2001 crisis (post-2001 period). Accordingly, even though export revenues and GDP increased in the first period and a rise in the rate of labor productivity growth is observed as well; private sector investments were not steered to manufacturing sector, but rather were concentrated in the housing sector (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 93; Boratav 2018, p. 177; Yalman, 2009, p. 271). As a result, industrialization experience of Turkey during the 1980s "could not generate sufficient contributions in productivity and employment"

(Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 96), nor did it alleviate import-dependency of the industry (Boratav, 2018, p. 178; Yaman, 2016, p.67). Moreover, large-scale capital groups, who had chance to benefit from cheap labor and generous incentives, did not need industrial upgrading attempts.

They even avoided such attempts, leading to increasing reliance of SMEs (small- and medium-scale enterprises) on labor-intensive production methods during the 1980s. Subcontracting and informality became much more widespread especially in textile and apparel production (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 5). As it was the case, “trade liberalization has, in general, been insufficient to introduce the expected increase in competition in the industrial commodity markets” (Boratav et al, 2000, p. 11). The suppression of wages via repressive measures played a key role in order to both provide exportable goods by shrinking the domestic demand and to decrease labor costs. Therefore, the mode of capital accumulation pursued in the period between 1980-87 is called as “classic mode of surplus extraction” in the literature (Boratav et al., 2000, p. 3 and 5; Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 93; cf. Çelik, 2015a, p. 620).

The beginning of the second period in this outline is labeled by the recognition of full convertibility of the Lira in 1989 and full liberalization of the capital account (Köse & Yeldan, 1998, p. 53). As a result, the impetus in the conduct of the economy gained an exogenous character, and the increasing domination of the financial institutions made the economy, especially the real sector, quite sensitive and fragile against external economic and political effects as well as limiting the abilities of national policy-makers. This development also brought along a new dimension in terms of distribution of the surplus among the various segments of national domestic and foreign capital (Boratav, 2018, p. 211). However, during the 1990s, the contribution of this capital inflows to the real economy remained limited and these capital inflows sourced by the full liberalization did not make a considerable contribution to the fixed capital investments (Boratav, 2018, pp. 225-227 and pp.259-260; Köse & Yeldan, 1998, pp. 51-78). The turbulent 1990s is generally shown as an example of boom-and-bust cycles, the GDP growth and production patterns in the era reveals a fluctuating performance. In this regard, “private investments were not sustained during the decade”, and “growth of private capital accumulation was not able to

provide sustained invigoration to the economy as a whole” (Köse & Yeldan, 1998, p. 57). Thanks to the pressure of working class mobilizations that started in the late-1980s, a populist phase was observed in terms of distributive policies from 1988 to 1994 January crisis<sup>7</sup>. However, 1994 crisis had a devastating effect over the wages and caused a severe reversal of labor’s gains during the late 1980s and early 1990s as the prominent tool to manage the crisis and the main dynamic of growth in the post-1994 era becomes the wage suppression. All in all, the 1990s *per se* was not a turning point in terms of Turkish industrialization experience, but upon the influence of Customs Union of 1996, some “medium and medium-high” technology sectors such as electrical machinery and apparatus, motor vehicles industry and machinery and equipment industry displayed an advancing performance by the mid-1990s. Nevertheless, it is propounded that an orientation towards less productive sectors characterized the Turkish manufacturing industry’s evolution between 1980-2001 contrary to many fast-growing countries like South Korea (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 97 and 102).

The third period in this realm started in the wake of 2001 crisis, and the Transition to the Strong Economy Program was introduced upon the directives of the IMF and the WB under the guise of crisis management. The Justice and Development Party (JDP) period started after November 3, 2002 elections in such a context. In terms of economy policies, the Party would pursue further deepening neoliberal policy agenda “much more diligently than its predecessors” (Yalman, 2016, p.257). The debates on industrialization in this period is marked by the term of (premature) deindustrialization which refers to “becoming service economies without having had a proper experience of industrialization” (cited from Rodrik by Yalman, 2016, p. 258)<sup>8</sup>. Accordingly, during the initial favorable sub-period of JDP era, availability of

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<sup>7</sup> As the state follows the way of “giving to labor/the poor without taking from capital/from the rich” (Boratav et al, 2000, p. 28) within such cycles, the result became a serious deterioration in the fiscal balances during the post-1990 period. For the characteristics of this populist cycle which caused a crowding-out effect to the detriment of private sector investments; see Boratav et al, 2000 and Köse & Yeldan, 1998, pp. 51-78.

<sup>8</sup> The term of deindustrialization does not refer to absolute deterioration of the indicator figures of industrialization. To clarify the delivery of the term, it should be noted that, between 1980 and 2013, “industrial value added was almost quintupled, industrial employment more than doubled, and industrial productivity per capita multiplied by a factor about 2.5” (Türel, 2014, pp. 402-406).

foreign exchange thanks to capital inflows caused the “oft-discussed overvaluation of the Turkish Lira” (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 98). Benefiting from the relatively cheap currency thanks to the temporary conditions, Turkish economy adopted an ‘import-oriented’ tendency in terms of manufacturing policy. Already increased import-dependency of the economy during the 1980s and the 1990s was aggravated by the withdrawal of industrialization as a result of the opportunity to import under affirmative conditions for a term. By 2014, medium-high and high technology sectors of Turkey are highly dependent on the imports in terms of intermediate goods. While export of intermediate goods in medium-high technology sectors was 29,9 % in 2014, it was counteracted by 39,6 % import. The circumstances in high-tech sectors were worse, and the previous was 0,7 % against an overwhelming 4,6 % (Development Bank of Turkey, 2016, p. 22). More strikingly, according to the study of Şahinkaya and Küçükkiremitçi (2015, p. 10), which is based on the data derived from Development Bank of Turkey, as the data of Turkish Statistical Institute is not sufficiently stratified, Turkish economy had to import 65-70 units intermediate goods in order to produce 100 units goods subject to export activities<sup>9</sup>. This dependency seriously ravages the level of added-value productivity of the country as added-value in the amount of imported goods and services would be transferred to the other foreign productive firms and countries (Development Bank of Turkey, 2016, p. 2; cf. Küçükkiremitçi, 2018, p. 32).

Actually, consumption per capita grew more rapidly compared to the investment per capita so as to reveal that the capital inflows were primarily utilized in consumption rather than investment<sup>10</sup> (Boratav, 2018, p. 275). As these capital inflows did not make

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However, when the ratios of industrial value added (IVA)/Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and industrial employment/total employment are taken into consideration; it is observed that Turkey has been under the influence of the tendency of deindustrialization “albeit in muted and slower forms” (Türel, 2014, p. 392; Şahinkaya & Küçükkiremitçi, 2015, p. 6; cf. Rodrik, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that internationalization of Turkey-based capital was also observed simultaneously. To some extent, Turkish capital groups found the opportunity to access new markets concurrently with this dependency.

<sup>10</sup> It is noted that, during the JDP period, the rate of capital accumulation has not exceeded the levels of 20 %, which is far more behind six prominent Asian countries (China, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam) (Boratav, 2018, p. 255).

a considerable contribution to the fixed capital investments (Boratav, 2018, p. 259), Turkey maintained its character to specialize in the production of consumption goods and has not performed sufficient improvements in intermediate goods production as well as the production of capital goods and primary goods (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 99). Between 1998-2009, the sectors which provide positive contribution to the trade balance were labor-intensive “low” and “medium-low” technology sectors, with the exception of Motor Vehicles, such as Textile, Textile Products, Non-Metallic Mineral Products, Rubber and Plastic Products and Basic Metals and Fabricated Products (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p.90). The meaning of that was the articulation of Turkey to the “international division of labor” as a cheap labor force and importation reservoir (Yeldan, 2018). In compliance with the picture depicted above, flexible conditions and labor costs favorable to private investors started to be advertised as an investors’ paradise<sup>11</sup> (Bedirhanoglu & Yalman, 2010, p.120). Lastly, it is striking that the share of working classes and peasantry in GDP and added-value depreciated in the era. However, it is also observed that working classes accessed consumption facilities beyond the limit of their incomes (Boratav, 2018, p. 275). In the literature, it is generally associated with the indebtedness of the households in the context of financial deepening<sup>12</sup>.

All in all, the industrialization performance of Turkey since the 1980s has been evaluated as “relatively poor” compared to the fast-growing countries even though

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<sup>11</sup> In 2012, Turkish Investment Support and Promotion Agency, which is the “sole official institution which undertakes the duty of introducing investment opportunities in Turkey to the global business community and supporting investors at every stage of their investments” under the Prime Ministry, invited investors to the country by promising; “increasing employee productivity along with decreasing real unit wage, the longest working hours in Europe and the lowest rate in average sick leave per employee (53,2 working hours per week and 4,6 days average sick leave annually per employee), and Government assistance with the employer’s share of workers’ social security up to 80 per cent” (cited from ‘10 Reasons to Make Investments in Turkey’ brochure of Turkish Investment Support and Promotion Agency by Çelik; 2012, p. 33; 2015a, pp 625-626). Currently, the agency does not use the referred document for the promotion. However, the document can be accessed on the websites of international trading companies which published this report in the past. The updated version uses the statement of “Skilled Workforce with Cost Advantage” (Presidency of Republic of Turkey Investment Office, no date, p. 12) and favors low labor costs per hour in manufacturing by comparing with Germany, France, UK, USA and Eastern European Countries.

<sup>12</sup> In order to alleviate these deteriorating conditions and incorporate the sufferers of this process, JDP applied a social policy based on charity policies and social aids (Çelik, 2015a, pp. 622-623; cf. Yalman, 2011).

“Turkey has been quite successful in terms of industrialization and raising average income per capita” against most of the developing world (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p. 104). In terms of developmental goals, for the Turkish case, export-oriented strategy also brought along a slower growth performance, and Turkish economy still maintains significant amount of labor reserves and underdeveloped characteristics of its economy (Boratav, 2018, p. 289). Given the circumstances, the main channel to pursue as the mode of accumulation would be the suppression of labor and disorganizing working-classes. To achieve that, Turkey deregulated labor market and arranged a legal framework which mainly allow trade-unions proper to this mode of capital accumulation.

## **2.2 The Flexibilization of Individual Labor Relations**

In compliance with this economic context, one of the most apparent development in terms of labor regime in the post-1980 era would be the flexibilization of the individual employment relations. Here, whereas collective relations refer to the framework of collective bargaining and trade-unionism, individual labor relations refer to the arrangements setting up the terms of individual contracts and regulations to make employment conditions more flexible. In compliance with the spirit of the new hegemonic strategy, the shift to “economic rationality of the market mechanism” as the basis of labor relations (Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, p.314) refers to a fundamental change in the legal and judicial foundations of the labor law. In the neoliberal era, the discussions over the labor market mainly focus on the rigid legislative framework, and flexibilization or deregulation of these rigidities is favored as a mantra. It is mainly inspired by the principle to protect the business rather than the worker on the grounds that job security could be possible as long as the business is secured (Çelik, 2003, p. 52; 2015a, p. 623; Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2011, p.75). The underlying philosophical maxim of these policy orientation became the elimination of the principles favoring the protection of labor, and the burden of protecting the industry and enterprise is born over the labor while it had been on the state “by way of taxes, credits, the provision of information, etc”. Under these circumstances, the labor is considered as a lifeless cost of production rather than a social entity and/or constituent of the human activity; and the relationship between



the employer and the employee is reduced to the exchange of a real commodity. The judicial consequence of this principal shift became the application of law of obligations, which cover the sale of real commodities, instead of labor law in conventional terms<sup>13</sup> (Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, p.316; 2011, pp.74-75).

In compliance with this philosophy, the law regulating the individual labor relations (Labour Law Nr. 1475 dated 1971) was partly amended just after the coup d'état. The terms of minimum wage, severance pay and premiums were tightened; wages were suppressed, and collective bargaining conditions were limited (Ozan, 2011, p. 104; Çelik, 2015a, p. 621). Rather, the post-1980 era is generally labeled by a *de facto* flexibilization (Boratav et al, 2000, p. 10). In parallel to the proliferation of SMEs and flexible employment relations, new employment types such as part-time, fixed-contract, homeworking, work on call, compulsory work or overwork started to occur. However, in the absence of a legal recognition of these practices, this had a *de facto* character without undertaking most of the related legal responsibilities. So, there was also a need to name these practices<sup>14</sup> (Çelik, 2003, p. 56; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 12; Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2011, p.71; Dinler, 2012, p. 10). Following the 1994 crisis, the scapegoat in the eyes of private sectors had been the 'rigidities of labor legislation' "as an impediment to a 'successful' transformation from the existing accumulation strategy to an export-oriented strategy" (Çelik, 2003, pp. 41-42; Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, pp. 314-315, p. 322; 2011, p. 64, 71).

As a result, The Labor Law with the number of 4857 was enacted on May 22, 2003 and came into force on June 10, 2003 which was one of the very first practices of the JDP rule (Çelik, 2003, p. 46; 2015a, p. 623; Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, p.317; 2011, p.76; Türel, 2014, 411; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 12; Dinler, 2012, p.

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<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, this alteration is even in contradiction with the principles of law of obligations as "the juridical interpretation of any kind of contract depends upon the principle of protecting the weak party" (Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, p.316).

<sup>14</sup> One other implication of this proliferation would be the decline of average wages within the sectors in which the share of small-scale production units increases (Boratav et al, 2000, p. 10).

10)<sup>15</sup>. Unlike the previous law, the new law encompassed many new flexible regulations in line with the spirit of neoliberal prescriptions, and this was a further step in the institutionalization of “flexible and/or non-standard work practices” initiated by the amendments to the previous labor law and other enactments issued after the coup d’état (Dinler; 2012, p. 10; Türel, 2014, 411). The new law (i) provided a legal recognition for the de facto flexible employment relations such as fixed-term contracts, contract work, subcontracting, homeworking, and (ii) introduced new working types which are slippage in the duration of work, temporary employment relationships, work on call, compulsory work, overwork and shared working (Çelik, 2003, p. 56; Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2011, p.78-82). Furthermore, the terms protecting workers’ job security were loosened and the dismissal procedures were eased (Çelik, 2003, p. 57). Job security started to be applicable for “enterprises employing 30 or more workers, up from an earlier period when it applied to enterprises employing 10 workers” (Çelik, 2015a, p. 623). “In this way, more than half of the all workers in Turkey have been excluded from job security” (Çelik, 2015a, p. 623) as nearly half of the workforce is employed in the small- and medium-scale workplaces (Çelik, 2013, p. 5).

After the 2008 crisis, a complementary policy-agenda was needed to re-regulate employment relations<sup>16</sup>. Thus, one of the most prominent documents during the JDP period, the National Employment Strategy, was issued as the embodiment of the approach towards the labor market perspectives. Studies for a national employment strategy started in October 2009 by Ministry of Labor and Social Security (Makal, 2012, p. 5). The draft of the National Employment Strategy encapsulating the policies to be applied between 2012-2023 was submitted to the relevant parties in February 2012; and an action plan including 2012-2014 targets was published in 2012 as well.

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<sup>15</sup> Historically, the first Labor Law (No. 3008) came into force on June 15, 1937 and it was superseded by 1475 numbered and November 12, 1970 dated Code which was evaluated having the “imprints of a rather social democratic discourse” (Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2011, p.76).

<sup>16</sup> The strategy document is evaluated as a framework including the regulations to transfer the sources to the capital in the post-2008 environment (Petrol-İş, 2012, p. 12). As the employer representatives frequently uttered utilization of various funds to compensate unemployed segments to save ailing entrepreneurs, the strategy and its policy tools were evaluated within the scope of the policies to manage the crisis.

Afterwards, it was issued in the Official Gazette in 2014 with the title of National Employment Strategy Document (*Ulusal İstihdam Strateji Belgesi*) (2014-2023) and action plans for each two-year continued to be issued<sup>17</sup>. The document is considered as “one of the most important documents of the JDP government with regard to labor relations” (Çelik, 2015a, p. 626) and “one of the most important political challenges currently faced by the Turkish trade unions” (Dinler, 2012, p. 13). Its main function is considered to be the “road map for the government to complete gradually evolving and sometimes interrupted labor reforms in the private sector” (Dinler, 2012, p. 13), and the main motive was to make employment relations more flexible on the grounds of rigidity<sup>18</sup> (Dinler, 2012, p. 13; Çelik, 2012; 2015a; Yeldan, 2012).

As for the policy prescriptions in light of this spirit of the document, four main axes were defined in the document: (i) strengthening training/education-employment relation, (ii) flexibilization of the labor market, (iii) enhancement of employment conditions for groups having special needs, and (iv) strengthening employment-social protection relation (Makal, 2012, p. 5; Çelik, 2012, p. 21). Nevertheless, flexibilization has been considered as the most malignant possible consequence of this policy agenda. While the notion of flexibility “is marketed as a modernity and freedom project” to enhance “competitiveness and performance” of the businesses, the document discursively propounded a balance between job security and flexibilization (Yeldan, 2012, p. 7; Çelik, 2012, p. 23; 2015a, p. 627). Thus, the preferred term becomes flexicurity implying “assurance, security, and flexibilization in the labor market” rather than explicit “flexibilization of the labor market” (Çelik, 2012, p. 23; 2015a, p. 627). In this scope in addition to various positive and negative incentives to enhance participation to and survive within the labor market<sup>19</sup> (Yeldan, 2012, p. 8; Jessop, 2003, p. 39; Näätänen, 2015, pp. 702-705), proliferation of

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<sup>17</sup> For the documents, Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services has a separate website ([www.uis.gov.tr](http://www.uis.gov.tr)) both in English and Turkish, and it is updated regularly.

<sup>18</sup> The claim of rigidity for Turkish labor market is based on a highly problematic OECD report. For a detailed analysis of this report see Yeldan, 2012; Çelik, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> For an evaluation dealing with the effectiveness of active and passive labor market policies applied in Turkey in the aftermath of 2008 crisis see Erol & Özdemir, 2012.

temporary employment contracts and subcontracting, entitlement of private employment agencies<sup>20</sup>, the loosening of the burden on employers in connection with severance pay<sup>21</sup>, and the reconsideration of minimum wage implementation can be listed among the policy tools (Çelik, 2012, p. 15; 2015a, p. 627). Both Labor Law and National Employment Strategy document were enacted in spite of trade-unions' objections including even Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions (Hak-İş) which generally adopts a moderate and supportive position towards the government's policies. However, the approaches reflected in employer organizations' studies and reports were included in the spirit of the documents (Çelik, 2003; 2012; 2015; Dinler, 2012). By considering these factors, document is defined "denominational" based on the opinions of employer organizations rather than "national"; and it is a unilateral document in spite of the social dialogue arguments (Yeldan, 2012, p. 8; Çelik, 2012, p. 20; 2015a, p. 626).

In parallel to the globalization process and as a result of this flexibilization it is frequently suggested that the labor force was fragmented as the central and peripheral: whereas the central layers included "valued (i.e. expert) employees with indispensable skills as permanent employees" and more formal working conditions, the periphery was constituted by the employees "with easily replaceable skills (i.e. non-expert) hired on a contingency basis as needs arise" (Wallace & Junisbai, 2004, p. 394; Çelik, 2003, p. 56). For Turkish case, differentiations among the workers on the basis of several different criteria are commonly uttered and segmented structure of the working-classes is frequently emphasized (cf. Adaman et al., 2009; p. 171; Özüğurlu, 2010; Çelik, 2003, p.57; 2015a, p. 623; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018). With this consideration, a set of criteria for the differentiations can be listed including but not limited to axis of registered - unregistered, unionized – ununionized, employed – unemployed, skilled – unskilled, male – female, public sector – private sector, identity-based fragmentations etc. (see Adaman et al., 2009, pp. 177-178; Birelma, 2018, p. 4; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 9).

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<sup>20</sup> The status of temporary employment agencies was legalized in May 2016 through a new amendment.

<sup>21</sup> In spite of various attempts at establishing a severance pay fund, it has not been concluded by the first quarter of 2019. However, it can be said that the issue is among the top priority for the government.

On the other hand, Turkish labor market displays a remarkable development in terms of aforementioned segmentation. Theo Nichols and Nadir Suğur (2004, p.26) observes that, by the beginning of the 2000s, employees in factories located in Turkey were full-time, permanent, generally male, unionized and relatively well-paid (cf. Klein, 2000); and this made formal employment relations much more advantageous against the informal sectors. However, in the course of time, it is noted that the enlargement of subcontracting and outsourcing activities minimized the opportunity to work in “a big, modern enterprise” for the majority of workers (Adaman et al., 2009, p.176). Subcontracting deepened and the number of subcontracted employees increased from 358 thousand in 2002 to 1,5 million in 2011 (Çelik, 2015a, p. 624). The JDP era is also labeled by high rates of unemployment and informal employment, and low levels of labor force participation (Adaman et al., 2009, p.175; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p.13).

As a result, formal employment conditions also deteriorated upon “an effort to make the terms of formal employment contracts resemble informal employment conditions as much as possible” (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p.13). One concomitant result of this effort became the convergence of the conditions in informal and formal sectors, and boundaries between informal and formal sectors blurred (Adaman et al., 2009, 169). The requirements of the registered employment were moderated for the benefit of employers; and hence, informal employment rates decreased from 50,6 % in 2000 to 33,4 % in 2016 (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 13). The recent developments in the Turkish labor market verify the supposition that “neoliberalism separates employees while bringing their destinies together” (cited from Özügürlü by Çelik, 2015a, p.6). This is also the case in the metal sector as it will be elaborated in the following chapter.

As “deterioration in collective and individual labor relations has fed each other” (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p.13), such a mode of accumulation would require the proper trade-unionism to serve to the flexibilization of the employment relations by functioning in the control and containment of working classes. The next part will focus on the institutional transformation of trade-unionism in the aftermath of the 1980 military intervention and the construction of tamed unionism required by the

mode of accumulation which is based on the surplus extraction on the basis of suppression of labor.

### **2.3 Transformation of Trade-Unionism**

As it is put by Ebru Deniz Ozan (2011, p. 19), contemporary Turkey is built upon the "products" provided by a strategy which was made possible by the 1980 coup d'état as a response to the hegemony crisis by the end of the late 1970s. Methodologically, economic crises of capitalism can be considered as

‘organic moments’ in the reproduction of social relations of production as well as in the reassertion of the hegemony of the dominant class in the absence of credible counter-hegemonic alternatives (Yalman, 2016, 255).

Successive crises, in this sense, brought new policy agendas, and this rather “serene” environment would facilitate implementation of these agendas. By considering such dynamics, it is important to reveal how structural transformation caused by the crises in differentiating scales and periods determine and (re-)shape the axes of social contestations (Yalman, 2018, p. 7).

The discussions over Turkish democracy is generally limited within the borders of “the tutelage of the state over the society” (cf. Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010, p.118) and/or “unlawful/illicit and coercive modes of government” (cf. Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p.2). In this respect, re-establishment of electoral democracy after the coup d'état along with some institutional ameliorations such as resume of unions, including DİSK, to their activities are considered significant landmarks for the implementation of the democratic procedures (cf. Adaman et al., 2009, p. 174). On the other hand, this approach may disable the perception of state-society relations in the sense of democracy debates by excluding the “change in the balance of class forces within society” for “the state forms concerned are nothing but the crystallization of different class strategies which must be reproduced in and through class struggle” (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010, p.118). On the basis of the latter criterion, it is necessary to characterize the post-1980 regime in Turkey in relation to an authoritarian form of state which remained in effect after the return to civilian rule as it did not annihilate the prohibitive framework for the exercise of the democratic rights

and freedoms of the working classes but even strengthened it (Bedirhanoglu & Yalman, 2010, p.119).

For the neoliberal era, it is stated that “we should conclude that never before has the capacity of the bourgeoisie been so uncontestedly ubiquitous” if political power is defined as the “capacity of a social class to realize its specific objective interests” (Tsoukalas, 2002, p. 233). In the context of Turkey, Galip L. Yalman (2009, p. 308) defines the “core” of this neoliberal hegemonic strategy of the post-1980 period as an attempt to “put an end to class-based politics”. The project, which was backed by the 1980 military coup d’état, has exercised an “exclusionary populism” while discrediting class-based politics. This new hegemonic framework had significant impacts over both political structure and trade-unionism. In this sense, state/politics was alienated as an autonomous sphere so as to disable “the reintroduction of class considerations into the political agenda” (Bedirhanoglu & Yalman, 2010, p.119). The result became the insulation of “policy-making processes from actual or potential popular involvement” (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p.2), and hence, “deprivation of working classes from the means of participation in policy-making” (Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2011, p.67).

This context would indispensably alter the philosophy, structure and role of trade-unionism. To the extent that a “market ideology” dominated the discourse of this hegemonic strategy, ‘depoliticization of labor-market’ became the predominant discourse. The new hegemonic strategy attempted to “discredit the trade union movement by labelling it as a vested interest” and “accordingly, the task of the trade unions would be to negotiate wages with the employers but not to negotiate economic policy with government” (Yalman, 2009, p. 316) having the same meaning with the fact that “economic rationality of the market mechanism became the only basis of labor relations” (Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, p.314). Thereupon, “unions ceased to be viewed as a social force, or partners to be reconciled with” (Interview with Aziz Çelik, Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 94). Trade-unions have been prevented from becoming an independent party in the regulation of industrial relations in the neoliberal era as a part of exclusionary character of Turkish industrial relations system (Özügurlu, 2016, p. 93). Labor organizations could not properly get involved in “the

policy-making processes that directly concerned the working and living conditions of the laboring classes” which is called as “the marginalization of labor representation in the state” (cited from Nilgün Önder by Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 10)<sup>22</sup>. In this respect, the forthcoming legal regulations would be in compliance with the spirit of this philosophy so as to enable the “formation of an organizationally weakened and disciplined labor force which would allow for greater wage flexibility” (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 5). In this sense, de-unionization (union-busting) strategies followed by symbiotic unionism became the main strategies as the main target in this realm has been “the construction of a ‘tamed’ unionism” (Çelik, 2015a; 2015b Gürcan & Mete, 2017, 96).

In this regard, it can be suggested that post-1980 trade-unionism differs from the characteristics of trade unions before the coup d’état in terms of representation and mobilization of working classes. The period of 1961-1980 corresponds to an era in which industrialization and labor organizations just started to become apparent in terms of social relations in Turkey. The permissive environment provided by 1961 constitution also contributed this emergence and enabled a “rather favorable labor regime” (Çelik, 2015a, p.619). In addition to the 1961 constitution, Union Acts No. 274 and 275 passed in 1963 brought social protections, right to collective bargaining and strike along with guarantee for trade union freedoms. Thus, this encouraged a significant increase in union membership in the country (Dinler, 2012, p. 1). Nevertheless, organizational capacity of the labor movement grew towards the 1980s. Especially in certain sectors such as automobile and consumer durables, the social insurance system and job security were strengthened in favor of workers thanks to the collective labor legislation and collective bargaining regulations. In this sense, the period of 1960-1980 is considered as an era in which social protection was more dominant in comparison to market imperatives (Çelik, 2015a, pp.618-619).

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<sup>22</sup> The ‘titular’ Economic and Social Council (ESC) can be considered as a good exemplary case. As a tripartite body composed of the representatives from government, employers and employees, ESC was established to develop social dialogue; but never worked under the circumstances the trade unions were excluded from the political sphere. Along with other tripartite bodies, the function of ESC remained limited with formalities and it was criticized for being a pseudo organization that does not even convene meetings (Dinler, 2012, pp. 11-12; Çelik, 2013, p. 5, 21 and 22; Adaman et al., 2009, p. 174).



Under these circumstances, Turkish labor movement gave birth to four main confederations; Türk-İş, DİSK, MİSK and Hak-İş. The Turkish Confederation of Workers' Unions (Türk-İş) was born in 1952 and strengthened after the 1963 enactments. As a confederation which was mainly organized in public sector and predominant in export-oriented industries such as food and textiles, Türk-İş tended towards a “policy above parties” and conciliatory attitude towards governments (cf. Işıklı, 1990, pp.338-339; Savran, 2014, p.192). The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions<sup>23</sup> (DİSK) was founded in 1967 by some unions leaving Türk-İş together with some independent ones. DİSK was mainly organized in private sector workplaces, especially those of the locomotive of Turkish bourgeoisie; and dominated industries geared to the domestic market such as rubber and metal. By criticizing Türk-İş, DİSK adopted a radical position called “class- and mass-based unionism”. By virtue of its style of unionism, DİSK reached to 500 thousand members by the 1980s, while it was 50 thousand at the time of its foundation. Considering the fact that Türk-İş and DİSK had organized the overwhelming majority of the workers before 1980, other two confederations were relatively ineffective. The Confederation of Nationalist Workers' Unions (MİSK) was founded in 1970 and supported by the National Front government in 1975 but did not record any major successes. Finally, the 1976-founded Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions (Hak-İş) was close to the Islamist ideology of the National Salvation Party (MSP) and adopted a non-confrontational approach based on harmony between employers and employees<sup>24</sup> (Dinler, 2012, p.1; Akkaya, 2002, pp. 133-136).

Towards the end of the 1960s, a draft law was prepared by the Justice Party government in power to establish a “corporatist union system with monopolistic representation, centralized by the state and posing no threat to capital accumulation” (Akkaya, 2002, p.135). By this means, Türk-İş would be the only active union *de facto* to the detriment of DİSK's position, and politicized labor movement would be

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<sup>23</sup> First DİSK uses the translation of “The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions” for the English nomination. When the Confederation reopened in 1992, it adopted the translation of The Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions even though its Turkish name remained same.

<sup>24</sup> On the basis of comparison, Demet Şahende Dinler (2012, p.1) evaluates Turkish trade-unionism within a category forming along ideological dividing lines traditionally. Alpkın Birelma (2018, p. 18) has a similar emphasis, and this aspect resembles the trade unionism in France and Italy.

incorporated within the borders of tamed unionism. However, the draft law encountered a strong opposition of workers on the days of 15 and 16 June 1970. With the summons of DİSK, ten thousands of workers marched from industrial zones in different parts of Istanbul and Kocaeli but were confronted by the police and gendarmerie. There were losses of lives and injuries in addition to custodies. Whereas this movement terrifies the ruling classes and becomes a turning point in Turkish labor movement as a peak, certain articles of the draft was repealed by the Constitutional Court on 19 October 1972 as a result of the demonstrations even under the conditions following the 1971 Turkish military memorandum (Akkaya, 2002, p. 135; Işıklı, 1990, p. 341).

Within permissive legal framework provided by the 1963 enactments, the strike action was effectively utilized by working classes in the pre-1980 environment, especially in the manufacturing sector and metal subsector. The scale and level of collective agreements, one of the most contentious issues of the era, were sometimes the core issue of the disputes. In practice, majority of collective agreements were signed at workplace level and “employers’ attempts to accomplish more encompassing agreements met fierce resistance of trade unions” (Koçer, 2007, 249). Maden-İş, then DİSK-affiliated union in metal and automotive sector, and some other independent or other confederations’ affiliate unions utilized every enviable contract as a precedent for the new agreements. So, each gain in the sector would be a new step to enhance collective bargaining standards in other workplaces.

In response to this, employer organizations eagerly defended implementation of sector-level contracts. So much so that, in 1977, at the end of 8-month collective bargaining negotiations accompanied by a significant labor mobilization namely MESS (Metalware and Industrialists' Association - *Madeni Eşya ve Sanayicileri Sendikası*) Strikes, three MESS-member metal employers were expelled from the membership for did not act together with other members to conclude sector-level agreement and made separate agreements<sup>25</sup> (Taştan, 2015, p.321-322; Yükselen, 1998; Ozan, 2011, p. 104-106; Koçer, 2007, p. 252). This affair would be an issue

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<sup>25</sup> When the leading role of MESS in the establishment of Turkish Confederation of Employer Association (TİSK) is taken into consideration, this dimension becomes an important issue going beyond sectoral interests of Turkish bourgeoisie in this era.

after the coup through with different solutions which gave birth to contemporary Türk Metal. This era was also marked by significant labor demonstrations which had political character beyond wage and social right struggles as it can be observed in “the demonstrations against fascism” initiated by DİSK upon the bomb attack to Istanbul University students in 1978 and TARİŞ events upon firing of 3000 workers due to political reasons (cf. Algül, 2015).

Such a dynamic labor movement would generate its counterpart. Thus, Turkish “bourgeoisie has become a class for itself, if not before, then gradually during the 1970s” (Yalman, 2009, p. 306). As an outcome of this formation process, establishment of Free Enterprise Council, initiated by Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TİSK – *Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*) and other employer organizations in the mid-1970s, can be considered as an important moment as the embodiment of this class-consciousness. When the uprisings in the labor mobilization are taken into consideration, formation of such an organization in addition to Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD - *Türk Sanayicileri ve İş İnsanları Derneği*) became the concrete manifestations of the propensity “to act in roles determined by class objectives, to feel themselves to belong to classes’, and to define their (political as well as economic) interests vis-a-vis other classes” (Yalman, 2009, p. 306). Under these contentious circumstances, depoliticization of labor-market<sup>26</sup> and establishment of labor-peace, among other things, were the predominant discourse of the bourgeoisie to decrease wages levels for the claim of enhancing competitive capacity and efficiency. However, this solution did not seem probable within the limits of the existing order; so, the military intervention on September 12, 1980 came up in such a context.

In the period between September 12, 1980 and the elections of November 1983, Turkey was ruled by a military junta, the National Security Council (MGK), which consisted of five generals (Çelik, 2015a, 619). Operation of political parties and unions was forbidden, ongoing strikes were cancelled, and collective negotiations

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<sup>26</sup> This “de-politicization of labor market” in the meaning of purifying social and political sphere from the class mobilizations still prevails as Ali Babacan, then Deputy Prime Minister, suggested that there were some doubts regarding ideological grounds of the Metal Storm, and they intended to make some reforms targeting to de-ideologize labor market (Diken, 20 May 2015a).

were suspended by the junta regime during this three-year period (Çelik, 2015a, 619; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 4). Following this three-year period, the legal framework governing union organizations was restructured at the end of the military period and shortly before the general elections, with the enactment of the Trade Unions Law No. 2821 on 5 May 1983 and the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Strike and Lockout Law No. 2822 on 7 May 1983<sup>27</sup>. These two laws replaced with the regulations provided by the Constitution of 1961 and the union acts (No. 274 & No. 275). The new framework targeted to wipe away collective capacities of the working class. As a result, a restrictive and repressive legal framework came into existence. The alterations can be listed in the regulations in the collective bargaining thresholds, restrictions on unions and right to strike (Dinler, 2012, p.1; Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, p.313; 2011, pp.65-67; Birelma, 2018, p.8; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 5; Çelik 2015a, pp. 619-620; Türel, 2014, p. 409; Akkaya, 2002, p. 136)).

The restrictive measures regulating the scale of trade-unions' operation included double thresholds. According to these double thresholds, a union had to organize at least 10 percent of all workers in the relevant sector and 50 percent of those in any given enterprise (Article 12) (Adaman et al., 2009, p. 174; Dinler, 2012, p. 6; Çelik, 2013, p. 3). The regulation also provided functional objection rights to employers to postpone the entitlement of the organized union through the investigation processes to be conducted by the ministry and courts<sup>28</sup> (Dinler, 2012, pp.6-7; Çelik, 2013, p.3). There occurred striking effects of these thresholds on unionization structure and the bargaining level in the area. The implementation made “it highly difficult for a trade union to become eligible to negotiate a collective agreement” (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018,

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<sup>27</sup> Public servants were not in the scope of these legislations. In the context of the study, the regulations on public servants are not included in the discussion unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>28</sup> Employers generally either object to ministry against the authorization process by demanding re-investigation or file lawsuit by claiming that they employ more workers than it appears in the records of ministry, that they have another branch or that the workplace belongs to another industry than the union's industry. During the lawsuit, Unions cannot start collective bargaining or legally strike until the court declares the authorization, while the employers usually liquidate the initiative trying to unionize in the workplace in the interim. In only 27 per cent of the cases in which the court authorizes the union as a result of the lawsuit the union could sign a collective contract. In the rest of the cases the union was busted (cited from Özveri by Birelma, 2018).

p. 5) and provided work-place level collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) instead of industry-level standards<sup>29</sup> (Dinler, 2012, p. 6).

In relation to the threshold policy, the unionization gained a centralized character (Özveri, 2016, p. 712 and p. 715). Furthermore, the laws eliminated the possibility for the establishment of workplace and profession unions and federations in addition to “craft unions and regional unions” (Çelik, 2013, p.3; 2015b), but only unions in the sectors defined by the legal regulations. As it was accompanied by “a decentralized collective bargaining structure where sector level bargaining was disallowed” (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 5; Çelik, 2003, p. 3), industrial-level unionism gave birth to over-centralized oligarchic structures which are closely connected with the government (Özveri, 2016, p. 711)<sup>30</sup>. The laws also seriously narrowed the right to strike. Strike is forbidden in many sectors such as petro-chemicals, urban transport and civilian personnel of the armed forces. Furthermore, “sympathy strikes and strikes over issues other than wages” were also prohibited. By the means of legal ground, government could and did postpone permitted strikes for reasons of ‘national security’ (Adaman et al., 2009, p.174; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 5; Çelik, 2013, p.3; Özdemir & Yücesan-Özdemir, 2006, p.328). The result became the comprehensive and cumulative restrictions on the activities of the unions (Çelik, 2015a, p.621) which was defined as the prohibitive unionism (Özveri, 2016).

The aforementioned laws No. 2821 and No. 2822 were superseded by the Law of Unions and Collective Agreements No. 6356 (*Sendikalar ve Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Kanunu*) in 2012 (Dinler, 2012, p. 6). In this way, regulations that had been determined by two separate laws have been collected within the framework of a single law. The new law introduced a set of changes in terms of implementations, yet paradigm established in the aftermath of the coup d’état has been maintained

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<sup>29</sup> Sector level agreements are signed between The Union of Textile Employers and TEKSİF Union; The Union of Metal Industry Employers and Metal Unions (Dinler, 2012, p. 10) which has significance for the context of this study.

<sup>30</sup> In this sense, “the Turkish bourgeoisie felt the need for centralized bodies to impose the bargaining terms and wage increases in a manner that would suit the leading firms of each sector, whilst coordinating it at an economy-wide level; sometimes at the expense of medium- and small-scale capital” (Yalman, 2009, p. 318). For the Thatcherite British experience on the contrary to Turkey and rather mixed Brazil and Argentina experiences in this sense, see Yalman, 2009, p. 318 – 319.

especially in terms of establishment of unions limited with the sectoral-level, single level of collective bargaining, administrative powers attributed to the ministry concerning collective agreement representation and bans on strikes (Çelik, 2013, p.5). Among other trivial changes, the law enabled workers to register a union through the e-state portal<sup>31</sup> whereas they used to do them in the presence of a notary public previously.

The purpose of these legal amendments was to centralize unions with a persistence on a single trade-union formation so as to shape an organization form that is suitable to its interventions if needs be under the guise of “labor peace” (Özveri, 2016, p. 712 and 715). On the basis of openness to such kind of interventions, the unions are categorized into benign (*makbul*) and malign (*makbul-olmayan*) ones within the post-1980 environment (cited from Man by Özveri, 2016, p. 712) and workers’ rights are curtailed through the cooperation of benign unions and employers.

Here, benign unions are the ones adopting the ‘basic values’ narration of the state. For those unions, the emphasis on the class is curtailed, and their agenda is only limited to the very basic problems of their members. Likewise, this agenda may vary depending upon the party in power. Such kind of unions certainly avoid the actions perceived as a threat against national integrity and abstain from political agenda. For they follow strategies which do not harm national economy, these are deemed as “the perfect unions”. For other unions which do not fit this definition, they are marginalized (or otherized) and their suppression is deemed favorable (cited from Man by Özveri, 2016, p. 712; also see Akkaya, 2002, p. 138). Establishment of this structure is twofold: whereas the benign unions were favored, the malign unions had to be eliminated and repressed. Hence, the main approach of the state and employers towards the labor unions pursued either (i) union-busting strategies (i.e. de-unionization) or (ii) symbiotic unionism (Çelik, 2015a, p.618).

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<sup>31</sup> This amendment affected reactions, and hence protests, of workers towards their unions. Whereas they previously used to go notary office to resign and reveal their reaction against their union; now, they wave the envelope of e-government system password document taken from the post office so as to represent their desire and power to change their union (Evrensel, May 27, 2015b). In the struggle, employers also try to suppress this power by requesting their passwords to log in and change their union registrations (Evrensel, November 16, 2013; Nayır, 2018).

The repressive nature of the legal framework summarized above principally targeted de-unionization in Turkish labor relations (Çelik, 2015a; Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p.96; Türel, 2014; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p.13). In this scope, the military intervention banned the activities of union confederations DİSK, Hak-İş and MİSK but not Türk-İş. Hak-İş was allowed to operate again in 1981, MİSK in 1984 and DİSK in 1992 (Dinler, 2012, p.1; Çelik, 2015a, p.620; Adaman et al., 2009, p. 173). Meanwhile, most of DİSK members had to move to Türk-İş affiliated unions which turned DİSK into a weak organization whereas it was the symbol of combative tradition in Turkish unionism previously (interview with Aziz Çelik, Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 95). Concomitantly, unions under the umbrella of Türk-İş narrowed their demands to bread-and-butter issues in terms of “workers’ short-term interests rather than developing strategies against the organized assault on the livelihood of their members” (Yalman & Topal, 2017, p.8). Furthermore, flexibilization of the labor relations made aggravating effects over unionization; and, under the conditions of job insecurity, high unemployment and lack of legal protection, union membership has been seriously degraded (Koçer, 2007, p. 251; also see Yalman, 2009, p. 319; Adaman et al., 2009, p. 180; Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 104; Türel, 2014, p. 410).

Here, although de-unionization is a phenomenon “observed worldwide since the 1980s, mainly due to major changes in the working environment, including deindustrialization, privatization, outsourcing, growth of small-size firms, flexibilization of labor markets and expansion of non-standard forms of employment” (Türel, 2014, p. 409), de-unionization in Turkish case goes beyond having its share from a global decrease in union density as it has decreased “three to four times that of the OECD average” (Çelik, 2015a, pp.630-631). In Turkish context, a study conducted in 2009 identified forty-one different techniques applied by the employers and the state such as dismissal of pioneer workers, various penalties and discriminations against (unionized) workers, the use of force, arranging religious staff to preach against unionization, using kinship relations, applying objection procedures mentioned above and blacklisting union activists (Bakır & Akdoğan, 2009).



Figure 2.1 – Union Density in Turkey between 1986-2018  
Source: Çelik, 2015a and MoLSS Data

Figure 2.1 presents the union-density since 1986 and the figures clearly depicts the effects caused by union-busting policies. Whereas 20.8 % of total registered workers were unionized in 1986, it decreased to 5.4% in 2011<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, as it can be observed in the graphic the union density started to increase after the enactment of the Trade Union and Collective Agreement Law No. 6356. In order to understand this dynamic, the practices in the form of symbiotic unionism should be investigated. The mode of accumulation summarized in the previous chapter necessitates proper apparatuses in compliance with its characteristics. Whereas the union-busting strategies functions the elimination of “malign unions”, symbiotic unionism is utilized in order to enhance such proper apparatuses. It is stated that JDP has a stick and carrot approach to colonizing unionism (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 115). While the stick approach is ideally observed in the decline of union density, “the carrot” reveals itself in the form of symbiotic unionism which even increased this density afterwards. Symbiotic unionism may refer to either undertaking control or containment functions in the workplace by the union which cooperate with the employer or ideological-

<sup>32</sup> The data on the numbers of union members was quite problematic in advance of 2013 for various reasons. Thus, there are different approaches for the calculation. For a detailed analysis, see Çelik & Lordoğlu, 2006.



political incorporation of working classes by the means of trade-unions which are supported by the government - and most of the time both of them.

Even though this type of unionism shares some similarities with “yellow” (or business) unionism and even can be considered as a continuation of it, it is possible to observe some transformation in terms of its functions in parallel to the alterations in the environment. Following the Second World War and in advance of the neoliberal era, an American model of business unionism was a predominant model. This type of unionism is based on trade-consciousness rather than class-consciousness (Hyman, 2001, p.8), and hence, attempts to organize workers around the motives determined by wage- and occupational-conscious, but not class objectives (Aydoğanoglu, 2011, p.51). Thus, business unions adopted a reconciliatory style of unionism between employer and worker parties within the framework of social dialogue (Aydoğanoglu, 2011, pp. 56-65). As this type of unionism initially emerged in America, it is also named as *Gomperism* with reference to Samuel Gompers, founding father of American Federation of Labor (AFL). It should also be noted that this style was exported by the United States to other countries especially under the circumstances of global contestations between the USSR and the US, thereby influenced the continental Europe along with Turkey. However, it is observed that the business unionism lost its functionality in the neoliberal era as also admitted by the business circles (Özügurlu, 2013, p.38).

In an era labeled by the ubiquitous dominance of the bourgeoisie, the influence of employers over the trade-unions has also intensified. Thus, the domain of trade-unionism has become tamed; and in the absence of independent and combatant union alternatives, existent unions developed a winning strategy which is based on mutualist guarantees and concessions between the employers. That being the case, such unions have a tendency to neglect the consent of their members and to disregard their demands, interests and complaints to a certain extent. Indeed, this type of unions feels very little necessity to protect and develop workers’ rights to the extent that their power is indebted to the alliances with the employers and the state rather than its deep-rooted relations with workers. In this regard, it can be suggested that symbiotic unionism represents a more degenerated form of business unionism experience of the

last century. It is possible to observe that, among other things, more contentious form of industrial relations forced all type of unions to utter the workers' requirements in advance of the neoliberal era (cf. Silver, 2008 [2003]), and this provided more favorable conditions for the workers in terms of both contractual terms and representation rights. By considering that, the observations cited here on the symbiotic unionism can be considered as a symptom related to the effects of neoliberal globalization over the developing economies.

In this respect, some observers define these symbiotic unions as “a regulator agency of the government in labor relations rather than a union”<sup>33</sup> (Özüğurlu, 2016). Indeed, it can be suggested that symbiotic unions, instead of being a labor organization acting on behalf of working classes, undertake some functions supposedly performed by the state and employers such as some of techno-economic functions which enable the operation of production and reproduction in the workplace along with some of administrative and ideological functions (cf. Poulantzas 1973; Jessop, 2002, p.211).

In the workplace, cooperation with a union may also be in countenance of the employer as unionized workplaces have more benevolent conditions for employers in terms of labor-peace, duration of strikes and severity of conflicts<sup>34</sup> (cited from World Bank by Akkaya, 2016, p.76). The scale of the enterprise may also be another facilitating factor for the acceptance of unionization by employers. Adaman et al. (2009, pp. 180-181) notes that

Big enterprises cannot legally prevent unionization and public relations concerns often check an overtly hostile management strategy against unions. Under these circumstances, big business firms often adopt a seemingly tolerant attitude toward organized labor, which they seek to limit to a small

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<sup>33</sup> There are also affirmative views albeit with certain annotations. For Sungur Savran (2016, p. 57), not legally or practically forbidding the unions but generating strong “benign” unions in the exchange of political support may somehow provide opportunities for the struggle or probability to modify it (cf. Lenin, 1940 [1920], pp.30-39; Doğan, 2017). It may also be meaningful to think about the relationship between the recent developments in symbiotic unionism and the regime change discussions in Turkey. There are observations evaluating this recovery in union density as a channel to incorporate working-classes into the regime (Koçak, 2019; cf. Savran, 2016; Broader, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> As Labor Studies Group (Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu; 2016; 2017; 2018) reports revealed, ununionized workplaces are more tended to the emergence of workplace demonstrations for there is no address to negotiate and control the affairs.

segment of the total workforce that they employ by a particularly ingenious way of using subcontracting.

In this context, private sector is more prone to cooperate with concessive unions<sup>35</sup>; and hence, such a trade-unionism emerged as a predominant behavior adopted by the unions in the form of a winning strategy. As it will be discussed in the next chapters, the story of Türk Metal also serves as an example which can be classified in such a variation of symbiotic unionism. As a result of this partnership between the employers and trade-unions, “unions have become an instrument of controlling the working class” (Akkaya, 2002, p. 138; see also Dinler, 2012, pp. 11-12). While trade unions have weakened, most of the existing-unions have become a glasshouse prison (or ‘panopticon’ prison) to the workers (Çelik, 2015b). In that vein, the internal democracy in the unions has been undermined in the post-1980 unionism (Akkaya, 2002, p.138) as there occurred trade union oligarchies and cumbersome bureaucracy which are insulated from workers. Likewise, these mechanisms are utilized to maintain their personal interests by the executives of the unions.

Even though symbiotic unionism is not an unprecedented phenomenon, it has been reinterpreted by JDP government to colonize the labor movement rather than completely eliminating unions (Çelik, 2015a, p.632; Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p.111). The recent amelioration of symbiotic practices is generally interrelated with another factor in the form of political clientelism -i.e. ideological reasons - as such in the rapid growth of All Municipal and Public Services Worker's Trade Union (*Hizmet-İş - Tüm Belediye ve Genel Hizmet İşçileri Sendikası*) union affiliated to Hak-İş<sup>36</sup> (see Figure 2.1 and Table 3.5) (Birelma, 2018, p. 3; Çelik 2015a, p. 632; Gürcan & Mete, 2017; p. 112; Türel, 2014, p. 410; Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 14).

The observations in this realm narrate diverse ways of co-operation between the government and the unions such as selectively granting authorization for official

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<sup>35</sup> In the context of EOI Fordism in Brazil, Beverly Silver (2008 [2003], p.56) notes that “Ford was the first to come to believe that the maintenance of discipline on the shopfloor required the promotion of ‘responsible unionism’”.

<sup>36</sup> Gürcan & Mete (2017, p.111) also includes the co-optation of Türk-İş after 2002 under the leadership of Mustafa Kumlu in this scope.

workplace representation to Hak-İş or Memur-Sen affiliated unions as it was the case for aviation, transportation, media and general services sectors<sup>37</sup> (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 112). Furthermore, JDP sometimes provide support for such unions in the forms of financial assistance or parliamentary membership to certain unionists in exchange for political support (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 111, 150). In grassroot levels, career incentives may also be influential. Many teachers or public employees join Memur-Sen affiliated unions in order to avoid political pressure and guarantee career advancement in spite of their differentiating ideological stances (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p.115).

On the other side of the coin, such an increase in unionization cannot be converted into the enhancement of social rights<sup>38</sup>. For instance, in spite of increasing union density, the collective bargaining coverage displays a constant share around 7% since 2012; and, in 2018, Turkey is listed among the worst ten countries by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in terms of number of strike bans and cases of arrests of union leaders (Birelma, 2018, p.7). As a reasonable outcome of this type of unionism, strikes and workers involved in strikes dramatically decreased in this context (Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, pp. 5-6).

Accordingly, it can be suggested that curtailment of working classes social rights' and deterioration of their conditions started just after the coup d'état and deepened by the hand of subsequent governments. It is even claimed that "the coup's especially profound effect on collective labor relations is much more enduring than the coup's other legacies" (Çelik, 2015a, p.619). In light of these observations, the next chapter shall investigate the effects of these dynamics in Turkish automotive industry.

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<sup>37</sup> In a panel organized by Mülkiyeliler Birliği Genel Merkezi, Engin Sezgin, expert at DİSK affiliated Genel-İş union, indicates that some unions such as Öz Büro İş and Öz Finans İş were either granted authority or established in several months while they had not been such a formation earlier in pursuant to this dynamic (Mülkiyeliler Birliği Genel Merkezi, 2019).

<sup>38</sup> However, it should also be noted that the state undertook the liabilities of workers' unionization with recent regulations in the area of sub-contracted workers after 2014 and this made a significant impact for this increase in the unionization especially in general services sector. As there would not be much liability, the subcontractors consented the unionization of the workers. For a detailed analysis; see Birelma, 2017.

## CHAPTER 3

### INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS SYSTEM IN TURKISH AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

In the second chapter, the economic, legal and institutional context of Turkish industrial relations system since the 1980s is summarized. Accordingly, this chapter attempts to examine the automotive sector at this background. In this sense, the structure of automotive sector will be presented. Afterwards, the industrial relations system in the sector and its actors will be introduced and the diverging and converging aspects of the sector with the main trends will be discussed. It is suggested that automotive sector is not free from the general characteristics of Turkish industrial production, and within this context, Türk Metal is an example of symbiotic union under the rubric of partnership in coercion which is interpellated by this mode of accumulation.

#### 3.1 An Overview of Automotive Sector in Turkey

Turkey is on the fourteenth rank with regards to number of vehicles produced in 2017 with Asia-Oceania region having an overwhelming share (Figure 3.1). In terms of production, the share of the region has increased by 12% in the last ten years while it decreased by 7% in EU (27) and 3% in North America. This shift is interrelated with the fact that prominent multinational corporations moved their production plants to other countries including Turkey in addition to China, South America and Eastern European Countries, in which labor-costs are cheaper and employment conditions are more flexible, against the tendency of the rate of average profit to fall in the sector (Kurtulmuş & Tanyılmaz, 2017, p. 207). Accordingly, foreign automotive multinationals such as Toyota, Opel, Honda and Ford made further investments as a result of world over-capacity in the car industry and started to search for new markets in the 1990s (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p.20). To locate Turkey in this picture, Figure 3.1 provides the rank of Turkish automotive industry in the World between 2008-

2017. Even though Turkey’s performance does not refer to a miracle in the global context, it can be suggested that the sector is among the trendsetting sectors of Turkish industry.

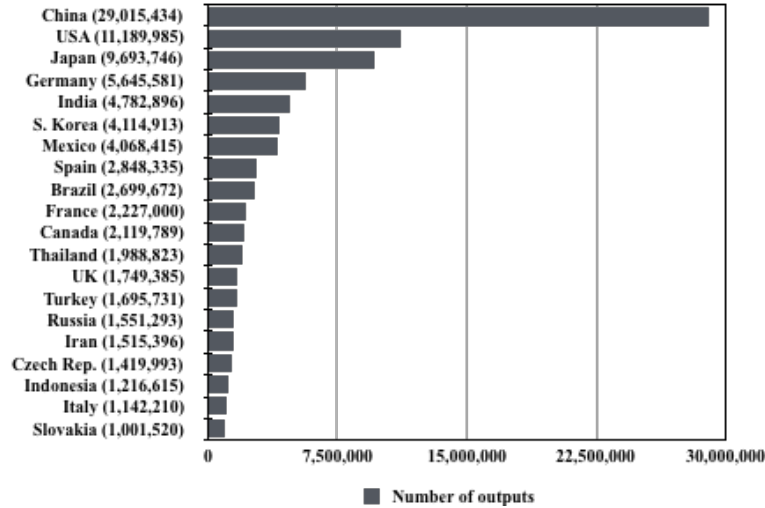


Figure 3.1 – Number of Total Outputs in Automotive Sector of Various Countries<sup>39</sup> (2017)  
 Source: International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (OICA) (online)

According to Taymaz and Voyvoda (2012, pp.106-107), the development of Turkish export items can be periodized in three main eras. The food sector, that became prominent during the 1960s and the 1970s, was replaced by textile and clothing by the late-1970s until the mid-1990s. Since then, motor vehicle and machinery export were added to the list, and motor vehicles sector “has been one of the main exporters in the late 2000s” (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p.106). Figure 3.2 clearly displays this periodization and the growth performance of the motor vehicles industry in the export activities of Turkey. The share of sector’s export activities, which is provided in Column 5 of the Table 3.1, reveals significant contribution to the economy. When it is narrowed to the manufacturing sector, it may be expected that the share of the sector would increase. According to the report issued by Automotive Manufacturers Association (OSD) (2018, p. 25), automotive is the second sector providing foreign trade surplus after the apparel and clothing accessories. In parallel, its share in total export has grown in time and reached up to 15.2% in 2017 whereas it was 2.3% in 1995 (Kurtulmuş & Tanyılmaz, 2017, p. 210).

<sup>39</sup> Germany issues only data on cars and France issues only on cars and light commercial vehicle.

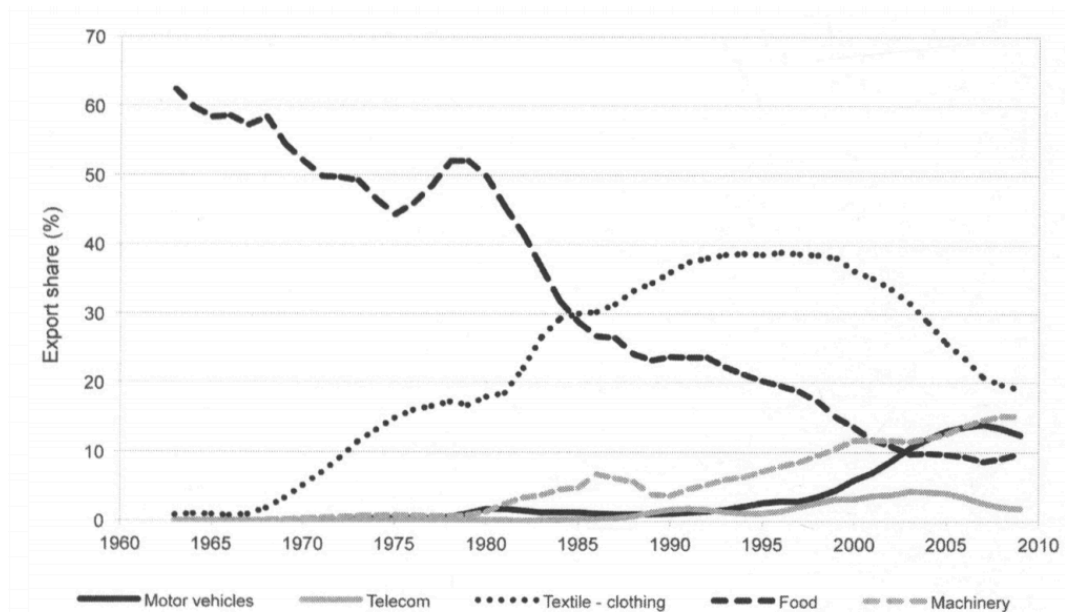


Figure 3.2 – Structure of Turkish exports (1963-2009) (3-year moving averages)  
 Source: cited from UN, Comtrade Database by Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p.107

Moreover, the main corporations of the sector in Turkey are ranked in the Table 3.2<sup>40</sup> according to their place Turkey’s Top 500 Industrial Enterprises in 2017 in terms of their production-based sales. It can be seen that the firms in the sector have a dominant place in the first fifteen enterprises in the list. Besides, almost all companies except one have a reasonable place. In the respectable positions of the list, there are also some other companies operating in side industry of the sector, which are not members of Automotive Manufacturers Association, such as Bosch (25<sup>th</sup>), BMC (72<sup>nd</sup>), Autoliv (87<sup>th</sup>) and Yazaki (94<sup>th</sup>). It is attested that ‘Motor Vehicles’ is the only sector “that has shown a significant transformation in its production processes” (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p.99) in the context of turbulent industrialization in Turkey<sup>41</sup>. However, the contribution of the sector to the value-adding processes, which started to improve after 1998, is still negative as the import-dependent industrialization has prevailed in the industry.

<sup>40</sup> Figures given in Table 3.2 represent the data belonging to the main industry, and it is indicated when the data of side industry is included in the text.

<sup>41</sup> According to Rıfat Hisarcıklıoğlu, president of Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, a car is exported from Turkey in every sixteen seconds (Milliyet, 2017). Workers interviewed during the strikes in 2015 casually highlighted that a car leaves the production line in fifty-seven seconds upon the completion of its production and installation (Turan, 2015).

Table 3.1 – Import and Export Performance of Turkish Automotive Sector (2008-2017)

Years	Total Import (\$ 1,000) (1)	Total Export (\$ 1,000) (2)	Rate of Exports meeting Imports (3)	Share of Import of the Sector in Total Import (%) (4)	Share of Export of the Sector in Total Export (%) (5)	Rank of the industry in the World* (6)
2008	12,789,717	18,326,711	1.43	6.3	13.9	16
2009	8,975,864	12,251,734	1.36	6.4	12.0	17
2010	13,419,356	13,812,677	1.03	7.2	12.1	16
2011	17,184,080	15,803,438	0.92	7.1	11.7	17
2012	14,514,293	15,148,114	1.04	6.1	9.9	16
2013	16,808,266	17,000,250	1.01	6.7	11.2	17
2014	15,735,932	18,063,448	1.15	6.5	11.5	17
2015	17,543,573	17,462,631	1.00	8.5	12.1	15
2016	17,840,587	19,801,974	1.11	9.0	13.9	14
2017	17,428,022	23,941,215	1.37	7.5	15.2	14

\* In terms of total output in the sector, Source: International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (OICA) (online)

Source: Automotive Manufacturers Association (2018, p. 24)

The automotive industry is categorized in the middle-high technology sectors according to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC Rev. 3) by UNSTATS, titled as ‘Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semitrailers’. In a very recent study based on a comprehensive research by İbrahim Semih Akçomak and Serkan Bürken (2019, p. 23), it is observed that “manufacturing capabilities gained over the years have not been translated into innovation capabilities” and hence added-value (cf. Eşiyok, 2013; Şahinkaya and Küçükkiremitçi, 2015). Accordingly, “the Turkish automotive industry has fallen into a middle-technology trap” (Akçomak & Bürken, 2019, p. 23), as Turkey is specialized “only in the final stage” of the sector (Taymaz & Voyvoda, 2012, p.99). Hence, its characteristics in Turkey are generally evaluated among the sectors which (cited from Yeldan by Bozkurt-Güngen, 2018, p. 9):

(...) use the advantage of cheap import materials, get assembled in Turkey at low value added and then are re-directed for export. Thus, being mostly import-dependent, they have a low capacity to generate value added and employment.

While this policy enabled them “to survive amidst fierce global competition”, the cost became dependence on the foreign partners or outsourcers “in strategic decision-making processes” (Akçomak & Bürken, 2019, p. 20). Kurtulmuş and Tanyılmaz (2017, p. 207) nominate this aspect by referring to the fact that added-value in the sector is still created in the developed countries.



Respectively, while “strategic policy choices favoring short-term gains over long-term capability building created a home-grown state-industry agreement on gaining manufacturing capabilities, which created a vicious circle within the weak innovation systems” and restrictions arising from the global value chains, the sector is certainly dependent on the foreign original equipment manufacturers and joint ventures in R&D processes (Akçomak & Bürken, 2019, p. 20). Whereas Turkish automobile is the sector having the greatest number of R&D centers according to a research conducted by Added-Value Movement Association (*Katma Değer Hareketi Derneği*)<sup>42</sup>, these centers are engaged in activities to promote the industry’s priority of “production in the shortest time and with the lowest costs” rather than R&D activities to facilitate added-value (Ekinci, 2017). Accordingly, Turkey is dependent on the import of many parts including engine or power transmission; and hence, the high-rate of imported intermediate goods in the sector significantly decreases added-value in the sector (Akçomak & Bürken, 2019, p. 17; Ekinci, 2017). The combination of “these national and global forces” results in “a middle-technology trap for the Turkish automotive industry” (Akçomak & Bürken, 2019, p. 2). In order to enhance high-value-added production, it is said that technology level, research and development facilities, consolidation, diversification of design and product models are the issues to be improved (Ekinci, 2017).

In such a context, the partnership structure of the industry becomes more understandable, as Turkish automotive sector attracts foreign investment thanks to its flexible production ability provided by the competitiveness through low labor costs and long working hours. Under the conditions of export-oriented market policy regime, Turkish automotive industry’s flagships applied merging with foreign firms and/or performing R&D and innovation led by foreign firms and joint ventures (Akçomak & Bürken, 2019, p. 22; cf. Nichols & Suğur, 2004; also see Yalman, 2016, p. 258).

As it is displayed in Table 3.2, especially the companies ranked in top six have foreign partners mostly from the central countries of the so-called ‘Triad’ (the U.S., the EU

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<sup>42</sup> It seems that the Association became in service for a certain period and it is closed down now.

Table 3.2 – The Main Companies of Automotive Sector in Turkey

<b>Firms</b>	<b>Shareholders*</b> (1)		<b>Share of foreign capital**</b> (2)	<b>Plants &amp; Foundation Year</b> (3)	<b>Rank in Top 500***</b> (4)
<b>Ford Otosan</b>	Shareholder 1	Koç Group (41 %)	41,04 %	Eskişehir – 1983 Gölcük/Kocaeli – 2001 Yeniköy/Kocaeli – 2014	2
	Shareholder 2	Ford (41 %)			
	Shareholder 3	Publicly-held (18 %)			
<b>Toyota</b>	Shareholder 1	Toyota (90 %)	100 %	Sakarya – 1994	3
	Shareholder 2	Mitsui (10 %)			
<b>TOFAŞ</b>	Shareholder 1	Fiat (38 %)	37,80 %	Bursa – 1971 (1968)	4
	Shareholder 2	Koç (38 %)			
	Shareholder 3	Other (24 %)			
<b>Oyak Renault</b>	Shareholder 1	Renault (51 %)	51 %	Bursa – 1971 (1969)	5
	Shareholder 2	Oyak (% 49)			
<b>Hyundai Assan</b>	Shareholder 1	Hyundai (70 %)	70 %	Kocaeli - 1997	10
	Shareholder 2	Kibar (30 %)			
<b>Mercedes Benz</b>	Shareholder 1	Mercedes (67 %)	84,99 %	İstanbul – 1968 Aksaray – 1985	12
	Shareholder 2	Other (33 %)			
<b>Türk Traktör</b>	Shareholder 1	Koç Group (37,5 %)	37.50 %	Ankara – 1954 Sakarya – 2014	27
	Shareholder 2	CNH Osterreich (37,5 %)			
	Shareholder 3	Other (25 %)			
<b>Honda Türkiye</b>	Shareholder 1	Honda Motor co. (100 %)	100 %	Kocaeli – 1997 (purchased by Honda in 2003)	55
<b>Man</b>	Shareholder 1	MAN (100 %)	99,90 %	Ankara – 1966	77
<b>Otokar</b>	Shareholder 1	Koç Group (45 %)	-	Sakarya - 1963	80
	Shareholder 2	Ünver (25 %)			
	Shareholder 3	Other (30 %)			
<b>Temsa Global</b>	Shareholder 1	Sabancı (49 %)	-	Adana – 1987	117
	Shareholder 2	Other (51 %)			
<b>Karsan</b>	Shareholder 1	Kıraça (63 %)	-	Bursa - 1966	160
	Shareholder 2	Other (37 %)			
<b>Anadolu Isuzu Otomotiv Sanayi</b>	Shareholder 1	Anadolu Group (55 %)	29,74 %	Kocaeli - 1966	162
	Shareholder 2	ISUZU (17 %)			
	Shareholder 3	ITOCHE (13 %)			
	Shareholder 4	Other (15 %)			
<b>Hattat Traktör</b>	Shareholder 1	Hattat (100 %)	-	Tekirdağ - 2002	-

\* Shares are rounded,  
\*\* Source: Akçomak & Bürken, 2019, p. 12,  
\*\*\*Turkey's Top 500 Industrial Enterprises in 2017 in terms of production-based sales, Source: ISO500 (online).

Source: Automotive Manufacturers Association (Online)

and Japan), and generally multinationals are the majority shareholders. Especially, the Customs Union of 1996 and the end of the 2001 crisis constituted significant milestones for the delivery of these investments. So much so that, the late 1990s and

the early 2000s were reflected as “Hello to the Factory”<sup>43</sup> era in Turkey (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, pp. 23-42). Accordingly, there occurred an acceleration in the export activities of the corporations after the 2001 crisis and there is an increment in the acquisitions of shares or factories by foreign multinationals (Nichols & Suğur, 2004<sup>44</sup>). In parallel, as it is shown in the Table 3.2, seven new plants in the main automotive industry were established in compliance with that calendar in addition to that there occurred either important acquisitions and mergers or significant investments by already-existing parties to increase productive capacity after that year.

The industry has been certainly indebted to its ‘assets’ in captivating these partners. According to a famous international audit company (cited from Ernst & Young by Kurtulmuş and Tanyılmaz, 2017, p. 211), the strengths of Turkish automotive industry are its flexible production ability with competitive costs; competitive and strong supply chain; highly trained, young, dynamic, willing and qualified labor-force; and lower-cost labor than EU countries. These statements, of course, frame the main qualities in Turkish automotive sector and are quite consistent with the proposition of that Turkey had already been articulated to the “international division of labor” as a cheap labor force and importation reservoir as discussed in the second chapter. Consistently, Pevrul Kavlak (Ulusal Kanal, 2017, 13:30, my translation), President of Türk Metal union, utters the following statement in a TV program during 2017 collective bargaining period:

I had a trip to France approximately five years ago. There, in the techno-center of a French company, they gave me a briefing. It is said that they had businesses in sixteen countries. Then, I asked the most efficient one among them. The answer was Bursa. The Turkish affiliations of multinational companies win quality awards annually. How can they achieve it? The enterprise in Bursa is doing the highest-quality production among the sixteen of the aforementioned firms in the world. We are really working efficiently. There are examples, so has MESS. When you look at the absenteeism, we are ever so much ahead of Europe. We are working with three-per-thousand

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<sup>43</sup> Authors allude to a study published in 1997 in USA, namely *Farewell to the Factory* by Ruth Milkman so as to refer to the move of factories and manufacturing plants from central economies to the peripheral countries.

<sup>44</sup> For Turkish copy is published later on, there are some additional notes regarding the post-crisis developments.

absenteeism. What does it mean? We are absent almost one day per year, while this is three percent in Europe, i.e. one day per month.

Moreover, to the extent that the development of the industry in Turkey focused on the final stage, a certain amount of the produced value is transferred to foreign countries by nature of the added-value. In this sense, incentives provided by the labor regime become an important parameter to attract foreign investments to the country. It would not be wrong to say that such dynamics are seriously influential in the enactment of legislative documents regulating labor relations and practices discussed in the previous chapter. All in all, the Turkish automotive industry displays a complying portrayal with the trends of globalization in terms of articulation with the world economy as a developing economy.

### **3.2 Conditions of Working Classes in the Sector**

Nearly, 450,000 people are employed in the whole automotive sector, and 50,000 of which works in the main industry. While the share of automotive sector *per se* in total employment is 6 %, it is estimated to occupy 20 % when side industry and related supplier and receiver sectors are taken into consideration (cited from TSKB by Kurtulmuş & Tanyılmaz, 2017, p. 210). Traditionally, with relatively favorable level of remuneration, of unionization and the registered contracts; the employment conditions in the sector are relatively better than the working conditions in informal sectors. However, it is quite behind international averages, and more importantly, employees in the formal sectors have started to lose their relative advantages as a result of the convergence of the conditions between informal and formal sectors.

Employment relations in the sector, especially in the main industry, are based on formal and registered terms. At the beginning of the 2000s, Nichols and Suğur (2004, p.32) listed three significant advantages provided by big private sectors in comparison to unregistered informal conditions of work; “relatively good wages, other important material benefits [in the form of in-kind aids, lunches, severance pay, premiums etc.] and good physical working conditions”. Accordingly, the authors noted that a worker in TOFAŞ factory (BursaCar in the study) who had worked for five years received pay equal “to the value of almost four times the minimum wage” and those who completed twenty years were paid “50 per cent more than teachers or policemen and

twice as much as nurses”. Likewise, a worker from presumably Honda factory (GebzeCar in the study) interviewed defined the factory as “a workplace made in Heaven” for which he could work forever. Similarly, workers from TOFAŞ factory defined their jobs as the most prestigious one in the city. So much so that, workers of this factory were respected in their neighborhoods, they could do shopping in the stores on credit without any question and even one worker narrates that he achieved to convince the parents of his spouse to get married only after getting a job in TOFAŞ factory (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, pp. 29-36). In 2016, a worker from Türk Traktör factory who participated in the Metal Storm explain the case by saying that “while employment in Türk Traktör was possible upon a very special reference and even the conditions were considered equal to working in Europe once upon a time” (Evrensel Metal, 2016, p. 10).

On the other hand, it can be deduced that the advantages of the formal working conditions were rather relative in the sense of material benefits but not the easiness of the tasks. At the beginning of the 2000s, Nichols & Suğur (2004, p. 107) mentions a German manager at a white goods factory in Çerkezköy<sup>45</sup> who finds it “absolutely fantastic” and “impossible in Germany” when Turkish workers worked overnight because a problem arose during the operation. In light of the precarization of the employment relations portrayed in the previous chapter, the underlying dynamics what brought the German manager to Turkey now becomes more understandable. Hence, working conditions do not present a heartwarming portrayal especially in the international context neither at the beginning of the 2000s nor later. In the following years this flexibilization of employment relations in Turkey further aggravated, and deregulation of the labor market deepened starting from the early 2000s (Çelik, 2015a, p.618; Türel, 2014, p. 411; also cf. Bedirhanoglu, 2018). Perhaps, this has been what mesmerized the German manager and his counterparts.

In the metal sector, actual weekly working hour is calculated as 51 hours; and 41,8 % of employees work longer than 50 hours, which is the threshold to define a work unhealthy in the literature (ILO standards limit this number with 48 hours) (Öngel, 2017, pp. 83-88). In the past, it is possible to encounter unfavorable utterances such

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<sup>45</sup> It may be then Bosch-Siemens-Profile factory which became BSH later on.

as “the reality in the plant is that my work is boring, managers are scolding and you are dreaming” (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p.137). Likewise, a worker complains about not having a minute to talk with friends and working as a robot because “the conveyor can’t and won’t stop” [in TOFAŞ factory], and “workers are generally unable to leave the line unless another worker stands in for them or they work yet faster and get ahead of the line in order to win a brief respite” (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, pp.131-140). Consequently, the rate of workers who thought they would not be able to work until the age of 60 is 94% in the automotive sector.

These conditions would not ameliorate in time but maybe worsened. In the words of workers reflected in a recent study, volume of output in the factories has been increasing year by year, but number of workers in the units has been diminishing (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p.948). As a result, the working conditions are getting worse. There are dramatic cases witnessed in the factories, which were revealed during the 2015 strikes. As indicated by workers in various studies, the intensified conditions of the working hinder worker from interrupting the production for a while and even going to toilet or drinking water during the work (Arabacı, 2015, p. 188; Tokol & Güler, 2016, p.948). According to Elçin Arabacı’s (2015, p.188) conveyance, there are workers testifying the cases of messing the pants for this impossibility. Workers complain about compulsory overtime imposed beyond their shifts and they sometimes work for ten or twelve hours while sleeping for five hours (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 948). During the shift, workers are allowed for 7-10 minutes for a break which do not allow them to meet all their vital necessities in such a short while (Turan, 2015). Furthermore, most of the workers experience occupational diseases, frequently waist or heart problems (Turan, 2015; Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 948). Lastly, some workers also complained about mobbing in the workplace (Turan, 2015).

In addition to these deteriorations in the working conditions, the previous privileges of formal sector workers are curtailed in time. In this regard, the alteration in sectoral real-wages does not correspond with the aforementioned growth in the sector. By 2015, it is reported that wages in the factories affiliated to Turkish Employers’ Association of Metal Industries (MESS) ranked 13<sup>th</sup> among the wages of 16 employer associations. Accordingly, wages in metal sector is above or around food, textile and

soil sectors whereas 30% lower than other sectors such as glass, petro-chemical, medicine and paper (Çelik, 2015b). Table 3.3 provides the changes in real-wages in automotive sector between 2005-2015<sup>46</sup>. According to table, though wages show temporal increases (generally at the years in which two- or three-year collective agreements are signed such as 2012 and 2014), they oscillate back later on and depreciates.

Table 3.3 – Labor Productivity and Real Wages in Turkish Automotive Sector (2005-2015)

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>Manufacturing Sector</b>											
<b>Labor Productivity*</b>	85.8	90.2	92.3	91.6	91.6	100	103.8	101.9	103.3	104.7	109.1
<b>Real Unit Wage</b>	80.8	79.6	89.7	97.4	92.3	100	92.6	102	104.7	102.7	98.9
<b>Motor Vehicles Industry</b>											
<b>Labor Productivity*</b>	80.6	83.9	86	88.5	81.6	100	102.8	95.8	100.3	99.6	106.9
<b>Real Unit Wage</b>	85.2	84.3	94.9	96.2	106.3	100	88.5	100.5	98.8	97.3	89.8
* Labor Productivity = Production Index/Hours Actually Worked											

Source: Kurtulmuş & Tanyılmaz on the basis of Turkstat data (2017, p. 212)

Compared to the increases in labor productivity, exploitation rate in the sector seriously intensified. Table 3.4 shows exploitation rates between 2010-2014 on the basis of various calculations belonging to the four of the factories in which workers went to strike during the Metal Storm (Bilgin, 2015; Tonak, 2015). The intensification of the exploitation can be observed in both calculations<sup>47</sup>. The figures in the table mean that a worker produces nearly four or five units for the employer while producing a unit for himself; and if the partnership structures are taken into consideration, approximately half of this value is transferred to the abroad.

<sup>46</sup> Even though calculations spanning the data before 2005 can be found in various sources (such as Birleşik Metal-İş, 2008b), they are not included in the table for they are based on different datasets. However, to give an opinion, it can be cited that the real wages per capita in motor vehicles sub-industry decreased to 66.21 in 2005 if the level applying in 1997 is taken 100. In the interim, labor productivity in the industry increases to 126.60 if the rates prevailing in 1996 are taken 100 (Birleşik Metal-İş, 2008b, p.14 and 18).

<sup>47</sup> To compare with 2007, the exploitation rate (profit/wage) is calculated for 610% in Ford, 150% in TOFAŞ and 470% in Türk Traktör (Birleşik Metal-İş, 2008b, p.21).

Actually, to compare the deterioration of the wages in the sector in time, the method pursued by Nichols and Suğur (2004, pp. 29-36) would suit better. According to an interview with an 8-year experienced TOFAŞ worker during the strike in 2015, his net salary costs an average of TRY 2000 including premiums but may recede down to 1400 when the production slows down (Emek ve Adalet Platformu, 2015). When it is considered that net minimum wage was TRY 1000 in 2015, it can be argued that relative advantage of the formal employment depreciated to a great extent in the example of TOFAŞ. As a result, the gap between the formal sectors in question and less formal terms has been closed since the beginning of the 2000s and working in such factories would no longer be a privilege. Nevertheless, half a loaf is better than no bread, and hence, remuneration in the sector is still considered to be slightly better than the unregistered and informal working conditions especially under the circumstances of serious amelioration of the SMEs in Turkish industry.

Table 3.4 – Exploitation Rates<sup>48</sup> in Some Workplaces of the Sector between 2010-2014 (%)

	<b>Bilgin (2015)</b>	<b>Tonak (2015)</b>
<b>Ford Otosan</b>	654	314
<b>TOFAŞ</b>	730	551
<b>Oyak Renault</b>	496	-
<b>Türk Traktör</b>	-	587

Sources: Bilgin (2015) and Tonak (2015)

All in all, the precarization of employment relations were not only for informal sectors, but more formal stratifications of the labor have also got their share as it is discussed in the previous chapter. Discursively, while it was possible to resemble the workplaces to the Heaven at the beginning of the 2000s as cited above; in the words of a Türk Traktör worker, the factory turned into a hell for workers by 2015 (Evrensel Metal, 2016, p. 10). The course of events and reasons which gave birth to the Metal Storm will be discussed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, at this juncture, it can be posited that almost all studies dealing with the resistance list low wages against strict working conditions among the very reasons of the events (Tokol & Güler, 2016; Çelik,

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<sup>48</sup> Ertuğrul Ahmet Tonak (2015) argues that the differences between the calculations probably arise from the fact that Erhan Bilgin takes “gross value added” for “the surplus value” while Tonak takes “profit before taxes, interest and depreciation”.



2015b; Turan, 2015; Koçak, 2015a; Arabacı, 2015). Among other things, the framework provided above constitute the womb that breed the Metal Storm. In that respect, if working conditions constitute the very first factor underlying the workers' reactions, trade unions and Turkish industrial relations system come just next to it.

### **3.3 Trade Unionism in the Sector**

According to the industrial relations classification system, the automotive sub-sector is categorized under the metal industry according to the Law No. 6356 on Trade Unions and Collective Agreements enacted in 2012. The scope of metal industry, by definition, is quite extensive and include a wide range of manufacturing subsectors containing metal components from iron and steel plants to almost all electronic devices, armories and even medical equipment. The unions generally classify the sub-sector as “main metal industry”, “metal ware”, “electrical equipment”, “machine manufacturing” and automotive (Birleşik Metal-İş Union, 2018, p.9) or “iron steel industry”, “white goods” and “automotive” (Türk Metal, December 2014, p. 30). The wideness of this range has some implications for the industrial relations in the sector as discussed below.

According to the data provided by Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, the number of registered workers in the sector has climbed up to one and a half million as it can be seen in Table 3.5. The union density in the sector displays a trend above the average of the country. However, as an adversity, it has never reached up to one fifth of the sector in the given period even though the sector is relatively formal. Nevertheless, it is suggested that metal industry, “is one of the leading industries known as locomotive and trend setter in terms of labor relations” (Çelik, 2015b). The industry employs nearly 11-12 % of total registered workers. Although service sectors have higher shares than industrial sectors in the total employment, industrial workers have a strategic social power in terms of class-politics because such sectors constitute the overwhelming share of the economy as partly discussed above (Kurtulmuş et al., 2015, p. 277).

As for this importance of the sector, one last point to be made is the dynamism of metal workers in the sense of labor movements. Relatively formal and organized

Table 3.5 – Some Selective Figures from Turkish Labor Relations System (2013-2019\*)

	No. of registered metal workers	No. of total registered workers	No. of unionized metal workers	Union density in the sector (%)	Union density in the country (%)	Türk Metal	Özçelik-İş	Birleşik Metal İş	Hizmet-İş**
2013 Jan.	1,367,258	10,881,618	206,325	15.09	9.20	151,734	27,493	26,061	51,079 (7.79 %)
2013 Jul.	1,396,755	11,628,806	212,443	15.21	8.88	155,989	29,313	26,094	53,145 (7.10 %)
2014 Jan.	1,413,151	11,600,554	222,739	15.76	9.45	164,343	30,296	26,905	57,900 (7.47 %)
2014 Jul.	1,426,744	12,287,238	227,569	15.95	9.68	169,549	30,242	26,214	83,076 (9.60 %)
2015 Jan.	1,445,331	12,180,945	233,218	16.14	10.65	177,125	28,823	25,595	101,378 (11.88 %)
2015 Jul.	1,468,064	12,744,685	231,305	15.76	11.21	166,250	32,192	31,066	139,553 (14.86 %)
2016 Jan.	1,485,906	12,663,783	250,422	16.85	11.96	181,838	35,282	31,118	162,150 (18.28 %)
2016 Jul.	1,480,048	13,038,351	256,370	17.32	11.50	188,103	35,784	30,630	164,259 (17.07 %)
2017 Jan.	1,480,053	12,699,769	263,768	17.82	12.18	194,670	36,848	30,484	186,750 (20.37 %)
2017 Jul.	1,519,268	13,581,554	273,194	17.98	11.95	200,398	41,491	29,502	206,592 (23.69 %)
2018 Jan.	1,553,106	13,844,196	278,333	17.92	12.38	203,504	44,149	30,610	251,122 (23.99 %)
2018 Jul.	1,582,714	14,121,664	287,428	18.16	12.76	209,429	45,121	31,058	286,356 (28.29 %)
2019 Jan.	1,521,942	13,411,983	279,790	18.38	13.86	205,515	41,345	31,048	315,199 (29.68 %)

\* The interval starts from 2013 because the figures have been registered and issued more properly after the enactment of 6356 No. Law.  
\*\* As it is quite explanatory, the proportion of Hizmet-İş members to the number of all workers registered in General Services sector was given beneath the absolute numbers.

Source: Regular Statements of Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (online)

character of the sector enables workers to develop collective actions in comparison with much more informal and less organized sectors. As it can be seen through the Table 3.6, metal sector was leading in the category of workplace-based demonstrations in 2015, 2017 and 2018 whereas it became second in 2016. Moreover, it is steadily leading in the category of tenured labor demonstrations. Although the sector sometimes comes in the top ranks of “demonstrations without the leadership of any institutions” category, it regresses in this category as the institutions –i.e. unions– operating in the sector take the lead of the demonstrations especially after the Metal Storm. Likewise, it can be deduced that this dynamism is not a recent phenomenon when the events like MESS Strikes in the pre-1980s are taken into consideration. In light of this dynamism, it is claimed that “labor movements having a sustainable character would be extracted from the more organized parts of workers” as “workers in the non-organized segments present dynamics having the character of a flash in the

pan which cannot be governed” (Kaygısız, 2016a, p.91, my translation). In this regard, the sector gains an important character in terms of class-politics because of both its overwhelming share in the economy and dynamism in terms of labor mobilizations.

Table 3.6 – Certain Dynamic Sectors in terms of Various Mobilization Categories

	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Top 3 sectors in workplace-based demonstrations</b>	1- Metal (23%)	1- Construction (13%)	1- Metal (23%)	1- Metal (26%)
	2- General Services (16%)	2- Metal (12%)	2- Construction (12%)	2- Construction (14%)
	3- Construction (11%)	3- General Services (12%)	3- General Services (10%)	3- General Services (10%)
<b>Top 3 sectors in tenured labor demonstrations</b>	1- Metal (46%)	1- Metal (30%)	1- Metal (49%)	1- Metal (51%)
	2- Textile (10%)	2- Textile (18%)	2- Petro-chemistry (11%)	2- Textile (8%)
	3- Petro-chemistry (8%)	3- Petro-chemistry (12%)	3- Textile (11%)	3- Food (8%)
<b>Top 3 sectors in demonstrations without the leadership of any institutions and the rank of metal sector</b>	1- Metal (29.4%)	1- Construction (18%)	1- Construction (33%)	1- Construction (23%)
	2- Construction (25.3%)	2- Metal (15%)	2- Textile (15%)	2- Public Services (7%)
	3- General Services (14.9%)	3- Textile (13%)	3- General Services (14%)	3- Mining (6%)
			4- Metal (10%)	4- Metal (6%)
<b>Top 3 unions in terms of number of demonstrations and listed unions in metal sector</b>	1- DİSK Birleşik Metal-İş (54)	1- KESK Eğitim Sen (34)	1- DİSK Birleşik Metal-İş (41)	1- TÜRK-İŞ Türk Metal (21)
	2- KESK SES (41)	2- İnşaat-İş (28)	2- TÜRK-İŞ Türk Metal (39)	2- DİSK Birleşik Metal-İş (15)
	3- DİSK Genel-İş (36)	3- DİSK Birleşik Metal-İş (25)	3-KESK Eğitim Sen (35)	3-DİSK Genel-İş (8)
	5-TÜRK-İŞ Türk Metal (17)	14-TÜRK-İŞ Türk Metal (4)		

Source: Labor Studies Group Reports (Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019)

To regulate industrial relations in the sector, the employer side is mainly represented by Turkish Employers’ Association of Metal Industries<sup>49</sup> (MESS), which was established in 1959 with the cooperation of managers from Demirdöküm and Arçelik

<sup>49</sup> During the negotiations of 2014-2017 collective agreement, Birleşik Metal-İş, which was entitled in 38 MESS member workplaces, initially did not accept the offer of MESS and decided to go on strike in January 2015. However, the strike was suspended by Council of Ministers on the ground of national security purposes. Afterwards, the union summoned the employers to resign from MESS and make individual agreements to sustain peace at workplaces. The proposal was accepted by 15 companies (Korkmaz, 2015, p.3). These companies gathered under the umbrella of Industrial Metal Employers Union (*Endüstriyel Metal İşverenleri Sendikası* - EMİS) on January 27, 2016; and hence, another employer union was established in the sector.

factories belonging to Koç, Jak Kamhi from Profilo and some other industrialists (Ozan, 2011, p. 66) and rapidly grew upon the awakening of labor movements after the legislations of 1963. In this period, MESS<sup>50</sup> was one of the main epicenters of İstanbul-based industrial bourgeoisie. It also played an integral role in the establishment of Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TİSK) in 1962 and became among the main thrusters of TİSK in advance of 1980 (Öztürk, 2009, p. 342).

MESS, which is considered as the “oldest and most powerful employer organization”, has an influential role on employers and government policies; so much so that its former president Turgut Özal<sup>51</sup> then became the deputy of prime minister in 1980 coup d'état and then prime minister and president of Republic of Turkey (Çelik, 2015b). The number of MESS members during the time varied according to the developments in the sector and the country. Whereas it had about 300-350 member workplaces during the 1970s, the figure reached up to 450 towards the end of the 1980s. However, to compete with larger-scale corporations in the sector was impossible for smaller institutions. Hence, many workplaces which were not willing to agree upon the terms concluded between MESS and labor unions started to resign following the two agreements in 1988 and 1991<sup>52</sup>. So, the number of members downsized to the range of 250-300 (Koçer, 2007, pp. 258-259). By the first half of 2019, 288 enterprises are affiliated to MESS. Nevertheless, it can be surely said that the impact of agreements concluded by MESS is not limited to these members. To the extent that such agreements set the standards in the industry, they influence almost all

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<sup>50</sup> Then, the name of the association was Metalware and Industrialists' Association (*Madeni Eşya ve Sanayicileri Sendikası*). The name was amended on 27 September 1983 through an extraordinary general assembly (Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi Vol. 2, 1998, p. 385).

<sup>51</sup> He was the former head of the State Planning Organization during 1965-1971 and spent a formative period at the World Bank in the mid-1970s. Afterwards, he became the main negotiator with the donor organizations during the late 1970s and became the supervisor of the January 24 program (Kirkpatrick & Öniş, 1991, p. 13). Turgut Özal was elected as a member of board Turkish Employers' Association of Metal Industries (MESS) on November 9, 1976 at 20th General Assembly of the Association and as the board chairman on May 8, 1979. He had to leave the office on December 4, 1979 because he was assigned as Prime Minister Undersecretary (Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi Vol. 2, 1998, p. 384; also see Öztürk, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> These dates overlap with the rise of labor movements and populist cycles summarized in the second chapter.

workplaces in the sector regardless of their membership. MESS highlights peaceful working conditions, mutual trust and dialogue under the guise of “common interests of the country” (MESS, online). On the other hand, there is a widespread idea on MESS which defines it as the most militant union within TİSK in terms of employer-employee relations for its strongly-worded attitude which can be observed both in its publications and approaches towards collective bargaining agreements (Ozan, 2011, p. 66; Öztürk, 2009; Yalman, 2009).

Whereas employers are jointly represented by MESS during collective bargaining processes, there are three significant labor unions in the industry; Turkish Metal Workers Union (Türk Metal), Iron, Steel, Metal and Metal Ware Workers Union (Özçelik-İş) and United Metal Workers’ Union (Birleşik Metal-İş). Türk Metal (*Türkiye Metal, Çelik, Mühimmat, Makina, Metalden Mamül Eşya ve Oto, Montaj ve Yardımcı İşçiler Sendikası*) was established in 1963 with the initiative of Kırıkkale Metal Workers Union, Ankara Metal Workers Union and Elmadağ Barut Metal Workers Union in the form of a federation under the roof of Türk-İş (Türk Metal, no date, p. 4). According to a brochure (no date, p.4) issued by the union in English (presumably in 2016), the union has 33 branches country-wide. By December 2014, it is reported that Türk Metal is organized in 95% of automotive industry in addition to 100% of white goods and 90% of iron and plant industry (Türk Metal, December 2014, p.30). As the number of members can be followed through Table 3.5; the union has an overwhelming superiority in the sector with respect to number of members. Likewise, Türk Metal was the largest union in the country in terms of number of members until Hizmet-İş outpaced by July 2017 data as a result of pursued symbiotic trade-unionism discussed in the previous chapter.

Türk Metal defines its own unionism perspective as above-politics and claims adopting dialogue and consensus in industrial relations and defends such a “positive” attitude as one of the main drivers and contributors of current productivity of Turkish industry<sup>53</sup> (Türk Metal, online). In this respect, the union frequently organizes joint

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<sup>53</sup> As an explanatory source of this attitude, Mustafa Özbek, then president of the union, welcomed the coup d’état in 1980 on the grounds that “it had initiated a period of national unity and harmony” by negating “those speaking of a confrontation between capital and labor” (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 170).

training projects with MESS, and it encounters various criticisms against these projects (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 179; Birelma, 2018, p. 16). The union grounds this collaboration through the argument that the more union and workers contribute the employers' gain the more they can earn, as a union official indicates that "our principle is: We should make the cake bigger and then take our share" (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p.179).

It is argued that after 1975, under the presidency of Mustafa Özbek, who was in office for 34 years, the union "took an authoritarian and one-man mentality", and "Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) (extreme rightist) gained the influence on the union" (Çelik, 2015b). However, because it affiliated to TÜRK-İŞ in the pre-1980 period but not nationalist MİSK, it was not affected by the bans subsequent to the coup; and in the aftermath of 1980 coup d'état, it became more influential in the sector. Although other labor unions in the sector are affiliated to different international organizations, Türk Metal's applications for membership had not been accepted until May 2019 as a result of opposition by Birleşik Metal-İş for the reason that Türk Metal "is not an independent trade union and its unionism is pro-employer without internal democracy" (Çelik, 2015b). The union alternatively initiated the establishment of International Eurasian Metal Workers Federation (IEMF) in 1994 (Türk Metal, no date, p.17).

The union was affected by the rise of working-classes towards the end of the 1980s as it is reflected by the actions such as Seydişehir Aluminum and Antalya Ferro-Chromium strikes in 1987. Upon the failure of collective bargaining process, Türk Metal went on a strike in the 1990s and, at the end of strike, got a significant increase which caused the resignations from MESS. The traces of this dynamism continued until the mid-1990s and then faded away<sup>54</sup>. As Türk Metal constitutes the focus of this study, its way of unionism will be further investigated below.

The second largest union in the sector is Iron, Steel, Metal and Metal Ware Workers Union (*Demir, Çelik, Metal ve Metal Mamulleri İşçileri Sendikası - Çelik-İş*) which changed its name to Özçelik-İş in September 2018. The union was established in 1965

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<sup>54</sup> Ayşen Uysal (2017, pp. 158-160) notes only one demonstration organized by Türk Metal between 2000-2006 while this number is nine for Birleşik Metal-İş in the same period.

in Karabük, applied to Türk-İş for affiliation, and Türk-İş proposed to merge with Türk Metal for the membership. Even though merging was attempted in certain times, it has not been concluded and the union joined Hak-İş in 1991 by merging with Öz Demir-İş<sup>55</sup> (Özçelik-İş, online; Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi Vol. I, pp. 229-230). The number of members can be seen at Table 6. It can be suggested that Özçelik-İş maintained a standard level of magnitude. Nevertheless, it may be meaningful to question the reasons underlying that Özçelik-İş's growth remained limited while other Hak-İş affiliated unions in other sectors rejuvenated in recent years. The union is also affiliated to international organizations of IndustriALL Global Union and IndustriALL European Trade Union.

United Metal Workers' Union (*Birleşik Metal İşçileri Sendikası*) can be considered as the continuation of Mining, Hardware, and Machinery Workers' Union of Turkey (*Türkiye Maden, Madeni Eşya ve Makine Sanayii İşçileri Sendikası - Maden-İş*), which was established in 1947 and banned after the 1980 coup d'état. By considering the demonstrations and resistances pioneered by the union such as Kavel strike, Sungurlar resistance and MESS strikes in advance of 1980, it can be suggested that the union displayed a combatant way of unionism in terms of class-politics. The union was affiliated to DİSK and banned after the coup d'état along with other DİSK unions. Following the coup d'état, the legacy of Maden-İş was undertaken by Otomobil-İş, which was established in 1963 and was not banned by military authorities thanks to its status as an independent union (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 96). During the 1980s, Otomobil-İş initiated Netaş strike, Kale Kilit strike and some other significant resistances as well as taking part in 1990-1991 MESS strikes. After the ban of DİSK unions ceased, Maden-İş and Otomobil-İş merged and established Birleşik Metal-İş. Birleşik Metal-İş has about thirty thousand members and is affiliated to IndustriALL Global Union and IndustriALL European Trade Union (Birleşik Metal-İş, online).

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<sup>55</sup> In September 1990, after the 137-day long strike in Karabük Iron and Steel Plant, the negotiations to merge initially started between the presidents of three unions; Çelik-İş, Özdemir-İş and Otomobil-İş. Moreover, adherence of Çelik-İş and Özdemir-İş to Otomobil-İş was decided. However, Özdemir-İş withdrew from the negotiations in October 1990; and, in January 1991, the authorization of Çelik-İş was invalidated by the Ministry through certifying the number of union's member under the proper threshold. The merging negotiations could not be continued upon these developments, and Çelik-İş merged with Özdemir-İş in February 1991 (Özçelik-İş, online).

### 3.4 Türk Metal and Symbiotic Unionism

It can be observed that there is a rivalry between the unions and the relationship is not open to cooperation but even contentious in some points. Collective bargaining in the sector is seemingly done by MESS and three trade unions mentioned above. On the other hand, these three labor-unions do not cooperate with each other. It is suggested that Türk Metal and MESS conclude an agreement and imposes it to the other actors of the sector. As Türk Metal is the largest body in the sector, such an agreement indispensably becomes the trendsetter for the standards in the sector. There are various claims and propositions regarding how Türk Metal has achieved to maintain its position (Çelik, 2015b).

In the post-1980 framework, as it is discussed above, there was an inconsistency between the bargaining level demands of MESS and the framework stipulated by Trade Union and Collective Bargaining Laws. Under the verdict of this framework, it was technically possible “for sectoral trade unions to ask for different terms for each workplace and thereby continue workplace bargaining” (Koçer, 2007, p. 252). Thus, there was a need for a centralized body to respond the MESS’s predicament. Such a body 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 de-unionize their workplaces in case they did not want to comply with MESS’ bargaining policy (Koçer, 2007, p. 253).

Among alternatives qualified as bargaining agents, Türk Metal became the one which is “capable of and willing to serve employers’ interests” (Koçer, 2007, p. 253). It is also added as another parameter of this process that the transformation required by employers in metal sector after the 1980 coup d’état “has not been achieved by a union partnership getting consent of workers, but elimination of Maden-İş union by the use of force and then unionization through Türk Metal in many private enterprises” (Taştan, 2015, 336). Once it was institutionalized in the workplaces, maintaining this order became easier for most of the workers select their confederations on the basis of the compulsion of the legal system since only certain unions are able to get entitlement due to the sectoral thresholds (Akkaya, 2002, p. 137).



Within industrial relations literature, there are various attempts to precisely define characteristics of Türk Metal's way of unionism. Some of them emphasizes its corporatist character whereas others define it as statist and some others focus on its gangster-like features. Most commonly, it "was repeatedly accused of being a 'yellow union'" (Koçer, 2007, p. 257). Rüya Gökhan Koçer (2007) names this type of symbiosis between Türk Metal and employer organizations as the "partnership in coercion". Whereas, in the post-1980 legal environment, "trade unions' existence largely depended on their ability to render themselves useful or at least not dangerous for employers instead of solely focusing representation of worker's interests", this generated 'coercive partnership' (Koçer, 2007, p. 251). While coercive partnership arises from a survival necessity for the unions (i.e. a compulsory reconciliation with the employer to be able to survive in the sector), some unions transformed it into "a winning strategy" going beyond a compelling situation. Accordingly, the union promises support to employers, gains some authorities in recruitment processes as the source of its power in the workplace. Such a partnership between the employer and the union, which based on a willing consensus rather than a survival reconciliation, is called as "partnership in coercion" (Koçer, 2007, p. 252).

Türk Metal has been frequently accused of the close relationship established with the employer organization MESS, and its founder institution Koç Group, which recurrently resulted in agreements unfavorable for workers. According to an anecdote elucidated by Levent Dölek (2016, p. 65), representatives of Koç Group always utter, for years that "we will not intervene in your union preferences, but our union is Türk-Metal". Regarding the entrance of the union to TOFAŞ factory affiliated to Koç Group, Nichols and Suğur (2004, p. 171) attest that the management supported Türk Metal to drive Maden-İş away from the factory, the police favored Türk Metal and the union eventually gained the control in the factory by 1978 and it still remains as the authorized union in the workplace (see also Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi Vol 3, 1998, pp. 248-250; Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p. 96).

According to the picture depicted above, it seems that Türk Metal's power is indebted to the alliances it established with the employers and the state rather than its deep-rooted relations with workers. As frequently reflected, Türk Metal's way of unionism

promise a control regime in the workplaces. While the union comes to the table on behalf of workers, the ties between workers and Türk Metal are quite weak. A common behavior of the post-1980 mainstream unionism is to conclude agreements with a *fait accompli* without thorough notification of workers. It is also frequently claimed for Türk Metal that the union did not consult the workers in advance of concluding agreements, and the head of union always decided and applied on behalf of workers (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 950).

In order to conduct this way of operation, the union did not refer to workers' ideas not only about the agreement terms but also about the election of representative bodies such as shop stewards, delegates and branch union officials (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, pp. 176-178; Çelik, 2015b). This is actually evaluated as the source of representation gap at the level of workplaces (Özveri, 2016; Taştan, 2015). These positions were determined through the appointment by the head of the union branch on the grounds that the law *requires* shop stewards to be appointed by the union (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 177; Kavlak, May 2015, p.5). The board of the union does not allow formation and resurgence of any opposition movements within the union. It is reported that a branch in İstanbul was closed down upon the election of a figure from the opposition list (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 177). It is often reported that there are recurrent events of physical assaults to such oppositional groups to maintain the control in the workplaces as occurred in the Metal Storm (Dölek, 2016; Arabacı, 2015). A TOFAŞ worker admits that the union behaves like a gang against the workers' revolts by carrying men from TOFAŞ to attack opposition groups as done in Grammer, Renault and Bosch workplaces (Doğan, 2019, p.139).

Indifference of the union against the dismissal of workers is another point commonly uttered by the workers (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 159, 173 and 174). As a result, it becomes probable to encounter with some perceptions among the workers defining the union as “parasite, useless, non-transparent and void” (Taştan, 2015, p. 332). Moreover, the functions provided by such a unionism become more understandable when it is compared to “the strong and participatory unionism model of the pre-1980 period” (Taştan, 2015). Nevertheless, it should be noted that some of these habits ameliorated after 2015 as it will be discussed below. Citing the German manager, who

finds flexibility in Turkish factories “absolutely fantastic” and “impossible in Germany”, would be meaningful to verify the fact that Türk Metal is a union necessitated by the mode of accumulation prevailing in Turkey. This manager justifies the impossibility in Germany by putting forward that “there exist unions”, but also forgets (or neglects) the existence of a union in factories located in Turkey as the physical existence of the union did not necessarily mean its eagerness to defend and develop workers’ conditions in the workplace (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 107).

On the other hand, this mutualist relationship between the union and employers was objected by Türk Metal-member workers several times in advance of the Metal Storm. To the extent that workers problematize such kind of antidemocratic procedures applied by the union, it can be deemed that their resistances were a challenge against the union’s *modus operandi*. Among others, the events which occurred in 1998 are worthy to mention as it was defined as “the first Türk Metal revolt” (Koçak, 2015a). In 1998, then president of Türk Metal Union, Mustafa Özbek, promised 90% increase in wages under the conditions of 70% inflation. However, upon the conclusion of the contract with a 43% of increase, thousands of workers protested the agreement (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 173). The protests started in the Renault factory and spread to TOFAŞ, Valeo, BOSCH, Coşkunöz and MAKO in Bursa and other cities (as it happened in 2015) such as İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara, Gebze and Trakya (Kaygısız, 2016a, p. 55; Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 173; Arabacı, 2015, p. 190). Workers marched to the city center for five kilometers in order to perform resignation in the notary office (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 173) and sixty thousands of Türk Metal’s ninety thousand members resigned from the union and joined Birleşik Metal-İş in 1998 (BirGün, 2015). During the resistance, workers were threatened with being dismissed by the employer unless they return back to Türk Metal. At the end, the resistance was broken through the cooperation between Türk Metal and the employers; thus, many workers were fired (Nichols & Suğur, 2004, p. 173; Tokol & Güler, 2016, p.939; Kaygısız, 2016a, p. 55). A similar wave of protests against Türk Metal is observed in 2012 by workers from İzmir, Eskişehir and Bursa. The reason was that the union had started collective bargaining procedures without asking workers’ demands. However, this wave of protests was suppressed by the means of violence of union and the dismissals of the pioneer workers in various factories (see

Appendix 1). It is claimed that Türk Metal also applied violence to suppress the protests in 1998 and 2012 (Dölek, 2016, p.62; BirGün, 2015).

To sum up, in compliance with the transformation pursued since the 1980s, this chapter labeled the automotive industry as a trend-setter sector of Turkish economy. However, as the added-value level of the sector could not be enhanced, this sector is indebted its performance to the suppression of labor. Accordingly, it is difficult to say that workers get their share from the growth of the industry when their decreasing real wages are taken into consideration. To implement this labor regime, employers cooperate with Türk Metal union which is defined as a partner of employer party in the control and containment of the workers in the sector. This partnership has been challenged at various times in the history, and a further and stronger wave of reaction against this type of unionism emerged in 2015 as it will be examined in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE METAL STORM

The status quo established under the leadership of Türk Metal have been challenged several times. For instance, 1998 and 2012 protests can be considered as examples of this kind of contestations, whereas 2015 Metal Storm constituted the last and the largest case to understand the structural problems inherent to the sector. In the first half of 2015, there occurred important labor demonstrations in Turkey. After signature of the collective bargaining in metal sector between the employer union, Turkish Employers' Association of Metal Industries (MESS), and the entitled labor union, Turkish Metal Workers Union (Türk Metal), in December 2014; there occurred some indications of inconveniences in the form of smaller protests within the factories because the workers were not satisfied with the terms of the agreement. In the first months of 2015, the union concluded a separate agreement in BOSCH factory under better conditions for there had been some mobilizations of workers in the factory. However, this was deemed as a double-standard by the workers from other workplaces. Thus, their inconveniences turned into larger and more decisive protests and strikes later lasting from mid-April to the first days of June.

The protests were mainly performed by automotive<sup>56</sup> workers from the factories located in Bursa which is an important industrial city in the West of Turkey. Before the agreement process in 2014, Türk Metal experienced an authorization problem in Bosch factory, Bursa, because workers had resigned from Türk Metal and participated to a more combatant union, Birleşik Metal-İş affiliated to Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DİSK). However, an important number of workers turned back to Türk Metal later due to the force of employer and Türk Metal. Anyhow, legal dispute on authority in the factory was not solved for a certain period and agreement

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<sup>56</sup> Automotive industry is the sub-sector of metal sector along with "iron - steel industry", "machine manufacturing" and "white goods" according to 2012 dated Law No. 6356 on Trade Unions and Collective Agreements (*Sendikalar ve Toplu İş Sözleşmesi Kanunu*).

could not be concluded until April 2015. Accordingly, the agreement for Bosch factory could be made after the regular agreement and under better conditions in order to convince the workers to maintain their membership in the union. This factor, at the same time, revealed potentiality and probability for a better contract covering the workers from the other factories and became the very first triggering factor for the events. Thus, workers in other metal-sector, but especially automotive, factories demanded the same rights with Bosch –i.e. wage rise – as well as free choice of unions, abandonment of Türk Metal from workplaces and the ability to choose their own shop stewards freely (Çelik, 2015b).

The movements on the basis of these demands started in mid-April 2015 and turned into a demonstration in Bursa city center on April 26. During the course of the time, discussions and negotiations were made with employers and demands were refused by employers and Türk Metal remained reluctant and indifferent against workers' demands. The movements started with the attempt of workers from Renault and TOFAŞ factories and then it grew with participation of workers from the side industry workplaces such as Coşkunöz, Ototrim and Mako. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, workers went to strike *de facto*. It also expanded to other cities such as Kocaeli, Eskişehir and Ankara as well as some other firms such as Ford and Türk Traktör. Strikes went on until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, and workers achieved to acquire some material gains in some factories. On the other hand, the union maintained its position in the workplaces and even grew further in the sector albeit some restorations were observed in the structure and attitudes of the union.

As it can be followed through the emphasis above, the inconveniences of the workers revealed as a reaction against the union. Before the resistance, the union disregarded workers' demands, and it is reported that there occurred physical assaults by the union to the workers who opposed Türk Metal. During the resistance, Türk Metal maintained its indifference and recurrently invited the workers to stop their demonstrations by recognizing the protests out of law. In light of these summary, whereas wage level is one basic reason for the resistance, the structure of unionization in the sector is the other.

The protests leading to the Metal Storm primarily erupted in Bursa and spread to Kocaeli, Ankara and Eskişehir. Since the 1960s, large industrial plants were established in Bursa especially in textile and automotive sectors (Akkaya, 1998, pp.198-202). The city witnessed significant labor mobilizations especially before the 1980 military intervention. However, following the coup d'état, labor movement in the city was either partly regressed or it altered its way of mobilizations to more passive ways of resistance (Akkaya, 1998, p.202). Whereas the city is known for the strong support to nationalist-conservative political streams, labor movement, nevertheless, has achieved to survive in this significant industrial city.

Most of the workplaces cited in the narration are located in Bursa Organized Industrial Zone (*Bursa Organize Sanayi Bölgesi*). The Zone is known as the first industrial zone in Turkey which was opened in 1966 and enlarged in time up to 670 hectares in parallel to the industrial policies of the country. There are textile and automotive clusters in the Zone, and the clusters include the most prominent businesses in these sectors. So much so that, it is named as Turkey's Detroit in terms of the automotive plants located in the city (Demir, 2006; Hürriyet Daily News, 2015) A map of the Zone so as to indicate significant workplaces in the context of the study is presented in Appendix 3 (also see Bursa Organize Sanayi Bölgesi, online). For the relevance to the study, it is noted that Bursa accommodates 59.3 % of all automotive production and 25 % of employment in the sector (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 938).

For the evaluation of the events, process tracing is used as the method. Process tracing necessitates the investigation of “the sequence of the events, the specific actions taken by various types of actors, public and private statements by those actors about why they took those actions, as well as other observations” (Hall, 2006, p.28). In this respect, determination and definition of the actors constitute an important aspect of the method. This study recognizes employer organizations, government officials, labor unions (Türk Metal, Birleşik Metal-İş and Çelik-İş) and workers as the actors of the events. As the term of workers is relatively ambiguous, it should be noted that actions and statements of the workers on strike (from Renault, TOFAŞ, Coşkunöz, Mako, Ototrim, Türk Traktör and Ford Otosan) are taken into consideration among others. Moreover, the statements of Metal Workers Association (MİB - *Metal İşçileri*

*Birliđi*) are paid attention with a critical view. In the annexes of this study, the trajectory of events is presented in detail on a chronological and daily basis. Appendix 1 of this study presents daily statements and actions of all these actors whereas Appendix 2 displays the list of the workplaces which were somehow involved in the wave of protests even though they did not go on strike. Hence, the layout presented in the Appendix 1 can be considered as the core of the events, and the list in Appendix 2 constitute the second circle. This chapter rather mentions significant turning points and the noteworthy facts to the extent that they are significant for the evaluations.

The number of workers employed in each workplace can be found in Appendix 2. Among the businesses in which workers went on wildcat strikes; Renault, TOFAŞ, Türk Traktör and Ford Otosan are the main industry workplaces (see Table 3.2) whereas Coşkunöz, Mako and Ototrim operate in the side industry. As it can be seen in Table- 2, TOFAŞ, Türk Traktör and Ford Otosan workplaces are affiliated to Koç Group conglomerate. The workplaces in the side industry produce window lifter, sunshield, roof lamp, cladding, door panel and plastic injection parts for larger companies such as Renault, Ford, Toyota, Hyundai etc.

#### **4.1 An Overview of the Events**

In the sector, there were five collective bargaining periods between 2008 and 2019. Accordingly, consecutive agreements were concluded in 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2017 so as to cover the period between two subsequent agreements. As part of the reactions against the union mentioned in the last part of the previous chapter, in March 2012, before the signing up of 2012 agreement, 3500 Bosch<sup>57</sup> workers resigned from Türk Metal and participated to Birleşik Metal-İş. Afterwards, majority of the workers somehow returned back to Türk Metal, but, as a result of legal procedures arising from this shift, an authorization problem occurred for Türk Metal until November 2014. Meanwhile, Bosch workers could not benefit from the terms of 2012 Agreement and the terms of the previous agreement became valid even though some improvements were made by the employer to maintain operation (Türk Metal, May 2015, p. 16). After the conclusion of legal proceeding, a separate agreement was concluded in the

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<sup>57</sup> Bosch is a factory in the side industry of automotive sector.



middle of April 2015 so as to be valid in the Bosch workplace. Before the Bosch agreement was made in April 2015, a collective bargaining agreement was concluded between MESS and Türk Metal (along with Özçelik-İş) in December 2014 so as to cover 2014-2017 period. The agreement was for a three-year period rather than two as usual, and workers reacted against the duration and terms of the agreement on the grounds of that the extension in the period would cause the loss of rights by considering wage erosion in front of the inflation (Evrensel Metal, 2016, p.8). To crown it all, the terms of the Bosch agreement were better than the 2014-2017 collective agreement.

These reactions accumulated and the Bosch contract was perceived as a double-standard by the workers from other factories when the workers learnt that the terms of the Bosch contract were better than the collective agreement. In response, by the mid-April 2015, workers started to demand amendment of the collective agreement in accordance with the terms of Bosch contract, but Türk Metal remained indifferent towards these demands. In this sense, the resistance (April 14-June 3) initially developed in the workplaces (April 14 – May 5); then negotiations deadlocked, and workers went on strike *de facto* (May 5 – May 20), i.e. without applying the legal procedures to strike and by disregarding injunctions to stop the movement; and finally, the resistance was retreated (May 20 – June 3).

During the mobilization workers demanded (i) amendment of collective agreement in accordance with the terms of Bosch agreement, (ii) free choice of unions and abandonment of Türk Metal from the workplaces, (iii) guarantee for that any worker shall not be dismissed because of the protests. In the first sub-period, workers uttered their wage improvement demands in various workplaces, mainly Renault. Whereas the union maintained its indifference against workers' demands, Renault employer representatives requested time to evaluate the demand. This relatively moderate attitude of the employer deepened the workers' reaction against the union. As a response, workers started a campaign to collectively resign from union membership, but some reported physical assaults and quarrels on May 5 amplified the events in Bursa Organized Industrial Zone. This event triggered the second period of the resistance which was characterized by the wave of protests against the union and the

following strike. After the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, workers' reactions were responded by a smear campaign of Türk Metal, and employers clearly rejected workers' wage improvement demands starting on May 9. When relatively moderate Renault clearly rejected workers' all demands on May 14, Renault workers stopped production in the first hours of the 15<sup>th</sup> of May and the strike started.

Upon the straight denials by the employer party, the strike spread to TOFAŞ, Coşkunöz, Mako, Ototrim in Bursa; and to Ford Otosan (Kocaeli and Eskişehir) and Türk Traktör (Ankara and Sakarya). Workers did not only go on strike, but also occupied the workplaces during these strikes. After the intensification of pressures over the workers by 20<sup>th</sup> of May, workplaces started to finish their strikes day by day and this period marked the third phase of the resistance. The strikes went on 12 days at Renault and Türk Traktör, 8 at TOFAŞ, 15 at Ford Otosan; and production either completely stopped or continued in insignificant amounts during these strikes. At the end, the gains of workers differentiated from factory to factory while some of their demands were accepted at Renault, Tofaş, Mako, Ototrim and Türk Traktör, Ford Otosan and Coşkunöz declined all demands raised by workers. In the long-term, this wave of strikes made great impacts on the standards in the sector.

It is noteworthy that the inconveniences and reactions of workers grew day by day during the first two phase of the resistance and started to fade away in the third sub-period. As it can be seen through the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, there is no single day without demonstration in the Renault factory between April 14 and May 27 whereas almost all workplaces witnessed a type of mobilization during the second phase of the resistance. Workers engaged in various kind of demonstrations such as dining hall protests, meal boycotts, marches within and in front of the factories, occupation, strike and demonstrations in the downtown.

## **4.2 The Reasons of the Events**

It should be re-emphasized that the Metal Storm experience revealed significant matters regarding the sector which do not normally gain currency but manifested through such an unusual event. The reasons and development of the events display that this revelation of the events verifies the portrayal depicted in the previous chapter

and makes the Metal Storm an exemplary case to understand the industrial relations in automotive sector. According to the field work<sup>58</sup> conducted by Aysen Tokol and Ceyhun Güler (2016, p. 948), there are many interrelated reasons for the resistance which are interwoven and extended over a period of time rather than a singular reason. The reasons reflected in Tokol and Güler's (2016) study can be summed up under two main titles: (i) low wages and aggravated working conditions, (ii) Türk Metal's way of unionism. These reasons emerged as a result of an accumulation of discontent, and Bosch agreement along with the assault to the workers intending to resist became effectual for the revelation of this accumulation. The main lines of working conditions and Türk Metal's way of unionism have been explained in the previous chapter in more detail. The working conditions were compelling, the wages deteriorated, workers could not find an addressee to utter their problems and the union did not function to represent these utterances. Given the circumstances, the Bosch agreement and physical assault to the workers constituted the final straw. These triggering reasons will be summarized below.

In this context, workers initially uttered their complaints about the so-called double standard arising from the conclusion of Bosch Agreement (Tokol & Güler, 2016, pp. 948-949). Accordingly, Bosch workers had already got improvements even though they were not achieved as a result of collective agreement, and a further increase made their wages more prosperous in comparison with those in other establishments<sup>59</sup>. Furthermore, this wage gap occurred under the conditions that Bosch workers had more favorable working hours and conditions. In light of these complaints, Bosch agreement inspired workers from other factories by proving the probability of a better framework to be concluded in the collective agreement. When workers addressed the union and employers to eliminate this 'double-standard' and amend the 2014

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<sup>58</sup> The study was conducted with fourteen workers who took part in demonstrations and resigned from Türk Metal during the resistance and returned back to Türk Metal or became a member of Birleşik Metal-İş, Çelik-İş along with the ones who did not become a member of any union but benefiting from the collective agreement through solidarity payment, and workers fired after the resistance.

<sup>59</sup> Most apparently, a TOFAŞ worker identifies the gap between Bosch and TOFAŞ after the agreement as TRY 500 per month (Doğan, 2019, p.134). To compensate this gap, workers had to work during the weekends.

collective agreement in accordance with the terms of Bosch Agreement, they could not find an answer.

After that point, workers' reactions also targeted the union and they started to resign from the union<sup>60</sup>. The events turned into a new stage by the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. On that day, the duration required by the Renault employer for an improvement was over. In this context, workers gathered on the area near the organized industrial zone mosque to collectively resign from Türk Metal as a response to its indifference. After a while, a group allegedly affiliated to Türk Metal physically attacked workers who resigned from Türk Metal by claiming that there were provocateurs among the workers. Some TOFAŞ workers claimed that Türk Metal carried workers loyal to the union for the fight upon a trade-union leave from the workplace (Emek ve Adalet Platformu, 2015; Kızılbayrak, May 19, 2015a). The group injured workers and knocked the tables set for resignations down. Upon the assault, workers left the area (Kızılbayrak, May 5, 2015a; Sendika.Org, May 6, 2015; Yalvaç, 2015a; Sol Haber, May 5, 2015; Akgül, May 18, 2015), yet from now on, reactions against Türk Metal were going to proceed to another stage<sup>61</sup>. The attack circulated on social media and stimulated a wave of rage against the union which directly targets the workers. Thereupon, workers started to protest and resign from the union membership in masses in many factories such as TOFAŞ -in particular-, Ototrim, Delphi, Ermetal and Valeo (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 941; Taştan, 2015, p. 331).

According to Tokol and Güler (2016, s. 950), all the workers interviewed indicated that the fight in the industrial zone expanded the scope of the resistance and accelerated the resignations. If the discontent with the three-year contract and Bosch agreement were initiator of the process, this attack would be the exact “rupture moment of the ties” between workers and Türk Metal (Turan, 2015; Arabacı, 2015, p.186). In this sense, the event can be considered as one of the embodiments of Türk

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<sup>60</sup> During their demonstrations, workers highlighted the discourse of “we are not unionized, we are from Harran” (*Sendikali değil, Harranlıyız*) (Coşkun, May 17, 2015). The repercussions of this proposition will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>61</sup> Dölek (2016, p. 62) defines this date as the beginning of the wave of strikes even if the strikes started on May 15.

Metal's "authoritarian, bureaucratic, centralized and pro-employer union mentality" (Çelik, 2015b). Whereas workers previously were open to a transformation of the power relations in the workplace through more participatory practices with the existence of Türk Metal<sup>62</sup> such as the implementation of shop steward elections, the idea of a solution without Türk Metal became popular after the attack<sup>63</sup>. It is claimed that the group affiliated to the union chanted triumph slogans (Doğan, 2019, p.81); yet this method, which was tried and trusted in the past many times (Arabacı, 2015, p.188) to solve such kind of crisis, caused to grow it rather than to alleviate it this time (Dölek, 2016, p. 62). All in all, in light of considerations above and those included in Appendices 1 and 2, Bosch agreement and this attack can be considered as factual rupture moments that gave birth to the wave of strikes.

### **4.3 Attitude of the Actors in the Sector**

#### **4.3.1 Unions**

In the face of the workers' demands, Türk Metal insisted on legal impossibility of any amendment in the agreements (Türk Metal, May 2015, pp.10-11) and counselled to wait until the next agreement to be signed in 2017. To explain the differentiation between the terms of the collective agreement and Bosch Agreement, Türk Metal put forward the following propositions at various times;

- Bosch workers had suffered from the lack of agreement for thirty-eight months, some of them had to fall into debt trap within this period (Türk Metal, May 2015, pp. 12-16),
- Even though this agreement has more favorable conditions in comparison to some workplaces, Bosch workers' average wage per hour (9,46 TRY) is still

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<sup>62</sup> This statement of a MİB representative is quite striking in this sense: "Both on our social media account and in our conversations with the workers, we repeat that we have not suggested the resignation [from Türk Metal] as the first option. The struggle of the workers here may also accomplish great things in Türk Metal to the extent that it maintains as an organized and powerful labor movement and as long as it establishes its internal organizations and opposes the suppression." (Kızılbayrak, April 27, 2015b).

<sup>63</sup> Other than this triggering assault incidence on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, there are two slapping cases merely during the Metal Storm in the workplaces by Türk Metal shop stewards against workers which are not generally spoken about (see Appendix 1 on April 18 and May 5) in addition to other claims in various time in the past.

lower than Renault (9,83 TRY) and TOFAŞ (10,04 TRY) (Türk Metal, May 2015, pp. 12-17),

Türk Metal also stood behind the agreement by defining it as a new higher threshold for the future agreements<sup>64</sup> (Türk Metal, December 2015, p.14) and promised to compensate the gap arising from the separate agreement in the 2017 collective agreement (Türk Metal, May 2015, p. 12). According to President Pevrul Kavlak (Türk Metal, May 2015, p. 16) and Vice President Mesut Gezer (Oğhan, May 19, 2015), Bosch agreement was a success, but the union had been unsuccessful in explaining the process and including the workers into the proceedings.

During the resistance, Türk Metal made two consecutive declarations on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of May. In the declarations, the union summarized the details of Bosch Agreement and identified the reactions against the union as unjust. According to the statement, the union tried to contact the workers, but this was not possible because of provocative groups. Whereas the first declaration indicated that the union respects the struggles to claim rights and support all democratic actions to this end, the second one put forward that all effort of the union was to finish the demonstrations, to start production and to solve the problems through negotiation in cooperation with MESS and employers (Türk Metal, May 2015, pp. 12-13). Pevrul Kavlak made a speech at Ordinary General Meeting of Türk Metal Eskişehir Branch on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May and emphasized similar points. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, Türk-İş, to which Türk Metal is affiliated to, made a statement paraphrasing Türk Metal's day-old statement and explaining its support to the union.

During the resistance, it can be said that Türk Metal adopted an aggressive temperament against other unions along with MİB through media, social media and leaflets distributed in the workplaces. On the other hand, other than the explanation "we tried to reach the workers but could not because of the provocative groups" upon the eruption of the events (Türk Metal, May 2015, pp. 12-13; Oğhan, May 19, 2015),

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<sup>64</sup> This justification would be frequently repeated by Kavlak and the union especially towards 2017 collective bargaining process. Even though Kavlak (Türk Metal, November 2016, p. 5) claims that he stated this argument just after Bosch agreement, it is encountered first time in December 2015 in the literature provided by Türk Metal.

it is not possible to see any excuse or explanation about the physical assault in the publications of Türk Metal. Yet, this silence can be considered one of the main factors forcing Türk Metal to a restoration or transformation in the following period. It is also striking that the deepening of crisis caused some cracks between the actors which had operated in a collaboration until that day. The May 15 dated declaration of Türk Metal can be considered as a significant example in this regard. In the declaration, union accused the Renault employer for their “tantalizing” approach by requiring an option to ask France because this led to an expectation among the workers. According to the union, this approach of the employer party generated an opinion among the workers that Türk Metal rejected or neglected, even though achieving more gains was possible (Türk Metal, May 2015, pp. 10-11).

Birleşik Metal-İş, another labor union in the sector, issued a press statement upon the assault of the workers and condemned the attack by Türk Metal members and administrators (Birleşik Metal-İş, May 6, 2015). On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, the union issued a further press statement to respond the leaflets distributed by Türk Metal to ridicule Birleşik Metal-İş upon the decision of High Board of Arbitration<sup>65</sup> (Birleşik Metal-İş, May 14, 2015). Impeaching Türk Metal as a yellow union, Birleşik Metal-İş claimed that employers in the sector had a strategy based on the differentiation of wages. Accordingly, recently-employed workers would get lower wages than previous ones and average-wage in the sector would constantly decrease. In the statement, Türk Metal was accused of executing this strategy on behalf of the employers in the sector. During the later phases of the resistance, Birleşik Metal-İş achieved to get organized in Renault workplaces even though it could not maintain its organization there. Similarly, Çelik-İş, which is affiliated to Hak-İş, interacted with TOFAŞ workers which shared the same fate with Renault organization of Birleşik Metal-İş.

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<sup>65</sup> Meanwhile, incomplete agreement procedure between Birleşik Metal-İş and MESS, which had not been concluded in December 2014, was concluded by High Board of Arbitration on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May so as to include the terms Group Collective Agreement previously concluded in December with Türk Metal and Çelik İş (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 940). Without considering whether the timing of this decree is a coincidence or not, it can be considered that it influenced the mood of the parties so as to reinforce employers’ and Türk Metal’s attitude to justify legal impossibilities of any amendments in collective agreements (Kızılbayrak, May 12, 2015). Even relatively moderate Renault employer changed its position and stated that there would be no improvement after the decision of High Board of Arbitration (Evrensel, May 14, 2015).

### 4.3.2 Employers

As for employers, it can be observed that employers initially adopted a relatively moderate approach against the improvement demand of the workers. When the mobilizations started in Renault, employer representatives consecutively requested fifteen-day duration to discuss the improvement of the contract with the business headquarters in France (Tokol&Güler, 2016, 941; Sendika.Org, May 25, 2015; Kızılbayrak, May 5, 2015b). It is also reported that TOFAŞ Human Resources Directorate officials made a meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May with workers and requested several days to evaluate the demands (Kızılbayrak, May 9, 2015b). On the other hand, the attitude of the employer party clearly changed by the 9<sup>th</sup> of May with a statement issued by TOFAŞ Human Resources Directorate. Employer party declared its decision not to improve the contracts by this statement, and employers became more relentless and stricter against the workers. The statement accused the workers of harming industrial peace and indicated that the workplace would have “taken necessary precautions” unless protests had stopped.

Especially after the decision of the High Board of Arbitration (see footnote above), employers and employer organizations such as TİSK, MESS and Automotive Industrialists Association (Otomotiv Sanayicileri Derneği - OSD) made recurrent declarations during the resistance which insistently labelled the resistance illegal and the strike unlawful. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, a message was sent to the workers’ mobile phones by MESS in the morning. In the message, it was stated that the group collective agreement would be valid and binding over both parties and parties’ unions for three years, i.e. until the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2017. The message emphasized legal impossibility to provide any further rights in addition to those given in the agreement and labeled the demonstrations illegal (Kızılbayrak, May 14, 2015a). With this message, the employer tried to curtail the hopes to amend the contract and to halt the workers’ attempts, but the message triggered a new phase in the struggle of workers. However, it is difficult to say that the arguments of the union and employers achieved to persuade workers. As it is frequently put forward by the workers as a counter-argument, the collective agreement concluded in 2008 had been amended in Ereğli (Zonguldak) and İskenderun (Hatay) iron and steel plants to the detriment of workers



through a protocol between Türk Metal and the employer party (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 943) (see Appendix 1). Moreover, workers discovered a previous article from the MESS publications which justifies legal probability of the supplemental agreements to amend the terms<sup>66</sup> (Doğan, 2019, p.61).

After the strikes, the gain of the workers in terms of wage improvement differed in various workplaces against this strict approach of the employers. However, this strictness of the employers can be considered as the crux of the process in terms of the consequences. Under the circumstances that government was timid in advance of the elections and the union was disregarded, the employers undertook the role and sliced through the knot with their sword. A striking point regarding the employers' approach is the difference between Koç Group and Renault's responses to the workers. It is observed that workers had a more tough process in Koç affiliated workplaces, i.e. TOFAŞ<sup>67</sup>, Türk Traktör and Ford Otosan. TOFAŞ workers had to consent with the less of Renault workers' gains whereas the case was even worse in Türk Traktör and Ford Otosan (Çelik, 2015b). Furthermore, the attitude of Koç Group against the riotous and striker workers was harsher after the strikes. It is claimed that Renault employer intended to accept the workers' demands at the very first phases to cease the mobilization, but MESS made pressure by considering that such an agreement would trigger other workplaces though it became the case (Doğan, 2019, p.89). The precise justification of this differentiation requires further investigation. However, one reason can be considered as the high-level of class-consciousness of Koç Group which refined its policies since the struggles in the eve of 1980 coup d'état. Likewise, the differentiation of international structure of these two multinationals can

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<sup>66</sup> However, After two years from the Metal Storm, Pevrul Kavlak, stated that the management of the union did not accept the amendment demand during the resistance for not to lead to utilization of this option by employers to the detriments of workers under crisis conditions later on (Türk Metal, April 2017, p.21).

<sup>67</sup> It is stated that TOFAŞ workplace has a bad reputation among the workers for showing doggedness against improving wages during the collective bargaining processes. Workers claim that conclusion of negotiations lengthen due to the disagreement of TOFAŞ employer while others agree upon the terms. Moreover, there may be even extra improvement in some other workplaces (Emek ve Adalet Platformu, 2015).

also be considered among the factors<sup>68</sup>. Whereas France based Renault is relatively tolerant, Koç Group affiliations, of which headquarters are mainly located in Turkey, are more responsive against the local mobilizations in Turkey<sup>69</sup>.

### 4.3.3 The State

The approach of the state during the strike days can be dealt in twofold. Whereas the state followed strict ways to control the mobilizations in the sense of law and order, the government and other political actors adopted an oscillatory position. On the second day of the strike, Bursa governorship got involved in the negotiations as the arbitrator. However, two-day-long negotiations remained inconclusive as a result of insistent approaches of the parties (Haberler, May 20, 2015). Workers declared that they were repressed by the governorship to conclude an agreement with the employer party and withdrew from the negotiations on May 19, 2015. After this deadlock, the pressure over the workers by employers and the police reinforced day by day. Workers were isolated from their visitors by the means of police force and factory managements started to sue them for their resistance. Moreover, the police made an operation in the early morning and took eleven people under custody in relation to the demonstrations in Bursa city. Afterwards, tent area of workers was surrounded by barriers and workers were isolated from any kind of support. Workers in the factory were not allowed to see their families. It seems that the indoctrinations of the police towards the workers to insulate them from any other social and political support made impact over the workers (Doğan, 2019, p.93). Workers, with the concern of provocation, fell under the influence of police and started to apply all instructions after a point. This played a significant role for the prevention of interaction between the workers and other parts of the society.

On the other hand, forthcoming 7 June 2015 elections made a great impact over the attitude of government towards the workers. All of the workers Tokol & Güler (2016,

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<sup>68</sup> According to Aysen Tokol and Ceyhun Güler (2016, p. 942), the international framework convention called “Committing Together for Sustainable Growth and Development” concluded between Renault Group and IndustriALL became effective in this more affirmative result between the parties.

<sup>69</sup> Nicos Poulantzas (1978, p.146) indicates that “a political balance of forces within the bourgeoisie” is dependent on “the context of its confrontation with the working class” (cf. Ozan, 2012, pp.119-120).

p. 955) interviewed stated that the elections provided a suitable environment for the resistance. According to a news reported in *Hürriyet* (Oğhan, May 19, 2015), Mesut Gezer, Vice President of Türk Metal, the government did not intervene so as to disperse workers due to the forthcoming general elections, and all political candidates visited workers to demonstrate their nominal support. As an offshoot of this attitude, along with Nilüfer Municipality, which was governed by the opposition party, JDP-ruled Osmangazi and Yıldırım Municipalities established portable toilets, provided tents, water and food for the workers during the strikes. Government officials also made moderate statements in the first phase of the events<sup>70</sup>. When it is considered that the government had always been obstructive against the strikes and had postponed the strike in the sector several months ago, this attitude becomes much more striking.

However, this moderate attitude reversed in parallel to the intensification of the pressure over the workers. By the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, Ali Babacan, then Deputy Prime Minister, suggested that there were some doubts regarding the ideological grounds of these events and found the emergence of such demonstrations in advance of elections meaningful in terms of timing (Diken, May 20, 2015a; *Hürriyet*, May 23, 2015). After the resistance, Nihat Zeybekçi, then Minister of Economy, targeted the mobilizations by identifying that this was not the strike but an unlawful action which led to great losses in the economy (*Hürriyet*, May 27, 2015). For Zeybekçi, such kind of attempts to stymie the country were “remarkable” and there arose a legal right for employers to compensate their losses from either unions or workers. Zeybekçi also accused Türk Metal by claiming that its cunningness led to events and they did not make any effort to terminate them but tried to evade. This is quite striking that such crisis moments result in emergence of cleavages among the allied actors of the industrial relations system which had conducted the operations for years. While the union accused the political actors and employers, the government representatives directly pointed out the union’s clumsiness as the cause of the strikes.

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<sup>70</sup> Previously, Faruk Çelik, then Minister of Labor and Social Security, had defined the demonstrations as an ordinary event between employer and employees (Diken, May 20, 2015b). Fikri Işık, then Minister of Science, Industry and Technology, tried to approach the event “insightfully” and stated that “we do not think that workers’ demands are unjust, but they must not stop production. They can continue negotiations while working.” by emphasizing the harmful effects of the strike over the economy (*Hürriyet*, May 21, 2015).

## **4.4 The Features of the Movement**

The resistance had original aspects as it erupted without the leadership of any conventional labor organization. In that vein, the strike started upon the halt of production abruptly rather than a dully legalized manner. In this regard, the features of the mobilization will be investigated under the sub-titles of its balance sheet, legal aspects and its spontaneous character.

### **4.4.1 Balance Sheet**

Regarding the number of workers who took part in the demonstrations, there are various approaches. The general view regarding the participants is the difficulty to precisely identify the number of workers who participated in the demonstrations. As cited in Appendix 2, it is estimated that approximately 50 thousand workers from 49 workplaces took part in various type of actions in this process (Kaygısız, 2016a, p. 52; cf. Çelik, 2015b, Dölek, 2016, p.62; Atar, 2016, p.58). According to speech of Pevrul Kavlak made in the 15<sup>th</sup> General Congress of Türk Metal, “movements occurred in 59 places out of 689 workplaces where the union is organized and the number of resigned workers does not even constitute 15 per cent of the total number of members” (Çelik, 2015b).

In terms of the results emerged in the manufacturing processes, it was reported that there occurred a risk at many factories from different countries, mainly Romania factory of Oyak Renault, for Turkish automotive sector has a crucial role within global supply chain in terms of both final and intermediate products (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 946). According to a MESS statement, one-day delay in production costs 175 million TRY for the main industry (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 946), while Nihat Zeybekçi, then the Ministry of Economy, stated that aggregate loss in the exportation arising from the strikes was \$500 million by the 27<sup>th</sup> of May (Hürriyet, May 27, 2015). Accordingly, 15,158 is the number of cars in terms of loss in the production in Oyak Renault, TOFAŞ and Ford factories between May 14-22 (cited from TSKB by Kurtulmuş & Tanyılmaz, 2017, p.214).

#### 4.4.2 Wildcat Strikes and Legal Aspects

Aziz Çelik (2015b) defines the Metal Storm as a set of “wild cat strikes” “since they were sudden, unexpected and out of the procedure laid down by the current labor legislation”. Çelik (2015b) lists the characteristics of this type of strikes as being spontaneous so as to include work stoppages, workplace occupations, and slowdown strikes which are performed on by workers’ own initiative. In this respect, it is emphasized that the mobilization of the workers emerged beyond the control of any union and was out of the guidance and surveillance as work stoppages, workplace occupations, and slowdown strikes are performed by workers’ own initiative. On the grounds of this characteristic of the movement, the most prominent claim by the addressees of the resistance became the argument of unlawfulness. Türk Metal and MESS, especially Koç Group, stated that the resistance was illegal and invited workers to stop it (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p.943; Çelik, 2015b). Workers were recurrently threatened with dismissal as their action gave birth to legal rights to the employers to terminate striker workers’ contracts, and this position was also supported by the government and Türk Metal. On the other hand, there are different opinions in the literature on how to construe the events. Those who put forward that the demonstrations were unlawful justify this claim with reference to the Article 58 of Law on Trade Unions and Collective Labor Agreements No. 6356 which determines the definition and the scope of lawful and unlawful strikes. Accordingly, the Metal Storm is not a strike in which all conditions for a lawful strike has been fulfilled, and hence it should be considered as an unlawful strike. However, there is another position which propounds that these demonstrations should be considered as a “peaceful collective action” on the basis of Article 90 of the Constitution which puts the provisions of international agreements ahead in the case of a conflict between international agreements and the local regulations regarding fundamental rights and freedoms. In that respect, the regulation in the legislation contradicts with ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98 and decrees of ILO audit organs, European Convention on Human Rights, European Courts of Human Rights, The UN

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, European Social Charter and European Committee on Social Rights<sup>71</sup>.

Even though the agreement between the workers and employers included provisions such as “preventing dismissal of the workers involved in the resistance and prosecution on workers, withdrawals of the existing lawsuits, the protection of the freedom of association and the recognition of the representatives elected by the workers” (Çelik, 2015b), factory managements started to fire workers shortly after the agreement was set (Evrensel, June 2, 2015a). There were workers collectively dismissed from their jobs in all workplaces where strikes happened<sup>72</sup> (Özveri 2016, p. 704; Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 944). In compliance with the legal framework above, for instance, dismissed Ford Otosan workers filed a lawsuit to Kocaeli 6<sup>th</sup> Labor Court with the demand of reemployment and union compensation, and the Court granted a decision in favor of these workers. However, Supreme Court 9<sup>th</sup> Civil Chamber reversed this judgment by deeming workers’ actions unlawful and far from temperate. According to the decision of Supreme Court, cancellation of labor contract by the employer was based on a just cause (Tokol & Güler, 2016). In this way, the Supreme Court ruled a decision contradictory to both international conventions and earlier precedents.

#### **4.4.3 Spontaneity of the Movement and the Role of Social Media**

All workers Tokol and Güler (2016) interviewed emphasized “the spontaneous character of resistance” along with “establishment of workers’ own organizational forms”, “prevention of any intervention by political organizations, parties or unions to the resistance” and “functional role of social media in occurrence and proliferation” (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p.951-955; Turan, 2015; also Çelik 2015b). In that vein, it is

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<sup>71</sup> On the basis of this argument, Supreme Court 7<sup>th</sup> Civil Chamber have not deemed such kind of actions like Şişecam, SEKA, Yatağan and TEKEL resistances illegal by considering them within the frame of international treaties in 2014 (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 944; Çelik, 2015; Özveri, 2016).

<sup>72</sup> Tokol and Güler (2016) notes that the exact number of dismissed workers cannot be determined because dismissals were based on various reasons and some of workers did not filed any lawsuits regarding the issue even though all workers were fired upon the resistance. However, it can be followed through some notes that 50 workers were dismissed at Ford Otosan (Tokol & Güler, 2016) whereas 596 workers in Renault 481 of which was dismissed at a time (Türk Metal, December 2016, p. 21).

reported that workers conducted the process through their own representatives and avoid from any kind of political reference (Turan, 2015). That being the case, the Facebook page of Metal Workers Association (MİB) played a crucial role in decision making process and coordination between the factories.

MİB is an independent pioneer worker platform established in 2009 with a congress under the leadership of socialist workers against the exploitation and the betrayal of the unions (Kızıl Bayrak, April 24, 2015b; Doğan, 2019, p.22 and 62). The Association has a critical position not only against Türk Metal but also all other unions in the sector (Doğan, 2019, p.236). During the resistance, the page of the Association functioned as a hub and was employed during the resistance to convey workers' message to each other, to announce schedules and details of demonstrations instantly, published some declarations and sometimes responded some of Türk Metal's claims and accusations. It is understood that, at the beginning, MİB did not have any affiliated member among the workers (Doğan, 2019, p.30 and pp.55-104). However, it seems that the page provided an opportunity to MİB to influence the trajectory of the mobilization, especially in Renault. During the first period of the movement, the Association tried to meet with workers through the contacts gained by the page and undertook the organization of a meeting on April 26 in downtown Bursa (Doğan, 2019, p.66). Furthermore, it is reported that a MİB representative addressed Oyak Renault workers on the first days of the resistance and pointed the worker forum as the decision-making mechanism by-passing all unions in the sector (Kızıl Bayrak, April 22, 2015a). As an outcome of these initiatives, the Association pioneered the establishment of an inter-factories committee to be composed of representatives from various factories. This committee made consecutive declarations during the resistance (see Appendix 1). During the initial phases of the movement, it is possible to observe a remarkable overlapping between the general discourses of the movement and the propositions of periodical statements by MİB to respond the developments (Kızıl Bayrak, April 17, 2015c; April 19, 2015b). Additionally, features of the resistance emphasized by the subsequent studies connotes the presumption of MİB's role which might have gone beyond just publishing and announcing the schedules of demonstrations. In the words of a worker, they had not had an intention to stop the

production initially and they had only been protesting the union. Afterwards, the production stopped upon the influence of MİB (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 954).

During the resistance, Türk Metal and judicial procedures insistently targeted the Association. Its eleven members were arrested so as to be released after being taken to court four days later. According to a news published on *Anatolian Agency* (Ulu, May 20, 2015), Bursa Security Directorate Anti-Terror Branch team claimed that work stoppage demonstrations at four separate factories since the 15<sup>th</sup> of May were supervised by people who had come to the city from other cities. Accordingly, it was reported that suspects performed these activities through the group of Metal Workers Association (MİB) which was established on social media along with *Kızıl Bayrak* newspaper and thanks to the decisions taken by Inter-Factories Committee generated during this process. Within the scope of the prosecutions filed against the workers, they were asked whether they carried out any activity regarding initiation and endurance of the strikes, rejection of employers' offers, propaganda of the demonstrations along with their information or affiliation with inter-factories committee allegedly established by Communist Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist İşçi Partisi - TKİP) (Benli, M. H., June 2, 2015; Ulu, May 20, 2015). Similarly, most of the speeches done by Pevrul Kavlak targeted these groups as "provoker of the events" (Türk Metal, May 10, 2015; Kızılbayrak May 21, 2015d). Towards the end of the resistance, the Facebook page of MİB was tried to be banned by a court decision upon the request of employers, but, the decision could not be executed because the headquarters of Facebook in the United States did not apply it (Sol Defter, June 19, 2015; Ürey, May 30, 2015).

On the other hand, it is also understood that there is a fragmented group of workers in different factories and MİB would not be influential in all coverage of the resistance (Emek ve Adalet Platformu, 2015). Different fractions of the workers had their own ways in the later phases of the resistance (Doğan, 2019, p.234). In addition to varying attitude of employers, it seems that spatial distance became influential in the lack of coordination as TOFAŞ workplace is not located in Bursa Organized Industrial Zone. After the beginning of the strike, the spokesmen of the workers from Renault and TOFAŞ declared that they would not act in coordination with MİB but would rather



have their own way; and hence, inter-factories committee lost its function (Doğan, 2019, p.91).

All in all, the movement had an eruptive and spontaneous character as well as the workers had a fragmented profile. Nevertheless, it can be suggested that MİB achieved to penetrate and became determinant to some extent as its summons and declarations were influential on the workers especially during the development of the events. However, it also seems that they lost control afterwards. To the extent that workers got fed from MİB's declarations and guidance, they became a part of MİB's collective mind even if they were not linked to MİB organically (Doğan, 2019, p.41).

## **4.5 The Outcomes of the Movement**

### **4.5.1. Material Gains and General Outcomes**

At the end of the movement, workers achieved certain gains, and the Metal Storm had some outcomes both in the sector and beyond it. Gains of workers differentiated from factory to factory. In this respect, Dölek (2016, p. 63) categorizes factories into three; (i) the cases workers forced the employer to agree, (ii) the cases workers had to agree after the beginning of dissolutions, and (iii) the cases strikes were broken. Accordingly, while Renault can be considered as the example of first category for the basic demands of workers were accepted here (Çelik, 2015b), TOFAŞ and Mako are for the second, and Ford Otosan, Türk Traktör and Coşkunöz are for the third. Regarding the details of material gains, there are ambiguous claims that there is no official statement in most of the factories or employers individually provided extra-rights in some cases such as Renault without publicly explaining them in order to compensate differences and prevent any further resistance. In Renault, workers achieved to gain 1000 TRY advance payment, minimum 600 TRY premium, 480 TRY bank promotion and improvement in hourly wages in a month (Tokol & Güler, 2016, pp.942-943; Kızıl Bayrak, May 25, 2015c). TOFAŞ management also accepted to 1000 TRY payment<sup>73</sup> along with annual premium payments, but no improvement per hour; the terms were also applied in Mako. Workplaces in the third category could

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<sup>73</sup> It is claimed that protocols included that all MESS member workplaces would pay TRY 4500 in total to nearly 150,000 workers (Doğan, 2019, p.100).

not achieve any material gains<sup>74</sup>. Nevertheless, it is expected that an amelioration in certain workplaces triggers relative improvements in other workplaces in pursuant to the standards in the sector<sup>75</sup>.

There are attempts to evaluate the resistance in terms of its qualitative impact on social forces rather than quantitative gains on paper (Kaygısız, 2016a, p.91; Çelik, 2015b). In this sense, the change in the attitudes of employers and the developments in terms of unionization provide significant data to measure the results of the resistance and procedures in the sector. During and after the resistance, there was a constant attempt to marginalize the resistance through prosecutions and smear campaigns. The resistance and riotous workers were tried to be interrelated with a wide range of legal or illegal political organizations, and Türk Metal made a great effort through its leaflets and SMSs in this regard (cf. Benli, M. H., June 2, 2015; Evrensel, June 2, 2015b; Kızıl Bayrak, May 23, 2015b). Özveri (2016, p. 710) observes that metal employers became more aggressive after the resistance by continuing to accuse illegal forces who provoked the workers for the purpose of sabotaging exportation-champion workplaces in advance of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015 General Elections. Accordingly, in addition to dismissal of resistant or pioneer workers, the attitude of company managements changed against the workers in most of the factories as well (Tokol & Güler, p. 960); and terms of protocols were not applied, security measurements were enhanced, and production organization was changed in some others. Irrelevant gatherings of workers started to be deemed as demonstrations (Tokol & Güler, p. 961), and workers were discriminated as the ones who got involved in the resistance and others (Tokol & Güler, p. 959). Thus, labor peace started to deteriorate in the workplaces, and workers started to lose tranquility and confidence in each other. Moreover, metal employers

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<sup>74</sup> However, it is claimed that, in some factories, none of promises has been kept (Tokol & Güler, p.961). The figures promised by employers were treated as gross wages and workers were paid smaller amounts, some workers were fired or discriminated within the workplace after the resistance even though there were some positive changes in small number of factories in terms of managers' behaviors and working conditions.

<sup>75</sup> For instance, workers at Bursa Ermetal factory stopped production for a while in order to call factory managers to negotiate their conditions just after Renault workers ended their resistances with certain gains. Thus, Ermetal workers gained 2 TRY rise in their wages per hour (Kızıl Bayrak, May 29, 2015a).

obliged workers to become Türk Metal members as the precondition of employment in relevant workplaces (Özveri, 2016, p.706; Dölek, 2016, p.86).

#### **4.5.2 Outcomes in Terms of Unionization in the Workplaces**

İrfan Kaygısız (2016a, p. 91) estimates that approximately 40,000 workers at 41 workplaces resigned from Türk Metal during the resistances. This number is 30,000 members according to Türk Metal in words of President Pevrul Kavlak (Türk Metal, March 2017, p.26). However, just after the resistance, some of the workers returned back to Türk Metal in order to benefit from the ameliorated Collective Agreement terms. So, this makes difficult to observe exact data through membership numbers declared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. Nevertheless, there occurred a loss of 11,000 members from January to July 2015. At the end of the resistance, some workers who resigned from Türk Metal joined other unions in the sector (see column vi, vii and viii of Table - 6).

It is observed that almost all addressees of the issue attempted to somehow contain this dynamism revealed by the Metal Storm which also forced a transformation in their way of unionism (Koçak, 2016, p.90; Tokol & Güler, 2016; Dölek, 2016; Taştan, 2015). At the end of the resistance, some workers who resigned from Türk Metal at TOFAŞ joined Çelik-İş whereas a part of Oyak Renault and affiliations' workers became members of Birleşik Metal-İş. A part of workers returned back to Türk Metal union and another part did not join any of the unions but benefited from the agreement by paying solidarity due until the end of agreement. A small number of workers joined Automotive and Metal Workers' Union of Turkey (Türkiye Otomotiv ve Metal İşçileri Sendikası -TOMİS) established by 15 workers from Oyak Renault, Ford, Tofaş, Arçelik, Delphi and others (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 945; Taştan, 2015, p.334).

Çelik-İş, which is affiliated to Hak-İş, interacted with TOFAŞ workers and promised them to enable workers saying their own words through free elections of organs along with preparation of agreement drafts. Moreover, Çelik-İş covenanted not to take any subscription or payment from workers until the end of the agreement in force then. After the resistance, the union established a separate branch for TOFAŞ workers, and recruited some of dismissed pioneer workers, and undertook the pursuance of judicial

processes (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 946). On the other hand, Türk Metal reclaimed the majority and hence the authority within this workplace afterwards. As far as it can be followed through the news and speeches published in Türk Metal journal, Türk Metal became prevalent in TOFAŞ factory by March 2016 (Türk Metal, March 2016, p.19). By October 2016, Türk Metal also established a new local branch in TOFAŞ which became the first in the union's history (Türk Metal, October 2016, p.10). The general approach of Çelik-İş is criticized by some opponents as "leading to the same result with Türk Metal" because it tried to persuade workers to the claim of "getting on with the employer is indispensable in order to organize within a workplace" (Evrensel Metal, 2016, p.4).

Birleşik Metal-İş committed various promises to Renault workers in order to organize the workplace such as determination of stewards and agreement drafts in addition to undertaking judicial processes of workers and trying to employ them in other workplaces. Even though Birleşik Metal-İş established Oyak Renault 5 Mayıs Şubesi (Oyak Renault 5 May Branch) for Renault workers, Türk Metal achieved to reclaim this workplace at the end of a long and toilsome process. The first visit of Pevrul Kavlak to the Renault workplace after the resistance on January 23, 2017 occupies a wide space in union's journal as 'an important victory' (Türk Metal, January 2017, pp.14-19). Türk Metal established its second local branch at Renault by the end of April 2017. During the process, Kavlak recurrently felt need to publicly make some invitations to Renault workers in his speeches and propagate that Türk Metal was close to get the majority in the workplace. Furthermore, the election and social aid requirements were exceptionally loosened specific to Renault workplace whereas usual requirements are tighter in other workplaces after the restoration of Türk Metal (Türk Metal, March 2016, p.19; September 2016, p.19; November 2016, p.18; December 2016, p. 21). Workers at Ford Otosan also joined Birleşik Metal-İş after the start of dismissals and the umbrella of the union protected workers to some extent. However, as many workers were dismissed, the existence of the union in the workplace could not be sustained.

Whereas some workers gravitated to other unions in the sector, there also occurred a discussion over the danger of disregarding unionism in general (Çelik, 2015b; Koçak,

2015b). To the extent that workers promoted resignation from the union with a rage against Türk Metal, this motive “caused weaknesses during the resistance and delayed the new memberships of workers, who left Türk Metal, into another union” (Çelik, 2015b). Column (iv) of Table 3.5 represents the decrease in the union density in the sector in this interim. This imperative also explains the emergence of a new union idea (Arabacı, 2015, p.190). As to continue within the structure of Türk Metal became impossible, there occurred a need for an alternative for workers including to join existing unions, committees without union called as Toyota model and to establish a new union after abandonment of Türk Metal (Özkurt & Tali, May 19, 2015; Kızıllı Bayrak, May 10, 2015). After the completion of wage bargaining during the strike, the discussion was revisited by MİB (Kızıllı Bayrak, May 28, 2015b; May 29, 2015d; May 30, 2015c), and TOMİS was established with the purpose of channeling the energy revealed by the Metal Storm into the form of a grassroot union. MİB usually defended a unionism perception based on grassroot organizations, worker committees and forums, independency from decayed labor-unions of the sector and lateral decision-making mechanisms in its statements to workers. According to a MİB representative, MİB was significantly adopted by the workers mainly because of its independent character from any unions in the sector (Kızıllı Bayrak, April 27, 2015b). However, according to the study conducted by Tokol & Güler (2016, p. 961), factors like worker representatives (or shop stewards), tendency of workers to become member of any union, promises of unions to workers, idea of complying with the majority and desire of becoming member of a strong union became influential over choice of a new trade-union (Doğan, 2019, p.131). It seems that workers preferred a more institutional and rooted option rather than an option that they could not estimate the evolution and potentials, and the new union remained ineffective<sup>76</sup>. It seems that the spokesmen in Renault and the concern to hold the workers together also became influential while rapidly choosing Birleşik Metal-İş after the resistance rather than waiting for a new union (Doğan, 2019, p.51, 103).

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<sup>76</sup> It has 213 members out of 1,5 million registered metal workers according to the data belonging to January 2018.

### 4.5.3 Perseverance of Türk Metal

Among others, the effect of the mobilization over Türk Metal is worthy to analyze under a separate title. Even though the fate of Türk Metal in the sector was questioned just after the resistance, as it can be seen in Table 3.5, Türk Metal survived and compensated its power loss; even it increased in terms of some indicators. Some considerations can be dealt with in order to better understand the dynamics underlying this revival. It is frequently claimed that Türk Metal is indebted to employers' support while consolidating their power in the sector (Özveri, 2016; Dölek, 2016, p.86; Koçak, 2015b). Furthermore, the organic relationship between the union and employers as well as the repression of employers over the workers while obliging workers to return or join Türk Metal were also reflected in trial records during the courts (Özveri, 2016, pp.706-708). It seems plausible to say that Türk Metal has been grateful to this support in compliance with the established partnership summed up in the previous chapter. In addition to this support, some mutations and transformations were also observed in Türk Metal's way of unionism which have also become functional in the compensation of the union's loss of power.

In order to understand how workers' mobilization transformed Türk Metal, journals of the union published between December 2014 and January 2018 were examined within the scope of this study from a critical perspective. After the resistance, when the journals of Türk Metal union are investigated, six important features can be observed as the prominent emphases in Türk Metal's way of unionism: (i) 'promotions', (ii) 'activism in terms of right-based struggles', (iii) 'a discursive emphasis on democratic representation in the workplaces', (iv) 'use of social media', (v) 'a nationalist discourse' and (vi) 'an emphasis on gender equality'. The (v) 'a nationalist discourse' and (vi) 'an orientation to the gender issue' are the motives which can be commonly seen in the activities of the union before the resistance. It looks like that they were not a part of transformation but cyclically adopted by the union in this restoration process whereas the other policies can be interrelated to the effects of resistance. Accordingly, the first four aspects will be focused on in the context of this study.

For Türk Metal, there were five main factors underlying the mobilizations: (a) the number of members had increased in years, but unchanged structure of the union could not address the demands of all workers because of its bulkiness, and hence, the union bureaucratized; (b) workers, whose voices had been excluded from the all spheres of the life, could not find a representative voice in the union; (c) the budget allocated to working classes had decreased as a result of intensification of competition in private sector, and the conditions of working classes deteriorated; (d) workers could not access the resources gathered under the control of union; and (e) indirect representation of workers was exploited by malign groups (Kavlak, May 2015, pp. 4-5). As the reasons were diagnosed in this line, the solutions, then, would be in compliance with the requirements of these problems. The union convened a General Congress immediately after the resistance, on August 1-2, 2015. On the eve of Congress, the union had declared that they were criticizing themselves by considering the demands of workers which points a more participatory union (Türk Metal, June 2015, p.15). The Congress gathered with the slogan of “This General Congress will be a turning point” not only in the history of Türk Metal but also the labor struggle as the first step of the great march of labor (Türk Metal, July 2015, p.16), afterwards, Kavlak would even define it as a revolution (Türk Metal, August 2015, p.13). In this sense, following policies can be listed as the main outputs of this congress.

- promotions

Most prominent policy applied within the scope of this reorganization became the promotions and social aids provided by the union. Türk Metal amended its bylaw at the 15th General Meeting of the Union congress and so as to provide in-kind-aids to the workers. Accordingly, the union provided scholarships to members’ children studying at a university in addition to other educational assistances in order to redistribute resources collected by the workers (Türk Metal, November 2015, p.17). Kavlak (Türk Metal, June 2015, p. 15) stated that while initially the total amount to be distributed workers was 100 million TRY, he claimed that the union distributed 118 million TRY by the mid-2017 (Türk Metal, July 2017, p. 16). This policy can be considered as a solution against the problems (c) and (d) identified above. Additionally, it is stated that workers who had not been able to benefit from the

union's social facilities such as its hotels, training camps etc. felt themselves left out. Kavlak often repeated this argument later (Türk Metal, October 2016, p.12) in order to ground their policies based on promotions and social aids. As a result, the union suggested to re-distribute these sources to the workers in various channels such as proliferation of training camps, in-kind aids and social facilities.

- activism in terms of struggles for the rights,

Furthermore, the solution suggested for the reason (c) by Kavlak was to collectively struggle for the rights. Thus, significant transformations are observed in the discourses and the actions of the union towards a more activist line. Just after the resistance and in light of lessons taken from these events, “we are ready to struggle if necessary” became the motto of post-strikes period for the union (Türk Metal, May 2015, p.14). Especially towards the end of 2017, workers made demonstrations under the leadership of the union in order to enhance their influence during the collective bargaining process (Türk Metal, November-December 2017, p.13), and this played a crucial role in the conclusion of a successful agreement (Türk Metal, January-February-March, 2018, p.13). This orientation of the union can be observed through Table 3.6, as the rank of Türk Metal mounts in the category of actions organized by a union (cf. Uysal, 2017, pp. 158-160). When the attitude of the Türk Metal during the resistance is taken into consideration, it appears that the union adopted an idea propounding that ‘if you invite workers to the demonstration, they do not demonstrate against you’.

- a discursive emphasis on democratic representation in the workplaces,

The amendments in the bylaw also included the promise of elections<sup>77</sup> in the factories. Likewise, to respond to the reasons (a), (b) and (e), the union established branches specific to workplaces, and the agreement drafts started to be determined with the participation of members (Türk Metal, June 2015, p.17). For instance, in advance of the 2017 collective bargaining negotiations, the union conducted two researches

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<sup>77</sup> There are some contradictory claims that the union still determines and imposes its own candidates or workers who intended to become candidate in the elections are dismissed as the case in Ankara Arçelik factory (Evrensel Metal, 2016).



among the workers one of which was done by a respectable professional research institution to determine the conditions of the draft (Türk Metal, January-February-March 2018, p.8). Moreover, the draft was presented to the workers and discussed at the forums organized in some factories (Türk Metal, August 2017, p.14), and every workplace voted for the draft (Türk Metal, January-February-March 2018, p. 8).

- use of social media

Significant functioning of social media during the resistance revealed close engagement of workers in this medium and Türk Metal reviewed its media organs so as to centralize social media broadcasts in their propaganda activity. In this respect, a social media expert participated to board of presidents' very first meeting after the resistance to make a presentation about the importance of this sphere (Türk Metal, May 2015, p.19). Moreover, each branch of the union registered a social media account and their addresses were advertised in all volumes of the journal after the resistance (Türk Metal, May 2015, pp.24-25). In August 2015, the union reshaped its journal so as to enhance the role of social media in its propaganda activity (Türk Metal, August 2015) Kavlak recurrently referred to the functionality of social media in his speeches (Türk Metal, March 2016, p. 22; January-February-March 2018, p. 2).

It should be noted that all these policies were accompanied by a strong nationalist discourse depending upon the political agenda of the country especially on the Kurdish issue which gained currency after the 2015 June elections, i.e. just after the resistance (Türk Metal, July 2015, p.7; December 2015, p.5; March 2016, p.14; June 2016; December 2016, p.21). Moreover, the union gives importance to gender issues on the basis of March 8 and November 25 ceremonies. As the last factor facilitating the Türk Metal's rejuvenation, the scope of the metal sector should be mentioned. The extensive scope of metal industry (see Chapter 3) shape elbow room of unions. When the union faces a crisis in one sub-sector, it would be able to compensate its losses in other sub-sectors thanks to this large maneuvering area. Without considering this aspect, it would be difficult to understand the union's high number of members and ways of crisis management as it can be observed in the compensation of Türk Metal's member capacity in the period after metal workers' 2015 strikes.

All in all, the Metal Storm experience constitutes a crystalized example of the treatments in the sector to the extent that it littered *modus operandi* in the sector. The dynamics revealed by the Metal Storm has forced almost all addressees of the issue, and all labor actors, more or less, had to adapt themselves to the emerging dynamism of this young working-classes in order to avoid liquidation for surviving with conventional forms, discourses and actions was impossible thereupon (Koçak, 2016, p.90). Onur Can Taştan (2015, p. 334) puts two criteria to measure the transformation within the industrial relations system of the sector after the resistance; significant material gains in the [next] collective agreement, and a democratic/participatory worker organization<sup>78</sup>. As for the second criterion, the movement made considerable impact over the unionism in the sector even though workers were not able to generate a new organization or already-existing democratic institutions were not rejuvenated as a result of this process. Regarding the first one, 2017 collective agreement became an important indicator. The union(s) made a better preparation for this agreement achieved really significant gains after a long and contestant process. Accordingly, parties concluded a two-year contract with an 24.63% average increase in wages. Hakan Koçak (2018) evaluated this achievement as the legacy of the Metal Storm.

Even though the Metal Storm is generally considered as a defeated movement for most of the pioneers were dismissed and workers returned to Türk Metal at the end of the resistance, pressure of workers forced Türk Metal to a mutation and forced employers to make concessions. On the other hand, it should be re-emphasized that this new framework, albeit more favorable for workers, is to maintain the hegemonic alliances and partnerships in the sector as much as it is an achievement of workers. Moreover, this transformation did not influence only Türk Metal, and to the extent that all unions in the sector had to adjust their unionism according to the new conditions, such gains can also be attributed to the all workers organized under the umbrella of unions within the sector.

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<sup>78</sup> For Özveri (2016), the success of the Metal Storm is dependent on the criterion whether courts evaluate the demonstrations legal within the scope of international regulations as discussed above. Özveri also warns that the only triumph for the movement would be the transformation of legal framework regulating the prohibitive industrial relations system. Arabacı (2015) is in the expectation of the establishment of a new grassroots union as an output of the movement albeit she does not identify any success criteria.

## CHAPTER 5

### CLASS-POLITICS AND TRADE-UNIONISM IN LIGHT OF THE METAL STORM

As an expectable outcome of “putting an end class-based politics”, the notion of class started to be perceived as a rather ineffective agent of change (Yalman, 2016, p.244) nor valued as a social category and as a tool for analysis” (Yalman, 2016, p.260). In this sense, the political demarcation lines - and impasses as well – of Turkish politics since the 1990s became (i) secular state against Islamist movements and (ii) unitary state against Kurdish movements (Aydın & Keyman, 2014, p. 9) rather than confrontation of antagonistic class positions. To the extent that the notion of class was excluded from the politics, this gap was filled by the identity-politics in compliance with the nature of hegemony project and all kind of struggles and collective formations were marked by these political axes<sup>79</sup> (Bedirhanoğlu & Yalman, 2010, p.119).

The reflection of this dynamic in the metal sector can be seen in Table 5.1. Studies conducted by Birleşik Metal-İş Union among their members in 2008 and 2016/2017 clearly exhibit domination of identity-based belongingness. While sum of categories which are more relevant to culture/identity-based politics, i.e. religion, religious sect, nation/ethnicity and hometown, was 57 % against 43 % of class share in 2008, the

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<sup>79</sup> The protracted political results of this motive would become an image counselling a contestation between religious and ethnic identities. Just after 2018 elections, KONDA, one of the most notable social research agencies in the country, depicted this picture as “the polarization and the entrapment within identity politics” on the basis of four polarized corners: Kurdism, Turkism, Islamism, Secularism (KONDA, 2018, p.5). According to the report including the 8-year data of KONDA researches, this stereotype is observed in every research conducted during the earlier five years (KONDA, 2018, p.39).

share of identity-based (mainly religious identity) categories became 83.5 % in total under the conditions that reference to the social classes decreased to 14.2 %<sup>80</sup>.

Table 5.1 – Comparison of Workers’ Identity Belongingness in 2008 and 2017

Primary identity	2008 Survey	2016/2017 Research after distribution of unanswered forms	2016/2017 Research without distribution (percentage - people)
Social Class	43 %	14.2 %	12.8 %   126
Religion	24.3 %	45.5 %	41.2 %   404
Religious Sect	2.1 %	2.3 %	2 %   20
Nation/Ethnicity	18.8 %	20 %	18 %   177
Hometown	11.8 %	15.7 %	14.2 %   139
Humanity	NA	1.7 %	1.5 %   15
Personality	NA	0.7 %	0.6 %   6
No answer	NA	-	9.6 %   94
Total	100 % (n=806)	100 %	100 %   n=981

Source: Birleşik Metal-İş, 2008a; Öngel, 2017

That being the case, metal workers “of a predominantly conservative and Turkish-nationalist background” (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p.9) performed one of the most crowded and radical labor mobilizations in Turkish labor history. In this respect, the Metal Storm revealed an important militancy level which has not been encountered in Turkey for the last 20 years by persisting with their strike notwithstanding the fact that it was declared unlawful. Thousands of workers occupied factories by disregarding their union and achieved some gains even though they could not institutionalize them. In the literature, two different approaches became prevalent in evaluating the wave of strikes. On the one hand, some of the scholars, columnists and politicians enthusiastically followed, paid attention, welcomed and even pampered the demonstrations with the expectation of an ultimate reunion with the yearned labor class as a dominant or at least rising actor within the political sphere under the conditions that class was disregarded (Koçak, 2015a; Çelik, 2015b; Taştan, 2015). However, some others were much calmer and more cautious about the manifestation, direction and destination of the protests and were warning others to perceive this movement in a more reserved manner rather than defining it as a miracle by cutting

<sup>80</sup> It should be kept in mind that such surveys may not be sufficient for comprehensive analysis since data beyond the figures presented in the results may be necessary in order to get an idea about the change in the shares. However, the figures represented in these researches evoke certain issues regarding the recent political history of Turkey. Moreover, there are some other studies which provide data attesting a similar transformation (cf. Urhan & Selamoğlu, 2008, p. 180; Uçkan & Kağncıoğlu, 2009, p. 45; Uysal, 2017, p. 147 and 155).

corners (Özveri, 2016; Arabacı, 2015; Turan, 2015). Nevertheless, regardless of being enthusiastic or cautious, almost all authors dealing with the issue have found out and/or attributed a distinctive character to the events within the course of Turkish labor history.

In this chapter, the literature on the strikes in question will be critically evaluated on the basis of their approach to the demonstrations. First of all, the literature on the movement will be presented with its judgements; and prudent positions will be given subsequently. Accordingly, the final part of the chapter will attempt to develop a framework to perceive class notion based on the literature review of the Metal Storm. Ultimately, a range of studies will be utilized to compare, support and interpret the ideas given below, even though they do not specifically focus on the demonstrations in question. In the final part, the chapter attempts to reflect various insights on labor organizations in light of facts revealed by the Metal Storm.

### **5.1 The Evaluations on the Metal Storm**

As it is discussed in the previous chapter, the reactions of the workers during the Metal Storm targeted the entitled union, Türk Metal, after a point of the events. All of the workers interviewed with Tokol and Güler (2016, p. 949) indicated that “shop stewards’ and branch administrators’ attitude of the union authorized in the workplaces augmented the reactions”. A worker<sup>81</sup> clarifies the case more explicitly that “our reaction was against neither the employer nor MESS, but Türk Metal. The reaction was directly against it and the first target was to resign from Türk Metal” (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 949). Then, the Metal Storm gained importance to the extent that it challenged the status quo outlined above. As the first point over the Metal Storm, there is almost a consensus on that the very distinctive character of these protests was its attitude to oppose trade-union-order established just after the 1980 coup d’état (Koçak, 2015a; Koçak, 2015b; Taştan, 2015; Çelik, 2015b; Arabacı, 2015; Özveri, 2016).

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<sup>81</sup> As the information about the workplaces of the workers is kept anonymous in the study, the details are unknown.

As mentioned above, “metal sector and Türk Metal have become sort of laboratories for the labor controlling mechanism” during the period just after the 1980 coup d’état (Çelik, 2015b). Accordingly, Koçak (2015a; 2016) lists three layers of control over workers for the post-1980 period; (i) micro-level or workplace level of control through various methods of Fordism, post-Fordism etc., (ii) unions such as Türk Metal or some others having closer relations with government, (iii) nationalist-conservative social and ideological environment (cf. Gürcan & Mete, 2017, pp.120-121). For Taştan (2015, p. 308), the second layer – trade-union order so as to consolidate the post-1980 hegemony project – encountered a crisis and this resistance revealed the crisis of this structure in Turkey. A similar emphasis can be found in Çelik (2015b); “this resistance wave can also be read as the failure of the mainstream trade union approach in Turkey”. The crisis in question is also linked with the bureaucratic and centralist unionization model’s crisis which has been lasting since the 1970s (cited from Özügürlü by Taştan, 2015, p. 308). It should be analyzed as the crisis of domination tools over labor within the metal sector. In that respect, these demonstrations, for Koçak (2015a; 2015b), were unexpected on the one hand, but belated to the extent that predominating labor-regime had problems to sustain itself in a peaceful manner while working-classes had been experiencing both qualitative transformations and quantitative growth to a great extent as well as forfeiting their job security and level of prosperity. Accordingly, the resistance has come up as an indispensable result of this deterioration which was even admitted by Türk Metal when the sources of the restoration identified by the union are taken into consideration as examined in the previous chapter.

On the other hand, the same consensus is not observed regarding the political influences and transformative effects of the movement. Whereas an enthusiastic approach pampers the experience and likens this wave of resistances to Gezi Park Protests (Koçak, 2015b; 2016, p. 69; cf. Kızıl Bayrak, May 18, 2015d); the cautious approach summons to become careful even while talking about any class consciousness among these workers (Arabacı, 2015, p. 185). For Koçak (2015b), the demonstrations have a similar character with Gezi Park events in terms of its claim of being legitimate, direct representation experiences and its naïve character in some cases. It is also suggested that foodstuffs brought by the families, organization of the

resistance area with cooperation of workers and contributions and solidarity from other workplaces reminded Gezi events as well as the catchword “Everywhere Renault, everywhere resistance” which reminds Gezi slogans (Kızıl Bayrak, May 18, 2015d). Moreover, when the scope of the movement is taken into consideration, it can be suggested that the Metal Storm has constituted a threshold and milestone as Gezi has done for the evaluation of social movements in the country (Koçak, 2015b). In this sense, any development to occur after these movements will be built upon the basis of this experience as it is said, “no one can act anymore as if the Gezi had not occurred from now on” just after Gezi events (Koçak, 2016, p. 69)<sup>82</sup>. Thus, “this outbreak is just a ‘settling accounts’ with 1980 *coup d’état*” for Koçak (2015b). Likewise, for Çelik (2015b), “the resistance of metal workers of 2015 will be remembered as one of the most important movements of working class history of Turkey along with the spectacular workers’ resistance on 15-16 June 1970 and the Spring Movement of 1989 which mostly occurred in public sector”.

However, it is not possible to argue that workers adopted such a vanguard approach while demanding a wage remediation and protesting the union. In this sense, it is reported that workers were not pleased to be likened to Gezi Park movements (Turan, 2015). Furthermore, there were workers who were uneasy because the demonstrations were called as “strike” or “resistance”. For those workers, they were only demanding wage increase and guarantee for their job protection. In this regard, it is claimed that workers kept themselves apart from politics (Turan, 2015). By considering these aspects, another approach towards the demonstrations propounds that the events should not have been exaggerated and be approached with caution for demands of the workers were bounded with their employment rights and these protests should not have been considered as an ultimate reunion with the yearned class as a dominant or at least rising political actor (Özveri, 2016; Arabacı, 2015; Turan, 2015)<sup>83</sup>. Accordingly, for this view, the disposition of reading metal resistance as a “romantic reinvigoration” story does not reflect the truth (Arabacı, 2015, p. 185). In this respect,

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<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that Koçak draws attention the realities and risks of the resistant workers’ profile in spite of his such strong stresses (2015b).

<sup>83</sup> It should also be noted all these authors do not reject the importance of the movement as the authors in the first category do not seem completely neglecting limitations of the movement.

resistance of metal workers should not be compared to workers' resistance on 15-16 June 1970. Likewise, the movement also should not be likened to Gezi resistance or evaluated as a continuation of it in any way though there may be found some similarities in terms of humour and creativity to some extent<sup>84</sup>. Workers did not question the capitalist system. Nor, were they aware of the contradiction between their demands and the system driving them into indebtedness. They just targeted the yellow union which had turned into an apparatus of this system (Arabacı, 2015, p. 185, 186, 189 and 194). Thus, the movement was “not against the system, nor against the employer but against the union” (Özveri, 2016). During their demonstrations, workers highlighted the discourse of ‘we are not from the union, we are from Harran’ (*Sendikalı değil, Harranlıyız*) with reference to a Yeşilçam movie<sup>85</sup>, and later on, they continued to use the term of Harraner (*Harranlı*) to define those who did not become a union member. For the cautious approach, this aspect is considered as the level of politicization of the movement. In that vein, the workers even stated that they took sides with the employers and the established order in the workplaces in order to make the movement more legitimate by differentiating the demonstration from any political stream (Özveri, 2016, p. 704).

The academic studies conducted in the field and the interviews made with workers both by Türk Metal's and its opponents' journals seem verifying the second approach in terms of political qualities of the movement. Among many details regarding the ways, tools and manners of the resistance; workers' general attitude implies the tame and reasonable wage-oriented nature of their demands. Some workers emphasized physical attacks of Türk Metal staff as a factor that added a new dimension to the movement in addition to economic issues (Tokol & Güler, 2016). In this respect, it is

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<sup>84</sup> As a sub-category, Cihan Tuğal's (2018a; 2018b) retrospective analysis should be noted even though his investigation problematizes a different comparison between Gezi and The Metal Storm. Tuğal (2018b) defines Gezi and The Metal Storm two different sides of a coin which are alien to each other. Whereas Gezi is the “westerner side” of social movements in Turkey, the other is “the Chinese” one to the extent that aggravated precarianization of employment relations triggered such a mobilization.

<sup>85</sup> In a Turkish movie, Kibar Feyzo (1978), the protagonist of the story comes from the Eastern countryside of the country and works in a construction. When workers get their wages, unionized workers are paid more. The protagonist asks the reason and the foreman replies, “they are from union”. Since he presumes “union” (*sendika*) is the name of their hometown, the protagonist replies, “then I am from Harran”.



difficult to claim that the workers participated in the Metal Storm consciously display a propensity “to act in roles determined by class objectives, to feel themselves to belong to classes’, and to define their (political as well as economic) interests vis-a-vis other classes” (Yalman, 2009, p. 306; cf. Savaş, 2016).

However, shall we say the case was experienced, then finished and that’s all? Even if it does not seem that workers had a perception that supposed a conflict between workers’ and employers’ interests, does it abrogate the imperative of class notion or class contradiction? Likewise, even though it is questionable whether the Metal Storm achieved to “overthrow the labor regime established in the post-1980 environment” (Koçak, 2015b), can it be deemed ineffective at all? Furthermore, it would be also a meaningful inquiry whether contending the entitled union refers to a questioning of control mechanisms preventing the formation of collective interests of the working classes.

To answer these questions, a framework about the development of collective consciousness may provide a fertile ground to discuss on the effectiveness of the Metal Storm. Benefiting from the definition of class concept provided by E. P. Thompson, Ellen Meiksins Wood suggests a useful concept of class by perceiving it as a “process and relationship” (Wood, 1995, pp. 76-107). By considering discussions over the ‘definitions’ as certainly determined categories above, Thompson examines the formation of “disposition to behave as a class”. With an attempt to overcome the dichotomy of “class-in-itself” and “class-for-itself”, both Wood and Thompson suggests the notion of “experience” as a middle-term between social being (class-in-itself) and social consciousness (class-for-itself) (Wood, 1995, p. 96). This provides a sane perception of class which focuses on formation of coalescence and collective action of a certain group sharing common position under the same mode of production rather than sticking to structural definition of class which limits itself with the relation of people with means of production or to the subjective approach perceiving a group of workers as a collective labor class as long as they reveal an advance level of class consciousness.

In this line, in addition to the transformations in the sector caused by the wave of strikes, “metal workers’ resistance induced significant damage to the long-lasting

alliance between the state, employers and collaborationist unions” (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p.21). Furthermore, Engin Sezgin, an expert at DİSK affiliated Genel-İş union, claims that regulations in the minimum wages after metal workers’ demonstrations have been comparatively based on the wage improvements and collective agreements standards in the metal sector (Mülkiyeliler Bir. Gen. Mer., 2019). If it is the case, it can also be suggested that sectoral gains also generally affected the wage-standards in the country as an achievement in favor of laboring-classes as well as the Metal Storm constituted a cautionary threshold in terms of the regulations in Turkish labor market.

Similarly, the findings reflected in above-mentioned studies of Birleşik Metal-İş provides striking points for discussion. Accordingly, an overwhelming part of the workers are really eager for their economic rights; they define their prior problems as the economic ones and deem any attempt to assign severance pay to the fund as a strike reason. On the other hand, it is contended by the workers that the unions should not engage in politics even if this would entail activities to protect workers’ rights (Öngel, 2017, p.94, 121 and 124). All the data depicts a profile which is dynamic in terms of claiming their rights but distant from politics. In this respect, the Metal Storm revealed an important militancy level and achieved some gains, but workers did not persist to transform these gains into political and institutional outputs because they were sincerely nationalist and conservative, and the political actors fond of class-based politics were hegemonically weak (Tuğal, 2018a; 2018b). Furthermore, by considering the catalogue over the labor actions that emerged in Turkey during the last twenty years such as Tekel, Greif Novamed, Telekom and Hava-İş strikes; it can be suggested that the median of labor demonstrations in Turkey has more or less the similar characteristics with metal workers’ resistance in this context (cf. Birelma, 2014, pp.40-47). With reference to the case of TEKEL Workers' resistance in Turkey, Galip Yalman and Aylin Topal (2017, pp. 6-8 and 21-23) suggest evaluating these movements as an “*economic-corporate* moment” with reference to Gramscian moments<sup>86</sup> in terms of collective political consciousness attained by various social

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<sup>86</sup> “The first and most elementary of these is the *economic-corporate level*: (...) the members of the professional group are conscious of its unity and homogeneity, and of the need to organise it, but in the case of the wider social group this is not yet so. A second [*solidarity or politico-juridical equality*] moment is that in which consciousness is reached of the solidarity of interests among all the members

classes (cf. Filippini, 2017; Katznelson, 1986). Such a competent taxonomy also seems proper to observe “tension between the impulses towards and against coalescence and common action” (Wood, 1995, p. 98)

Accordingly, the formation of a collective consciousness seems to have remained limited with certain workplaces and could not penetrate the other segments of the working classes (cf. Doğan, 2019, p.244). Additionally, it is difficult to say that workers, who got involved in these movements, became “able to reconstruct their identities in terms of ‘capital- labor conflict’” at the end of the process (Yalman & Topal, 2017, p. 23). By considering this theoretical framework it can be suggested that this movement does not seem as an ultimate reunion with yearned labor class as an actor influencing political sphere as it was in the 1970s. Indeed, it is possible to say that Metal Storm achieved to leave a permanent mark neither in collective memory of the society nor academia to the extent that it has not become a popular issue in national press and has not been discussed at prestigious academic conferences and books (Tuğal, 2018a; 2018b).

On the other hand, certainly, this overview on collective behavior on the working classes reminds the proposition of “what has made working-class ‘economism’ so tenacious is that it does correspond to the realities of capitalism” (Wood, 1995, p.20). In this era that was labeled by the ubiquitous dominance of the bourgeoisie (Tsoukalas, 2002, p. 233), the notion of class is excluded from the political sphere, and the activities of the unions are restricted “with the aim of preventing the formation of barriers to capital accumulation” and workers’ struggle is restrained to the workplace (Akkaya, 2002, p. 136). By considering this ‘reality of capitalism’, the drawbacks of the second position should also be avoided as it implicitly takes the class notion into account as long as it becomes visible and influential over the political portrait under the conditions it is just excluded from the sight within the framework

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of a social class-but still in the purely economic field. (...) A third [*hegemonic*] moment is that in which one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too. This is the most purely political phase, and marks the decisive passage from the structure to the sphere of the complex superstructures” (Gramsci, 1971, pp.181-182). These ‘moments’, with an allusion to *German Ideology*, “are not of course to be taken as three different stages, but just as (...) three ‘moments’, which have existed simultaneously” (Marx & Engels, 1998 [1845], p.48; cf. Topal & Yalman, 2015).

of neoliberal project (cf. Doğan, 2019, pp.249-250). Thus, when the depiction of the post-1980 political sphere given above is taken into consideration, it becomes clear that the term of “the attempt to put an end class-based politics” itself is a class-based political demand of dominant classes.

## **5.2 Considerations on Türk Metal**

In light of the discussions above, the question of “why workers were excessively reactive against the union” can be recalled now. What may be the implications of the demand for the abandonment of the union from the workplaces? In this regard, in spite of its limitations, the revolt of the workers against the established trade-unionism may refer to an indirect challenge against the ‘capitalist reality’ that drives them “into indebtedness” and aggravated exploitation to the extent that the union serves the mediation of these policies’ enforcement.

Türk Metal, in advance of the resistance, appears as a union distant from being a labor organization in terms of representing, protecting and enhancing workers’ interests as well as rights; but rather, like an organization that undertakes the responsibility to regulate and control the relations in the workplace. As presented in the third chapter, when the exploitation rates and trends in the real wages are compared to the growth rate of the sector, the alleged strategy based on ‘making the cake bigger and taking the share’ seems unfounded, but rather becomes a discourse to persuade the workers in the production of consent for the exploitative conditions.

The partnership of MESS and Türk Metal established a trade-union status quo in the metal sector after 1980 by also taking the support of governments. The motive of this partnership was the establishment of a “tamed unionism” in the sector (Çelik, 2015b). It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that such kind of unionism was the requirement of the accumulation mode pursued by Turkey since the 1980s when its functions, channels and consequences are taken into consideration. To the extent that Türk Metal is indebted to this reconciliation for its size and influence in the last forty years, this can be considered as a type of “symbiotic unionism” which is adopted as a winning strategy by the union. Accordingly, this type of symbiotic unionism looks like the one observed in the private workplaces rather than the symbiotic relationship

with the government recently emerging in the municipalities and public sector as discussed in the second chapter (see subtitle 2.4). In that vein, it is possible to observe a differentiation between the public sector and trend-setter private industries in this realm. Thus, whereas other Hak-İş affiliated unions are able to benefit from the opportunities provided by this recent symbiotic unionism phenomenon in the public sectors, its union in the metal sector, Özçelik-İş, could not make use of this opportunity because of the different dynamics in the private sector<sup>87</sup>.

The resistance revealed that Türk Metal frequently, by disregarding the workers, made agreements with the employer party even if they were to the detriment of workers and remained indifferent to their demands of its members. So much so that there are workers who say even very little improvements would be satisfactory as an indication of goodwill gesture by the union and employers would have prevented the rise of the strikes (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p.949; cf. Doğan, 2019, p.223). Accordingly, it looks like that Türk Metal fulfills some functions, which are generally attributed to the state and in compliance with the interests of employers. Among others, some techno-economic functions which enable the operation of production and reproduction in the workplace, some administrative and ideological functions can be considered in this scope (Poulantzas 1973; cf. Jessop, 2002, p.211). As it is examined in this study, Türk Metal fulfilled various tasks in controlling and containing workers in the workplace so as to sustain the productive activities even by the use of force in some cases, and in sticking them to the nationalist-conservative ideologies by the way of discourses generated among the workers (cf. Gürcan & Mete, 2017, pp.118-122). Similarly, a recent narration of the Metal Storm from the perspective of MİB indicates that Türk Metal is not a union speaking on behalf of workers and their interests but is “the guardian of the exploitation regime” (Doğan, 2019, p.7). In that vein, the rage against

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<sup>87</sup> In this sense, Engin Sezgin (Mülkiyeliler ..., 2019) evaluates Türk Metal as the private sector counterpart of Hak-İş experience. On the other hand, it should also be noted that even though Hak-İş affiliated unions are much more advantageous in the public sector, they may be preferred in peripheral Anatolian cities such as Gaziantep, Konya, and Kayseri in the context of metal industry (Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p.113).

Türk Metal is considered as a reaction against an apparatus of employers rather than a certain labor organization in one way or another (Özüğurlu, 2016, p.96)<sup>88</sup>.

Accordingly, the restoration of Türk Metal following the demonstrations can be considered as the way of sustaining alliance in the sector between the state, employers and collaborationist unions, which had been damaged as a result of metal workers' resistance (cf. Gürcan & Mete, 2017, p.21). Sustaining the operation in the sector would be possible upon the transformation in the way of unionism. In that vein, Türk Metal responded the mobilizations as if it is a *social relation* “of forces or, more precisely, the material condensation of such a relationship among classes and class fractions” (Poulantzas, 1978, p.128). As it happened after the mobilization in 1998 (Doğan, 2019, p.17), this restoration may fall back in time depending upon the new configurations of this *relation*. On the other hand, the question of whether very substance of this case can be generalized to hegemonic strategies conducted in other sectors requires further investigation<sup>89</sup>. This case may present an integral part of labor control and containment strategies including some typical and characteristic qualities of the post-1980 project. A comparative analysis extending to some certain strategic sectors would be important to understand whether Türk Metal is a unique case or has some reflective aspects to understand industrial relations in Turkey<sup>90</sup>.

During the twentieth century, the confrontation between labor movement and employers was much more apparent in the mobilizations that emerged in the automotive industry; and working classes were usually represented by their unions

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<sup>88</sup> This is also consistent with the ideas of Özüğurlu about the symbiotic unionism.

<sup>89</sup> Koçer (2007, pp.263-266) compares metal sector with construction, chemicals and textile sectors with reference to existence of partnership in coercion. In light of his hypothetic formulation and determinants he used for his comparison, he concludes that “the partnership in coercion prevailing in the metal sector should not be used to make generalizations about other sectors without detailed sector-specific inquiries”.

<sup>90</sup> As a comparison, Abdullah Karacan, the President of Lastik-İş Union, was murdered in GoodYear factory (Sakarya) in November 2018. The details of the homicide revealed the control and containment functions of the union in the workplace on behalf of the employer. As an authoritative body, the union was arranging the administrative relations in the factory. While the president attempted to change department of a worker by threatening him with a gun on the table, the employee rejected; and union staff started to beat the worker as it is seen in the camera records. Then, the worker reached the gun and shot Karacan (Yalçın, 2018; Aksu, 2018b).

against the employers in the United States, Italy, Brazil, South Africa and South Korea along with Turkey, whereas the employers tried to bust these unions (Silver, 2008 [2003]). Most of the times, the acceptance of the unions in the workplaces was the core of the mobilizations. On the other hand, in pursuant to Tsoukalas's proposition above, the neoliberal era is labeled by the ubiquitous dominance of bourgeoisie, so are trade-unions. Thus, workers encounter with symbiotic unions, which disregard workers' interests and turns cooperation with the employer to a winning strategy on its own, not only in Turkey but also in other developing economies. In the absence of an independent trade-unionism; on the part of workers, the demand turned into the abandonment of the unions instead of its acceptance, and radical challenges against the predominating trade-union orders were also observed in other developing economies to the extent that trade-unions serve as functional apparatuses in sustaining the competitiveness in the context of globalization (cf. Butollo & ten Brink, 2012; Marinaro, 2018; Zorzoli, 2018).

### **5.3 A Wave of Contentious Labor Movements?**

In their study on the TEKEL resistance, Yalman and Topal (2017, p.13) put forward that, in light of lessons derived from the previous experiences, new and creative forms of organizations through bottom-up initiatives by core cadres would be among the factors to thrust a collective struggle that would go beyond economic corporate moment. As discussed above, the prohibitive nature of legal framework prevents even combatant unions from being proactive in the area<sup>91</sup> even though there is an aggravated ground to act against collaborative attitudes of unions, loss of rights, austerity measures and worsening working conditions especially after the 2008 financial crisis<sup>92</sup> (Gindin, 2013; cf. Adaman et al., 2009, 169; Yalman & Topal, 2017, p. 7). In an interview, DİSK President Arzu Çerkezoğlu states, “even the most conservative workers know that the only way of gaining any social rights is to act with

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<sup>91</sup> Yüksel Akkaya (2016, pp.90-91) notes that lawful and constitutional trade-unions have to conduct their activities covertly and clandestinely, because their cadres are dismissed and cannot find a work for a long time when the activities are noticed by the employers.

<sup>92</sup> In the context of United States, Sam Gindin (2013, p.26) calls labor organizations' inadequateness to address this potential or to adapt themselves to unique characters of sectors as “impasse in labor”.

a combatant union against the rule of governments that safeguard the employers” (Çerkezoğlu, 2018). Accordingly, she claims that right-winger workers rely on DİSK much more than other confederations if a struggle becomes the case. If such a latent dynamic is influential<sup>93</sup>, it may be more plausible to construe DİSK’s power qualitatively rather than quantitatively which may promise a solution in the context of a crisis of representation. On the other hand, whether DİSK has been able to realize that potential seems questionable in light of the stasis in terms of labor mobilizations. In the context of Turkey, it should also be noted that the state of emergency, which was declared after the failed coup attempt in July 2016 and remained in force for two years, was among the influential factors preventing labor organizations from adopting a proactive disposition.

In this respect, the Metal Storm experience revealed another outcome that aforementioned impermeable control regime makes contentious grassroots movements functional for alternative class-politics within the workplaces. In line with the framework developed by the social movements literature,

collective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities (Tarrow, 2011 [1994], p.7).

In the literature, it is emphasized that organizations and/or movements which do not have any access to representative and decision-making bodies are at the forefront in terms of social mobilizations to utter and bring along transformative claims (Uysal, 2017, p. 161; cf. Watts, 2010). Such movements can be named as “contentious movements”<sup>94</sup>. In the context of labor movements, this category may include the

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<sup>93</sup> It seems workers utilizes this potential in more cynical and pragmatic ways though. For instance, Özveri (2019) cites some examples such as using the existence of DİSK as a threat against the employer or joining a combatant union to force employer a dismissal with indemnity payments. These can also be evaluated as the ways of rule-of-thumb bargaining and/or resistance under the conditions of prohibitive industrial relations and enhanced powers of the employer party.

<sup>94</sup> In the literature, the term is used in order to define “contentious political parties” and the “decision-making body” applies the parliament (cf. Uysal, 2017, p.161), and this is dealt with the perceiving public demonstrations as an alternative (though ordinary) way of political participation (Uysal, 2017, p.19 and 139). In the context of this study, similar trends are displayed by the movement itself rather than an institutionalized organization. Thus, the concept of “contentious parties” is adopted in the form



initiatives of grassroots organizations, associations, smaller and combatant unions which do not have legal authority to come to the table for the negotiations with the employers, ministerial offices or other legal entities like tripartite bodies, but somehow become, or at least seek to become, influential in determining the standards.

In this context, to the extent that industrial relations system is established in an impermeable authoritarian form, such contentious grassroots movements in the form of wildcat strikes have gained importance in Turkish industrial relations. As the Metal Storm is defined as “a rebellion against the unionism generated by the prohibitive unionism understanding” (Özveri, 2016, p. 715, my translation), it can be argued that this kind of actions is deemed as a useful method to directly get the outcome through the demonstrations. With reference to this feature of the movement, The Metal Storm is evaluated as an action putting ahead the “superiority of action over the law” (Koçak, 2015a) under the verdict of “a political system in which the government puts the law and right to use force in place only for the benefit of employers, and does not recognize workers’ right to organization as well as free collective bargaining right” (Özveri, 2016, p. 722).

In compliance with this determination, in recent years, the rise of *de facto* labor demonstrations in contemporary Turkish industrial relations seems quite striking as it can be seen through Table 5.2. Accordingly, “non-legal strikes” is the second in the list and it should be noted that number of legal strikes is highly insignificant in this picture (Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu, 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019). Especially metal and construction<sup>95</sup> sectors are the industries in which such kind of actions are observed as it can be seen through “Top 3 sectors in demonstrations without the leadership of any

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of “contentious movements” so as to substitute with “contentious grassroots movements” and “contentious labor movements”.

<sup>95</sup> A similar case is observed in another significant labor upsurge, which occurred in the worksite of new İstanbul Airport in September 2018 with the participation of 30,000 workers against the miserable working conditions. As there was no labor-union in the workplace, the upsurge was initiated by smaller unions (İnşaat-İş, Dev-Yapı-İş and İyi-Sen) which do not have collective bargaining authority and define themselves “as a street movement” rather than a union (Gündoğan, 2016, p.65). These phenomena are also in compliance with the proliferation of non-legal labor mobilizations especially in the metal and construction sectors as reflected in the reports of Labor Studies Group (Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu, 2016; 2017; 2018). This being the case marginalization and criminalization of such mobilizations become like a destiny as it is observed in the Metal Storm experience and 24 workers who got involved in the Airport demonstration were arrested.

institutions” in Table 3.6. In the metal sector, in spite of its discursive influence over the movement, MİB could not extract a “contentious labor organization” from the movement. Thus, the permanency of such a contentious wave became questionable after the transformation of Türk Metal. As it can be seen through “Top 3 unions in terms of number of demonstrations and listed unions in metal sector” in Table 3.6, the demonstrations without institutions in metal sector retreated and Türk Metal has mounted to the top of the list as the union which initiated the highest number of demonstrations in 2018. In this regard, it can be observed that this contentious wave seems to be contained in the metal sector at least for now.

Table 5.2 – The Type of Actions Mostly Observed in Labor Demonstrations in Turkey

	2015 (n=915)	2016 (n=529)	2017 (n=537)	2018 (n=554)
<b>First three types of actions observed in Turkey</b>	1- Press Conferences (29%)	1- Press Conferences (44%)	1- Press Conferences (52%)	1- Press Conferences (41%)
	2- Non-legal Strikes (17%)	2- Non-legal Strikes (19%)	2- Non-legal Strikes (18%)	2- Non-legal Strikes (23%)
	3- Permanent Picket Lines (11%)	3- Permanent Picket Lines (11%)	3- Permanent Picket Lines (9%)	3- Permanent Picket Lines (12%)

Source: Labor Studies Group Reports (Emek Çalışmaları Topluluğu 2016; 2017; 2018; 2019)

Concomitantly, it should be noted that seeking for struggles so as to gain favorable outcomes on the part of workers is not limited to these contentious movements as some conventional unions still do not avert from the combatant disposition to a certain extent<sup>96</sup>. Furthermore, challenging the given standards of the industry through these kinds of mobilizations does not constitute the only way of protecting and enhancing the workers’ rights albeit it is a prominent one especially under given circumstances. However, what is certain is that a patient struggle based on a class-centered perspective provides benign results in terms of overcoming the layers of control over workers. In addition to their gains in terms of social right and workplace achievements, there are experiences reflecting that building bonds of trust with workers in the language of class struggle changes nationalist-conservative workers’

<sup>96</sup> Gürcan and Mete (2017, p.152) cites Birleşik Metal-İş, Nakliyat-İş and Tek Gıda-İş unions’ triumphant struggles. Petrol-İş can also be added to the list as it led the resistances in Flormar and Tüpraş corporations along with Birleşik Metal-İş with its persistent attitude in years (cf. Aksu, 2018a). It should be noted that variations in the structure of each sector also differentiate the activity of these kind of organizations.

perception against the struggle and combatant organizations (Interviews with Nakliyat-İş President Ali Rıza Küçükosmanoğlu and Birleşik Metal-İş Expert Alpaslan Savaş, in Gürcan & Mete, 2017, pp.118-122).

Consequently, the identity-based demarcation lines, which labeled the political sphere in Turkey in the last forty years, have also made great impacts over the level of class-consciousness in the metal sector. However, as it has been accompanied by serious deterioration in the conditions of working-classes and establishment of a strict control regime in the industry; violent exploitation of workers triggered a radical challenge against the established order in the form of economic struggles as it can be seen through the Metal Storm experience. Even though the workers' struggle could not deeply transform the relevant legal-institutional framework, they achieved some material gains and forced Türk Metal to a restoration to a certain extent. Whereas it is difficult to say that workers who took part in the movement consciously perceived their public demonstrations as a way of political participation, it can be suggested that the experience has brought along various discussions in terms of class-politics for all addressees of the issue. As a result of the movement, distributive policies were reviewed and rearranged in the sector, and partly in general. Partial amelioration in the representation of workers and increasing significance of contentious labor organizations can also be listed among the consequences of the Metal Storm.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The starting point of this study can be considered as the question of “how do workers interrelate with politics?”. Labor mobilizations are considered as an appropriate case to investigate the involvement of the workers in actions with political significance as these moments of confrontation reveal their frustrations and aspirations. In this context, the Metal Storm experience has been examined as the sample case to proceed in this query. To cut a long story short, workers who got involved in this mobilization did not portray a conscious movement that challenges the political framework that drives them into suppression. On the other hand, the process of inquiry revealed some other observations beyond this short answer.

Within this framework, this study tried to understand the reasons and dynamics underlying the Metal Storm. To the extent that case of the study is evaluated as a movement “opposing the trade-union-order established just after 1980 coup d’état” (cf. Koçak, 2015a; Koçak, 2015b; Taştan, 2015; Çelik, 2015b; Özveri, 2016), an investigation of Turkish industrial relations system became indispensable. Furthermore, this industrial relations system has been restructured in pursuant to the requirements provided by the mode of capital accumulation that Turkey pursued since the 1980s. In this respect, to examine the main lines of the developmental strategies, especially in the area of Turkish industrialization, would be extremely crucial to better understand the context in which trade-unionism after the 1980 military intervention evolved.

By considering these justifications, this study initially outlined the shift from an inward-oriented strategy to an export-oriented neoliberal industrialization approach and its outcomes. The second chapter attempts to trace this transformation along with the restructuring of the legal-judicial framework establishing the individual and collective labor relations in Turkey. As it can be observed through the framework

given in the chapter, this transformation has been established in parallel to the restructuring of the industrial policy; and the result became the suppression of labor as it was the main method to extract surplus provided by the way of industrialization. It can be expected that such a mode of accumulation would require mutualist trade-union apparatuses to assist such policies. To achieve that, union-busting strategies were pursued by the governments and employers against combatant unions, and a symbiotic way of unionism has been constructed in the manufacturing industries.

As a result of neoliberal globalization, such a tamed unionism thus became significant so as to attract foreign investments in the developing economies, thereby contributing to the deterioration of their labor regimes. In compliance with this proposition the third chapter examined the case in Turkish automotive sector. Accordingly, it is observed that Turkish automotive sector has been trapped in middle-technology level in spite of certain developments in the industry. Whereas the sector's dependency to foreign joint ventures has remained in strategic decision-making processes and R&D activities, suppression of working conditions became the main driver of maintaining the competitiveness. As a result, the privileges of formal employment conditions have worsened to the detriment of workers in the sector, and the gap between the informal and formal labor has narrowed. It is possible to observe that the style of unionism, which is based on collaboration with employers, could not prevent this decline but rather functioned as a mediator of this process. So, it is not coincidence that workers' reflection echoed as a rage against the union among other things when they demanded amelioration of their conditions at certain moments.

The Metal Storm emerged as an explanatory case of aforementioned dynamics in the sector. The fourth chapter along with the Appendices of this study attempted to the portray this case since it provides an illuminating example to evaluate the practices in the sector. The research on the case is based on the method of process tracing so as to span preliminary developments, the wave of strikes and its outcomes. Here, it has been observed that long-term alliances between the union, employers and the state were shaken by the workers' determined protests, and the parties started to accuse each other thus making the other the scapegoat for the emergence and the rise of strikes.

In light of the Metal Storm experience, it is contended that the attitude of Türk Metal before the resistance can be considered as an example of symbiotic unionism which functioned as a mechanism to maintain the control of workers in the workplace. This style of unionism was quite anti-democratic in terms of representation of different voices and impermeable against the grassroots opposition among the members. Under this impermeable control, workers resorted to wildcat strikes by disregarding 'duly' legal procedures and, in order to achieve their demands, applied direct action rather than other inactive ways of struggle. At the end of the movement, while some pioneer workers were dismissed, the remaining work force achieved some of their demands in terms of wages and forced their union, Türk Metal, to a restoration in its way of unionism.

To return the discussion cited at the beginning of the study, it can be concluded that workers resort to social mobilization to demand their rights as a last resort with a rather limited agenda. Even if it is difficult to extract an explicit and precise connection between workers' political inclinations and their economic concerns, it is possible to say that this is the political 'reality' of the 'class struggle' in the current circumstances. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that this is the only way to strive for the 'fundamental interests' of the workers. Nor does it imply that "there is no necessary or privileged relation between the working class" and alternative political frameworks (cf. Wood, 1998 [1986], p.4).

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## APPENDICES

### A. CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE EVENTS

Following table presents the main events observed during the resistances. While preparing this table, the method of process analysis is applied. This method necessitates the investigation of “the sequence of the events, the specific actions taken by various types of actors, public and private statements by those actors about why they took those actions, as well as other observations” (Hall, 2006, p.28). Accordingly, the sequence of the events observed between April 14 – June 3, which spans the mobilizations and strikes in the factories, is presented in detail. In addition to this period, some previous events and following developments were also included as they were significant in terms of their relevance to the demonstrations. Previous events were either important in the development of the events or pointed as a precedent by the parties to justify their positions.

Most of the events are collected from various websites regularly publishing on the affairs. News published in some websites such as *Kızıl Bayrak*, *Evrensel* and *Sendika.Org* unavoidably constituted primary source of data. There are several reasons underlying this selection. First of all, during the resistances, these websites issued regular diaries of the events in a detailed manner, which is unique to follow the developments on a daily basis. Secondly, these sources included detailed reports and visual materials from the factories, which were impossible to find anywhere else. For instance, the large demonstration made by the workers in the city center on April 26, 2015 is “factual” as it can be verified by many other sources; but, without applying these websites, it is impossible to trace the process through which this demonstration was decided and organized.

Keeping in mind that portrait of any event in the media constitute a representation of the reality, this selection of the narration was performed in a critical manner. The reports, news and facts, rather than propaganda, were recognized. Likewise, another

criterion pursued during the selection of the sources was to make “the specific actions taken by various types of actors” explicit, in compliance with the requirements of process tracing. Thus, reciprocal statements were absolutely included in the preparation of the following framework. If the other party of the event made an objection or explanation through its official channels or maybe its journals afterwards, they are definitely taken into consideration and the case was checked once more to make sure. If it is not verified, both parties’ explanations were presented in the narration. However, any party may have kept its silence about certain affairs, especially the offensive ones such as attack to workers by a group allegedly affiliated to the union. As the verification of such kind of events is not as easy as the ones discussed by all parties, they are either cited with the statements like “it is reported”, “it is claimed that” etc. or more scholar sources were applied.

In the selection of events, employer organizations, government officials, Türk Metal, Birleşik Metal-İş and Özçelik-İş (or Çelik-İş then) unions, Metal Workers Association and workers who went on strike are deemed as the actors of the events. It is observed that workers went on strike in Renault, TOFAŞ, Türk Traktör (Ankara), Ford Otosan (Kocaeli and Eskişehir), Coşkunöz, Mako and Ototrim. On the other hand, workers resigned from Türk Metal in many other factories even though they did not go on strike. In some of these factories, workers did short-time work stoppages, dining hall protests, demonstrations inside and in front of the factory etc. Furthermore, workers from many other workplaces visited the workers on strike for solidarity. To provide a more refined focus, this second category of demonstrations is not included in the following table. However, they are mentioned in Appendix 2 which gives a cumulative idea about the balance sheet of the demonstrations.

<b>2008-2010</b>	
<b>Collective Agreement Period</b>	
<b>2009</b>	The agreement concluded in 2008 was amended in Ereğli (Zonguldak) and İskenderun (Hatay) iron and steel plants, and the wages were reduced 35 % for sixteen months in these two factories through a protocol between Türk Metal and the employer party with the justification of preventing any dismissal which might have arisen from the adverse effects of 2008 financial crisis (Tokol & Güler, 2016, p. 943).
<b>2010-2012</b>	
<b>Collective Agreement Period</b>	
<b>2010</b>	Birleşik Metal-İş took strike decisions upon the disagreement during the 2010-2012 bargaining period and this was the first decision after 21 years in the sector with the scope of twenty-eight establishments and fifteen thousand workers (Kaygısız, 2016, s. 55). This decision was first penetration to patronizing attitude of MESS (Çelik, 2015b).

<b>2012-2014</b>	
<b>Collective Agreement Period</b>	
<b>2012</b>	
<b>March</b>	3500 Bosch workers resigned from Türk Metal and participated to Birleşik Metal-İş. Afterwards, majority of the workers somehow returned back, but an authorization problem occurred for Türk Metal until November 2014.
<b>November</b>	Workers protested Türk Metal because the union had started collective bargaining procedures without asking workers' demands. Protests initially started in İzmir BMC factory and spread to Arçelik (Eskişehir) and Renault (Bursa) factories. Workers from Bosch, Coşkunöz, MAKO Elektrik workplaces came in front of Renault factory for solidarity (Turan, 2015). However, workers and Birleşik Metal-İş members who came for solidarity were assaulted by Türk Metal (Arabacı, 2015, p. 189). In Renault factory, more than fifty workers were dismissed after the protests (Turan, 2015).
<b>2014-2017</b>	
<b>Collective Agreement Period</b>	
<b>2014</b>	
<b>December</b>	A collective labor agreement was concluded between MESS and two labor unions in December 2014 so as to cover 2014-2017 period. The scope of the agreement between MESS and Türk Metal on December 15 included 98,743 workers and 123 establishments while the agreement of MESS and Çelik-İş on December 17 contained 2,437 workers and 5 establishments (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 940). Birleşik Metal-İş and MESS did not reach an agreement and Birleşik Metal-İş organized a rally in Gebze on December 23 (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 940). Here, approximately ten thousand workers insisted on their demand to come out on strike and Birleşik Metal-İş took strike decision in January (Evrensel Metal, 2016, s. 8).
<b>2015</b>	
<b>January</b>	Birleşik Metal-İş's strike on January 29 contained 15,000 workers from ten cities and twenty-two factories, but on the day after the beginning of the strike, the 30 <sup>th</sup> of January, the strike was suspended by Council of Ministers on the ground of national security purposes (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 940). Even though workers from workplaces such as Koraman Çelik, Sarkuysan, Çayırova, Cengiz Makina and Yücel Boru in Gebze took a decision to go on resistance, the union decided to apply suspension decision and to keep resisting in the workplaces (Evrensel Metal, 2016, s. 8).
<b>April 14</b>	After a long period, Türk Metal and MESS concluded a separate collective agreement for Bosch factory on April 14, 2015, and this was the first agreement in Bosch after four years. The agreement included better terms than the collective agreement (December 2014) in some respects. To this end, workers from Oyak Renault factory vehicle body department revealed their reactions by halting the production and demanding arrival of Ruhi Biçer, president of relevant Türk Metal branch, on 14 <sup>th</sup> April (Kızıl Bayrak, April 14, 2015).
<b>April 16</b>	These reactions turned into demonstration on April 16, and Renault workers left the dining hall boycotting the meal after beating plates with their forks in the dining hall to make themselves heard (Kızıl Bayrak, April 17, 2015a). During the dining hall protests, workers demanded improvement in their wages and booed union officials (Kızıl Bayrak, April 16, 2015).
<b>April 17</b>	In the morning of April 17, after 00.00-08.00 shift, hundreds of workers did not get on the shuttle vehicle, chanted slogans against the union and demanded its withdrawal from the workplace. After factory directors arrived and assured that they would meet the case, workers left the factory. There were also protests during the lunch and afternoon by the workers from other shifts. In the afternoon, one of the Renault managers met with the workers and pointed out the union as the addressee of the problem but did not guarantee employment security in the case of workers' resignation from the union. After the director's promise to negotiate wage improvement in the forthcoming days, the workers left the factory (Kızıl Bayrak, April 17, 2015a). This mobilization triggered a mobility in TOFAŞ albeit it was not massive at the beginning (Kızıl Bayrak, April 17, 2015b).
<b>April 18</b>	Renault workers continued their protests during the meals and after-work on April 18, and TOFAŞ workers went in front of the union office located in the factory to demand wage improvement by considering the level of Bosch agreement. They chanted the slogans of "we do not want the yellow-union" and demanded abandonment of the union. Workers from Mako factory declared their support to Renault and TOFAŞ workers and started demonstrations on the

	production line and in front of the factory. It is also reported that Türk Metal union representative Şinasi Ongan slapped in the face of a subcontracted worker in the workplace and directed HR staff to attack workers in Mako (Kızıl Bayrak, April 18, 2015).
<b>April 19</b>	On the 19 <sup>th</sup> of April in Renault, workers formed an execution committee among themselves so as to include representatives from the departments and undertake negotiations with the factory management (Kızıl Bayrak, April 19, 2015a). Moreover, protests of TOFAŞ workers in the dining hall and in front of the factory and union office continued on the 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> of April.
<b>April 20</b>	On the 20 <sup>th</sup> of April, Renault workers gathered and discussed details of their demands in addition to their demonstration after 00.00-08.00 shift. Then, the committee representing the workers met with the directors to discuss their demands (Kızıl Bayrak, April 20, 2015a). Meanwhile, Coşkunöz workers went to Türk Metal branch in Altıparmak district downtown after work of 08.00-16.00 shift. There, they had a meeting with shop stewards and branch staff, and workers demanded improvement in accordance with the terms of Bosch agreement. However, union representatives declared impossibility of any amendment in the agreement and advised workers to wait until 2017 agreement for compensation. The meeting turned into a heated debate and workers indicated that they were insistent on their demands. Three demands of workers, which were frequently uttered during the strikes, became clear by these negotiations (Kızıl Bayrak, April 20, 2015b): (i) amendment of the collective agreement in accordance with the terms of Bosch agreement, (ii) determination of shop stewards through democratic methods and (iii) immunity of activist workers from dismissals.
<b>April 21</b>	On the 21 <sup>st</sup> of April, Mako workers made a demonstration similar to the one of Coşkunöz workers did the day before. After protesting Türk Metal in front of their Altıparmak branch, they demanded union officials to come down and make an explanation to the workers. However, the officials did not accept, and the workers walked towards Altıparmak town square. On the same day, Birleşik Metal-İş Bursa Branch held a press conference on the events and referred to High Board of Arbitration process regarding their incomplete contract procedure after their suspended strike. In the conference, they accused of Türk Metal and MESS, and invited irritated workers to Birleşik Metal-İş (Kızıl Bayrak, April 21, 2015a). In the evening, Renault workers made a meeting with the factory managers. It is also reported that there occurred a squabble between Ruhi Biçer, president of Türk Metal Nilüfer Branch, and Renault workers. It is claimed that Ruhi Biçer referred to previous protest experiences and dismissal of workers. At night, workers' committee declared that business management had required time until the 5 <sup>th</sup> of May to discuss issue with the business headquarter in France. Employees admitted this requirement and indicated that they would halt production unless their demands of wage rise and right to elect their representatives are accepted. Workers also decided to boycott May Day events of Türk Metal and to resign from Türk Metal on the 5 <sup>th</sup> of May if their demands are not accepted till then. Türk Metal union branch invited Renault workers to a meeting in the dining hall to be organized the next day (Kızıl Bayrak, April 21, 2015b). Meanwhile, TOFAŞ workers protested union in front of its office located within the factory again (Kızıl Bayrak, April 21, 2015c).
<b>April 22</b>	On April 22, Renault workers did not participate Türk Metal's meeting, and invited a lawyer to the workplace to consult their rights and legal options upon the tension with Ruhi Biçer. At the end of the consultations, they decided to warn Türk Metal for the last time and to organize a rally in the city center on the 26 <sup>th</sup> of April. Whereas Mako workers continued their protests in the workplace, it is reported that TOFAŞ Türk Metal stewards resigned but it was not accepted by the general management of the union (Kızıl Bayrak, April 22, 2015a). Coşkunöz workers went to Türk Metal Altıparmak branch again, but union officials declared that there was nothing to be done regarding the amendment of the agreement (Kızıl Bayrak, April 22, 2015b). From this date on, Türk Metal's attempt to repeat this position in the factories was not accepted by the workers, and Türk Metal representatives were not allowed to make an excuse in some workplaces by the workers (Kızıl Bayrak, April 22, 2015c). In the afternoon, a statement was declared on behalf of "Workers from Renault, TOFAŞ, Coşkunöz, Mako and other factories" on the social media account of Metal Workers Association (Metal İşçileri Birliği - MİB). The statement included the three demands of workers (Kızıl Bayrak, April 22, 2015d).
<b>April 23</b>	On the 23 <sup>rd</sup> of April, after the workers decided upon a rally in the city center and disregarded Türk Metal, pressure on the workers by the businesses started to increase. Especially Renault and Coşkunöz employers defined the events as an unrest and increased the surveillance over the workers. Coşkunöz employer cancelled Sunday leave in order to prevent participation to the rally (Kızıl Bayrak, April 24, 2015a). However, routine workplace protests continued in Renault, TOFAŞ, Mako, Coşkunöz and other factories (Kızıl Bayrak, April 23, 2015).
<b>April 24</b>	On the 24 <sup>th</sup> April, ten days had lasted in the demonstrations and MİB issued a declaration. According to the declaration, Türk Metal had started a propaganda against MİB in the workplaces through fliers and verbal statements by defining the Association as an extension of illegal organizations and the demonstrations as a provocation. Due to the functional role of MİB's social

	media account since the beginning of the events, a (counter) account was opened under the name of “Liar MİB” ( <i>Yalancı MİB</i> ) which is propagating Türk Metal’s justifications against workers’ mobilization. In the declaration, the Association defined itself as an independent pioneer worker platform (Kızıl Bayrak, April 24, 2015b).
<b>April 25</b>	On the 24 <sup>th</sup> and 25 <sup>th</sup> of April, workers in Renault, Coşkunöz and Mako got prepared for the rally to be held in the city center on April 26 through their routine protests within the workplaces. Upon the request of Renault managers, workers moved their protests to the dining hall from the yard. Even though it was decided in Renault workers’ forum, workers from other factories also decided to participate this demonstration and act according to the schedule determined by Renault workers in terms of the duration given to the employers and the union.
<b>April 26</b>	On the 26 <sup>th</sup> of April, workers from Renault, Ototrim, Mako, Coşkunöz, and TOFAŞ gathered in Bursa City Square to hold a demonstration (Kızıl Bayrak, April 26, 2015). It is emphasized that Renault, Mako, Coşkunöz and Ototrim workers seem prominent in terms of workplace-level organized participation. In the meeting, a representative from Renault presented the joint text of the workers and uttered their demands. Moreover, workers also restated that they would wait until the 5 <sup>th</sup> of May and resign from the union unless any attempt is made to meet these demands. After the joint text, one worker representative made a speech on behalf of each of Ototrim, Mako and Coşkunöz workers. Workers symbolically tore a copy of the lastly concluded agreement as well.
<b>April 27</b>	In this context, Türk Metal union delegates and officers started to resign from the union by the 27 <sup>th</sup> of April though they were very few (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 941). Moreover, Mako workers went on dining hall protests on the 27 <sup>th</sup> of April (Kızıl Bayrak, April 27, 2015c).
<b>April 28</b>	On the 28 <sup>th</sup> of April, Coşkunöz workers marched in the factory after both 07.30 and 15.30 shifts and invited Pevrul Kavlak to resign from his position (Kızıl Bayrak, April 28, 2015a). In addition, CGT Union, which is entitled in the Renault factory in France, visited Bursa factory to investigate the situation and make a report. The committee held a press conference and declared their support to the workers (Kızıl Bayrak, April 28, 2015b; Birleşik Metal-İş, April 27, 2015).
<b>April 30</b>	On 30 <sup>th</sup> April, Coşkunöz workers marched to Türk Metal Altıparmak branch to consult with the union officers. Officers clearly rejected workers’ demand for a new contract or a supplementary protocol by propounding that it would not be legal (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 941). By the end of April, the utterance of an inter-factories committee is encountered. It is claimed that pioneer workers from Renault, Coşkunöz and Mako gathered and decided to establish an inter-factories committee to coordinate the process. Accordingly, workers were invited to organize their committees on the basis of units, to boycott Türk Metal’s May Day activity and to get prepared to collective resignation from the union on May 5 (Kızıl Bayrak, April 30, 2015).
<b>May 3</b>	On the 3 <sup>rd</sup> of May, the so-called inter-factories committee made its second meeting towards the 5 <sup>th</sup> of May. In this sense, workers were invited to enter into the factory all together against any possible dismissal and to continue dining hall protests. The committee also declared that workers would gather in the organized industrial zone on the 4 <sup>th</sup> of May to warn Türk Metal and remind the demands last time. According to the declaration, workers would resign from the union collectively if their demands were not accepted (Kızıl Bayrak, May 3, 2015). At night, Türk Metal officials visited the production lines and repeated their “no increase” position (Kızıl Bayrak, May 4, 2015a).
<b>May 4</b>	After the day shift on the 4 <sup>th</sup> of May, workers from Coşkunöz, Mako and Renault gathered in front of the Bursa Chamber of Commerce and Industry. There, workers showed their e-government passwords to warn Türk Metal and announced that five Coşkunöz workers had submitted their symbolic resignation from the union as a warning and precursor of a greater resignation wave. A Renault worker read the declaration of the inter-factories committee. In the declaration, they emphasized that they could not stand the union officials lead a life of pleasure through workers’ contributions but avoid struggling for their rights (Kızıl Bayrak, May 4, 2015b).
<b>May 5</b>	On the 5 <sup>th</sup> of May, the duration allowed for an improvement of the contract was over. Workers gathered on the area near to the organized industrial zone mosque to collectively resign from Türk Metal. After a while, a group allegedly affiliated to Türk Metal physically attacked to workers who resigned from Türk Metal (Turan, 2015; Çelik, 2015b) by claiming that there were provocateurs among the workers. Some TOFAŞ workers claimed that Türk Metal carried workers loyal to the union for the fight upon a trade-union leave from the workplace (Emek ve Adalet Platformu, 2015; Kızıl Bayrak, May 19, 2015a). The group injured workers and knocked the tables set for resignations down. Upon the assault, workers decided to leave the area (for the videos and photos of the attack see Kızıl Bayrak, May 5, 2015a; Sendika.Org, May 6, 2015a; Yalvaç, 2015a; Sol Haber, May 5, 2015; Akgül, May 18, 2015). From now on, reactions against Türk Metal were going to proceed to another stage. The attack circulated on social media and stimulated a wave of rage against the union which directly targets the workers. Thereupon, workers started to protest in many factories such as TOFAŞ -in particular-, Ototrim, Delphi, Ermetal, Valeo, SKT, Arçelik in İstanbul and Eskişehir (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 941; Taştan, 2015, p. 331; Kızıl Bayrak, May 5, 2015b). Türk Metal Union

	<p>officials, Ruhi Biçer, Mesut Dinç, Yaşar Şen, Özden İnce, Sedat Gürpınar and Arif Bekiç, were sued for this attack (İnsanhaber, May 12, 2015). Birleşik Metal-İş issued a press statement and condemned the attack to workers by Türk Metal members and administrators (Birleşik Metal-İş, May 6, 2015).</p> <p>During the day, workers from Mako, Renault, Coşkunöz and TOFAŞ started to resign from Türk Metal one after another. Türk Metal and employers called riot police in front of Renault, Coşkunöz and Mako factories for after-work hours. It is claimed that, in Ototrim factory, Arif Bekiç, Türk Metal shop steward, slapped a worker.</p> <p>At night, two Renault workers could not clock in the 00.00-08.00 shift, because their cards were invalid, and this was perceived as the dismissal by the workers. Moreover, it was claimed that sixteen Renault workers had been fired in total one of which was attacked by Türk Metal group that morning.</p> <p>Workers operating in 16.00-00.00 shift did not leave the factory and the night shift staff did not enter into. Thus, workers from two different shifts got together and they halted production for the first time. Upon the arrival of managers to the factory, representatives elected among the workers had a meeting and the dismissals were withdrawn. In the meeting managers demanded fifteen days more to negotiate wage improvements with France headquarter and promised termination of Türk Metal's entitlement (Tokol &amp; Güler, 2016, 941; Sendika.Org, May 25, 2015; Kızıl Bayrak, May 5, 2015b).</p> <p>During the night, TOFAŞ factory management tried to divide the mass of workers through allowing a part of them to leave the factory earlier. However, workers did not allow shuttles to exit from the factory and protests expanded to both inside and outside the factory. According to one of the leaders of TOFAŞ factory resistance, there was an expectation among the workers for a rise in wages by the 5<sup>th</sup> of May. However, when workers were advised to wait until 2017, the worker started to hit his spoon on the plate and this triggered the process in the factory (Emek ve Adalet Platformu, 2015).</p>
<b>May 6</b>	<p>In the morning of 6th May, TOFAŞ workers from both night and morning shifts got together and discussed resignation from the union (Sendika.Org, May 6, 2015b). Moreover, Ototrim and Coşkunöz workers protested Türk Metal in their workplaces. In Ototrim, workers lustily protested slapping affair and boycotted the meals during the day. Türk Metal Bursa Nilüfer Branch President Ruhi Biçer came to the Ototrim factory to persuade workers. After the eighth second of his speech starting with “probably for the first time in the world, we are a union which is protested for concluding a good contract”, workers started to protest him and invited to abandon from workplaces (Kızıl Bayrak, May 6, 2015a). In the afternoon, TOFAŞ workers gathered in front of Gate No. 1 and made a meeting with factory management in order to gain the security not to be dismissed upon resigning from Türk Metal. At the end of negotiations, human resources manager declared that nobody would be dismissed, demands would be evaluated, and workers would be informed in several days. In the evening, Mako workers made dining hall protests (Kızıl Bayrak, May 6, 2015b).</p>
<b>May 7</b>	<p>On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, protests spread to many other factories in the sector, and workers in all factories indicated that they would stop production in the case of any dismissal or attack of union affiliated groups. On the other hand, Türk Metal officials intensified their smear campaign against MİB upon the worsening of the crisis (Kızıl Bayrak, May 7, 2015). Regarding the events at Renault factory in the morning of May 6, Birleşik Metal-İş issued a press statement by defining the terms of Group Collective Agreement as the cause of demonstrations and appreciated the persistence of the workers who object to this agreement (Birleşik Metal-İş, May 7, 2015).</p>
<b>May 8</b>	<p>On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, collective resignation constituted the main agenda of the workers. On the one hand, Renault workers reached up to 3500 resignations and 85 % of Coşkunöz resigned, TOFAŞ workers decided to resign from the union on May 13 unless their demands are taken into consideration. On the other hand, Türk Metal deepened its campaign against MİB and distributed leaflets accusing MİB of being provokers targeting to lead a chaos in advance of elections (Kızıl Bayrak, May 8, 2015a). Inter-factories committee responded this leaflet through a declaration which points out workers as the organizers of the whole process (Kızıl Bayrak, May 8, 2015b).</p>
<b>May 9</b>	<p>TOFAŞ Human Resources Managers had made a meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May with workers and requested several days to evaluate the demands. Afterwards the managers department issued a statement on 9th May. In the statement, TOFAŞ drew attention that workers' protests had been harming industrial peace. According to the statement inviting workers to “good sense”, the workplace would have “taken necessary precautions” unless protests had stopped. TOFAŞ management declared its position through this statement and it was the first veiled threat of “riotous and striker workers' dismissal”. In the same day, Türk Metal continued its black propaganda against MİB by making statements on TV; the same threat of “riotous and striker workers' dismissal” by automotive company employers was uttered on same TV through referring to unknown company managers (Kızıl Bayrak, May 9, 2015a). Workers from TOFAŞ, continued their protests in front of the union office within the factory. Because Olay TV channel</p>

	broadcasted such contents mentioned above and invited Pevrul Kavlak for a program, workers also reacted against the TV channel (Kızıl Bayrak, May 9, 2015b).
<b>May 10</b>	On the 10th of May, inter-factories committee made its third meeting. The report of the meeting was issued on MİB social media account and the committee declared various issues to be further discussed among the workers within the factories. In addition to determining acceleration of resignation process from Türk Metal, workers started to clearly utter the need for a new union rather than the idea of joining existing unions after this meeting (Kızıl Bayrak, May 10, 2015).
<b>May 11</b>	Upon the decision to accelerate resignations from the union, most of the factories including TOFAŞ determined the 12 <sup>th</sup> and 13 <sup>th</sup> of May as the date to collectively resign from the union. The protests in some factories such as TOFAŞ and Ototrim continued on the 11 <sup>th</sup> of May (Kızıl Bayrak, May 11, 2015).
<b>May 12</b>	While resignation process was proceeding on the side of workers and TOFAŞ employer started to counterattack along with Türk Metal since the 9th of May; incomplete agreement procedure between Birleşik Metal-İş and MESS, which had not been concluded in December, was concluded by High Board of Arbitration on the 12 <sup>th</sup> of May so as to include the terms Group Collective Agreement previously concluded in December with Türk Metal and Çelik-İş (Tokol & Güler, 2016, s. 940). During those days, it seems that workers were concentrated on resignation process while waiting the news to come from Renault on the 21 <sup>st</sup> of May, which was the deadline of the duration requested by Renault management. However, police were called in front of TOFAŞ factory in order to prevent collective resignation of workers by arguing the denunciation of a provocation (Sendika.Org, May 25, 2015).
<b>May 13</b>	The decree enacted by High Board of Arbitration on the 12 <sup>th</sup> of May reverberated through a leaflet of Türk Metal in the factories distributed on the 13 <sup>th</sup> of May. Türk Metal accused and ridiculed Birleşik Metal-İş to sign an exact copy of Türk Metal's agreement (Sendika.Org, May 25, 2015; Birleşik Metal-İş, May 14, 2015). Furthermore, the leaflet included some statements to associate MİB to Birleşik Metal-İş (Kızıl Bayrak, May 13, 2015).
<b>May 14</b>	Impeaching Türk Metal as a yellow union, Birleşik Metal-İş issued a press statement on the 14 <sup>th</sup> of May to respond Türk Metal's leaflet (Birleşik Metal-İş, May 14, 2015). In the statement, it was claimed that the decision of High Board of Arbitration would be applied in only three workplaces, but Birleşik Metal-İş gained better terms in total than Türk Metal's terms in eight other workplaces. For Birleşik Metal-İş, employers in the sector have a strategy based on the differentiation of wages. Accordingly, recently-employed workers would get lower wages than previous ones and average-wage in the sector would constantly decrease. In the statement, Türk Metal was accused of executing this strategy on behalf of the employers in the sector. On the 14 <sup>th</sup> of May, a message was sent to the workers' mobile phones by MESS in the morning. In the message, it was stated that the group collective agreement would be valid and binding over both parties and entitled unions for three years, i.e. until the 31st of August 2017. According to MESS, it was legally impossible to provide any further rights in addition to those given in the agreement and workers should not have any expectations by questioning Bosch Agreement and should stop and avoid illegal demonstrations in the workplaces (Kızıl Bayrak, May 14, 2015a). With this message, employer party tried to curtail the hopes to amend the contract and to halt the workers' attempts by defining workers' protests illegal. However, workers reacted against this message as well, and hence message triggered a new phase in the struggle of workers. According to a piece published in <i>Evrinsel</i> (May 14, 2015), Renault management, which had required duration until the 21 <sup>st</sup> of May, decided to express its final decision one week earlier upon the decree issued by High Board of Arbitration and invited the night shift workers to the Renault sports hall. Because workers had learnt that there would be no further increase in the wages, they rejected to participate in the meeting. Instead, they protested Renault management and Türk Metal around the hall. Management invited 08.00-16.00 shift to the hall later and stated that the contract in effect would be applied until 2017. In the meeting, workers also demanded to benefit from the agreement after resigning from Türk Metal without paying any solidarity payment, but it was not accepted by the management as well. Workers from 16.00-00.00 shift protested decisions before starting the work, and all Renault workers were invited in front of the factory at night. Within the first hours of 15th May, 16.00-00.00 shift workers did not leave the factory with nearly 1500 workers and others came in front of it, the production was halted, and the strike started. There were more than thousand workers in the first minutes. Workers from other factories came in front of the factory for solidarity during the night. Meanwhile, there were workplace protests in Coşkunöz and Mako. Mako workers prepared food packages to serve resistant workers, TOFAŞ workers brought their own food packages as well. Resistant workers made discussions to determine representatives to meet with management. They clarified the demands once more at the very first hours of the strike; (i) improvement in wages, (ii) recognition of representatives elected by workers, and (iii) guarantee for that there would not be any dismissals because of the demonstrations (Kızıl Bayrak, May 14, 2015b).



<p>May 15</p>	<p>Because Renault factory management cancelled all shuttle services, workers from 08.00-16.00 shift came to the factory by their own facilities in the early morning and, after their arrival, approximately 4500 Renault workers gathered in the area. After completing their shifts in the morning, many workers from the factories around came to the area with their banners and slogans for solidarity. At 10.00am, Renault workers made a statement and indicated that their request to negotiate with factory management was rejected by managers and workers would maintain their resistance until the acceptance of their demands. Workers' families made a solidarity demonstration at midday. Most of the workers from other factories brought food packages for resistant workers. To get prepared against the probability of a long-lasting resistance, Renault workers started preparations to pitch tents on the area. Moreover, six representatives of workers had a meeting with Ministry of Labor and Social Security inspector with the presence of police. According to the statement made by representatives, the inspector suggested that the demonstrations were not legal, and this might have granted the employer the right to fire workers without any severance and notice pay and compensate the losses from workers. The first action of sticking to the workplaces occurred at Renault and spread to other factories (Taştan, 2015, s. 331). TOFAŞ workers halted the production at about 8.00pm. Upon the stoppage at TOFAŞ, it is propounded that the resistance would affect approximately 40 thousand workers in the region when subsidiary industry manufacturers are taken into consideration.</p> <p>In the afternoon, Renault management made a written statement and declared that employer was not in a negotiation process on the terms of the contract in effect and events occurring in and around the factory were not in compliance with relevant legislation provisions. TOFAŞ and Renault managements successively expressed that production was paused until the 18th of May (Monday) in the factories. Afterwards, MESS issued a statement and not only defined strikes unlawful time and again but also rejected any demand to amend applied contract.</p> <p>After that, workers made an evaluation and Renault workers decided not to leave the factory until the 18th of May, while Coşkunöz workers settled on to go on strike at that night and Mako workers decided to start their strike on the 18th of May (Monday). Coşkunöz management made a meeting with workers and requested to maintain production until Monday but workers did not accept. After the meeting, the management issued a declaration and intimidated workers by pointing out legal sanctions as MESS, Renault and TOFAŞ managements did (Evrensel, May 15, 2015; Sendika.Org, May 15, 2015a; May 15, 2015b; Kızıl Bayrak, May 15, 2015a; May 15, 2015b).</p> <p>Türk Metal made a statement and explained the process of Bosch agreement from its point of view. The union accused of the employer party in Renault for their "tantalizing" approach by requiring an option to ask France because this led to an expectation among the workers. According to the union, this approach of the employer party generated an opinion among the workers that Türk Metal rejected or neglected, even though there exists potentiality to achieve more gains. Additionally, Türk Metal summoned workers to become reasonable and calm as well as indicating that the union respects the struggles to claim rights and support all democratic actions to this end (Türk Metal, May 2015, p. 12).</p>
<p>May 16</p>	<p>Renault workers started the 16th of May by cleaning the inside and in front of the factory and held on the area during the day with their slogans. Uludağ University students, a committee from Union of Chambers of Turkish Architects and Engineers in addition to workers from other factories visited workers during the day. Ototrim workers made a Türk Metal coffin and a symbolic funeral for the union. White collar employees of the factory collected money and sent cigarette together with cold beverages to the resisting workers. Workers' families made an enthusiastic demonstration and brought various stuff with them. Renault workers forwarded foodstuff collected for them to Coşkunöz and TOFAŞ workers (Kızıl Bayrak, May 16, 2015a; Sendika.Org, May 16, 2015). There were solidarity visits in other factories as well. During the day, Nilüfer and Osmangazi Municipalities provided foodstuff to workers at Renault and TOFAŞ on the 16th of May even though TOFAŞ management did not allow the distribution (Kızıl Bayrak, May 16, 2015b). Because of its pro-employer and -Türk Metal contents, workers protested <i>Olay</i> newspaper and summoned people to boycott it. Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu-TİSK) made a statement and defined the strike and work stoppages as unlawful and unacceptable along with a depiction of the resistance as a threat for industrial relations and labor peace (Kızıl Bayrak, May 16, 2015c).</p> <p>In the evening, Münir Karaloğlu, Governor of Bursa, came into the play as the "arbitrager" and made a meeting with representatives from TOFAŞ and Renault for 2.5-3 hours to evaluate the developments and listen to the problems and demands of the workers. Attorney Deniz Baykal, who also took part in the meeting, made an explanation to the workers at Renault factory at midnight. In words of Baykal, the governor principally leaned to three main points; (i), nobody would be dismissed (ii), shop stewards would be determined through elections and (iii) a study "may be conducted" for a wage improvement (YouTube, May 16, 2015). Furthermore, the governor also committed to organize a meeting with the participation of companies', workers' and MESS representatives in order to conduct a negotiation process regarding the affairs. On the other hand, it is claimed that the governor suggested workers not to resign from the union in</p>

	exchange of the right to elect shop stewards. However, workers rejected the offer of employing ballot box to determine shop stewards in exchange of the right to elect their stewards for it would mean returning back to Türk Metal (Sendika.Org, May 17, 2015).
<b>May 17</b>	<p>By the 17th of May, repercussions of the strike started to take effect, and production stopped in Romania factory of Renault for motor production and transfer from Bursa stopped whereas operation decelerate in Spain factory (Kızıl Bayrak, May 17, 2015a). Waiting inside and outside the three factories continued on the 17th of May. On the other hand, it is reported that the pressure over TOFAŞ workers inside the factory started to be felt through after indoctrinations by TOFAŞ employer's representatives so as to define the resistance illegal (Yalvaç, 2015b). Moreover, in front of the Renault factory, police started to advise workers to send visitors away even including their families (Kızıl Bayrak, May 17, 2015b).</p> <p>On the 17th of May, Pevrul Kavlak, president of Türk Metal Union, made a speech at Ordinary General Meeting of Türk Metal Eskişehir Branch. In this speech, even though he expressed his support to workers' struggle for rights, he accused illegal marginal actors as the provocateur of the movements in addition to Birleşik Metal-İş as the trouble-maker in the sector in line with Türk Metal's May 13 dated statement. According to Kavlak, some militants of political organizations forced Renault workers to resign from the union. In his speech, Kavlak referred to the statements of Ministry inspector which defines the movement unlawful and enabling employer to fire workers without any severance and notice pay and to compensate the losses from workers. In this context, Kavlak invited workers to stop the demonstrations and to exclude marginal elements among them (YouTube, May 17, 2015).</p>
<b>May 18</b>	<p>Workers did not pay regard the invitation of Kavlak, and contrarily, Mako workers went to strike in front of the factory and with nearly one thousand people. First support to them came from Renault, TOFAŞ and Coşkunöz workers. Moreover, Yıldırım Municipality served some provisions to Renault workers. By the 18th of May, number of workers who went to strike de facto in Bursa was uttered as nearly twelve thousand (Vardar, May 18, 2015). Morocco factory of Renault stopped production because import products from Turkey could not be manufactured and transferred. TOFAŞ made a notice to Public Disclosure Platform (Kamuyu Aydınlatma Platformu-KAP) announcing the work stoppage started on the 16th of May and would continue until the end of demonstrations. For Coşkunöz factory stopped its operation, and hence Ford factory's sub-industry product supply interrupted, Ford's inventory almost finished and decelerated its operation. Hereupon, Coşkunöz employer negotiated with workers, and workers stated they would keep going their resistance until the acceptance of their demands (Sendika.Org, May 18, 2015).</p> <p>Due to increasingly felt effect of the resistances, Renault employer promised to accept workers' demands but requested a-month duration to settle existing protocols and procedures with MESS. However, workers did not accept this offer on the grounds of immediate acceptance of their demands. Furthermore, in TOFAŞ, management offered to start work the next day in exchange of the guarantee not to dismiss anybody without any wage improvement. Workers did not accept here either (Kızıl Bayrak, May 18, 2015a; May 18, 2015b).</p> <p>Hereupon, MESS made a new statement (Kızıl Bayrak, May 18, 2015c). In the statement, MESS recurred to define the demonstrations unlawful. According to MESS, the extent and scope of the resistance reached on the 18th of May were intolerable and greatly harming Turkish automotive industry's competitiveness within the international market as well as possibly causing cancellation of orders and market loss so as to damage country economy and employment. Meanwhile, workers met with the governor and decided to continue resistance after this meeting. During the 18th of May evening, the Governor, CEOs of the companies and worker representatives from Renault, TOFAŞ, Coşkunöz and Mako had a meeting. At the meeting, the governorship accepted the demands of (i) recognition of freedom to choose union, (ii) prevention of dismissals, (iii) written promise for wage increases, and (iv) conclusion of all these demands under a written protocol. However, because the employer party did not clearly agree upon the wage increases, workers left the table (Kızıl Bayrak, May 19, 2015b). According to attorney Deniz Baykal, the problem arose from reluctance of employer party to utter a figure regarding the improvements (Haberler, May 20, 2015). Even though CEOs and the governorship invited workers to another meeting on the 19th of May morning, workers indicated that the governorship applied pressure within the meetings and rejected this invitation (Evrensel May 19, 2015). Workers invited both employer party and the governor in front of the factory and the workers if there would be any further development or statement. The next day (May 19), it was claimed that Renault sent a message to the workers accusing worker representatives of leaving the table and escaping negotiations for this rejection.</p>
<b>May 19</b>	Upon these developments, employer party enhanced its pressure and aggression over the workers' resistance on the 19th of May. At midday, the police went to Mako factory and made a notice to the workers so as to instruct them to leave the factory upon the complaint of the employer (Kızıl Bayrak, May 19, 2015c). In the evening, Renault management orally promised to pay a premium of 500 TRY and make an improvement in the wages in a month with the

	<p>condition of that workers would start production by 00.00. However, workers insisted on the immediate acceptance of all their demands rather than postponing it to the next month. It is also reported that Renault management filed a criminal complaint against the workers and demanded taking the workers out of the factory by the means of police force (Evrensel, May 20, 2015). Workers rejected this notice, but employer cut off the water and restrained workers from using the facilities in the factory by locking prayer room and toilets. Moreover, Coşkunöz employer cut off the electricity and water along with locking the toilets as well as forbidding the entrance to and exit from the factory. Renault management also decided not to allow entrance of workers into the factory who had already left. Departments in which workers had stayed for days were locked and water &amp; tea dispensers were taken away (Sendika.Org, May 19, 2015). Additionally, towards morning, Coşkunöz management threatened workers for calling police intervention unless they leave the workplace. However, workers did not give up and did not leave the factory (Kızıl Bayrak, May 19, 2015d).</p> <p>According to a news reported in <i>Hürriyet</i> (Oğhan, May 19, 2015), Mesut Gezer, Vice President of Türk Metal, claimed that the movement turned into a mass movement which reminds Gezi Park demonstrations. For Gezer, the Bosch case was completely different due to the unique process experienced there. Gezer thinks whereas Bosch agreement, in essence, was a successful agreement; they were not able to explain and did not include the workers into the process which was a mistake that was even accepted by the union. More importantly, the government did not intervene so as to disperse workers due to the forthcoming elections, and all political candidates visited workers to demonstrate their nominal support. For Gezer, this is a factor both complicating for the finalization of the events and the union because the government does not normally conduct negotiations on behalf of workers, but the union. However, the government does not have to defend or support workers' gains on the table (and generally does not do so); whereas they explain their nominal support to workers.</p> <p>Another important development occurred on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, and Ford Otosan workers in Kocaeli gathered at Seka Park. There, workers made a statement to declare their resignation from Türk Metal and beginning of their strike on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May with the demand of re-employment of previously sacked workers for their struggle at Ford Otosan along with the requests claimed in other factories. Hereupon, Ford Otosan management, which is affiliated to Koç conglomerate like TOFAŞ, announced that production was paused for a while in order to prevent workers gathering, but workers performed a demonstration (Kızıl Bayrak, May 19, 2015e). In their statement, they defined Türk Metal, as the spokesman of employer rather than the voice of workers, was the main source of the problems (YouTube, May 19, 2015).</p>
<p><b>May 20</b></p>	<p>On the other hand, to isolate the resistance, police constantly attempted to marginalize the groups who came to visit and support the workers. During the night, Coşkunöz workers were overwhelmed by the pressure of employer party and the police. Team leaders were invited by the factory management and informed that they would be dismissed without any compensation or payment and the police would intervene unless they stop their resistance. Even though there were attempts by Coşkunöz workers to gather in front of the factory and persist the strike in the workplace with the support of workers from other factories; they could not achieve upon the withdrawal of team leaders due to the employer's intimidation (Kızıl Bayrak, May 20, 2015a). Police called workers to leave the factory at Renault as well. However, workers made a forum and did not accept to leave without concluding a reliable and satisfactory protocol.</p> <p>In addition to Renault, TOFAŞ, Mako and Coşkunöz, which had already stopped production; Ford Otosan and Ototrim workers turned off the switch by the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. In Kocaeli, Ford Otosan workers met in front of the factory in spite of the blockage by the police and made a statement here. Through the statement, workers advised to get e-government gateway passwords in order to carry out resignation process and declared another meeting for the next morning at Sabri Yalım Park (Kızıl Bayrak, May 20, 2015b). For the production was paused in other factory upon the reactions of the workers, they did not start work either. At Ototrim, workers did not leave the factory after 00.00-08.00 shift and 08.00-16.00 shift did not started to work on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. With the new factories which stopped the production, nearly thirteen thousand workers went on strike (Haberler, May 20, 2015).</p> <p>In Ankara, at Türk Traktör factory which is affiliated to Koç conglomerate like TOFAŞ and Ford Otosan, workers made dining hall demonstration at midday. After their shift at 15.00, they made another demonstration in front of the factory both to support workers resisting in other factories and to claim the same demands. In order not to give rise to a provocation by Türk Metal, they finished their demonstration after an hour and declared to repeat it the next day. Night shift workers also made a separate protest at Türk Traktör (Kızıl Bayrak, May 20, 2015a; Evrensel Metal, 2016; Tokol &amp; Güler, 2016, p.942).</p> <p>After discontinuous negotiations under the arbitration of the governorship, Türk Metal union made a statement. In the statement, the union repeated to paraphrase the details belonging to Bosch Agreement process and identified the reactions against the union unjust. According to the statement, the union tried to contact with the workers, but this would not be possible because of</p>

	<p>provocative groups. Statement put forward that all effort of the union was to finish the demonstrations, to start production and to solve the problems through negotiation in cooperation with MESS and employers (Türk Metal, May 2015, p.13).</p> <p>Moreover, three Renault managers came to Bursa from France in order to conduct negotiations and expedite the solution. Attorney Deniz Baykal indicated that they met with these managers after negotiations with the governor. Managers indicated that they were not able to make a decision before discussing the issue with MESS officials by reasoning a separate and exceptional policy at Renault factory would trigger a chaos in the metal sector including 110 thousand workers. While, for Baykal, participation of Ministries of Economy and Labor and Social Security would be solvent along with the ongoing negotiations; it was reported that some factory managers filed declaratory lawsuits at labor courts in order to identify work stoppages because of the interrupted nature of negotiations (Haberler, May 20, 2015).</p> <p>Last but not the least, the police made an operation in the early morning and took eleven people into custody in relation to the demonstrations in Bursa city. According to <i>Kızıl Bayrak</i> (May 20, 2015d) newspaper, this operation targeted MİB through arresting ten members of MİB along with the newspaper's rightful owner and managing editor. According to a news published on <i>Anatolian Agency</i> (Ulu, May 20, 2015), Bursa Security Directorate Anti-Terror Branch team claimed that work stoppage demonstrations at 4 separate factories since the 15<sup>th</sup> of May were supervised by people who had come to the city from other cities. Accordingly, it was reported that suspects performed these activities through the group of Metal Workers Association (MİB) which was established on social media along with <i>Kızıl Bayrak</i> newspaper and thanks to the decisions taken by Inter-Factories Committee generated during this process. The same day, government officials, who had been trying to keep calm regarding the demonstration in advance of general elections, brought a new dimension to their discourse and implied that there would be ideological traces underlying the demonstrations (Kızıl Bayrak, May 20, 2015c). Ali Babacan, then Deputy Prime Minister, also suggested that there were some doubts regarding ideological grounds of these events, and the government intended to make some reforms targeting to de-ideologize labor market. For Babacan, the emergence of such demonstrations in advance of elections is meaningful in terms of timing (Diken, May 20, 2015a). Previously, Faruk Çelik, then Minister of Labor and Social Security, had defined the demonstrations as an ordinary event between employer and employees rather than referring to an ideological framework as Babacan did (Diken, May 20, 2015b).</p>
<p><b>May 21</b></p>	<p>On the 21st of May, Ford Otosan management invited a part of workers to the factory to start the production. However, a pioneer group of workers was not invited, and they were sent a message noticing that they were on leave until the 4th of June. Hereupon, against this tactic to divide workers group which also refers to dismissal risk, a group of workers started to resist in front of the factory and evoked other workers to maintain strike (Kızıl Bayrak, May 21, 2015a). In front of the factory, workers collectively resigned from the union and collected money to contribute the expenses of workers in Bursa (Sendika.Org, May 21, 2015).</p> <p>On the 21th of May, Türk Traktör strike started in Ankara by 15.30. After the work stoppage, employee and employer representatives had a meeting. Whereas workers paraphrased the demands of the movement along with termination of weekend and overtime works, general director stated that it was not possible to decide on these demands in a single factory even though demands on hours and working conditions were solvable. Then, workers did not leave the factory, and upon the arrival of the other shift, they occupied the factory and continued to the strike (Evrensel, May 22, 2015a; Kızıl Bayrak, May 21, 2015c).</p> <p>At Renault, it was reported that negotiations went on and proceeded to sign of a satisfactory protocol. However, it was also claimed that the protocol was amended upon the intervention of MESS and Türk Metal. Accordingly, it was reported that the conditions included in Bosch agreement had been suggested by General Director Ales Bratoz and this offer had been accepted by workers, but employer representatives indicated that MESS had not allowed such an improvement two hours later than this meeting (Sendika.Org, May 24, 2015). Hereupon, workers left the table and decided to maintain their strike. Meanwhile, Jean Christophe Kugler, head of Renault Eurasia Regional Department, made a speech at İstanbul Autoshow 2015 fair and stated that the demonstrations were a significant problem for not only Renault but also Turkey, and they would review their long-term projects if this problem perseveres (Mersin Siyaset, May 21, 2015).</p> <p>At TOFAŞ, the CEO of the company met with workers in the evening. In the meeting, the CEO invited workers to start production 6.45am on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May and set an hour time aside workers to decide. However, workers did not accept this offer. Meantime, Ototrim and Mako maintained their resistance and it looks like they waited the result of developments in TOFAŞ and Renault.</p> <p>A statement on 21st May revealed the extremely organized character of the employers in the industry. Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu - TİSK), Turkish Metal Industrialists Union (Türkiye Metal Sanayicileri Sendikası - MESS), Uludağ Automotive Industry Exporters Association (Uludağ Otomotiv Endüstrisi İhracatçıları Birliği - OİB), Automotive Industrialists Association (Otomotiv</p>

	<p>Sanayicileri Derneği - OSD), Association of Automotive Parts and Components Manufacturers (Taşıt Araçları Yan Sanayicileri Derneği - TAYSAD) indicated in their common statement that even a day must not be lost in order to keep contribution of automotive industry to the Turkish economy and invited workers to finish demonstrations by defining their methods unlawful. The same day, Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu – TÜRK-İŞ), to which Türk Metal is affiliated, made a statement paraphrasing Türk Metal’s day-old statement and explaining its support to the union (Sendika.Org, May 21, 2015b). Furthermore, then Minister of Science, Industry and Technology Fikri Işık, albeit prudently in advance of elections, advised workers to start work and to continue negotiations while working on the one hand (Kızıl Bayrak, May 21, 2015b). The most serious event of the day in terms of oppressing the resistance was invitation of 47 workers from Oyak Renault and TOFAŞ to the court to give statement regarding the events (Diken, May 21, 2015) with the accusation of “halting the production forcibly” (Evrensel, May 23, 2015).</p>
May 22	<p>By the 22th May, mainstream media organs such as <i>Milliyet</i>, <i>Habertürk</i>, <i>Hürriyet</i>, <i>Posta</i>, <i>Yeni Şafak</i> and <i>Dünya</i> reported that nearly 1700 TOFAŞ workers started to work using a photo belonging to white collar employees who wore uniforms of the blue collars’ (Sendika.Org, May 22, 2015; Kızıl Bayrak, May 22, 2015a). According to a news published on <i>Evrensel</i> (May 23, 2015), factory management invited sub-contracted cleaning workers, Türk Metal supporters, retired employees and interns to start production and nearly 150 workers entered into the factory. This was reflected as bigger numbers in the media, and the police and other staff started to iterate this propaganda. Meanwhile, the tent area of workers was surrounded by barriers and workers were isolated from any kind of support. Workers in the factory were not allowed to see their families. Furthermore, the police started to fine supporters and Türk Metal officials called workers to persuade return back to the work and the union.</p> <p>The majority of TOFAŞ workers had rejected CEO’s proposal to start work at 06.45am on the 22th of May whereas this claim was commonly announced by Türk Metal officials and employer parties in Mako and Türk Traktör along with Tofaş all day (Kızıl Bayrak, May 22, 2015b). TOFAŞ management repeated its proposal so as to invite workers to start production 4.30pm through a message (Evrensel, May 23, 2015). In the message, it was also stated that labor contract of those who do not accept this invitation would be cancelled, but workers did not turn back to work still. Hereupon, two of workers’ demands were accepted by the management in the evening; company would not interfere with workers’ union preference and nobody would be dismissed for the involvement in the demonstrations. While negotiations over the third demand, i.e. wage improvement, was going on, Tülomsaş workers from Eskişehir visited workers and brought aids they had collected. At midnight, TOFAŞ management also accepted to 1000 TRY along with annual premium payments, though not improvement per hour, if workers start production on Monday (the 25<sup>th</sup> of May). Workers initially decided to talk with Renault workers before concluding the agreement. However, upon some fireworks were set off so as to imply a celebration, a part of workers supposed that agreement was concluded and by midnight, nearly 500 workers entered into the factory. However, there was not any written commitment regarding the agreement (Kızıl Bayrak, May 25, 2015a). Hereupon, TOFAŞ and Mako workers decided to conclude agreement on the basis of agreed terms.</p> <p>Mako workers went on their demonstration during the day. While they performed Friday prayer within the workplace at midday as Türk Traktör workers also did, they did not return production even though the management threatened them with dismissal if they do not start work by midnight. Upon the conclusion of TOFAŞ agreement, management offered the same terms and parties agreed (Sendika.Org, May 23, 2015). While Renault and Ototrim went on their strike during the day, an agreement could not be reached at the negotiations (Evrensel, May 22, 2015b). Ford Otosan factory also could not maintain production because of workers’ resistance. Workers with 3500 people gathered in front of the factory with a flourish of trumpets. It is claimed that Ali Koç came to the factory to negotiate with the workers and the factory management invited workers to start production promising to make the same improvement with Bursa workers in the case of the conclusion of an agreement there (Kızıl Bayrak, May 22, 2015b). Türk Traktör workers gathered in front of the factory in the early morning and determined their representatives on the basis of each department’s representation. After that, they designed the area for a long-term resistance. During the day, workers resigned from Türk Metal.</p>
May 23	<p>On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, after the conclusion of agreement in TOFAŞ and Mako along with the retreat of the resistance in Coşkunöz, Renault worker representatives and lawyers made a meeting with the employer representatives while resistant workers were waiting in front of the factory with its slogans, but there was not any result at the end of the negotiations. Meanwhile, standing and resistance went on at Ototrim, and Ford Otosan workers in Kocaeli continued to resign from the union. Almost all Türk Traktör workers in Ankara resigned from the union. In Ankara, Türk Traktör workers were threatened by the employer through a message, but workers ignored the message and went on the demonstrations (Kızıl Bayrak, May 23, 2015a).</p>

	<p>More importantly, Türk Metal sent an SMS to the workers indicating that “global forces have targeted constantly developing economic structure of our country by employing coconspirator and traitor LEFT organizations such as TKP, EMEP, BDP, Halkevleri, Kızıl Bayrak, DHKPC, DEV YOL, DEV SOL, KESK, DİSK, MİP, MİD. They are trying to spoil labor peace in the workplaces. We kindly request from all our patriotic members not to give any chance such kind of attempts” (Kızıl Bayrak, May 23, 2015b).</p> <p>After the conclusion of these first agreements, while workers and MİB started to expect full coverage of their demands and insisted on it, employers and officials accelerated their efforts to cease the demonstrations in terms of both oppression and dialogue. By this date, it can be identified that these first agreements became the precursor of somehow conclusion of other resistance even though they went on until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June.</p>
<b>May 24</b>	<p>On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, parties reached a consensus at Ototrim workplace upon the acceptance of workers’ demands so as to start production by 8.00am on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. Accordingly, no worker would be dismissed because of the demonstrations and workers would elect their own representatives within a reasonable duration though they were insistent on the abandonment of Türk Metal. Furthermore, all wage and social improvements to be concluded at Renault would be applied upon an agreement there (Evrensel, May 24, 2015). Upon TOFAŞ agreement, Renault workers were offered the conditions concluded at TOFAŞ this time. However, workers did not accept and insisted on all their demands by arguing that they required improvement per hour rather than aggregated premiums. Whereas the strike at Türk Traktör factory went on, employer at both Renault and Türk Traktör invited to stop demonstrations and start production along with speculating an agreement was concluded (Kızıl Bayrak, May 24, 2015a; Sendika.Org, May 24, 2015; Evrensel, May 25, 2015a). Meanwhile, eleven MİB members and Kızıl Bayrak journal editor who had been arrested were released after four days upon a trial at the court. MİB declared a statement and put forward that all claims of Türk Metal about MİB failed (Kızıl Bayrak, May 24, 2015b). In the evening, MESS made a statement and offered an improvement in the amount of 1000 TRY with the condition of protection of labor peace (Bursa’da Bugün, May 25, 2015).</p>
<b>May 25</b>	<p>On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, amid agreement news from various factories, Eskişehir İnönü Ford Otosan workers halted production after Kocaeli Ford Otosan factory on the eleventh day of the strikes. In order to reduce the number of participants of the demonstration, the employer sent a message to the workers and said to come the work, and then, threatened to dismiss resisting workers. Consequently, the employer had to come to the table, but workers did not accept the offer including the conditions concluded at TOFAŞ (Kızıl Bayrak, May 25, 2015b). Meanwhile, a long meeting between Renault worker and employer representatives remained inconclusive for workers did not accept the employer’s offer including 1000 TRY advance payment, 600 TL premium, 480 TL bank promotion and improvement in hourly wages in a month (Kızıl Bayrak, May 25, 2015c).</p>
<b>May 26</b>	<p>Two workers who participated the meeting with the employer as representatives were dismissed in Ford Otosan (Sendika.Org, May 26, 2015; Kızıl Bayrak, May 26, 2015). At Renault, a crucial meeting was held again between representatives, and the employer insisted on the previous offer. Even though workers did not accept the case, workers within the factory finally went out upon the collective decision of workers after twelve days. During the meeting, both all Renault workers and employees from other factories came in front of the factory to support for the significance of the negotiations in the eyes of all workplaces in the region. At night, one more meeting was organized, and Renault employer made a statement as if the resistance ended upon the leave of the workers from the factory. At this moment, it seems that Renault workers divided into two parts in terms of accepting the agreement and they decided to make a meeting the next day for an evaluation (Turan, 2015). The strikes in Ankara, Kocaeli and Eskişehir went on and Eskişehir Ford Otosan workers called a demonstration in front of the factory for the next morning (Evrensel, May 26, 2015b).</p>
<b>May 27</b>	<p>At the dawn of the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, the agreement was concluded at Renault under the conditions that employer had recently offered on the twelfth day of the resistance. According to the agreement, workers gained provisions such as “preventing dismissal of the workers involved in the resistance and prosecution on workers, withdrawals of the existing lawsuits, the protection of the freedom of association and the recognition of the representatives elected by the workers” (Çelik, 2015b) along with their economic gains under nine clauses. Parties made reciprocal statements regarding the details of the agreement (Evrensel, May 27, 2015a). In Kocaeli, whereas Ford Otosan workers went on their strike, factory management tried to sustain production with a small number of workers and invested 200 TRY to the accounts of operating workers in order to divide the resistant workers (Evrensel, May 27, 2015d). Türk Traktör workers in Ankara and Sakarya sustained their strike (Kızıl Bayrak, May 27, 2015b).</p>
<b>May 28</b>	<p>After the meeting held between worker representatives and Marco Votta, General Directorate of Türk Traktör, remained inconclusive, oppression at Türk Traktör intensified on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May. Factory management closed the toilets to be used by resisting workers and made a statement declaring the work would start the next morning upon allegedly obstructive attitude of worker</p>

	representatives (Evrensel, May 29, 2015a). Resistance at Ford Otosan's Kocaeli and Eskişehir factories went on (Sendika.Org, May 28, 2015). At Türk Traktör and Ford Otosan, employer representatives offered 1000 TRY premium payment for once only in order to persuade workers to stop resistance, but workers rejected for they demanded improvement in their hourly wages. (Kızıl Bayrak, May 28, 2015a; May 29, 2015a).
<b>May 29</b>	At Türk Traktör factory, Marco Votta's call to start production was not responded by workers, and a very small number of workers entered into the factory to start work, which would not be sufficient to initiate production in the factory (Sendika.Org, May 29, 2015). Meanwhile, Ford Worker Representation Committee established in Cologne made a statement and invited Ford Europe headquarter to persuade Ford Otosan to accept workers' demands in Turkey (Evrensel, May 29, 2015b). During this final curtain, Ford Otosan and Türk Traktör, two workplaces affiliated to Koç Group, took the strike by the throat in spite of the challenging conditions in the sense of both employer party's attitudes and environmental circumstances such as heavy rains (Kızıl Bayrak, May 29, 2015c).
<b>May 30</b>	On the 30 <sup>th</sup> of May, workers from Ford Otosan Eskişehir factory visited resisting workers at Kocaeli factory. After that, Kocaeli workers made a return visit (Kızıl Bayrak, May 30, 2015a). In Ankara, Deputy Governor visited Türk Traktör workers along with Turkish Employment Agency Representative (Kızıl Bayrak, May 30, 2015b).
<b>May 31</b>	On the 31 <sup>st</sup> of May, Türk Traktör managers made a call once more to start production the next day (Evrensel, June 1, 2015). This was the 5 <sup>th</sup> call during then 12-day strike. The resistance sustained at Ford Otosan factories in Kocaeli and Eskişehir along with Türk Traktör on this calm Sunday (Kızıl Bayrak, May 31, 2015; Sendika.Org, June 1, 2015a).
<b>June 1</b>	On the 1 <sup>st</sup> of June, Çelik-İş, which is affiliated to Hak-İş, distributed a leaflet signed by Cengiz Gül, president of the union, in TOFAŞ factory with an attempt to organize TOFAŞ workers (Kızıl Bayrak, June 1, 2015a; June 1, 2015b). In the afternoon, the strike at Türk Traktör factory ceased. Upon the calls of the factory management to start production, some workers broke away and the committee established by workers had to conclude the agreement with the terms of TOFAŞ agreement in order to prevent a more serious dissolution of the resistance on the twelfth day of the strike (Evrensel Metal, 2016). However, even though the provision of preventing dismissal of the workers involved in the resistance and prosecution on workers had been included in the agreement, factory management started to fire workers just several hours later (Evrensel, June 2, 2015a).
<b>June 2</b>	By the 2 <sup>nd</sup> June, strikes went on only at Ford Otosan along with separate minor protests and resignations in other factories (Kızıl Bayrak, June 2, 2015). It was reported that workers who went on strike in Bursa were prosecuted by Anti-Terror Branch of Bursa Provincial Directorate of Security (Evrensel, June 2, 2015b). Within the scope of the prosecution, workers were asked whether they carried out any activity regarding initiation and endurance of the strikes, rejection of employers' offers, propaganda of the demonstrations along with their information or affiliation with inter-factories committee allegedly established by Communist Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist İşçi Partisi - TKİP) (Benli, June 2, 2015). On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> of June, towards the end of the resistance, Birleşik Metal made a statement inviting workers to a democratic and class-based unionism under the umbrella of Birleşik Metal-İş (Birleşik Metal-İş, June 2, 2015).
<b>June 3</b>	The last castle of the resistance, Ford Otosan, ceased the resistance on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> of June at the fifteenth day without any gains (Evrensel Metal, 2016; Çelik 2015b). After the resistance, a lot of workers were dismissed. Apart from follow-on movements, even though the strikes finished by the 3 <sup>rd</sup> of June, the Metal Storm led to comprehensive transformations within the sector in terms of its long-term results.
<b>August 1-2</b>	Türk Metal convened a General Congress and amend its bylaw (Türk Metal, June 2015, p.15; July 2015, p.16; August 2015, p.13).
<b>2016</b>	
<b>May</b>	Türk Metal started to get prepared for 2017-2019 Collective Agreement period (Türk Metal, May 2016, p.16).
<b>August</b>	Negotiations between MESS and Türk Metal started.
<b>December</b>	Towards the end of the year, Türk Metal initiated demonstrations in the workplaces to enhance its influence during the negotiations. However, parties could not reach an agreement. Thus, arbitration came into play but there was no agreement under arbitration either.
<b>2017-2019 Collective Agreement Period</b>	
<b>2017</b>	
<b>January 18</b>	Upon the impasse of the negotiations, three major unions in the sector took strike decision so as to start on February 2, 2017 with 130,000 workers.

<b>January 23</b>	Metal employers declared lock-out upon the strike decision of the unions. Pevrul Kavlak visited Oyak Renault workplace and had a meeting with workers (Türk Metal, January 2017, pp.14-19).
<b>January 24</b>	The strikes were banned by Council of Ministers.
<b>January 30</b>	Eventually, parties concluded the agreement at the dawn of January 30 as a result of long and determinant negotiations. Accordingly, the agreement would be valid for two years with an 24.63% average increase in wages.
<b>April</b>	Türk Metal established Emek branch for Renault workplace (Türk Metal, April 2017, p.5)



## B. THE CHART OF WORKPLACES INFLUENCED BY THE METAL STORM

Following table is prepared on the basis of İrfan Kaygısız's study (2016b, pp. 112-114) to map the workplaces influenced by the Metal Storm. The list includes the workplaces in which any kind of demonstrations were performed, i.e. strikes, dining hall protests, resignation from the union or any action to utter their inconveniences from the union. Kaygısız notes that it is really difficult to precisely identify the number of workers who participated the demonstrations. Methodologically, the table take the number of Türk Metal members in the workplaces as the basis to get an idea by keeping in mind that all workers may not have participated to the demonstrations in their workplaces (Kaygısız, 2016b, p.112). On the other hand, the list prepared by Kaygısız has been compared with the database which was generated for the preparation of Annex-1, and actions reflected in the press were listed in the right column to give an idea about the dynamism of the workplace. The types of mobilization in each workplace may include but not be limited to the ones indicated in this column. The workplaces which are narrated in Chapter – 5 and Annex – 1 are bolded in the table and bypassed as the information can be seen in other titles. Following list includes workplaces operating in the side industry of automotive sector along with some others operating in other sub-industries of metal sector such as white goods. They are also included for the workers from these workplaces were influenced by amendments in the contracts even though they do not operate in automotive sub-sector.

	<b>Workplace</b>	<b>Number of Workers</b>	<b>Number of Türk Metal Members</b>	<b>Actions Performed by the Workers*</b>
1	ADDS Dişli Dövme	369	257	Resignation from Türk Metal.
2	Akplast	792	687	
3	Arçelik - LG Klima	979	827	Resignation from Türk Metal, protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, strike between July 2-6, 2015.
4	Arçelik Beylikdüzü	14274	12150	Protest in the workplace against the physical attack to workers, resignation from Türk Metal
5	Arçelik Ankara			

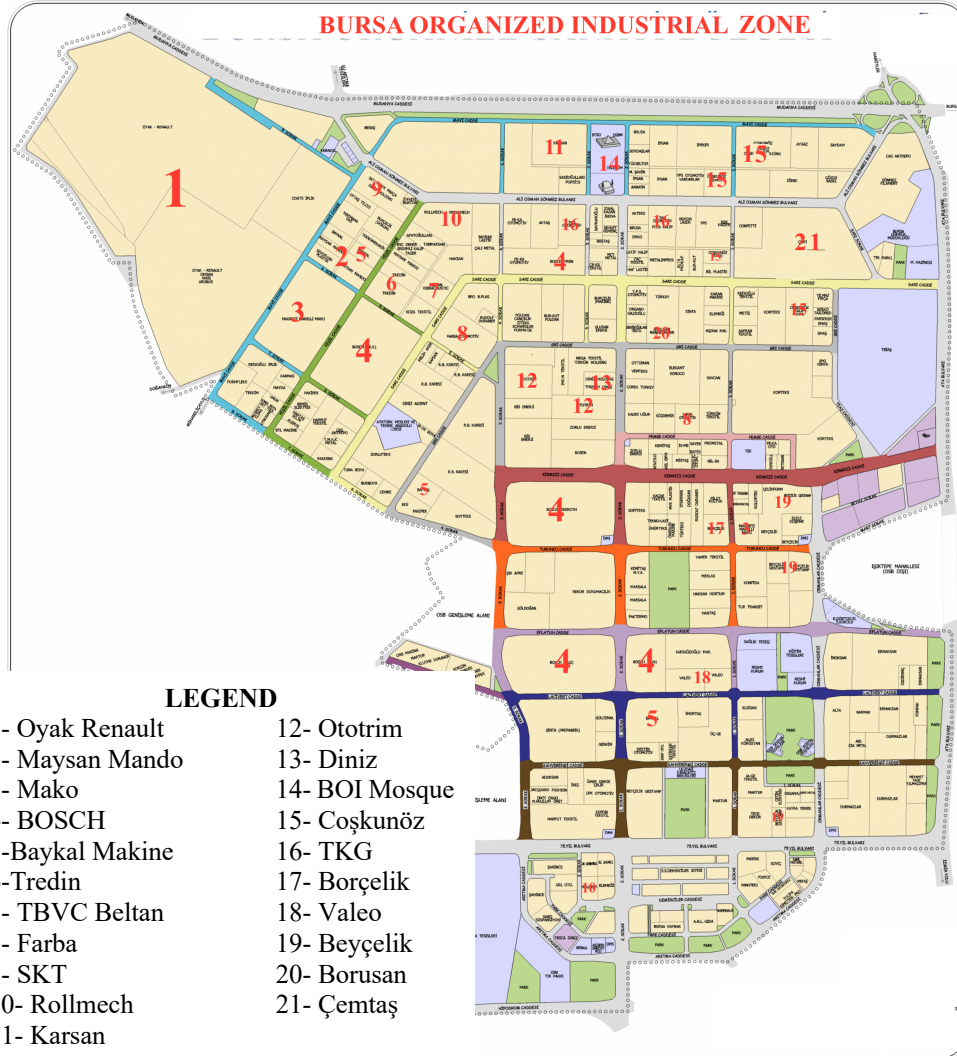
6	Arçelik Gebze			Dining hall protests
7	Arçelik Eskişehir			Protest in the workplace against the physical attack to workers, protest in the workplace against Türk Metal and short-term work stoppage.
8	Autoliv	1.029	833	
9	Aygaz	323	276	
10	B/S/H Ev Aletleri	4.056	3.213	Resignation from Türk Metal.
11	CMS Jant (İzmir)	1.526	1.320	Protest in the workplace against Türk Metal.
12	Coşkunöz	1.736	1.374	
13	Çemtaş	399	302	Solidarity visit to Coşkunöz workers, resignation from Türk Metal
14	Delphi	4658	4.268	Protest in the workplace against the physical attack to workers, protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, representative in so-called inter-factories committee meeting, solidarity visit to Renault, TOFAŞ, Coşkunöz and Mako workers, meal boycott, demonstration in front of Renault.
15	Diniz Johnson Controls (DJC)	496	416	Demonstration in the city center, solidarity visit to Coşkunöz and Renault workers.
16	Dytech	614	457	Short-term work stoppage.
17	EGO	603	512	Strike between June 10-12
18	Enpay	896	689	Resignation from Türk Metal
19	Ermetal	730		Protest in the workplace against the physical attack to workers, short-term work stoppage.
20	Erkunt Döküm	1214	1056	Resignation from Türk Metal
21	Farba Bayraktarlar / Bursa	926	677	Protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, solidarity visit to Renault, TOFAŞ, Coşkunöz and Ototrim workers, demonstration in front of Renault, resignation from Türk Metal
22	Farba Bayraktarlar / Gebze			
23	Federal Mogul	1.353	1.191	Resignation from Türk Metal
24	Ford Otosan Kocaeli	7.824	6.386	
25	Ford-Otosan Eskişehir			
26	Orau Nobel Otomotiv	698		Dining hall protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, solidarity visit to Renault and TOFAŞ workers, resignation from Türk Metal.
27	Habaş	1.133	623	Resignation from Türk Metal
28	HP Pelzer Pimsa Otomotiv	378	250	
29	İzmir Demir Çelik	994	735	
30	Mako	1021	773	
31	Mercedes (Aksaray)	5.637	3.850	Resignation from Türk Metal, dining hall protest, protest in the workplace against Türk Metal.
32	Metalsa	159	124	
33	Opsan	325	212	
34	ORS Rulman (Ankara)	1.974	1.561	Work stoppage, resignation from Türk Metal, Protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, strike on June 8 and between August 26-September 7.
35	Ototrim	674	559	

36	<b>OYAK Renault</b>	5.681	4.205	
37	Rollmech	865	727	Protest in front of Türk Metal Altıparmak branch, solidarity visit to Renault and Ototrim workers. 30 workers were dismissed because of their support to resistant workers.
38	SKT Yedek Parça	373	305	Demonstration in the city center, protest in the workplace against the physical attack to workers, protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, representative in so-called inter-factories committee meeting, meal boycott, solidarity visit to Renault, Coşkunöz, Mako and Ototrim workers, demonstration in front of Renault.
39	Şahince Otomotiv A.Ş.	401	212	
40	TBVC Beltan	361	301	Demonstration in the city center, representative in so-called inter-factories committee meeting, demonstration in front of Renault, solidarity visit to Coşkunöz and Ototrim workers.
41	TKG Otomotiv	198	157	
42	<b>TOFAŞ</b>	5.960	4.732	
43	Trakya Döküm	828	722	
44	Tredin Oto	364	295	Protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, Solidarity visit to Renault, Coşkunöz and Ototrim workers, demonstration in front of Renault.
45	<b>Türk Traktör (Ankara)</b>	2.646	1.963	
46	<b>Türk Traktör (Sakarya)</b>			
47	Valeo	1.119	802	Protest in the workplace against the physical attack to workers, protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, representative in so-called inter-factories committee meeting, solidarity visit to TOFAŞ and Renault workers, short-term work stoppage.
48	VLE Elektronik	88	53	Protest in the workplace against Türk Metal.
49	ZF Sachs	507	398	Protest in the workplace against Türk Metal, resignation from Türk Metal.
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74843</b>	<b>58019</b>	

\* **Sources:** Tokol & Güler, 2016; Taştan, 2015; Kızıl Bayrak; Evrensel, Sendika.Org

Apart from the list provided by Kaygısız (2016b), in various media organs, it is reported that following workplaces performed certain type of mobilizations in the forms of resignation, solidarity visits or protests against the union; Maysan Mando (in which Çelik-İş is the entitled union), Beyçelik Montaj, Karsan, Freudenberg, Borusan, Componenta, Ficosa Gemlik, Borçelik, Orhan Teknik Malzeme, Bosch, Yazaki, Aka Otomotiv, Otokar, Magna Seating, Ege Endüstri, Baykal Makine and Pimsa (**Sources:** Tokol & Güler, 2016; Taştan, 2015; Kızıl Bayrak; Evrensel, Sendika.Org).

## C. LOCATION OF THE PROMINENT WORKPLACES ON THE MAP



## D. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

İşçilerin sınıfsal pozisyonuyla, siyasal katılım ve mobilizasyona dair tercihleri arasında geçmişte olduğu varsayılan ilişkinin etkisini yitirdiğine dair tespitler son kırk yılda çokça tartışıldı. Bu süre zarfında siyaset alanında meydana gelen çok sayıda olay sınıf kategorisinden çok ulus, din, etnisite gibi başka değişkenlerle açıklandı. Öte yandan bu esnada sınıfsallık ve politika arasındaki ilişkinin akıbetine dair sorgulama, konuyla özel olarak ilgilenen dar bir akademik çevrenin dışında pek az ele alındı. Bu çalışmada, bu noktadan hareketle işçilerin politikayla ilişkilene biçimleri incelenmiştir. Öte yandan, işçi sınıfına mensup bireylerin, oy verme davranışı bakımından yaygın olarak hükümet partisine destek verdiği bilindiğinden, bu inceleme oy verme davranışı üzerinden değil, Türkiye’de alternatif bir siyasi katılım biçimi olan sosyal mobilizasyonlar üzerinden yapılmıştır.

Bu çerçevede 2015 yılında Nisan ve Haziran ayları arasında otomotiv sektöründe gerçekleşen grev dalgası, söz konusu incelemenin vakası olarak ele alınmış, Bursa merkezli olmak üzere çeşitli otomotiv fabrikalarında gerçekleşen protesto eylemleri incelenmiştir. Söz konusu protesto eylemlerinin ilk sinyalleri Türkiye Metal Sanayicileri Sendikası (MESS) ile metal işkolunda yetkili işçi sendikalar olan Türk Metal ve Çelik-İş arasında Aralık 2014’te imzalanan toplu sözleşmenin ardından gelmiştir. Önceki dönemlerde 2 yıllık olan sözleşme süresi bu anlaşmayla 3 yıla çıkartılmış, sözleşme süresinin uzaması işçiler arasında gelirlerinin enflasyon karşısında eriyeceği endişesini uyandırmıştır. İlerleyen aylarda Türk Metal sendikası, daha önce yetki problemi yaşadığı Bosch fabrikasında, mahkeme sürecinin tamamlanmasının ardından yetki belirsizliğinin ortadan kalkmasıyla münferit bir sözleşme imzalanmıştır. Bu sözleşmenin koşulları, MESS ile yapılan toplu sözleşmenin koşullarından daha iyi olması, Bursa’daki otomotiv ve bağlı yan sanayi işletmelerinde çalışan işçiler tarafından bir çifte standart olarak algılanmasına yol açmıştır.

Bunun üzerine işçiler, sendika ve işverene MESS ile yapılan toplu sözleşme şartlarının iyileştirilmesine yönelik taleplerini iletmiş ancak olumlu yanıt

alamamışlardır. Bunun üzerine, 14 Nisan 2015 itibariyle, Bursa Organize Sanayi Bölgesinde (BOSB) bulunan Renault fabrikasından başlayarak işçiler fabrika içerisinde seslerini duyurmaya yönelik eylemler düzenlemeye başlamış, eylemler daha sonra TOFAŞ, Mako, Coşkunöz ve Ototrim gibi işyerlerine yayılmıştır. Söz konusu fabrikalardan işçiler önce 26 Nisan 2015'te Bursa şehir merkezinde bir miting düzenlemiş; yetkili sendika Türk Metal'i işçilerin taleplerini dile getirmeye ve takipçisi olmaya çağırmıştır. Bu taleplerine yanıt bulamayan işçiler 5 Mayıs 2015 tarihinde BOSB'de sendikadan topluca istifa etmek üzere bir araya gelmiş, ancak bu toplantıya Türk Metal sendikasına bağlı olduğu iddia edilen bir grup tarafından saldırı düzenlenmiş, bazı işçiler ve basın çalışanları yaralanmıştır. Bu olaya ilişkin görüntülerin sosyal medyada yayılmasıyla işkolunda bulunan işyerlerinde ciddi bir tepki ortaya çıkmış ve işçiler sendikadan toplu bir biçimde istifa etmeye başlamışlardır.

İşçilerin ücretlerin iyileştirilmesine ilişkin taleplerini değerlendirmek üzere süre isteyen işveren temsilcileri de 14 Mayıs 2015'te herhangi bir değişiklik yapılmayacağını işçilere bildirmiş, Renault fabrikasından işçiler de 14 Mayıs'ı 15 Mayıs'a bağlayan gece, vardiyanın sona ermesinden sonra işyerini terk etmeyerek fiili bir grev başlatmışlardır. Grev sonraki günlerde Bursa'da TOFAŞ, Coşkunöz, Mako ve Ototrim; Kocaeli ve Eskişehir'de Ford Otosan; Ankara ve Sakarya'da Türk Traktör fabrikalarına sıçramıştır. Renault ve Türk Traktör'de 12, TOFAŞ'ta 8 ve Ford Otosan'da 15 gün boyunca üretim ya durmuş ya da çok düşük seviyelerde seyretmiştir. İşçilerin bu fiili grevler esnasında talepleri; (i) sözleşmelerin Bosch'ta yapılan sözleşmeye göre yeniden düzenlenmesi, (ii) işçilere sendikalarını seçme özgürlüğünün tanınması ve Türk Metal sendikasının işyerinden gitmesi, (iii) eylemler nedeniyle hiçbir işçinin işine son verilmeyeceğine dair güvence verilmesi olmuştur. İşçiler, Renault, TOFAŞ, Mako ve Ototrim fabrikalarında ücret taleplerinde belli kazanımlar elde etmiş, Ford Otosan ve Coşkunöz'de ise herhangi bir kazanım elde edilememiştir. Sendikalarını seçme konusunda özellikle Renault ve TOFAŞ'ta Türk Metal dışında sendikalar bir süre etkinlik gösterse de Türk Metal bu fabrikalarda yeniden yetkili sendika haline gelmeyi başarmıştır. Grevin meydana geldiği hemen hemen tüm işyerlerinde de özellikle greve öncülük eden işçiler işten çıkartılmıştır. Doktrinde bu konuda farklı görüşler olmakla birlikte grevi takip eden dönemde açılan

işe iade davalarında mahkeme grevlerin yasal çerçeve dahilinde olmadığını gerekçe göstererek işverenin fesih gerekçesini haklı bulmuştur.

Eylemlerin gerçekleştiği sektör ve eyleme katılan işçilerin sayısı, eylemlerin süresiyle kapsamı göz önünde bulundurularak bu süreç kamuoyunda Metal Fırtına olarak adlandırılmıştır. Yaklaşık kırk bin işçinin çeşitli eylem biçimleriyle bu sürece dahil olduğu hesaplanmaktadır. Bu rakam ve yukarıda ifade edilen fiili grev süreleri göz önünde bulundurularak Metal Fırtına, işçi mobilizasyonu bakımından yakın geçmişin istisnai olayları arasında sayılabilir. Bu çalışmada söz konusu olayın sergilediği temel özellikler, sürecin tarafı olan aktörlerin olaya yaklaşımları, grev süreci ve sonuçları ele alınmıştır. Bu çerçevede, yukarıda sunulan taleplerden de anlaşılacağı üzere, işçilerin içinde buldukları koşullara karşı memnuniyetsizliğini sendikaya karşı bir tepki biçiminde açığa koymalarının nedenleri tartışılmış; grev sürecinde güç kaybeden Türk Metal sendikasının ne tür politikalarla gücünü yeniden tesis etmeyi başardığı incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamda, sınıf politikaları bakımından böylesi geniş kapsamlı bir olayın ne gibi gönderimlerinin olduğu ele alınmıştır.

Bu sorulara yanıt aramak üzere, bu çalışmanın Giriş'i takip eden ikinci bölümünde 1980 sonrasında Türkiye'de snai sektörlerin dönüşümü ele alınmış, bu dönüşüme paralel olarak çalışma ilişkilerinin esnekleşmesini ve sermaye birikim rejiminin gerekliliklerine uygun sendikacılık sisteminin tesis edilmesini sağlayan yasal çerçeveye değinilmiştir. Üçüncü bölümde bu dinamiklerin otomotiv sektörü üzerindeki etkileri incelenmiştir. 1990'ların ortasından sonra gelişme kaydeden Türk otomotiv sektörünün büyüme dinamikleri ve sektörde faaliyet gösteren ana firmalar sunulmuş ve sektördeki bireysel ve kolektif çalışma ilişkileri analiz edilmiştir. Bu genel çerçevenin sunulmasının ardından dördüncü bölüm, Metal Fırtına sürecinin temel özelliklerinin ve sonuçlarının tartışılmasına ayrılmıştır. Bu bölümde tartışma konusu edilen olaylar detaylı olarak Ek-1'de günlük bazda sunulmuştur. Ek-2'de, greve çıkmasa bile çeşitli biçimlerde bu sürece dahil olan işyerleri ve buralarda çalışan işçi sayıları sunulmuştur. Bu ekler, grevlerin bilançosunu anlamak açısından anlamlı bir çerçeve sağlamak amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Ayrıca Ek-3, protesto eylemlerinin en yoğun biçimde yaşandığı Bursa Organize Sanayi Bölgesi'nin haritasını sunmaktadır. Grev sürecini ele alan dördüncü bölüm, bu eklerle bir arada tasarlanmıştır. Beşinci

bölüm, Metal Fırtına'nın sınıf politikaları açısından değerlendirilmesine ayrılmıştır. Bu çerçevede, Metal Fırtına'nın politik bir işçi sınıfı hareketi niteliği taşıyıp taşımadığı incelenmiş, hareketin taleplerinin merkezinde yer alan sendikacılık tarzı ve alternatiflerine dair gözlemler tartışılmış ve yaygınlık kazanan fiili grev biçiminin tezahürleri irdelenmiştir.

Çalışmanın araştırma kısmı, Metal Fırtına olarak adlandırılan sürecin öncesini, grev sürecini ve sonrasını kapsayacak biçimde süreç takibini (*process tracing*) temel alan bir yöntemle tasarlanmıştır. Bu çerçevede, süreç takibi yöntemi, olaylar silsilesinin, sürecin parçası olan aktörlerin benimsedikleri tutumların ve bu tutumları hangi saiklerle benimsediklerinin anlaşılması için ilgili aktörlerin yaptığı açıklamaların incelenmesini gerektirir. Olayın tarafı olan aktörler olarak işverenler ve işveren örgütleri, konuya müdahil olan hükümet ve idare yetkilileri, işçi sendikaları (Türk Metal, Birleşik Metal-İş ve Çelik-İş) ile işçiler kabul edilmiştir. İşçiler ifadesi çok geniş bir popülasyonu ifade ettiği için, bu çalışma bağlamında grevin gerçekleştiği işyerlerinde (Renault, TOFAŞ, Ford Otosan, Türk Traktör, Coşkunöz, Mako ve Ototrim) çalışan işçiler kastedilmektedir. Araştırma, temelde söz konusu aktörlerin basına yaptıkları açıklamalar, alana ilişkin haberler, sendikaların yayınları, konuya ilişkin sahadan gözlemler içeren akademik ve yarı-akademik çalışmalar gibi çeşitli araçlar yoluyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Özellikle eylemlerin günlüğünü tutan *Evrensel*, *Kızılbayrak* ve *Sendika.Org* gibi kaynaklar gelişmelere ilişkin sistematik bilgi içermeleri nedeniyle öne çıkmıştır. Bir olay medya organları yoluyla sunulurken gerçekliğe ilişkin bir temsil oluşturulacağı yönündeki kabulden hareketle söz konusu inceleme eleştirel bir gözle yapılmış ve olayın diğer aktörlerine ait kaynaklara ve akademik çalışmalara başvurarak doğrulamaya çalışılmıştır. Kesin olarak sağlaması yapılamayan hususlar, iddia biçiminde aktarılmıştır.

Çalışmanın soruları kapsamında iktisadi bağlam ele alınırken küreselleşme süreciyle merkez ekonomiler ve çevre ekonomilerin birbiriyle entegrasyonu ve bunun çalışma ilişkileri üzerindeki etkisi tartışılarak başlanmıştır. Buna göre, merkez ülkelerdeki üretim faaliyetlerinin önemli bir kısmı ucuz ve esnek emek gücü ile uygun pazar imkanlarına erişmek üzere çevre ekonomilere kaydırıldı. Bunun çevre ekonomilerdeki karşılığı ise daha önceleri uygulanan ithal ikameci modelin yerini



alan, dünya ekonomisiyle eklemlenmenin farklı bir biçimini ifade eden ihracata dayalı sanayileşmeye geçiş ve kendisine bu sanayileşme biçimini temel alan bir kalkınma stratejisi oldu. Türkiye’de bu geçiş, 1970’lerin sonuyla beraber etkisini ciddi biçimde göstermeye başlayan iktisadi ve siyasi krize yanıt olarak önerilen 24 Ocak Kararları ve bu programı uygulamanın aracı olan 12 Eylül 1980 darbesinin ardından gerçekleşti. Öte yandan programın hayata geçirilmesi öncesinde ortaya atılan beklentiler, bu stratejinin uygulanmasıyla da gerçeklik kazanmadı. Yatırımların ağırlıklı olarak konut sektörüne yöneldiği, sanayi alanında yeterli üretkenlik ve istihdam olanaklarının oluşturulamadığı 12 Eylül sonrası sanayileşme politikalarının önemli bir kısmında yaygın olarak gözlemlendi. Bu çerçevede, sanayi katma değerinin gayri safi yurt içi hasılaya oranı ve sınai istihdamın toplam istihdama oranı gibi endeksler zaman içerisinde dalgalı ve dahi düşüş trendinde bir grafik sergiledi. Sanayisizleşme olarak adlandırılan bu süreç, aslında ülkede sermaye birikim rejiminin ve sanayiinin katma-değeri ve teknolojik girdileri düşük, emek-yoğun bir karaktere sahip olduğu anlamına gelmektedir. Bu durum, Türkiye ekonomisinin dünya ekonomisine eklemlenme ve rekabet düzeyini koruyabilmek adına emeğin baskılanması sonucunu doğurmuştur.

Söz konusu baskılama, bireysel çalışma ilişkilerinin esnekleşmesi, gayri-nizami iş sözleşmelerinin önce fiilen ortaya çıkması ardından da 2003 yılında çıkartılan 4857 sayılı İş Kanunu ile yasal bir çerçeve kazanması biçiminde gerçekleşmiştir. Bu değişikliğe, çalışanların sosyal bir varlık olarak görüldüğü yaklaşımın yerini emek gücünün büyük ölçüde hesaplanabilir bir maliyet kalemi olarak ele alındığı bir mental dönüşüm kaynaklık etmiş; buna paralel olarak da çalışanın korunduğu bir hukuki çerçeve yerine işleri korumaya önem veren ve iş güvencesini daha korumasız bir biçime dönüştüren yeni bir hukuki çerçeve tesis edilmiştir. Takip eden süreçte yayımlanan Ulusal İstihdam Stratejisi Belgesi, bu felsefenin daha da derin bir etki kazandığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bunun sonucu olarak daha önceleri görece iyi ekonomik olanaklara ve güvenceye sahip daha formel sektörlerin de bu ayrıcalıklarını yitirmeye başladığı, enformel sektörlerle aradaki farkın gitgide azaldığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Bu koşullar altında, yukarıda özetlenen sermaye birikim rejimi, bu rejimin uygulanmasına olanak sağlayacak sendikacılık biçimlerinin de tesis edilmesini gerekli

kılmıştır. 12 Eylül'ün hemen ardından çıkarılan 2821 sayılı Sendikalar Kanunu ve 2822 sayılı Toplu Sözleşme, Grev ve Lokavt Kanunuyla oluşan yasal çerçevede, merkezi bir sendikal yapı oluşturulması hedeflenmiş, işkolunda ve işyerinde belirlenen barajlarla yalnızca belli sendikaların işlevli bir sendikal faaliyet yürütebilmesi olanaklı hale getirilmiştir. Bu çerçevede belirli sektörler büyük ölçüde sendikasızlaştırılırken (*union-busting*) bir sendikayla çalışmanın ihtiyaç olduğu veya sektörlerde simbiyotik sendikacılık olarak adlandırılan sendikacılık biçimi geçerlilik kazanmaya başladı. Buna göre, özel sektörde işverenle kamu sektöründe de devletle karşılıklı iş birliği halinde çalışan sendikalar güçlenip büyüdüler. Bu iş birliği, yer yer sendikaların temsil ettiği işçilerin çıkarlarını ikinci plana atması sonucunu da beraberinde getirdi. Simbiyotik sendikacılık örnekleri, özellikle 2008 krizinin ardından, hükümete yakın bir politika izleyen konfederasyona bağlı sendikaların pek çok sektörde ciddi bir güç kazanmaya başlamasıyla tekrar tartışma konusu oldu.

Bu nesnel çerçeve içerisinde, Türkiye'de otomotiv sektörü teknolojik anlamda gelişme kaydeden az sayıdaki sektörden biridir ve ihracat kalemleri içerisinde bu sektörün üretimi oldukça kritik bir yer tutmaktadır. Sektör özellikle 1990'ların ortasında Gümrük Birliği Anlaşması ve 2000'lerin başında 2001 krizinin ardından merkez ekonomilerden yatırım almış ve ciddi bir gelişim göstermiştir. Buna rağmen, hala katma değer bakımından belirli bir seviyenin üstüne çıkılamamıştır. Orta-teknoloji tuzağı olarak adlandırılan bu durum, teknoloji düzeyi yüksek bileşenler, yedek parça, tasarım ve araştırma-geliştirme faaliyetlerinde dışa bağımlılığının devam etmesiyle karakterize olmaktadır. Türk otomotiv endüstrisinin en önemli kuruluşlarında, bu faktöre uygun biçimde yabancı ortakların hisseleri önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Bu da Türkiye'de üretilen artık değerinin bir kısmının bu merkezlere transfer edildiği önermesini doğruluyor görünmektedir.

Öte yandan sektördeki büyüme, işçilerin çalışma koşullarında iyileşme sonucunu beraberinde getirmemektedir. İşçiler uzun çalışma saatlerinden ve zorlu çalışma koşullarının yol açtığı fiziksel rahatsızlıklardan şikâyet etmektedir. Bu ağır koşullara rağmen çalışan ekonomik koşulları ciddi ölçüde kötüye gitmiş, işçi sınıfının daha enformel kesimlerine kıyasla sahip oldukları avantajlı koşullar ortadan kalkmaya başlamıştır. Bütün bunlara rağmen kayıtlı, güvenceli ve sendikalı çalışma ilişkilerinin

hala belli oranda geçerli olduğu sektör, işçi eylemlilikleri ve mobilizasyonları bakımından dinamik sektörler arasındadır. Beyaz eşya ve demir-çelik sektörleriyle beraber metal işkolu içerisinde sayılan otomotiv sektöründe yetkili üç işçi sendikası bulunmaktadır. Bu üç sendika, Türk Metal, (Öz)Çelik-İş ve Birleşik Metal-İş, arasında rekabetçi bir ilişki olduğunu söylemek mümkündür. Sektördeki en büyük sendika Türk Metal, işveren sendikası MESS ile sözleşme koşullarında anlaşmakta ve bu biçimde belirlenen standartlar sektördeki diğer işyerlerinin de koşulları konusunda bir ölçek oluşturmaktadır. Türk Metal, bu süreçlerde benimsediği katılıma kapalı, anti-demokratik ve işverenle iş birliğini ön plana alan politikası nedeniyle eleştirilmekte, zaman zaman sendika içerisinde bu politikaya karşı gelişen muhalefet olaylarının şube kapatma veya şiddet gibi bir dizi araçla bastırıldığı ifade edilmektedir. Bu çerçevede 12 Eylül sonrası oluşan sendikal çerçeve içerisinde pek çok sendika hayatta kalabilmek için işveren tarafıyla zorunlu uzlaşılarda bulunduğu ifade edilmiş ve bu tutum literatürde baskıcı ortaklık (*coercive partnership*) olarak tanımlanmıştır. Öte yandan Türk Metal'in ortaya çıkan durumun, zorunlu bir uzlaşının ötesinde, söz konusu yasal çerçeveyi bir kazanma stratejisine dönüştüren baskıda ortaklık (*partnership in coercion*) stratejisini izlediğine yönelik gözlemler aktarılmıştır. Buna göre sendika, işverene hayatta kalmak üzere mecbur kaldığı zorunlu bir uzlaşının ötesinde işçilerin kontrolü ve içerilmesi hususunda bir dizi işlevi vadeden, işverence üstlenilecek çeşitli işlevleri üstlenmeye dayalı yeni bir uzlaşım geliştirmekte bu da onu işçilerin taleplerini temsil eden ve haklarını koruyan bir sendika hüviyetinden uzaklaştırmaktadır.

Bu nedenle sendikadan istifa etmek ve sendikanın yetkisini düşürmek üzere çeşitli zamanlarda eylemler gerçekleştirilmiş, bu eylemler ücretlerde iyileştirmenin yanında şiddet, işten çıkarma ve güvenlik güçlerinin müdahalesine başvurmak gibi araçlarla bastırılmıştır. 2015 yılında sendikaya karşı oluşan ve yukarıda özetlenen eylemlilik süreci de bu dalganın daha ciddi boyuta sığramış bir uzantısı olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Sendikayı karşısına aldığı oranda Metal Fırtına, 12 Eylül sonrasında tesis edilen sendikacılık tarzını ve yasal çerçeveye bir meydan okuma olarak değerlendirilmekte, yasakçı sendikal çerçevenin mantıki bir sonucu olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Bu çerçevede işçilerin ücret talebi önce sendika tarafından kayıtsızlıkla karşılanmış ardından da sendika gelişen muhalefeti şiddetli bir karşı çıkışla engellemek istemiştir. Ancak, kullanılan yöntemler tepkilerin daha da artmasına yol açmış, işçilerin Türk Metal'e öfkesi eylemlerin büyümesinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu süreçte sektördeki sendikalardan Türk Metal, işçilerin provokatör gruplarca kışkırtıldığı argümanını sık sık öne sürmüştür, işçilere temas etme girişimlerinden söz konusu gruplar nedeniyle sonuç alamadığını ifade etmiştir. Birleşik Metal-İş süreçte işçilere demokratik ve mücadeleci başka bir sendikacılık tarzının mümkün olduğunu ifade ederek kendi çatısı altında örgütlenmeye davet etmiştir, bu girişimlerinin Renault ve Ford Otosan işyerlerinde belli oranda karşılık bulduğu ancak süreklilik kazanamadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Çelik-İş de TOFAŞ fabrikasında benzer bir girişimde bulunmuş, ancak uzun ömürlü olmamıştır.

Gerek tikel işyerleri bakımından gerekse örgütsel düzeyde işverenler, özellikle işçilerin Türk Metal'e yönelik tepkilerinin şiddet kazanmasının ardından işçilerin talepleri karşısında kararlı bir tutum takınmış, pazarlıklar esnasında ödün vermeyen, kararlı bir politika izlemiştir. İşverenler yasal olarak bir sözleşmeyi değiştirmenin mümkün olmadığı gerekçesini sık sık dile getirmiş, ancak bu gerekçe işçiler tarafından geçmişte yapılan çeşitli tadiller örnek gösterilerek reddedilmiştir. İşveren tarafının kararlı tutumuna rağmen, zararın giderek büyümesi üzerine üretimi bir an önce yeniden başlatmak amacıyla belli tavizler karşılığında anlaşma yolunu aramaya başlamıştır. Yine de Koç Holding'e bağlı işyerlerinin diğer işyerlerine oranla işçiler karşısında daha kararlı bir tutum izlediği gözlemlenmiş, dahası işçilerle uzlaşma yoluna gidebilecek işyerlerine MESS tarafından baskı yapıldığı öne sürülmüştür.

Devletin eylemler karşısındaki tutumu iki boyutta ele alınabilir. İlk boyutta 2015 Haziran'ında gerçekleşecek seçimlerin hemen öncesine denk gelmesi nedeniyle tüm siyasiler işçilerin talepleri karşısında mutedil bir tutum izlemiştir. Tüm siyasi partilerden adaylar direniş alanını ziyaret etmiş, belediyeler çadır ve kumanya desteğinde bulunmuştur. Öte yandan direnişin ilerleyen aşamalarında kolluk kuvvetleri eylemlerle ilişkili olduğu ifade edilen çeşitli gruplara yönelik operasyonlar düzenlemiş, çok sayıda işçi eylemlerin organize edilmesinde görev aldığı gerekçesiyle Cumhuriyet Savcılığı tarafından terör örgütüne yardım yataklık suçlamasıyla

sorgulanmıştır. Ayrıca hükümet cephesinden de bazı bakanlar aracılığıyla eylemlerin ideolojik bir karakter taşıdığına dair bazı şüpheler bulunduğu açıklanmış, emek piyasasının ideolojiden arındırılması gerektiğine yönelik vurgular öne çıkmıştır.

Eylemlerin sonucunda Türk Metal sendikası önce belli oranda güç kaybetse de daha sonra bu kaybını telafi etmiş, hatta üye sayısı bakımından direniş öncesinde eriştiği rakamların da üstüne çıkmıştır. Bu noktada sendikanın eylemlerin hemen ardından özeleştirel bir yaklaşımla topladığı kongre ve bu kongreyi izleyen bir dizi yeni politika etkili olmuştur. Bu çerçevede sendika sahip olduğu varlıkların bir kısmını çeşitli sosyal politika araçlarıyla işçilere dağıtmış, hak mücadeleleri anlamında geçmişe kıyasla daha mücadeleci bir çizgi izlemiş, işyerlerinde işçilerin daha iyi temsil edilebilmesine olanak sağlayacak değişiklikler yapmış ve sosyal medyayı daha etkin kullanmaya yönelik önlemler almıştır.

Araştırma sürecinde tespit edilen bu veriler ışığında yapılan değerlendirmeler üç başlık altında toplanabilir. Bunlardan ilki Metal Fırtına'nın sınıf politikaları açısından nasıl değerlendirilmesi gerektiğine ilişkindir. Sınıf kavramının siyasal alandaki gelişmeleri açıklamakta ve siyasal alandaki aktörleri tanımlamakta prestijini kaybetmiş bir kategori olduğu sıklıkla ifade edilmektedir. Öyle ki, neoliberal dönemde hegemonya projesine ruhunu veren nosyon sınıf temelli siyasete son verme çabası olarak nitelenmektedir. Bu koşullar altında ortaya çıkan çeşitli işçi eylemleri de işçilerin ekonomik talepleri etrafında şekillenmekte, bu ekonomik taleplere programatik bir bütünsellik kazandıracak karşı-hegemonik bir politik çerçeve geliştirme aşamasına sıçrayamamaktadır. Metal Fırtına olarak adlandırılan süreçte meydana gelen eylemlerde bu türden eylemlerin bir örneği olarak değerlendirilebilir. Öte yandan bu tip eylemlerin politik bir karakter kazanamaması, sınıf nosyonunu geçersiz bir kategori haline getirmemekte, bu nosyonun mevcut koşullar altında aldığı tezahürü ifade etmektedir.

İkinci aşamada işçilerin eylemine hedef olan Türk Metal sendikası ve bu örnek üzerinden Türkiye'de yürürlükte olan sendikacılık tarzı üzerine çeşitli değerlendirmeler yapılabilir. Buna göre, sendikanın işverene kazandırmak ve bu kazançtan işçilerin payını kurmaya dayalı stratejisi, sektördeki büyüme karşısında

işçilerin reel gelirlerinin düştüğü olgusu göz önünde bulundurulursa hayatta karşılık bulmuş görünmemektedir. Metal Fırtına süreci, sektörde işlerin olağan biçimde gittiği dönemlerin dışında, olağanüstü bir durumu ortaya çıkarmış; bu süreçte de sendikaya dair çok sayıda gözlem ve kanaat kamuoyunda gündeme gelmiştir. Bu çerçevede Türk Metal'in savunduğu işverenle iş birliğine dayalı sendikacılık biçimi, bu sendikayla işveren temsilcileri arasında bağtlanan sözleşmelerin pek çok kez işçilerin taleplerine ve hassasiyetlerine kayıtsız kalarak gerçekleştirilmesi sonucunu doğurmuştur. Dahası, işçilerin çıkarlarını temsil etmekten ve korumaktan uzak bu tarz, daha ziyade işçilerin kontrol edilmesi ve içerilmesi gibi işlevler çerçevesinde işveren sınıfı lehine vazifeler üstlenmiştir. Böyle bir sendikacılık biçimi ve bu tarza karşı işçiler tarafından gösterilen tepkiler sadece Türkiye'yle de sınırlı değildir. Özellikle Çin, Meksika ve Arjantin'de otomotiv sektörünü de içerecek biçimde sendikalara karşı güçlü eylemler meydana gelmiştir. Geçtiğimiz yüz yılda ücret sendikacılığı olarak ele alınan, işverenle işçiler arasında sosyal diyaloga dayalı bir uzlaşmayı savunan tarzın bir devamı sayılabilecek bu simbiyotik sendikacılık biçimi içinde büyüdüğü iklimde bu tarzdan belli bakımlardan farklılaşmıştır. Bu noktada bütünüyle sermayenin nüfuzu altında kalarak gücünü onunla yaptığı işbirliğinden almakta, dolayısıyla işçilerin taleplerini temsil etmeye dair pek az ihtiyaç hissetmektedir. Neoliberal dönem öncesinde sendikalar arasındaki çekişmeci ilişki tüm sendikaları işçilerin taleplerini çeşitli biçimlerde temsil etmeye mecbur bırakırken bu durum işçiler açısından hem sözleşme hükümleri hem de temsil hakları bakımından çeşitli avantajlar sağlamıştı. Öte yandan günümüzde, simbiyotik sendikacılık biçiminin böylesi gerekliliklere ihtiyaç duymadığı, neoliberal küreselleşme sürecinin gelişmekte olan ekonomiler üzerindeki etkilerine bağlı semptomlardan biri olduğu ifade edilebilir.

Son olarak, Metal Fırtına süreci, Türkiye'de yürürlükte olan endüstriyel ilişkiler sisteminin yasadışı karakterine dair çarpıcı bir veriyi ortaya koymuştur. Son yıllarda sendikal aygıtların işlevsizleşmesi, hukuki yolların işçilerin taleplerine ve şikayetlerine yanıt üretmekte işlevsiz kalması ve diğer araçların işçiler nezdinde sonuç almaya dair itibarını yitirmesiyle, işçilerin doğrudan sonuç almalarını sağlayacak fiili eylemlere yöneldiği gözlemlenmektedir. Özellikle kolektif aksiyon geliştirmenin mümkün olduğu şantiye, fabrika vb. yerlerde işçiler sorunlarının çözümüne dair muhatap bulmakta zorlandıkları aşamada bir araya gelerek iş bırakmakta ve

muhataplarını pazarlığa zorlamaktadır. Yasal prosedürlerle grev yapmanın çok da mümkün olmadığı koşullarda yasal çerçeveye başvurmaksızın başlatılan bu grevler, toplumsal hareketler literatürünün kavramlarıyla ifade edilirse çekişmeci (*contentious*) bir nitelik göstermektedir. Yasal çerçevenin kısıtlayıcı yapısı nedeniyle temsil ve müzakere araçlarına sahip olmayan gruplar, pek çok kez bu durumun sebep olduğu eksikliği doğrudan protesto eylemlerine başvurarak gidermeye çalışmakta ve bunu sorunlarına çözüm ve muhatap bulmanın önemli bir aracı olarak görmektedir. Türkiye’de de özellikle Metal Fırtına ve 3. Havalimanı inşaatında çalışan işçilerinin mobilizasyonu buna örnek olarak gösterilebilir. Bu çerçevede 2015 yılında otomotiv sektöründe gelişen eylemler çekişmeci bir eylem dalgasının ortaya çıkıp çıkmadığı yönünde çeşitli sorular ortaya çıkarmıştır. Takip eden süreçte meydana gelecek gelişmelerin, bu soruları da akılda tutarak izlenmesi toplumsal mücadeleler repertuarına dair yapılacak tartışmalar bakımından büyük önem taşımaktadır.

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