Labour, Capital, and Religion: Harmony and Conflict among the Constituency of Political Islam in Turkey

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In a review article on several studies dealing with religion and politics in different contexts, D.H. Levine observes that the renewed salience of religion has fostered a widespread interest in the phenomenon and led to certain approaches which now ‘attribute to religion all the decisive impact once reserved for Marxism or modernization’. While he mentions ‘the obvious shortcomings of much instant scholarship’ on such a complex subject, he accepts that at least some of the research in the area has the potential to bring about a radical change in the conventional approaches to religion and to contribute, consequently, to our understanding of society. According to Levine, the change in question involves a reformulation of common questions about the ideological direction of politicized religion. In this regard, he suggests that questions about whether religion is ‘revolutionary’, ‘moderate’, or ‘conservative’ should be replaced by those addressing issues such as the structural conditions that make religion salient or the appeal of religious ideas to different social groups with different needs and practices. It is the questions of this second type which are explored in the analysis of Islamic resurgence in Turkey presented in this article.

In the particular case of political Islam in Turkey, probably the most important contribution of contemporary research has been to the analysis of the role of the state and state–society cleavages through the process of secularization in the republican era. Yet, the analysis of harmony and conflict, communality and divergence of interest or outlook among the social groups that form the constituency of political Islam has remained more limited. This article addresses these issues through a comparative analysis of the labour union confederation Hak-İş and the business association MÜSİAD (The Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen). Both organizations derive their organizational strength from the rise of political Islam. In their critical stand against the state-led
modernization experience of the country and the traditional role of the republican state in society, they both show an awareness of the changing parameters of economic activity and industrial relations in the contemporary world economy. Yet, the model of social integration incorporated in the social project that Hak-İş seeks to promote appears to be highly different from the one that characterizes MÜSİAD’s general outlook.

This comparison is carried out through a perspective where questions pertaining to class relations figure somewhat more significantly than they commonly do in contemporary research on Islamic resurgence. Without overlooking the power of religion to unify aspirations and behaviour across social classes, the article suggests that the nature of social projects designed around religious themes is significantly shaped by different life experiences that reflect class positions.

Internal contradictions of Turkish development experience constitute an important aspect of the historical background of Islamic resurgence in Turkey. The economy and society shaping role of the state in Turkey has been, in many ways, more significant than in any Western country. While the state has extensively intervened in economic life, it has not done so, first, in a rule-based manner via formal institutional arrangements, but through particularist relations between political authorities and individual businessmen. Second, extensive state intervention in economic and social life was not successful in assuring social integration. Large segments of the population have remained excluded from economic benefits of modernization and no significant uniformization of life styles could materialize. Many of the problems that stem from this double failure of the Kemalist modernization process in Turkey were explored by Ş. Mardin long before they manifested themselves in the current upsurge of political Islam in the country. As he puts it,

Altogether, the Kemalists had a fine understanding of regulation, but they missed the revolutionary–mobilizational aspect that, in certain contemporary schemes of modernization, mobilized masses for a restructuring of the society ... Just as the Kemalists missed the mobilizational aspects of modernization, they also did not see too well the nature of the integrative network of modern society, or were unable to legislate it into existence. The thinness of Kemalist ideology has to be seen in this light. Atatürk was trying to do with ideology what he had not achieved through political mobilization or through a commitment to radical changes in social structure. This was a hard burden to shift onto ideology.
The ideology in question was a secularist one. However, as some writers have recently underlined, the Turkish state has not followed a strictly secularist orientation in the Western sense. While there were serious attempts to eliminate Islam from the public political realm, these attempts were accompanied by those aimed at the institutionalization of a state-interpreted, official version of Islam as an integral part of the government structure. This ambiguous relationship between the state and religion took another turn after the military coup of 1980 where the ideological position known as the ‘Turkish–Islamic synthesis’ has become the centrepiece of the attempts to consolidate conservative forces and to pacify social dissent. This particular position was, to a large extent, accommodated by the leaders of the coup in a strategy of social unification where the Islamic identity of the nation figured in a significant way.

In this post-1980 order, therefore, Islam has become a variable of crucial significance in social and political life. It has not done so, however, quite in the way expected by the military authorities. Through successive ANAP (Motherland Party) governments in the 1980s, the role of Islam as a unifying force to be mobilized for the consolidation of state power has, to a large extent, been dominated by its role in an extensive questioning of the traditional position of the state in society. It has become, in other words, a central component of a new, and at times quite radical, ‘politics of recognition’ which has led to the electoral victories of the Islamist RP (Welfare Party) both in the municipal elections of 1994 and in the general elections of 1995 that culminated in the formation of the rather short-lived RP-DYP (True Path Party) coalition government. The coalition government was forced out of power mainly by the pressure from secularist military authorities who enjoyed, nevertheless, the not negligible support of certain segments of the civilian population. After the fall of the government, the RP was closed, but it soon reappeared as the FP (Virtue Party), just as the RP had reappeared as the continuation of another Islamist party, MSP (National Salvation Party), which was closed down following the military coup of 1980.

An important factor behind these electoral successes was the ability of political Islam to use effectively a ‘language of social disadvantage’ in a way to incorporate divers segments of the population ranging from the newly emerging entrepreneurs to other segments of the middle class which include Islamic intellectuals and professionals, as well as the marginalized masses largely consisting of new immigrants in urban centres. In this context, MÜSİAD, which has quite successfully mobilized religion to bind Muslim businessmen of varying status located in different regions of the country into a coherent community, is found to be deserving of some attention in the analyses of political economy of Islam in Turkey.
labour union confederation, Hak-İş, on the other hand, is almost invariably left out of these analyses in spite of its close relations with the MSP/RP/FP throughout the period following its formation in 1976.

Notwithstanding their shared position in the above mentioned Islamic politics of recognition, certain differences in both rhetoric and deed seem to place the strategies of MÜSİAD and Hak-İş in different paradigms of social exclusion and solidarity. By using Polanyite terminology, these paradigms may be said to reflect different ways of ‘instituting the economy’ distinguished from each other by the varying significance of the principles of ‘exchange’, ‘reciprocity’ and ‘redistribution’ in directing economic activity and shaping the social co-ordinates of the livelihood of individual members of society. In this framework, the principle of reciprocity describes personal and informal interaction between people bound by organic ties of kinship, ethnicity or religion. Redistribution with its accompanying pattern of centricity refers to formal mechanisms of social protection through centralized state intervention which, in the context of modern European economies, appears side by side with the principle of association defining organized interest representation which is carried out according to formal rules set by the central authority. While in these two types of social arrangements economy is ‘embedded’ in social relations either on the basis of reciprocity or ‘redistribution/association’, in market societies, economy is ‘disembedded’ from society and is instituted around impersonal relations of exchange between anonymous participants in the market process. In general, the three-fold classification of East Asian, European and American models of economic development, that we find, for example, in the taxonomies presented by B. Stallings and W. Streeck or by Perkin, approximate to these Polanyite typologies. Similarly, one could suggest that the paradigms of ‘solidarity’, ‘monopoly’ and ‘specialization’ described by H. Silver are characterized by the centrality of reciprocity, redistribution/association and exchange, respectively.

In spite of Polanyi’s comments concerning the continuing significance of reciprocity relations in certain economic arrangements in modern societies, the principle of reciprocity is often thought to characterize tribal societies or, more generally, pre-capitalist economies. I believe that there is a parallel between this belief and the distinction made in H. Silver’s comprehensive survey between modern and organic models of social integration. According to her, modern paradigms of solidarity, monopoly and specialization differ from the organic ones which are characterized by the principles of ‘community’ and ‘subsidiarity’. The latter seek to construct a social order based on either functional and regional or primordial groups (i.e. on ethnic, religious or linguistic bases) and they strongly oppose the larger and higher organizations (such as the state) to undertake
responsibilities which could be performed by smaller and lower models in their spheres of autonomy. This formulation posits a clear cut distinction between the organic models and the non-organic paradigm of solidarity, which largely disappears in an attempt to characterize the latter with reference to the personal and informal principle of reciprocity. I find, however, Silver’s distinction rather difficult to sustain, given, especially, the characteristics often attributed to flexible production which, in her taxonomy, appears as the political economy model associated with the modern paradigm of solidarity.

It is often argued that the post-Second World War socio-economic order is currently replaced by this system of flexible production characterized by the following interrelated features:

a) decreasing role of the nation state in economic life and, relatedly, the declining significance of the pursuit of ‘welfare’ in developed countries and ‘development and modernization’ as the background of different social movements;

b) decreasing role of interest associations of corporatist and neo-corporatist type with, in particular, the declining significance of labour unions and collective bargaining practices;

c) trends toward descaling, downsizing and decentralization of business firms and increasing significance of small and medium enterprises which are no longer regarded as less efficient and technologically backward forms;

d) successful economic performance of East Asian economies which are sometimes argued to be rooted in economic institutions that encourage and maintain social ties in their cultural specificity;

e) blurring of the boundaries between political, economic and cultural aspects of social life and the consequent replacement of the traditional left-right nexus with new types of social belonging and identity.

In one of the first systematic and perhaps the most influential analyses of flexible specialization as the current successor of the Fordist regulated economy, Piore and Sabel explicitly state that ‘in flexible production it is hard to tell where society (in the form of family and school ties or community celebrations of ethnic and political identity) ends, and where economic organization begins. Among the ironies of the resurgence of craft production is that its deployment of modern technology depends on its reinvigoration of affiliations that are associated with the preindustrial past.’ These affiliations are not very different from those that are often said to characterize East Asian economies, which are described as being rooted in culturally specific social relations, and they largely refer to those H.
Silver mentions as the basis of the social order organic models seek to establish. In the contemporary context of flexible production, therefore, it becomes justified to refer to the principle of reciprocity that manifests itself in community relations, including the primordial ones, as the determining principle of certain models of social integration.

The current relationship between religion and politics in Turkey takes place within this particular international context. Both MÜSİAD and Hak-ış respond to the challenges of the contemporary world economy and criticize the statist model associated with past development experience of Turkey by using Islam as an important component of their organizational strategies. A pure market society characterized by the ‘disembeddedness’ of the economy from society is not considered to be viable and desirable by either association. Yet, the centrality of factors of reciprocity found in MÜSİAD’s explicitly Eastern-looking strategy are not as important in Hak-ış’s call for an economy instituted around redistributive/associative principles as in modern European societies. It seems, therefore, that workers and businessmen have different interpretations of and expectations from an economic order where Islam constitutes a significant point of reference.

In his analysis of the rationale behind the emerging ‘Islamic subeconomy’ in Turkey and in other predominantly Muslim countries, T. Kuran argues that Islamic institutional arrangements that define this sub-economy largely lack coherence and uniformity and fail to bring about substantive changes in economic co-ordination mechanisms. According to Kuran, commitment to Islamic principles fulfils, however, two important functions for the business community. It serves, first, to alleviate feelings of guilt associated with personal wealth accumulation in contexts where money making activity is based on rather precarious legal arrangements and consequently lacks social legitimacy. It reduces, second, the uncertainty associated with feelings of mistrust among businessmen through the formation of networks of trust and solidarity.

These psychological and economic factors appear to be especially important in the contemporary setting of flexible production where the unregulated character of business activity becomes dominant. The formal context of market co-ordination and state regulation is complemented, in this context, by informal ties of trust and solidarity among small and medium enterprises. Industrial relations between the latter and their workers, too, are less significantly shaped by the formal rules governing market economy and organized interest representation. Appeals to ‘moral values’ and ‘business ethics’ consequently become significant in settling disputes about fairness. It is important to note, therefore, the congruity between the characteristics of the contemporary international economy and
the strategic use of both network-forming and guilt-alleviating functions of religion by MÜSİAD as a class organization. MÜSİAD represents about 3000 firms of varying sizes widely distributed in the country in terms of their geographic location. Although large enterprises are not absent, or even insignificant, among MÜSİAD’s constituency, the majority of the enterprises represented are smaller ones employing fewer than 50 workers, with the very small ones employing fewer than 10 workers constituting the largest group. The overwhelming majority of businesses represented by MÜSİAD are newly founded ones. The official MÜSİAD rhetoric on the foundation of the association highlights how these new enterprises are disadvantaged by the close collaboration between the state and older, largely ‘state-created’ big businesses mainly located in Istanbul.

For its numerous, geographically dispersed members among which smaller businesses have an important place, MÜSİAD fulfils an important function by providing technology and market-related information. Through the activities of the association, its members participate in international fairs and establish contacts which they could never form by their individual means.

Our interviews with MÜSİAD members in four different cities have confirmed the practical significance of these activities for the association’s members. These interviews have also shown that the association plays a very important role in network formation by fostering feelings of trust and solidarity not only among the businessmen located in a particular city but also at a national level. The association mediates in business relations that involve input, supply, outsourcing, subcontracting, retailing and establishment of representative agencies. This intermediation of the association effectively reduces uncertainty, prevents the breaching of contracts and consequently minimizes costs of information gathering and monitoring.

In these networking activities, Islam proves to be a very useful resource by instituting a communal bond of mutual trust among the members of MÜSİAD. Appeal to an Islamic value system also forms an important component of the macro-level social project that the association seeks to promote. This project is formulated on the basis of the assumption that ‘the civilization of the West’ is now faced with insurmountable difficulties everywhere and the world economy is currently marked by two dominant tendencies: the advent of the information society which has many characteristics of ‘pre-industrial, agricultural societies’ and the shift of the centre of the world economy toward East Asia.

MÜSİAD administration thus calls for an ‘Eastern looking’ economic strategy against the Western orientation of Turkish modernization. Hence, during the short lived RP-led coalition government, the association
supported the systematic attempts of the government to cultivate close relations not only with Islamic countries, but also with the successful economies of East Asia through certain ASEAN countries with large Muslim populations such as Malaysia and Indonesia.

The East Asian model of development is presented as the most viable one in the context of the contemporary information society precisely because of the faithfulness of East Asian societies to their cultural identity and traditional values. Such traditional values comfortably fit in the information society which is characterized by the increasingly significant economic role of small and medium sized enterprises and, on the cultural plane, family values and religion in contrast to large scale, capital-intensive enterprises, highly interventionist welfare state practices and a rationalist/positivist outlook which characterize Western industrial society.

In this industrial society, it is argued, ‘homo sapiens was transformed to homo brutalis’. The social project that MÜSİAD seeks to promote in Turkey is thus defined as the replacement of this ‘homo brutalis’ based economic order with a ‘homo Islamicus’ centred one. ‘Homo Islamicus’ is, in fact, the subtitle of a MÜSİAD publication where the Islamic order that the association advocates is discussed in its different aspects.

Attempts to define the characteristics of this Islamic order are also outlined in other MÜSİAD publications and they draw on Koranic verses as well as on the words and deeds of Mohammed. In this regard, the rules set out by the prophet himself to guide the exchange activity in the Medina market are often discussed as rules which clearly define a competitive system with minimum state intervention and regulation. This system is different, however, from a pure market economy in that it is clearly embedded in social relations mediated by a religious morality. For example, the references that we find to Medina market in MÜSİAD publications significantly include the payment of the Islamic wealth tax zekat, given ‘either to the state or directly to the poor’ as a requirement of ethical business behaviour. Payment of actually existing taxes of a secular character are conspicuously absent in these discussions of Islamic business ethics.

MÜSİAD administration’s attitude toward privatization of State Economic Enterprises (SEEs) are in line with the unregulated and decentralized character of the advocated Islamic economy. While the economic model in question clearly precludes the state’s role as a direct producer, it is also incompatible with the bureaucratic management structure of modern big business firms. Hence, the founding president of MÜSİAD, Erol Yarar presents the position of the association on the question of privatization as one which involves the transfer of SEEs not to the established big business concerns, but to highly dynamic, medium-sized enterprises with easy, long-term payment conditions. The possibility of
rising unemployment is regarded, in this context, as an unavoidable price to be paid for long-term efficiency and eventually rising employment opportunities.30

The position of MÜSİAD on industrial relations, too, could not be described with reference to the basic tenets of a pure market economy. The association adheres, rather, to a model where workers’ rights and entitlements, as well as responsibilities, are determined by informal and personal relations as opposed to redistributive/associative principles. In MÜSİAD publications, ties that bind the community of believers are often evoked as an assurance of stable and productive industrial relations.31 In this Islamic context of industrial relations, mutual trust replaces the need for a formal labour code and labour unions. According to some contributors to MÜSİAD publications on the issue, the latter might be allowed to exist as voluntarily appointed representatives of workers, but strikes, clearly, do not form a part of Islamic labour markets.32

Yet harmony and peace preached by Islam is not always successful in undermining class conflict as revealed by certain episodes such as the one that took place in a MÜSİAD-affiliated textile company in the town of Bursa in 1993. In this particular episode, the owner of the company was accused by the leader of the Hak-İş affiliated union of textile workers (Öz İplik-İş) of employing body guards close to the ultra nationalist MHP (National Action Party) and the BBP (The Great Union Party) to intimidate unionized workers and to chase the union from the establishment. The employer in question, while denying the use of physical force against union members, has never denied that he tried to discourage unionization in his enterprise.33

This particular incident which, according to the Hak-İş leaders we have interviewed, is only atypical in the use of physical force that was involved, highlights the dilemmas faced by Hak-İş as a labour union confederation that is situated, along with MÜSİAD, within the constituency of political Islam in Turkey.

Through the recent developments of the international economy, the requirements of ‘flexible production’ have limited the scope of policies designed to guarantee stability of employment and income while public opinion has in general become less favourable to organized interest representation by labour unions which have often come to be regarded as elements of rigidity inimical to efficiency and international competitiveness. Labour unions across the world have found themselves in an environment of enhanced international competition and diminished state intervention in their favour in the collective bargaining process.34 This state of affairs has, in theory, the potential to foster a more internationalist
consciousness among the workers of the world. What is more commonly observed today, however, is a rediscovery or consolidation of ethnic, religious or national bonds which sometimes dominate working class solidarity. As some writers have argued, such non-economic sources of identity and solidarity have always existed among the workers, at times supporting resistance against the fragmenting and homogenizing impact of capital, or contributing, under other circumstances, to the persistence of patriarchalism, racism or national-chauvinism within the labour movement. It could hardly be denied, however, that the relationship between class identity and identity politics now appears a much more crucial parameter within the labour movement than it ever was during the post-Second World War era.

The implications of this enhanced consciousness of different identities which compete with working class identity are not very straightforward. Affirmation of non-class identity could be situated, for example, within a strategic orientation of the labour movement toward more ‘innovative’ and less ‘oppositional’ militancy or it might lead to a more radical break from standard unionism by replacing it with different models of ‘social movement unionism’. In a similar way, one could not decide, a priori, whether religion, where it appears as an integral component of the organizational strategy pursued by a given union movement, would act as ‘the opium of the masses’ by making them tolerate exploitation or as a factor strengthening the will to resist oppression. In the case of Hak-İş, too, its relationship with political Islam could not, by itself, define the organization’s character as a labour union confederation. Yet, in the light of the preceding discussion of MÜSİAD’s views, some of which are clearly not very easy to incorporate in an organized labour movement, one could expect to find at least a potential tension between Hak-İş’s role as a participant in Islamic politics and its position within the labour movement. Hak-İş was founded in 1976 when a coalition government of the ‘left of centre’ CHP (Republican People’s Party) and the predecessor of the RP, the NSP, was in power. The minister of Labour and Social Security was Şevket Kazan, an important figure both within the MSP and RP. Necati Çelik, the founding leader of the confederation was the secretary of Şevket Kazan at the ministry and he remained president of the confederation until he became, first an RP member of parliament and then minister of Labour and Social Security in the RP-led coalition government founded in 1996.

Neither Necati Çelik nor other leaders of the confederation deny their affiliation with political Islam. This relationship is often justified by referring to many other cases of organic relationship between labour unions and political parties both in Turkey and in the West. Yet, they also feel that this close relationship with the MSP of their formative years has been
### Table 1: Membership of Different Trade Union Confederations January 1985–January 1998

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detrimental to the public image of the organization which has remained
handicapped by the stigma of the ‘confederation of the fundamentalists’. In the 1980s, Hak-İş indeed managed to establish itself as a national force whose significance could not be limited to strictly defined Islamic segments of the labour movement (see Table 1).

In the post-1980 period, the constituency of Hak-İş has come to include a not negligible number of workers formerly affiliated with the radical leftist confederation DİSK closed after the coup like Hak-İş but, unlike the latter that was allowed to resume its functions after six months, could come back only in 1992 after a long series of legal and political struggles. The impact of DİSK’s troubles on the development of Hak-İş appears to be a difficult subject for leaders of the latter confederation. In this regard, there is, on the one hand, a strong reaction against implicit or explicit suggestions that Hak-İş owes whatever organizational success it has to the forced absence of DİSK from the union scene. On the other hand, the leaders of Hak-İş often accept, albeit unwillingly, that this absence has an undeniable role in the history of the confederation. This role is mainly explained, however, with reference to the passivity of Türk-İş, the largest and oldest labour union confederation known for its closeness to the state authority as its permanent defining character, in the face of the political repression of the labour movement in Turkey during the 1980s. Hence, it is suggested that Hak-İş’s membership has mainly increased not so much through the recruitment of workers formerly affiliated with DİSK, but because many workers have left Türk-İş to join Hak-İş.41

In the current political atmosphere prevailing in Turkey, Hak-İş uses Islam as a binding force in its competition with other labour unions portrayed as either acting like a state organ and supporting the repressive policies of the central authority (Türk-İş) or fostering class conflict and disrupting harmony by adhering to an alien and now everywhere bankrupt ideology (DİSK). The leaders of the confederation often refer to the inevitable collapse of all ideologies defined to include fascism, communism and capitalism. They also highlight the ensuing tendency to return to traditional values. They argue, consequently, that the affirmation of cultural identity constitutes the basic characteristic of most contemporary social movements, including the labour union movement. Under these circumstances, labour unions are in a position to replace the materialistic values of the technology-centred, mass consumption society with people-centred approaches.42 Such approaches would emphasize social cohesion rather than individual self-interest or social harmony rather than class conflict, and would be, consequently, in full conformity with Islam. Yet, as Salim Uslu, the present leader of the confederation, is extremely cautious to underline, Islam is not an ideology. What is now on the agenda for Hak-İş
is not, therefore, to substitute Islam for the now defunct ideologies. While Islam presents a path to salvation for humanity in general, it does not provide specific institutional arrangements for the solution of concrete problems such as the ones currently faced by the labour union movement. What is necessary, therefore, is to form modern institutions and reform the existing ones in ways which are compatible with the values inherent in Islam and its traditional institutions.43

The leaders of Hak-İş show a clear awareness of the current problems of the union movement as well as the necessity of more conciliatory and 'innovative' approaches without, nevertheless, ever undermining faith in the organized labour movement and its ability to overcome its present difficulties.44 Even when certain zealous leaders of individual unions affiliated with Hak-İş go further than Çelik or Uslu in their affirmations of Islamic identity, traditional Islamic institutions are never presented as viable alternatives to modern labour union organizations, the *sine qua non* of just and equitable industrial relations in the contemporary world economy.45

In our interviews with Salim Uslu and the president of the Istanbul branch of the confederation, attitudes of certain MÜSİAD members, who would not allow unions to organize in their establishments, frequently appeared as a source of complaint. Both interviewees made statements to the effect that ‘some so-called Muslim employers act in ways which are not at all compatible with Islam whenever there is an industrial conflict that threatens their economic self interest.’ They both said that European or American enterprises are clearly the ones where labour organizations have the least difficulty in protecting workers’ rights and MÜSİAD’s members do not at all have good records in that area.

The divergence of opinion between Hak-İş and MÜSİAD *vis-à-vis* the question of organized interest representation by labour leads to parallel differences in other areas such as the strategic visions of these organizations concerning Turkey’s position in the international economy. As opposed to MÜSİAD administration that calls for an anti-Western strategy where the development of relations with Islamic countries as well as with East Asian economies is strongly advocated, the leadership of Hak-İş adopts a much more nuanced position. While the commitment to a one-dimensional, Western-looking strategy is criticized in favour of a more versatile and flexible orientation in foreign policy, it is nevertheless clearly stated that Turkey has made a definite choice by adhering to the European Customs Union and pursuing its application for full membership in the European Community. Given this choice, the politicians should act in conformity with this clear commitment.46

As Salim Uslu once stated ‘the East is where our roots are, but the West is our direction’.47 This statement summarizes, in many ways, the strategic
orientation of Hak-İş as a modern labour union movement which effectively uses religion both as a major source of values that bind its member into a coherent community and as an element of its harmonious relations with Islamic party politics. While Islam is very useful as an organizational resource, the organization’s very existence as a labour union depends on the acceptance of primarily Western institutional and political principles of organized interest representation.

International relations in general have a very important place in the activities of the confederation. While visits to Islamic countries or Turkic republics also figure among these activities, the priorities are very clearly elsewhere, in the attempts to develop close ties with western national and international labour organizations. According to the leaders of the confederation, Hak-İş has a responsibility to support the labour movement in Islamic countries and Turkic republics for the establishment, in these societies, of the norms and institutions of organized interest representation that are found in Western developed countries. Yet, it is with close collaboration with its Western counterparts that the confederation aims to contribute to the development of these norms and institutions in Turkey. In this regard, Hak-İş’s determination in the pursuit of its application for membership in ETUC and ICFTU is a clear indication of the leadership’s evaluation of the confederation’s place in the international labour movement.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the leaders of Hak-İş do not at all share MÜSİAD’s enthusiasm for the East Asian model of ‘embedded economy’, which, according to them, is based on an authoritarian, undemocratic political system. The emphasis of flexibility that one finds in MÜSİAD’s agenda, too, is replaced by Hak-İş’s call for economic relations based on formal rules and regulations which, nevertheless, does not imply a categorical opposition to market-oriented reforms. Concerning the question of privatization, for example, Hak-İş has adopted a nuanced position where the emphasis was placed more on the necessity of a case by case approach and on the methods of privatization than a straightforward public versus private sector dicothomy. The confederation has also developed a model of employee ownership and management which was adopted by Öz Çelik-İş, the union of metal workers affiliated with Hak-İş, which participated in and won the bid for the privatization of the iron and steel complex Kardemir. A similar attempt was made by Öz Gıda-İş, the Hak-İş affiliated union in food processing, during the privatization of the public enterprises in Meat and Fish Products (EBK) and Milk Products (SEK), but it has failed, according to the union, as a result of the legally dubious process of the privatization of SEK and EBK.

It is not clear whether the Kardemir case is in fact a success story as claimed by the leadership of Hak-İş or whether the privatization process of
EBK and SEK were really of dubious legality. Yet, the position of Hâk-İş in these particular cases clearly reveals the vision of a socio-economic order where workers have a role different from the one assigned to them in MÜSİAD’s model of an unregulated Islamic economy in its protected sphere of autonomy where they would have to reciprocate the justice and affection of good Muslim employers with devotion and hard work.

Contemporary realities of the world economy in general and Turkish society in particular call for organizational strategies different from past practices of private enterprises, business organizations and labour unions. Networking activities that rely on religion as an organizational resource acquire, in this context, a novel significance. For Turkish businessmen affiliated with MÜSİAD, Islam proves a useful resource with economic as well as ideological functions. Successful networking among workers could hardly present a substitute, however, for the redistributive/associative principles that define rights and entitlements in a way to assure stability of employment and income independently of the goodwill of individual employers. In fact, the advent of a socio-economic order based on an Islamic morality might imply that the rights of employees could easily be breached ‘with a clear conscience’ by Muslim employers who believe themselves to be acting according to the Islamic principles of fair treatment. In the absence of universally accepted principles on the basis of which disputes concerning the ‘fairness’ in question are settled, workers are likely to find themselves in a rather vulnerable position in industrial relations. It is not surprising, therefore, to see that for Hâk-İş, in spite of its close ties with political Islam, opposition to the uncritically Western orientation of the secularist state authority does not preclude the appeal to redistributive/associative principles characterizing, basically, the industrial relations in European societies. Consequently, class positions of the parties involved constitute a factor of non-negligible significance in the analysis of the differences between the views of Hâk-İş and MÜSİAD with regards to the desired strategic orientation of Turkish society.

NOTES

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3. Şerif Mardin, ‘Centre – Periphery: A Key to Turkish Politics?’, Daedalus, 102 (1973), pp.169–90.
20. This idea was also developed in Buğra, ‘Class, Culture, and the State’.
21. MÜSİAD members often refer to a particular episode that took place in 1990 when, as a group of businessmen, they were not allowed to participate in a meeting organized by DEİK (The Association of Foreign Economic Relations which is an umbrella organization bringing together both the Chambers of Industry and Trade and TÜSİAD) as the decisive event that triggered the foundation of MÜSİAD. Buğra presents an analysis of MÜSİAD as an
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organization that pursues a class strategy defined in opposition to the strategic orientation of TÜSİAD (The Association of Turkish Industrialists and Businessmen), the very influential association of established big business in Turkey. For a more detailed description of MÜSİAD's constituency and activities, see Ayşe Buğra, 'Class, Culture and the State'.


23. This can be seen quite clearly, for example, in a MÜSİAD publication on the visits of Erbakan, the RP leader and the prime minister of the RP–DYP coalition government, to the Middle East, Africa and East Asia where he was accompanied by a large group of businessmen affiliated with the association. See MÜSİAD, Başbakan Necmettin Erbakan'ın Doğa Asya Gezisi ve MÜSİAD’un Bosna–Hersek Gezisi Raporu (Istanbul, 1996).


25. Ibid., p.51.


27. The monthly Bulletin of MÜSİAD, as well as the quarterly journal Çerçeve published by the association provide a forum for these discussions. See, for example, Ali Akpınar, ‘Kur’an-ı Kerim’ in Emia‘ya Bakış’ (MÜSİAD) Çerçeve, Vol.4, No.15 (1995), pp.120–24.

28. This is the central motive, for example, in the multi-media show staged for the Fourth International Fair organized by MÜSİAD in Istanbul. See MÜSİAD Bulleten, Vol.5, No.18 (1997), pp.15–18.


34. Allen, ‘Trade Unions, Worker Participation and Flexibility: Linking the Micro to the Macro’.


42. See, among many declarations to the same effect, the opening address of Necati Çelik at the seventh general assembly of Hak-İş, Hak-İş, No.21 (March 1993), especially pp.5–6 and 23; Necati Çelik, ‘Some Thoughts on the 3rd Izmir Economic Congress’, Hak-İş, No.19 (May/June/July 1992), p.1; and Salim Uslu’s speech at the ISAV Conference on ‘Industrial Relations in İslam’, Report of the Sixth General Assembly of Hak-İş (Ankara, 1989).
43. Salim Uslu, speech at the ISA V Conference (note 42). See also the interview with Salim Uslu in Hak-İş, No.19 (July 1992), pp.66–9.


45. See the paper represented by Mahmut Aslan, secretary general of the Hak-İş affiliated union Hizmet-İş, at the International Conference on the ‘Islamic Model for the Labour Movement’ held in Pakistan in April 1993, Hak-İş, No.22 (May 1993), pp.65–7.


47. See the interview with Salim Uslu in Macro (Dec. 1996).

48. See, for example, Salim Uslu, ‘We Have no Choice but to Carry Hak-İş to the Future’, Hak-İş, No.34 (Jan. 1996), p.34.

49. Hak-İş’s decision to apply for membership in these organizations was taken in 1992, but the confederation had to wait for over five years until its application was finally accepted in 1997. One reason for the delay was the attitude of the leadership of Turk-İş which has systematically tried to prevent Hak-İş’s membership in the ICFTU after having supported it at the initial stages of the procedures in 1993. Through the period between the initial application and its acceptance, the leadership of the confederation, Salim Uslu in particular, have maintained close contact with the ETUC and the ICFTU and their individual members. They have pursued an active policy of lobbying which, in many ways, appears to be much more systematic, coherent and effective than the activities undertaken by those who conduct Turkey’s relations with the EU. See Hak-İş, No.33 (Nov. 1995), p.29; No.37 (July 1996), p.83; No.45 (May 1998), pp.6–7.

50. See the interview with Salim Uslu published under the title ‘Turkey is not South Korea’, Hak-İş, No.23 (Aug. 1993), pp.52–5.