

# Globalisation and trade unions in Turkey: Two class strategies in countering neo-liberal restructuring

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## Abstract

The paper reviews alternatives to globalization and neoliberal restructuring within the context of economic crisis and rising politics of dissent. What are the challenges posed by globalisation to labour movements? What kind of strategies does the labour movement in Turkey develop as a way forward? The study is based upon interviews conducted with twenty two trade unionists who took various responsibilities in the recent past in unions that are organised in textile, automotive and agriculture sectors, public services and in their confederations. They were conducted in İstanbul and Ankara in April-May 2010 and December 2010-January 2011. It is argued that although labour is united in their criticisms to globalisation, it is probable to observe an intra-class struggle. Whilst the internationally oriented labour has articulated a struggle at the international level under the motto that 'another globalisation in the interests of labour is possible', nationally oriented labour has developed a relatively defensive strategy echoing a form of Keynesian welfare state.

*Keywords:* Globalization, Trade unionism, Turkish politics, anti-globalization movement, intra-class struggle

## 1. Introduction

In conjunction with economic crisis and rise in politics of dissent, the debate around alternatives to globalization gains prominence. Turkey stands in the periphery of the world capitalist system with poor working conditions and high rates of precarious work and informality. There are studies directed to understand

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the position of labour *vis-a-vis* globalisation (e.g. Blanpain, 2013; Boratav *et al.*, 2000; Nichols and Sungur, 2004; Onaran, 2009) with an empirical focus on how labour movement is affected from globalisation and neoliberal restructuring (e.g. Adaman *et al.*, 2009; Cam, 1999; Yücesan-Özdemir, 2003). However, few systematic analyses have been undertaken on how transnationalisation and internationalisation of production embedded within globalisation have transformed labour movement and what kind of counter strategies labour have developed as an alternative (an exception is Fougner and Kurtoğlu, 2011). This article aims to unravel the position of labour within globalization and strategies developed in countering challenges posed by globalisation and neoliberal restructuring. How has globalization and neoliberal restructuring affected the position of labour? What kind of counter strategies are articulated so as to offset the negative repercussions of globalisation? Can labour come up with an alternative in Turkey?

In addressing these questions, the research relies on twenty-two semi-structured interviews conducted in İstanbul and Ankara with trade unionists across two research trips in April-May 2010 and December 2010 - January 2011. All interviewees were guaranteed anonymity in advance. The research takes the institutional stance rather than personal views of interviewees as the basis. During the interviews, interviewees clearly stated whether a particular opinion was reflecting their personal view or position of the institution; where there was doubt the author asked for clarification. The validity of information was cross-checked through the consultation of further primary resources. Harvard style references to the interviews are included in the text to indicate where particular points are drawn from which specific interview. The interviews commenced by questioning of the social base of institutions. For industrial sectors, an emphasis was placed on understanding whether they operate in national and/or international markets; and in the private or public sector. Interviews proceeded by interrogating the effects of globalisation and neoliberal restructuring on the particular industrial sector in which they operate, the production process and trade unionist strategy. Methodologically, particular sectors are selected in considering intra-class struggle. The textile and automotive industries are analysed as internationally oriented. They are the pioneering sectors in Turkey's export-promotion strategy, and so have a privileged position in foreign trade. To analyse nationally oriented industry, the agricultural sector and public employees are selected. Agriculture is still a relatively protected sector mostly directed to produce for the domestic market. Trade unions organized among public employees are also interviewed as nationally oriented that are expected to develop a critical stance *vis-a-vis* globalisation as privatization and de-regulation engender social cuts in the welfare state and declining employment in public sector. Moreover, as the state has

dissociated itself from regulating relations of distribution, public employees have seen decreasing standards of welfare.

Based on the empirical research, the paper argues that although labour is united in their criticisms to globalisation, there are fractions on the strategies developed in the struggle *vis-a-vis* globalisation. Thus, it is probable to observe an intra-class struggle engendered by globalisation between nationally and internationally oriented fractions as they are structurally situated differently within transnationalisation of production. Whilst the internationally oriented labour articulates a struggle at the international level under the motto that ‘another globalisation in the interests of labour is possible’, nationally oriented labour develops a relatively defensive strategy *vis-a-vis* globalisation articulating policies echoing a form of Keynesian welfare state such as protectionism for industry and social welfare reforms.

The debate starts with examining the challenges posed by globalisation to the labour movement and alternative strategies developed *vis-a-vis* globalisation in the literature. What does the state of research in the literature reflect on the position of labour within globalisation? How are alternatives to globalisation and neoliberal restructuring studied? This is followed with unravelling the principal mechanism of integration of Turkey’s production structure into world economy that in return sheds light on the dynamics of intra-class struggle. The following sub-sections present the empirical data. The conclusion sums up the debate around two strategies namely ‘another globalisation in the interests of labour is possible’ and ‘Keynesian neo-mercantilism’.

## 2. Position of labour and strategies *vis-a-vis* globalisation

There is not a single definition of globalisation in the literature. Scholars refer to both ‘material and non-material’ aspects in approaching globalization such as ‘production, distribution, management, finance, information and communications technology, and capital accumulation’ (Amoore *et al.*, 2000: 14). Scholte explicates the controversy over the definition of globalisation through presenting five possible conceptions: internationalization as the growth of trade, investment and transactions between countries; liberalization referring to elimination of state intervention for an open and a borderless world; universalization as standardization and homogenization of cultures; westernization or modernisation as the expansion of modern social processes such as capitalism, industrialisation and individualism; and respatialization through increasing interconnectedness of the world (Scholte, 2005: 15-7; 54-8). In this study, globalization is taken as a process within which production and finance are transnationalized through the deregulation and liberalization of financial markets and the rise of transnational corporations (TNCs) and/or foreign direct investment

(FDI) analogous to the rise of neo-liberal ideas at the ideational level (Bieler, 2000: 36). Thenceforth, it is treated as ‘a neo-liberal hegemonic project pushed by a class alliance that is led by transnational capital’ (Bieler, 2006: 71). Such a conception paves the way to conceive of consolidation and contestation of the globalisation process as an issue of class struggle opening the space to account for agency behind globalisation and to debate the politics of dissent.

The role of labour in studying globalisation is considerably neglected. However, there are few studies to fill this gap (Bieler, 2005; Bieler *et al.*, 2008a; Bieler and Lindberg, 2011a; Harrod and O’Brien, 2002; Munck, 2002; O’Brien, 2000; Strange, 2002). Scholars highlight that globalisation has shifted the power balance in favour of capital and engendered new challenges for labour movement which has often taken a defensive position structurally. Three particular challenges for the labour movements are identified in the literature. Firstly, the risk of underbidding is highlighted. Globalisation has strengthened the hand of capital *vis-a-vis* labour through practices such as benchmarking between production sites and threats to move production units (Bieler *et al.*, 2008b: 268). Structurally labour movements are put in a situation where there is the danger of underbidding among different national labour movements for national competitiveness and jobs (Bieler *et al.*, 2008b: 264). The workers are situated within competition at the global level over wages and concessions from social rights to decrease production costs (Bieler and Lindberg, 2011a: 5).

Secondly, globalisation has created an additional cleavage among formal and informal labour. The processes of deregulation, privatisation and commercialisation of agriculture have expanded the informal work (Bieler *et al.*, 2008b: 264). Moreover, transnationalisation of production operates through decentralisation and fragmentation of production through practices of transnational outsourcing, just-in-time and/or subcontracting, processes that have in turn engendered increasing casualisation and informalisation of the economy (Bieler and Lindberg, 2011a: 5-6). Cox depicts this fraction as a cleavage between established workers – relatively skilled workers who are employed in larger enterprises and who relatively benefit from security and stability in their jobs – and non-established workers – less skilled workers who are mostly employed from ethnic minorities, immigrants and women that confront great obstacles in developing effective trade unions (Cox, 1981: 148). However, trade unions are primarily organised among core workers leaving non-established workers employed in informal sectors and/or transnational outsourcing spaces outside of trade union solidarities. To quote Bieler *et al.*, ‘there is a clear danger that if unions continue to be dominated by male, formal-sector urban workers, they will become isolated, focusing exclusively on their particular interests’ (Bieler *et al.*, 2008b: 268). It is stressed that workers employed in new service sectors and

migrant workers are largely excluded from traditional ways to organize workers (Albo *et al.*, 2010: 90-1). The offense of capital encompasses resort to precarious work - low-paid service work, cheap migrant or women labour employed in atypical conditions— and working class solidarities cannot be created across these social identities and diverse work spaces’ (Albo *et al.*, 2010: 92). According to Albo *et al.*, there is an utmost need to explore how neoliberal restructuring has affected the labour movement in order to come up with a new union politics and to debate the ‘renewal of the Left’ (Albo *et al.*, 2010: 91).

Thirdly, globalisation has caused an additional fraction among national and international/transnational oriented labour. In particular, globalization has generated an intra-class struggle based on geographical fractionation - a struggle between national, international and transnational forces of capital and labour - along the contradictory logics of national and global accumulation (e.g. Bieler, 2000: 10; Robinson, 2004: 37; 49-53, van Apeldoorn, 2002: 27; 32). As Bieler contends “capital and labour, however, do not confront each other as two homogenous classes” (Bieler *et al.*, 2008a: 6). Cox (1981: 148) depicts workers employed in international production as ‘potential allies of international capital’. However, he adds that “this is not to say that those workers have no conflict with international capital, only that international capital has the resources to resolve these conflicts and to isolate them from conflicts involving other labour groups by creating an enterprise corporatism in which both parties perceive their interest as lying in the continuing expansion of international production”. For Cox, “established workers in the sector of national capital are more susceptible to the appeal of protectionism and national corporatism” (Cox, 1981: 148).

In countering these challenges, scholars refer to two possible ways forward. The literature on alternatives to globalisation and neoliberal restructuring can be grouped into two categories each articulating a different politics of praxis namely transnational solidarity and reformism through re-thinking Keynesian welfare state mechanisms and/or development debate. A group of scholars articulate a strategy of transnational solidarity based on a global working-class strategy in challenging globalisation and neoliberal restructuring (Bieler and Morton, 2004; Bieler *et al.*, 2008a; 2011a; Gill, 2000; 2012). Though it is possible to come across with disagreements among them, they share the common ground that globalisation constitutes a new transnational phase within capitalist development. In explicating this transnational phase, Robinson differentiates between a world economy and a global economy. In the former phase, national economies were integrated through trade and finance in a world system whilst production is reorganised worldwide in the global phase (Robinson, 2004: 10). In disagreement with the sceptics who argue that quantitatively the world was more integrated in the early twentieth century (e.g. Hirst and Thompson 1996), Robinson argues that global phase brings

forth a qualitative change in the sense that globalisation engenders a process through which `production has entailed the fragmentation and decentralization of complex production chains and the worldwide dispersal and functional integration of the different segments in these chains` (Robinson, 2004: 15). Global phase is different from world economy phase. Whereas internationalisation entails a quantitative feature along geographical expansion of economic activities across national boundaries, current epoch of transnationalisation has a qualitatively new feature as it encompasses not only geographical expansion but also a functional integration of different production units on a global scale (Robinson, 2004: 14). These scholars contend that despite this decentralization and fragmentation of the production process, the command and control of the production and accumulation is concentrated in the hands of a transnational capitalist class (Robinson, 2004: 15). In this new phase, scholars refer to the logic of a global structure of accumulation (Robinson, 2004: 75) and a global class structure `alongside or superimposed upon national class structures` (Cox, 1981: 147). Cox refers to a transnational managerial class as `both a class in itself and for itself` organised through multilateral institutions such as the Trilateral Commission, World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Cox, 1981: 147).

Alongside this understanding of globalisation and conception of the capitalist attack by the transnational capitalist class, scholars refer to the need to develop a response at the global level. To quote Robinson, “globalization turns the whole world into one giant zone of contestation” (Robinson, 2004: 176). Radice refers to developments such as awareness among workers in conjunction with deeper transnational integration, technological developments opening transnational communication chains and transnational solidarity and legislative initiatives at the transnational level to be optimistic about transnational labour movement (Radice, 2000: 14). Drainville also highlights the need to study counter hegemonic organizations at the global level and to develop original concepts of resistance (Drainville, 1994: 125). Scholars refer to concrete strategies of international labour regulations such as pressuring multilateral institutions to incorporate labour standards in negotiating liberalisation with the developing countries and/or pressuring multinationals about company codes of conduct on conditions of labour and environment (O'Brien, 2000: 95-6).

There is also an effort to understand the new collectivism emerging after Seattle protests. For instance, Gill conceives of the political agency that contests the Seattle talks as `post-modern Prince` following Machiavelli and Gramsci. In his effort to understand the new forms of collective political identity and agency, he depicts the group as a form of open-ended, plural, flexible and differentiated collectivism with class, gender and race aspects with a protest on social

reproduction of capitalism (Gill, 2000: 137-8). Thus, class struggle is interpreted as resistance against the discipline of capital in social reproduction (van der Pijl, 1998). The strategy of integrating struggles around class and identity politics is articulated. New social movements are interpreted as resistance to commodification in the sphere of social reproduction. According to van der Pijl, it is the ‘discipline of capital over the entire reproductive system’ and its ‘exploitation of the social and natural substratum’ that has to be resisted (van der Pijl, 1998: 36; 47). Bieler and Morton (2004: 305) articulate the need to merge labour struggles with social movements for them to be able to develop joint strategies *vis-a-vis* neoliberalism. Munck speaks about “social-movement unionism” as a new form of trade unionism standing as “workers’ voice in the struggle to impose democracy on the repressive political order” against the ‘economism of “free collective bargaining”’ (Munck, 2002: 125).

However the strategy of transnational solidarity bears challenges as well. On the one hand, scholars highlight the need to recognize the North-South divide that was manifested with the social clause campaign (Munck, 2002: 167). Bieler *et al.* highlight the structural factors referring to the fact that the workers in the core and periphery are situated differently under globalisation (Bieler *et al.*, 2008a: 265). Accordingly, it is necessary to form a common agenda and define common objectives among the established workers in the North and the non-regular workers employed mostly in informal sectors in the South (Bieler *et al.*, 2008a: 265). This is related to the distribution and fragmentation of production on a global scale. Cox observes a core-periphery structure of production on a world scale. The core mostly specializes on capital-intensive phases of production with development of technology through practices of research and development whereas the periphery concentrates on labour-intensive phases. Such a fragmentation drives main patterns of labour supply. Whilst capital-intensive phases of industry necessitate skilled and high-cost labour, labour-intensive standard technology in periphery requires “workers who are quickly trainable, readily disposable, docile and cheap” (Cox, 1987: 319). On the other hand, social movements are critical about traditional ways to conduct left politics. They criticise mass movement rhetoric for being hierarchical and they embark on an alternative conception of political praxis that in turn renders common action with labour solidarities more difficult.

Another strategy is related to either rejecting globalisation (e.g. de-linking developing countries from capitalist world economy) or proposing a form of reformism (Giddens, 1998; Rodrik, 1997; 1999). Bello (2004) proposes a strategy of deglobalisation within which economies will be re-directed from export promotion to production for the local market. These stances around de-linking, deglobalisation and/or Third Way echo the debates within the left during the 1970s

between Maoists, the developmentalist school and Keynesian welfare state regimes. In this strategy, scholars refer to the role of nation state in constituting capitalism in a national territory. For instance, Wood reminds us that:

“... capital has a strong ideological stake in the myth that globalization means the disempowerment, if not the disappearance, of the nation-state. Challenging the hegemony of capital requires challenging that myth. If there is a growing distance between the global scope of the capitalist market and the local powers on which it depends, this cannot simply mean that capital is escaping political control. It means instead, or also, that there is a growing space for opposition” (Wood, 2002: 37).

Here, the nation is conceived as a platform of defence against the domination of global capital. Scholars have named it as a form of ‘progressive nationalism’ that is defined as the strategy of proposing “a conventional progressive agenda within a fundamentally national political arena” (Radice, 2000: 5). Similarly, there are studies proposing regional blocks as probable platforms to provide protectionism. For instance, Strange refers to embedded Euro-Keynesianism as “a theoretically viable and politically possible (and desirable) alternative basis for integration and governance” (Strange 2002: 352). In this standing, regional blocks are defended as mechanisms of protectionism *vis-a-vis* globalisation. Yet, there are also reserves raised as regionalisation constitutes an ‘integral element’ of, rather than a ‘counter-tendency’ against, globalisation (Munck, 2002: 83). For instance effectiveness of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is questioned because of its financial dependence on European Commission (Munck, 2002: 15).

However, this strategy is also criticised. First, this stance relies on a particular reading of imperialism, against which the nation state is seen as the platform providing protection. Yet this strategy overlooks the capitalist nature of the developmental state. In that sense though the critique is anti-imperialist, it is not anti-capitalist. In a similar way, Bieler argues that “these generally reformist suggestions *vis-a-vis* global capitalism overlook the fact that the source of inequality and exploitation is not to be found in the lack of political authority and control, but in the way capitalist social relations are organised” (Bieler, 2006: 213). According to Radice, progressive nationalism is theoretically flawed not only to conceive of the relation between the markets and states as “intrinsically counterposed” to each other but also to operate within a national-international dichotomy (Radice, 2000: 16). Moreover, these studies fail to integrate labour in their analysis (Radice, 2000: 5-6) and deny global aspects of the current stage of capitalism (Radice, 2000: 13). Last but not the least, this strategy loses ground within globalisation. For instance, Amin acknowledges criticisms *vis-a-vis*

Bandung project and proposes `coherent delinking` as a way forward within the context of new challenges posed by globalisation (Amin, 1997: 106).

### 3. Position of labour movement in Turkey *vis-a-vis* globalisation

Having summarised challenges posed by globalisation to labour movements and strategies developed in countering these threats, this sub-section debates intra-class struggle within labour in Turkey. Before delving into an analysis of intra-labour struggle, there is a need to examine the main pattern of Turkey's integration into the global production structure. This section compares the role of foreign trade and FDI in Turkey's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in understanding whether the main pattern of Turkey's integration into the global production structure is a case of internationalization or transnationalization. Whilst internationalization is characterised as the integration of national economies into international markets through trade and finance, transnationalization entails a process through which production is organised on a global scale (Robinson, 2004: 10). Thus, transnationalization is often interpreted as a new phase within capitalist production that transcends geographical expansion - internationalization - by encompassing the organisation of worldwide production in processes of "fragmentation and decentralization of complex production chains" and their functional integration (Robinson, 2004: 14-5). Internationalization occurs when trade is the main mechanism used, whilst FDI is determinant for transnationalization as the major integration pattern (Bieler, 2006: 65). As Table 1 (below) shows, foreign trade is an important contributor to Turkey's GDP. Whilst the ratio of foreign trade to GDP was averaged %30 in the 1980s, it increased to 45% after the completion of the Customs Union in 1996 and reached to 58% in 2013.

**Table 1**  
Ratio of Foreign Trade to GDP

	Imports of Goods and Services (% of GDP)	Exports of Goods and Services (% of GDP)	Total Foreign Trade (% of GDP)
1980-1990	16	13	29
1991-1995	19	16	35
1996-2000	24	21	45
2001-2005	24	24	48
2006	28	23	51
2007	27	22	49
2008	28	24	52
2009	24	23	47
2010	27	21	48
2011	33	24	57
2012	31	26	57
2013	32	26	58

*Source:* National Accounts, Exports and Imports of Goods and Services to GDP (1981-2012)

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.IMP.GNFS.ZS>

<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.EXP.GNFS.ZS/countries?display=default>

The data on inward and outward FDI can be taken as indicating the degree of transnationalization of production (Bieler, 2006: 47-67). The FDI stocks averaged US\$16,1 billion (14,6 billion inward and 1,5 billion outward) in the 1990s and increased to US\$79,6 billion (71,3 billion inward and 8,3 billion outward) and US\$207 billion (186 billion inward and 21 billion outward) in 2005 and 2010, respectively (UNCTAD, 2012: 6). As Table 2 (below) shows the ratio of FDI stocks as percentage of GDP has reached to around 20% in the last decade. However, one may reasonably argue that Turkey still constitutes a case of internationalization more than transnationalization. Although Turkey's production is integrated with the global production through outsourcing/contract manufacturing and particular Turkish firms becoming operative in global markets transnationally within the fragmented and decentralized global production chain, it is still trade that constitutes the main pattern of its integration. Thenceforth, intra-class struggle is examined below in relation to internationally and nationally oriented labour. First, as Table 2 (below) shows the FDI stocks are still quite low when compared with the European Union (EU) member states and/or some

Central and Eastern European Countries. Second, concurrent with İzmen and Yılmaz (2009: 194-6) there is a need to consider the composition of FDI flows. It must be pointed out that the bulk of FDI is a result of privatization of state-economic enterprises. It is mostly realised by mergers and takeovers and directed to service sector such as banking and finance, transport and communication more than production and manufacturing. For instance, whilst the inflow of FDI stocks as equity flow is US\$180 billion in total in the 2010, US\$52 billion is directed to manufacturing and US\$123 billion reserved for the service sector (UNCTAD, 2012: 12). The difficulties to organize employees in the service sector to which the FDI is directed should be taken as another reason for debating intra-class struggle between nationally and internationally oriented labour. Third, as a peripheral country, transnationalisation of production has structurally transformed Turkey's production through subcontracting and outsourcing. There are multinational firms operative in Turkey. However, small and medium sized enterprises that are sites of outsourcing and contract manufacturing can hardly be unionised. There are studies highlighting that these two factors, namely, privatisation of public economic enterprises coupled with subcontracting and outsourcing, have transformed the industrial bases that in return left the bulk of the working class outside trade union solidarities (e.g. Adaman *et al.*, 2009: 176; Cam 2002). Hence, it can be concluded that Turkey's integration path still constitutes an instance of internationalization more than transnationalization. Remarkably, internationalization and transnationalization of production are embedded under globalisation and they are not mutually exclusive processes from each other. There are trade unions that are organized in enterprises which operate transnationally. However, transnational fraction remains far from constituting an additional category. That is why they are analyzed below as internationally oriented as well. It is assumed that globalisation has generated a new division between internationally and nationally oriented labour. The former can be expected to be in favour of a struggle at the international level to regain its power that is lost at the national level in tandem with transnationalisation of production. On the contrary, trade unions organising workers for nationally oriented sectors will develop a more critical stance with concerns over de-industrialisation and de-unionisation as they will increasingly be exposed to pressures of competitiveness and loss in welfare gains (these claims further draw on the work of Bieler, 2000: 48; 2006: 42).

**Table 2**  
FDI Stocks (Inward and Outward) as Percentages of GDP

	Turkey	EU-27	UK	Germany	France	Poland	Hungary
2001	-	-	94.0	52.9	61	-	56
2002	9.7	-	84.1	52.2	60	22.5	51.9
2003	11.7	-	85.9	52.5	64.8	24.9	48.3
2004	10.6	34.2	90.0	50.9	69	32.3	61.3
2005	17.4	38.4	92.6	56.5	77.9	33.6	66.5
2006	18.8	40.7	99.5	58.6	81.7	39.1	80.2
2007	24.0	45.2	100.4	61.5	87.4	43.4	77.2
2008	14.2	46.6	99.2	61.2	86.9	36.9	70.5
2009	26.2	55.5	117.7	59.7	93.7	48.1	90.2
2010	28.5	60.1	118.9	62.1	96.9	54.6	86.7
2011	22.9	68.7	127.4	62.8	95.6	52.9	83.9
2012	26.9	70.9	129.1	72.3	96.9	58.3	106.5

Source: Eurostat, "FDI stocks as of GDP" <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tec00047&plugin=1>.

Internationally oriented labour is examined through trade unions organized in the textile (Teksif, Tekstil-İş and Öz İplik-İş) and automotive industries (Birleşik Metal-İş) and DİSK and Hak-İş confederations. Textile and automotive industries constitute main industrial sectors in foreign trade (Togan *et al.*, 2005: 90). There is no public sector in the textile industry (Interview No. 4, 8 and 11) that in return renders the enterprises operative in the sector imperative to search for exports as a strategy of survival under globalization. Indeed, it is highlighted that approximately 70% of textiles production is exported (Interview No. 8). The automotive industry is mainly organised in the private sector and most of the enterprises in which it is organised began to operate in international markets, or became integrated within transnational production structures by operating as supplier enterprises for international firms (Interview No. 20). At the confederation level, both the DİSK and Hak-İş are primarily organised in the private sector and they have begun to be organised in multinational enterprises as well (Interview No. 5, 6, 9 and 17). Nationally oriented labour is analysed in relation to Türk-İş confederation, four trade unions organised in the agricultural sector (Tarım-İş, Türk Tarım-Orman-Sen, Tarım Orman-İş and Öz Tarım-İş) and four confederations that are organised among public sector employees (Türk

Kamu-Sen, KESK, Memur-Sen and Birleşik Kamu-İş). The Türk-İş is mostly organised among industrial workers employed in public economic enterprises that primarily produce for the domestic market. Interviewees highlighted that privatisation is transforming its membership profile in favour of private sector, though – with the exception of the textile and metal sectors – Türk-İş is still fundamentally organised in the public sector (Interview No. 2). Agriculture is treated as nationally oriented as it is still a relatively protected sector and agriculture labour is mostly organised in the public sector (Interview No. 17 and 22). Public sector employers are also expected to be in favour of protectionism since they are likely to be worse off by the erosion of the welfare state.

#### 4. Internationally oriented labour and globalisation: ‘Another globalisation is possible’

Trade unions organised in internationally oriented sectors define globalisation as ‘irresistible’ (Interview No. 8). Globalisation is taken as a process which creates a new division between countries whose production is based on advanced technologies produced by a skilled workforce; and countries whose production is less reliant on technology, is labour intensive and relies on an unskilled work force (DİSK, 1996: 69). Turkey falls within the latter category and the state operates to ‘intensify the exploitation of labour’ by overlooking demands of the labour unions and creating divisions among the working class in the interests of being competitive in international markets (DİSK, 1996: 69; DİSK, 2000: 6). Globalisation reduces the bargaining power of labour and generates de-unionization, whilst flexible, part-time and atypical forms of work increase (Interview No. 8 and 11). It creates opportunities for capital to counter demands for unionisation and collective bargaining by threatening to move to other countries or cut wages for the sake of competitiveness (Interview No. 3 and 20). Additionally, globalisation alters the stable industrial bases of the Fordist period and transforms the structure of enterprises through mergers, takeovers and contract work, processes which further serve to make it difficult for unions to organise workers. More importantly, globalisation attacks internationalism by generating competition and antagonism among workers in developed and developing countries (Interview No. 20). At the ideological level, meanwhile, globalisation endorses individualism and weakens collectivism (Interview No. 20).

The position of internationally oriented labour *vis-a-vis* globalisation corresponds to the expectation from the assumption stated below (page 11). Globalisation is taken as a fact that necessitates a struggle at the international level. It is stated that free movement of capital has ‘dynamited’ social rights acquired at the national level (Interview No. 9) and globalisation necessitates re-thinking about unionism (DİSK, 1996: 69). Globalisation has transformed the

structure of production from big industrial complexes and mass production to small workplaces which employ three to five workers in informal economies, often in atypical and/or part-time employment. Accordingly, the classical tools of struggle operative during the Fordist period (such as strikes and unionisation on the basis of 'industrial sectors') have to be further developed in the global era to integrate these excluded groups into the working class (Interview No. 21). From this perspective, internationally oriented labour conceives of the internationalisation of labour as the only viable way to struggle against globalisation (DİSK, 1996: 70-72; Interview No. 5). However there is a need to distinguish between the references of DİSK and Hak-İş to internationalism. DİSK believes that 'another globalisation, in the interest of workers, is possible' (Interview No. 9). Indeed, DİSK refers to the strategies of international solidarity to enable collective bargaining at the international level, a move designed to organise all workers employed in a multinational enterprise (Interview No. 5 and 9). Interviewees gave concrete examples of international solidarity such as 'social responsibility declarations' and/or framework agreements (Interview No. 5, 9 and 20). Moreover, DİSK reads the confining of unionism to collective bargaining as a neoliberal strategy demarcating class struggle as a form of narrow economism. This is done to present trade unions as narrowly 'utilitarian' platforms. Indeed, DİSK highlights that globalisation has rendered all kinds of assets and values in society to be treated as a commodity that is subjected to the mechanism of profit including nature and environment (DİSK, 2012: 2). Thus, DİSK seeks a united struggle of 'societal resistance', designed to create unity among retired and unemployed people, white-collar workers, female labour, students, migrant workers, peasants and workers employed in informal economies, as part-time and atypical work is promoted (Interview No. 5; DİSK, 1996: 70-71; DİSK, 2000). This position comes closer to the above mentioned strategy of transnational solidarity in the literature. In a similar vein, Hak-İş – the second confederation engaged as internationally oriented labour – takes globalisation as irresistible and defends a struggle at the international and regional level as the only way to shape globalisation (Hak-İş, 1996: 7-8; Interview No. 12). However, their reference to internationalism as a strategy denotes a policy of 'labour diplomacy' at the international level to reform globalisation rather than a transnational working class to come up with an alternative to the capitalist system (Hak-İş, 2011: 5). It is contended that globalisation would be unsustainable in terms of social policy, environment, peace and justice if it would one-sidedly accommodate the interests of capital (Hak-İş, 2009: 58-9). More importantly, the labour unionism advocated by Hak-İş internalizes market economy model (Hak-İş, 2009: 60) and operates within neoliberalism. This stance is identified by Cox as 'social partnership in Western Europe and business unionism in North America' (Cox, 1987: 374). Albo

*et al.* explicate it as a new challenge *vis-à-vis* working class as unions have started to adopt 'flexibility' and resort to 'competitive unionism' (Albo *et al.*, 2010: 92-95). It is possible to come across with this stance in the interviews conducted with interviewees from Hak-İş. Hak-İş describes its approach to trade unionism as facilitating an 'industrial democracy' (Interview No. 3) – an aim compatible with the mechanisms of 'social dialogue'. Moreover, Hak-İş conceives of 'class' as a social phenomenon rather than a 'front' (Interview No. 3 and 12). In this sense, it is argued that labour and capital are 'social partners' and trade unionism should be conducted on the basis of cooperation rather than conflict/struggle (Hak-İş, 1996: 16; Interview No. 11). Accordingly, Hak-İş conceives of competitiveness and quality as 'common' problems shared by both workers and employers; and of social dialogue as an important mechanism to facilitate cooperation (Hak-İş, 2009: 54; Interview No. 6). Analogous to this, collective bargaining is defined as a 'technical platform' (Interview No. 3). It is argued that Hak-İş is directed to increase the 'quality, efficiency and competition' of the workplace, which is defended as an approach to save the workplace and generate employment (Interview No. 6).

## 5. Nationally oriented labour and globalisation as de-unionisation and de-industrialisation

Nationally oriented labour is expected to develop a critical stance *vis-a-vis* globalisation as they will be increasingly exposed to pressures of competitiveness resulting in closure of workplaces that they are employed. Moreover, globalisation entails de-unionisation and cuts in social standards gained at the national level. In line with this assumption, the interviewee from Türk-İş accused globalisation of generating de-industrialisation and de-unionisation, with negative effects on economic development. Export-orientation endows capital with the capacity to search for cheaper intermediate goods in world markets, meaning that globalisation forces the closure of domestic enterprises that cannot compete with global prices (Interview No. 10). They also believe that it provides capital with the opportunity to move to other countries (Interview No. 17) and that so-called economic 'growth' fails to generate employment (Türk-İş, 2011: 47; Interview No. 10).

In a similar vein, interviewees from trade unions organized in agriculture and public sectors raise concerns over globalisation. The interviewee from agricultural labour argued that globalisation operates to create markets for international capital by curbing domestic production through direct support mechanisms, providing subsidies on the basis of land rather than production (Interview No. 13). The interviewees highlighted that Turkey is no longer agriculturally self-sufficient due to globalisation (Interview No. 14 and 22). In this

sense, globalisation curbs domestic production, impoverishes the agricultural sector; and generates proletarianisation, internal migration and informal work (Interview No. 7 and 13). Public employees criticize globalisation and the neoliberal campaign against the 'inefficient public sector', arguing that it generates commodification and views 'profitability' rather than the 'public good' as the determining factor in the provision of public services (Interview No. 13 and 21). Privatisation, they note, curbs employment in the public sector and the state withdraws from fundamental sectors such as education and health (Interview No. 18 and 21). There is an increase in individualism and collectivism is eroded (Interview No. 16). The effects of globalisation on social policy are also emphasized. It is noted that globalisation undermines mechanisms and institutions of the welfare state (Interview No. 14 and 15) and generates de-unionisation as nationally oriented capital squeezes wages and cuts working standards by invoking the need for 'competitiveness' (Interview No. 7 and 19). It weakens the bargaining power of labour (Interview No. 17). In the agricultural sector, globalisation is seen to engender impoverishment, unemployment, the rise of informal economies and internal migration (Interview No. 17 and 22). It is believed to increase unemployment and threaten the stability of employment for public sector employees (Interview No. 21). For instance, rather than creating employment, public schools turn to private firms to obtain services (Interview No. 21). The public sector is especially concerned by cuts made in the welfare spending (Interview No. 13). Interviewees from public sector unions criticised the deepening of income disparities and decreasing welfare for public employees which have arisen from globalisation (Interview No. 16 and 19).

As a counter-strategy against globalisation the stance of Türk-İş was sceptical about the viability of internationalism as a strategy in the 1990s. It is contended that workers of core and peripheral countries will not cooperate due to imperialism. This stance was shaped around a critique of imperialism, which is viewed as a force impeding the internationalism of the working class movement (Interview No. 7). It is argued that the workers of developed countries do not cooperate with workers of developing countries. This leads the Türk-İş to the claim that the nation state can act as a site of resistance against imperialism and to consolidate welfare regimes (Interview No. 7). This policy has been re-considered during the last decade, however. The nationally oriented labour is divided to what extent regionalism – EU membership perspective – now can be accepted as a mechanism to provide protectionism in terms of social policy and agriculture. Formerly, the Türk-İş perceived EU integration process as a colonial strategy designed to dismantle the unitary state structure (Koç, 2001: 12-4). European trade unions were criticised as partners of imperialist exploitation which is manifested through discourses of 'social partnership' or 'social dialogue' (Interview No. 7).

Accordingly, the ETUC was criticised as a platform unable to struggle against European capital, as most of its activities are financed by the European Commission (European capital, in other words). However, this former stance was criticised for excessive nationalism and for isolating Türk-İş from the accession process (Interview No. 1). Contrary to its previous position, Türk-İş now conceives the process of EU membership as presenting an opportunity to improve union rights and freedoms (Türk-İş, 2007: 12). With it, Türk-İş argues that membership can help Turkey realise the right to unionise, guarantee work, and fight against informal economies and unemployment. Additionally, it is believed that the EU can act as an anchor for the implementation of the European Social Charter and standards of International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Interview No. 2). In a similar vein, trade unions in the agriculture sector are also divided on the issue of whether regionalism - EU membership perspective - will provide a form of protectionism against the forces of globalisation or trigger further liberalisation. On the one hand, the Tarım-İş and Tarım Orman-İş oppose membership on the grounds that membership will not provide economic welfare, nor result in improvements to social policy (Interview No. 13 and 22). The European social model and the conception of 'social partners' are criticised for putting labour under the tutelage of capital (Interview No. 13 and 22). On the other hand, it is also posited that agriculture has already been subjected to liberalisation as a result of structural adjustment policies. In this view, the EU as a regional model can provide protectionism from globalisation (Interview No. 14). From this perspective, the EU's agricultural funds and social policies are viable mechanisms for the protection of agriculture (Interview No. 14).

## 6. Conclusion

This article has debated the position of labour movement in Turkey within globalisation and neoliberal restructuring with a focus on intra-class struggle. It has explained the challenges posed by globalisation to labour movement and probable alternatives developed in the literature. It is stressed that globalisation has engendered three particular challenges for the labour movements, namely, the threat of competitive underbidding among different national labour movements, fractionation between nationally and internationally/transnationally oriented labour and an additional fraction among established workers and non-established workers who are mostly employed in the informal economy. In countering these challenges, two strategies are proposed. Whilst a group of scholars refer to the need to develop a struggle at the international level around the strategy of transnational solidarity in tandem with the current phase of capitalism, another group of scholars propose either deglobalisation and/or reforming globalisation around the notion of Third Way or new social democracy. Then, the paper has

focused on labour movement in Turkey and has considered whether there is a counter-hegemonic formation contesting globalisation. Remarkably, the empirical findings reveal that suggested strategies in countering neoliberal policies in the literature resonate with these stances of transnational solidarity, deglobalisation and/or reforming globalisation.

It is argued that labour movement in Turkey is united on their criticism to globalisation and neoliberal restructuring. However, they are divided on the strategies put forward as an alternative. The internationally oriented labour takes globalisation as a 'fact' that has undermined – 'dynamited' even – the struggle at the national level. Thus, the internationalisation of labour is defended as the only viable strategy. The strategy of internationally oriented labour can be analysed as a rival class strategy *vis-a-vis* globalisation around the motto that 'another globalisation is possible'. However there is a need to differentiate the position of DİSK and Hak-İş. In agreement with Bieler, the fact that particular trade unions start to operate within transnational or international sphere does not by default lead to the conclusion that they ideologically internalise neoliberalism (Bieler, 2005: 466). Bieler contends that there is a need to question the social purpose behind the stances of trade unions (Bieler, 2005: 477-8). Although both DİSK and Hak-İş defend a struggle at the international level, the social purpose behind DİSK resonates with the strategy of transnational solidarity. However, the stance of Hak-İş comes closer to competitive unionism or social partnership unionism. Indeed, it was only the Hak-İş and affiliated trade unions which have internalised the conception of trade unionism around social partnership and defined itself as a partner to capital.

It is the nationally oriented labour - Türk-İş, public employees and agriculture labour - that describes globalisation as a process generating both deunionisation and deindustrialisation. In that sense they are concerned with industrialisation and repercussions of integrating with the global market. However, nationally oriented labour is divided on the possible ways forward. Here there is scepticism about the solutions at the international level due to imperialism which is conceived of as an obstacle against internationalism. Imperialism is conceived of as an obstacle to internationalism. However, this critique on the probability of providing cooperation among workers in developed and developing countries has been reconsidered in the last decade in tandem with further consolidation of neoliberal restructuring. They either refer to nation state as a site of resistance *vis-a-vis* globalization – that in return echoes a strategy of reforming Keynesian welfare state - or articulate regional platforms – social model within the EU in the case of Turkey- that can provide protection from globalisation. However they are divided on whether the EU membership will provide protectionism or trigger further liberalisation.

Thus, it is probable to observe two rival class strategies: `another globalisation in the interests of labour is possible` and `neo-mercantilism`. These strategies resonate with transnational solidarity or reformism as described in the literature. The former is supported by internationally oriented labour. They accept globalisation as a fact and articulate a struggle at the international level. They are also in favour of a societal struggle of uniting struggles around distribution and recognition, in other words class struggle and identity struggles. The latter is defended by nationally oriented labour. Here, nation state level or regional level is defended as platforms bearing the potential to provide protectionism from excessive mechanisms of the market economy model. This should not, however, denote that these rival class strategies cannot be reconciled. The struggle at the national and international levels is not mutually exclusive. For instance, Bieler and Lindberg contend that struggle at the national level should not be overlooked. To quote them, `... it would be a grave mistake to play off national unions and global ones against each other... but globalisation provides a new and additional task, that of restraining competition between workers in the new global framework...' (Bieler and Lindberg, 2011b: 231). Similarly, though Wood acknowledges the need to develop new forms of international solidarity, she contends that national states still constitute the main terrain of resistance (Wood, 2002: 37). In that sense, as Bieler and Lindberg reminds us that there is a need to go beyond `both methodological nationalism, that sees social processes as essentially beginning and ending at national borders, and an equally problematic methodological globalism, that posits the "global" scale as being the primordial determining factor in labour struggle in this era of globalisation' (Bieler and Lindberg, 2011b: 227).

## Interview List

- 1) Former Consultant of Press and Public Relations of Türk-İş (1995-2000 and 2002-2007); Ankara, 28 January 2008.
- 2) Former President of Türk-İş (2002-2007); Ankara, 29 January 2008 (Author and Prof. Dr. Mustafa Türkeş)
- 3) Former President of Hak-İş (1995-2011); Ankara, 29 January 2008 (Author and Prof. Dr. Mustafa Türkeş)
- 4) President, Tekstil-İş (Textile Trade Union); İstanbul, 13 April 2010.
- 5) Former President of the DİSK between 2000 and 2011; İstanbul, 20 April 2010.
- 6) General Secretary of Hak-İş; Ankara, 5 May 2010.
- 7) Former Chief Advisor of Türk-İş, responsible for International Relations (1993-2003); Ankara, 7 May 2010.
- 8) President, Teksif (Textile, Knitting and Clothing Industry Workers' Union); Ankara, 7 May 2010.
- 9) Brussels Representative of the DİSK; Ankara, 10 May 2010.
- 10) Expert, Directorate of Research, Türk-İş; Ankara, 10 May 2010.
- 11) President, Öz İplik-İş (Real Trade Union for Workers in Weaving, Knitting and Garment Industry); Ankara, 15 December 2010.
- 12) General Education Secretary, Öz Gıda İş (Real Trade Union for Workers in Food and Tobacco and Beverages Industry); Ankara, 16 December 2010.
- 13) President, Tarım Orman-İş (Union of Agriculture and Forestry); Ankara, 17 December 2010.
- 14) President, Türk Tarım Orman-Sen (Union of Public Employees in Agriculture and Forestry of Turkey); Ankara, 20 December 2010.
- 15) Former Expert for International Relations, Eğitim Sen (Education and Science Workers' Union); Ankara, 23 December 2010.
- 16) Former President of the Birleşik Kamu İş (Confederation of United Public Workers' Unions) between 2008 and 2011; Ankara, 24 December 2010.
- 17) President, Öz Tarım-İş (Real Trade Union for Workers in Agriculture, Land and Water Industry); Ankara, 28 December 2010.
- 18) Former President of the Türk Kamu-Sen (Confederation of Unions of Public Employees of Turkey) between 2002 and 2011; Ankara, 29 December 2010.
- 19) Secretary for Press and Public Relations, Memur-Sen (Confederation of Public Servants Trade Unions); Ankara, 30 December 2010.
- 20) President, Birleşik Metal İş (United Metal Workers' Union); İstanbul, 11 January 2011.
- 21) Former President of the KESK (Confederation of Public Employees Trade Unions) between 2008 and 2010; İstanbul, 11 January 2011.
- 22) International Relations Expert, Tarım-İş (Agriculture and Agricultural Workers Trade Union); Ankara, 17 January 2011.

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## Özet

### Küreselleşme ve Türkiye’deki sendikalar: Neoliberal yeniden yapılanmaya karşı iki sınıf stratejisi

Bu çalışmada ekonomik kriz ve artan muhalif politikalar içinde küreselleşmenin ve neoliberal yeniden yapılanmanın alternatifleri tartışılmaktadır. Küreselleşme işçi hareketi için ne gibi sonuçlar doğurmuştur? Türkiye’deki işçi hareketi ne gibi stratejiler öne sürmektedir? Çalışma tekstil, otomotiv ve tarım sektörlerinde örgütlenmiş sendikacılar ile kamu emekçileri ve konfederasyonlardan seçilmiş sendikacılar ile yirmi iki mülakatı esas alır. Bu mülakatlar Nisan-Mayıs 2010 ve Aralık 2010-Ocak 2011 tarihleri arasında İstanbul ve Ankara’da yapılmıştır. Çalışmada işçi hareketi her ne kadar küreselleşme karşısında ortak eleştirel bir tutum geliştirse de, hareket içinde bir sınıf içi çatışma gözlemlenmenin olası olduğu tartışılacaktır. Uluslararası alana yönelik işçiler ‘işçilerin lehine başka bir küreselleşme mümkün’ sloganının yansıttığı gibi uluslararası alanda bir mücadele öne sürerken, ulusal alana yönelik işçiler Keynesci refah devletini çağrıştıran mekanizmalarla daha koruyucu bir strateji geliştirmişlerdir.

*Anahtar kelimeler:* Küreselleşme, sendikacılık, Türkiye siyaseti, küreselleşme karşıtı hareketler, sınıf içi çatışma.