TRADE UNION–POLITICS RELATIONS IN FRANCE

Yıldız Çalıkkılıç*

Abstract
This article examines the complex and evolving relationship between trade unions and political power in France. Focusing on the historical trajectory from the French Revolution to the 20th century, the study explores how labor movements emerged, transformed, and interacted with state institutions and political ideologies. Through the lens of key legislative milestones, ideological currents, and institutional structures, the article highlights the dual role of trade unions as both socio-economic advocates and political actors. It particularly emphasizes the interplay between syndicalism and republicanism, as well as the tensions between reformist and revolutionary currents within the labor movement. By analyzing historical patterns of engagement and conflict, the article offers a nuanced understanding of how trade unionism shaped, and was shaped by, the French political landscape.
Keywords: France, trade unions, political power, labor history, syndicalism, republicanism, social movements

INTRODUCTION

Although relations between laborers and employers have been a matter of concern since ancient times, modern labor movements, trade unions, and employer-employee relations emerged only after the Industrial Revolution. The term "trade union" originates from the Roman and Greek legal systems, where it was represented by the word syndic. In essence, it referred to individuals designated to represent a collective body (Demirbaş, 1995, p. 3).

The concept of a trade union was first systematically defined by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, pioneers of the Fabian School, as a "continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives." (Erdoğan, 2016, 2016, pp.3–4).

The meaning of the term “trade union” differs across countries. In nations such as the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany, it refers exclusively to labor organizations, while in countries like Turkey and France, it encompasses both employee and employer associations. Trade unionism, by its nature, is also recognized as a form of social movement. (Dereli, 2019, pp. 16–24).

Trade unions are mass organizations established to protect, assert, and expand the social, economic, and political rights of workers and wage earners. These organizations aim to safeguard the rights of all employees without discrimination (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, pp. 13–21). Unions have sought to increase workers' wages, improve their living standards, and enhance working conditions. Originating in 18th-century England, trade unionism later spread throughout Western Europe.

In comparison to the United Kingdom and the United States, the development of trade unionism in France was relatively slow (Koç, 2015, pp. 102–105). The law of February 27, 1948 granted individuals the right to unite and claim their rights, thereby ensuring union freedom in France. However, a subsequent law enacted on November 27, 1948 revoked this freedom, and forming a union became a criminal offense. It was not until May 25, 1964, that union freedom was decriminalized through amendments to the Penal Code. Finally, on March 21, 1984, the legal recognition of trade unions was clearly established (Cindemir, 2017, pp. 554–557).

In general, trade unions have established close ties with political parties to more effectively defend the rights of their members and to influence legislative and executive powers. Conversely, political parties have engaged with trade unions to increase their electoral support and improve their chances of winning power. This study specifically aims to analyze the interaction between trade unions and politics, focusing on how unions influence politics and how political dynamics, in turn, impact union activities.

* Dokuz Eyül University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of History, Izmir, Türkiye, yldz.calikkilic@hotmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-8697-1160, DOI: 10,54414/QPVL5833

In this context, the present study focuses on the trade union–politics relationship in France. In order to fully grasp this relationship, it is crucial to outline the historical process leading to unionization. The emergence of unionization is closely linked to the Industrial Revolution and the concurrent development of a working class. As labor emerged as a concept, so did the worker, and in France, the bourgeoisie often supported laborers who were unable to secure fair compensation for their efforts.

The section titled “The Historical Development of Trade Unions in France” seeks to present the early, more rudimentary organizational forms of trade unions. This includes an examination of the initial conflicts that accompanied unionization, worker revolts, and strikes. Special attention is given to the revolutionary context of 1848, and the years 1850–1870 are analyzed as a crucial period for union development and consolidation.

Lastly, the trade union–politics relationship is analyzed under three sub-headings, each addressing a different dimension of this complex interaction.

1.The Industrial Revolution

Although the historical development of trade unions is commonly associated with the Industrial Revolution, certain organizational phenomena related to unionism had emerged long before the formal existence of trade unions. Even prior to the Industrial Revolution, various mutual aid societies, educational associations, and early organizations aiming to protect workers’ rights were established. Guilds and apprentice organizations are often considered the forerunners of modern trade unions in Europe (Erdoğan, 2016, pp. 3–10).

Nevertheless, it is beyond doubt that the institutional formation of trade unions as we understand them today occurred only after the Industrial Revolution. Trade unions began to appear particularly in countries that underwent industrialization. The Industrial Revolution emerged in the second half of the 18th century in England and gradually spread to Western European countries (Taş, 2012, pp. 61–65).

The mechanization and steam-powered innovations of the Industrial Revolution paved the way for the emergence of large factories and significantly affected both economic life and the institutions that governed it.

By the mid-19th century, the incomes of industrialists and companies in Europe had risen substantially. However, the impoverished rural and urban populations were largely excluded from these economic gains. Workers typically labored 13–15 hours per day, were malnourished, and lived in dilapidated conditions. At the time, laborers had no rights such as sickness or accident insurance, pensions, annual or weekly leave, severance pay, or job security (Yunus Taş, pp. 64–65).

Capital owners (the bourgeoisie) preferred women and children for their lower wages. The growing poverty resulting from the 18th- and 19th-century Industrial Revolutions created a large dispossessed class. The rural population became increasingly impoverished, as agriculture could no longer sustain the growing numbers. The economic policies of the physiocrats and mercantilists (notably Colbertism in France), which anticipated population growth, may have contributed to this outcome (Selik, ,p. 126).

As modern industrial technology began to develop, society and its institutions underwent significant transformations. The onset of the Industrial Revolution marked the transition from muscle-powered labor to steam power, accelerating societal change. Poverty became one of the most pressing issues in Western Europe after the Industrial Revolution—not merely as a social concern but as a systemic problem requiring eradication. In other words, poverty came to symbolize individuals' loss of control over their own lives. Thus, eliminating poverty became a central tenet of modern society (Baştaymaz, 2016, pp. 11–17)

The capitalist system dismantled small-scale workshop models and guild systems composed of interconnected artisans, laying the groundwork for the emergence of a new class (Özkiraz & Tulu, 2008, pp. 108–126).

The foundational element of unionism—the “working class”—was a direct result of the Industrial Revolution. One of the most defining features of the revolution was the unprecedented

emergence of mechanical power as a substitute for human labor. This shift marked a transformation from labor-based production to machine-based production (Talas, 1970, pp. 161–167).

Throughout history, labor was largely associated with agriculture; however, this changed in the 18th century. Feudalism displaced the landless peasantry, driving them into industrial cities where they were employed in "factories"—the hallmark of the Industrial Revolution—thus giving rise to the working class that Marx would later refer to as the "proletariat." (Şahin, 2018, pp. 118–130).

Industrialization brought about the emergence of factory systems and introduced the concept of the division of labor. Division of labor became a fundamental requirement of mass production. As labor became more specialized, production increased—thereby also deepening exploitation. Although France industrialized later than England, it eventually caught up. Nevertheless, for a considerable period, England retained its industrial superiority due to its early start and the advantages gained through pioneering the Industrial Revolution (Kuyucuklu, 1982, p. 57).

The Industrial Revolution ushered in mechanization across nearly every sector. The rapid acceleration of industrialization was supported by developments in infrastructure and communication, such as railways, canals, steamships, and telegraph systems, which in turn facilitated the growth of both domestic and international trade.

1.1.Industrialization in France

Unlike England, the process of industrialization in France did not proceed in a manner that brought about parallel population growth and urbanization. Since large-scale rural-to-urban migration did not occur during this period in France, the French working class primarily consisted of artisans.(Erdoğan, 2016, pp. 15–17).

Until 1840, capitalism in France advanced mainly in terms of land ownership. Traditional forms of production—such as home-based manufacturing, handicrafts, and artisanal trades—continued to play an important role. Within the framework of industrialization, the silk weaving industry constituted a significant sector. For many years, much of the production was carried out from home. The transition to factory-based production was driven by a series of practical needs. Initially, France pursued industrialization in order to compete with England and Sweden; however, over time, it became necessary to industrialize not for competition but as a prerequisite for functioning as a major state.

Furthermore, the liberal economic model exacerbated the suffering of workers. The laissez-faire principle of "let do, let pass" struck a severe blow to laborers. This system left working conditions to the discretion of employers and employees, significantly limiting the scope of state intervention. As a result, workers—whose sole source of income was their labor—found themselves defenseless against capitalists (Şahin, 2018, pp. 118–130).

In the long run, this situation laid the groundwork for workers to organize and confront capital owners.

The Restoration period (1814–1830) and the July Monarchy (1830–1848) were marked by early steps toward industrialization in France. However, these efforts did not result in full-scale industrial transformation. True industrialization emerged during the Second Empire (1852–1870) and the Third Republic (1871–1940) (Özkiraz & Tulu, 2008, p. 114).

Following the Industrial Revolution, trade unions were defined as "occupational organizations defending the economic and social rights and interests of the working class." By the early 20th century, trade unions had come to exert significant influence not only on the economy but also on the social and political structures of society (Şahin, pp. 118–130).

1.2.The Concept of Labor

Before delving into the general relationship between trade unions and politics in France, it is essential to reflect on the concept of labor. In ancient Greek, the word for labor carried the meaning of "pain at the moment of birth." The term has also connoted pain, suffering, and torment. Adam Smith described labor as "the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities," referring to it as the original price paid for everything (Yüksel, 2014, pp. 257–261).

Historically, laborers—including slaves and serfs—have endured harsh and painful conditions throughout their working lives. The Industrial Revolution transformed these difficulties into a new form. In particular, mechanization raised new concerns regarding ownership and economic justice.

The Industrial Revolution marked a period in which social deprivation and labor exploitation reached unprecedented levels. Historically, workers have often served as slaves or serfs for the ruling elite. Although the formation of a working class is generally linked to the rise of capitalism, throughout history, there has always been a laboring class compelled to work for the benefit of nobles and lords (Ballı & İlhan, p. 43).

The working class has consistently comprised those who must work to survive and who lack the freedom to leave their jobs at will. Workers who left their jobs without permission were subjected to severe penalties (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, pp. 34–40).

Broadly speaking, the interests of labor and capital are inherently contradictory. The desire for autonomy from the state stems from the structural role the state plays in perpetuating exploitation on behalf of the dominant class. Nevertheless, in the modern world, labor classes have also been shaped through state support. State-sponsored labor unions were often created to undermine genuine grassroots labor movements and suppress worker resistance (Erkan Aydoğanoğlu, pp. 34–40).

In this way, the aim was to weaken the labor movement's momentum and diminish its capacity for resistance.

1.3. The Bourgeoisie

The bourgeoisie played a pioneering role in the earliest class struggles in Europe. The rise of commercial capitalism in Europe paralleled the bourgeoisie's support for workers' rights. As workers increasingly struggled to find employment and provide for their livelihoods, they often found themselves in direct confrontation with the wealthy classes. In many cases, workers who were unemployed and desperate turned to crime or theft as a means of survival. The collaboration between the bourgeoisie and the working class culminated in the French Revolution of 1789, which ultimately brought the bourgeoisie to power. However, once in power, the bourgeoisie turned its back on the working class, ignoring their demands and distancing itself from the poorer segments of society (Rude, 1988, pp. 59–73).

One of the most significant betrayals faced by the working class from the bourgeoisie was the restriction of fundamental rights—such as voting and standing for election—exclusively to male property owners. Given that the vast majority of workers were propertyless, this exclusion sparked political awareness among them. They came to realize that unless they organized as an independent class—separate from both the state and capital—they would remain under bourgeois domination (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, p. 8).

In response to this exploitation, the first major step taken by workers was to initiate the process of unionization. This laid the foundation for the formation of trade unions.

There existed a particular group that not only belonged to the bourgeoisie but also constituted the intellectual elite of society and championed workers' rights. However, not all members of the intellectual class were aligned with the bourgeoisie. Many intellectuals supported workers' rights, especially in the early stages. Before the rise of capitalism, intellectuals were few in number and addressed only a limited portion of the population. While some were powerful individuals, others depended on feudal lords for protection. The monastic lifestyle and religious duties of the Middle Ages contributed to the emergence of a distinct intellectual class, which would later influence future generations (Price, 2016, pp. 111–165).

Capitalism, to some extent, emancipated the intellectuals by granting them relative freedom. The invention of the printing press, in particular, enhanced their influence and visibility. The simultaneous emergence of humanism and capitalism had a profound impact on the intellectual class. The humanist principle of the equality of all people resonated strongly with them. Broadly speaking, the aims of intellectuals included producing and disseminating high culture, constructing both national and transnational models, influencing processes of social change, playing political roles, and developing a shared cultural identity (Dereli, 1974, pp. 120–125).

Thus, many intellectuals advocated for labor rights and supported the idea that workers were entitled to the same rights as the bourgeoisie.

2. The Historical Development of Trade Unions in France

In many European countries, the emergence of trade unionism was a direct result of the rising labor movement, and the political radicalism of this movement played a significant role in shaping both the identity and actions of trade unions. The mission of these unions was not merely to reform capitalism but to challenge it fundamentally. Even in regions where more moderate forms of unionism—such as social or Christian democratic models—prevailed, the underlying aim was social transformation. The ideologies inherited from the formative period of the labor movement have demonstrated remarkable continuity over time **(**Bernaciak et al., 2014, pp. 21–25**).**

When examining the historical trajectory of union formation, France's economic, social, and political structures contributed to the delay in the development of trade union movements within the country. Although unionization in France emerged much later than in Britain, developments following the 1789 French Revolution positioned France at the forefront of class struggle discourse **(** Hof, 1995, pp. 266–269**).**

Prior to the Revolution, worsening working and living conditions served as catalysts for worker mobilization. Laborers who refused to work under such harsh conditions were compelled to continue working through the implementation of “labor booklets” by employers, or in some cases, through coercion and even imprisonment. It was common to see women and children employed alongside men in factories. As capital and production became concentrated in certain areas, workers were forced into factory- and workshop-like labor camps. Following the Revolution, the first mass movement against capitalism and its exploitative practices came from the “sans-culottes.” **(**Şahin, 2018, pp. 118–130**).**

Note: The term “sans-culottes” (literally “without breeches”) was used to describe workers who could not afford the aristocratic or bourgeois knee-length breeches and instead wore trousers. Initially derogatory, the term eventually became a source of pride due to their revolutionary actions (Vovelle, 2017, p. 49).

In 1791, the Le Chapelier Law—named after MP Isaac-René-Guy Le Chapelier—was enacted, granting freedom in trade and industry. However, while it ensured freedom to work, it simultaneously prohibited labor unions, collective bargaining, and strikes. (Koç, 2015, pp. 102–105).

All existing trade and guild associations in France were abolished (Ferguson, 2011, p. 173).

Trade unionism in France eventually fragmented along religious and political lines, leading to the formation of multiple principal union organizations. Compared to trade union movements in other parts of Europe, French trade unions historically exhibited a highly ideological and politically driven character. A distinct hostility toward employers has traditionally been a central element of trade union identity in France (Jensen, p. 5).

This adversarial stance perhaps explains the frequent occurrence of worker uprisings during France’s path to unionization.

2.1. The First Organizations

Before the institutionalization of trade unions, earlier forms of worker organization and collective associations had already emerged. As early as the 15th century, associations such as journeymen’s guilds or “compagnonnage” (companionship brotherhoods) had formed, laying the groundwork for later unionism. These journeymen, who organized secretly at first, are considered pioneers of occupational organization. These associations, formed especially by unmarried journeymen, arose in reaction to the dominance of master craftsmen within guilds and aimed to achieve economic independence (Kozak, 1992, p. 64).

Although initially established in opposition to master craftsmen, journeymen’s associations eventually diversified their objectives. They sometimes cooperated with the masters to act against common threats, worked to reduce the cost of commissioned goods, and resisted merchants who disrupted wage equilibrium. These associations also fought for fair working hours and wage standards. Over time, they began to mirror the guild structure and emphasized solidarity and brotherhood among their members, fostering a sense of familial unity. They also provided social assistance to the poor, the

sick, and orphans. At the outset, membership in such organizations was not easily obtained (Kozak, 1992, p. 64).

By the 19th century, these compagnonnages had grown increasingly influential, with membership reaching approximately 100,000. The associations maintained communication across cities and frequently engaged in visits and exchanges among members. Similar organizational forms also emerged in Germany. Indeed, these journeymen's associations, which originated in the 15th century and eventually evolved into federations, bear notable resemblance to the Ottoman lonca (guild) system—though key differences also exist.

In 18th-century France, mutual aid societies began to emerge. These associations, which united workers from various professions, were the early precursors of union activity (Cindemir, 2017, pp. 554–557).

When reviewing the early stages of union formation, it is evident that the first efforts typically began at the level of individual workplaces. These grassroots organizational initiatives eventually contributed to the broader development of trade unions. (Savran, n.d., pp. 16–25)

2.2. Conflicts Leading to Unionization

The mobilization of the working class laid the foundation for unionization. What may be considered the first instance of workers confronting employers occurred in 1501, when printing workers in Lyon stopped working to demand wage increases. The first official strike in France was carried out in 1711 by glass factory workers in Normandy, who demanded higher wages and better working conditions in enclosed spaces. During these strikes, just as in the Ottoman Empire, there was also religiously based union support in France (Quataert, 2016, p. 264). In several European countries, workers faced severe punishments for striking, including corporal penalties such as ear mutilation.

In 1725, following a famine in France, a series of food riots erupted. In 1752, cotton workers in Rouen organized an uprising, and the labor uprisings in Le Havre occurred in 1768. Le Havre, a port city on the right bank of the Seine River in northwestern France, was the site of significant labor unrest at the time (Price, 2016, p. 93).

The severe droughts of the 1770s and 1780s disproportionately affected the working class. In 1770, textile workers in Rheims protested. Following the famines, the so-called Flour Wars broke out in April and May of 1775. During these events, granaries and flour stores around Paris were looted. Bakers, merchants, farmers, and landowners were accused of stockpiling grain to inflate prices. These circumstances led to widespread misery and heightened social tension. Uprisings continued in Gremble and Toulouse in 1778, and the Bread Riots of 1784–1785 followed. The growing social unrest persisted until the Great Revolution of 1789, embodied by the urban poor known as the Sans-Culottes (Price, 2016, pp. 175–225).

The Sans-Culottes were initially hailed as heroes for their role in the 1789 French Revolution (Ağaoğulları, 1989, p. 224). Although primarily composed of the lower-middle-class artisans, Sans-Culottes came to symbolize the revolution, even if they did not represent a clearly defined economic class.

With the Penal Codes introduced in 1811, legal restrictions on labor movements were further intensified (Kul, 2016, pp. 27–29). However, these constraints made the working class even more combative. One of the most alarming uprisings from the government's perspective was the Réveillon Riots in Paris. These riots were triggered by wallpaper manufacturer Monsieur Réveillon's remarks at a political meeting suggesting a wage reduction. The comments were distorted and widely circulated, resulting in violent protests on April 27–28, 1789, which left about 50 people dead or injured (Price, 2016, p. 123).

Subsequent strikes occurred in 1793 and 1795. The July Revolution of 1830 sparked a wave of strikes between 1830 and 1835, which were primarily liberal in nature (Sander, 1989, p. 184). However, these strikes were not organized, nationwide movements but rather isolated and localized incidents. By 1833, the number of strikes had reached 72, and uprisings and strikes continued into the 1840s.

2.3. Early Labor Organization in France

In France, the initial efforts toward labor organization generally began with the formation of mutual aid societies by workers. These societies aimed to support workers during illness, old age, workplace accidents, and unemployment. Initially, these associations were even supported by the state and employers; however, they were closely monitored to ensure they did not evolve into more autonomous civil movements. Over time—particularly after 1830—these mutual aid societies began to participate in strike movements and gradually transformed into resistance groups leading labor actions (Özkiraz & Tulu, 2008, p. 114).

A brief look at the scope and structure of labor uprisings in France reveals that, influenced by the Industrial Revolution, workers were predominantly employed in the textile and mining industries, particularly concentrated in cities like Lyon—regarded as the world capital of silk—and Paris. In Lyon, due to the abundance of looms, the number of textile workers increased significantly. In 1827, the Mutual Responsibility Society was secretly founded by Lyon weavers, and membership required being a master worker for at least one year. The workers also published a newspaper titled The Voice of the Factory, which facilitated communication and organization among workers.

The workers of Lyon submitted their demands regarding long working hours directly to the governor. In response, the governor drafted a minimum wage tariff, but when factory owners refused to comply, workers' grievances intensified. Consequently, anger against the wealthy grew. Employers, attempting to disguise themselves as workers to avoid attacks, were nonetheless recognized and assaulted by the Sans-Culottes. Workers went on strike and took control of the city for three days, but the uprising was soon suppressed by security forces. Many workers were killed, and the rebellion was quelled. Lyon's workers frequently rebelled and resisted, with the slogan: "Live by working or die by fighting" (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, pp. 34–40).

In 1833, a highly productive year for silk production, both the economy and worker organizations experienced significant growth. The membership of the Mutual Responsibility Society doubled. Dissatisfied with the conciliatory tone of The Voice of the Factory, workers launched a more militant newspaper titled The Voice of the Workers (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, pp. 34–40). Despite attempts to suppress the labor movement, workers continued to resist the misery of their conditions and the capitalist system symbolized by machinery.

During these strikes and uprisings, workers expressed their class-based anger by destroying machines. This movement, known as Luddism, played a critical role in shaping the class consciousness and organization of the working class (Gökalp, 2013, pp. 63–68). As capitalism rapidly advanced and new factories were established, a sense of unity and solidarity began to emerge among workers. Initially, they established mutual aid societies and support funds (Kalaycıoğlu, Rittersberger-Tılıç & Çelik, 2008, pp. 77–78). The primary aim was to provide assistance in cases of illness, accidents, unemployment, or death—especially to support the widows and orphans of deceased workers.

Though initially focused on welfare, these associations later began to address wage and working conditions. Eventually, mutual aid societies and support funds evolved into formal unions. However, due to pressure from employers and the state, these early labor organizations operated in secrecy. Similar restrictions were later imposed on unions as well (Taş, 2012).

2.4. The Emergence of Trade Unions

Trade unionism first appeared in England (Talas, 1975, p. 8), primarily because it was in England that large numbers of people began working together in centralized locations. According to a widely cited anecdote about the origins of unions in France, a factory owner permitted his workers to use a yellow building in his factory garden for discussions on organization and even offered to help them. This gesture led to a conciliatory relationship between the employer and employees and is thought to have given rise to the term "yellow unionism" (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, pp. 34–40).

When examining the emergence of trade unions in France, it is useful to trace back to the revolutionary period. However, the French working class at that time lacked fully developed and organized structures. The unionization process would gradually take a more formal shape in later

years. In 1795, although some mobilization efforts took place, true organization was hindered by the fragmentation of labor groups.

While early labor organizing emerged first in England, its success and visibility led to similar developments across continental Europe. In England, trade unions began forming in the 17th century as mutual aid societies or relief funds. These early associations represented the initial stage of unionism (Özcan, 2010, p. 6). The movement started with the unionization of porters and workers in port cities and spread to other service sectors. Workplace-based associations and mutual aid societies began forming in England. Although trade unions were banned in 1720, the prohibition was lifted in 1824. In continental Europe, such bans and their eventual repeal occurred throughout the 19th century.

Trade unionism generally developed along three main lines. The first form was professional and economic unionism, which focused solely on improving working conditions and deliberately avoided political engagement. The second was doctrinaire unionism, which saw politics as a tool to achieve its goals and engaged more explicitly in political advocacy. Nevertheless, the first unions to form were almost entirely professional and economic in nature. The emergence of unions was largely a response to the extremely unhealthy living conditions endured by workers (Miller, 1962, pp. 81–89).

As a result of being pushed to the margins of urban life, workers found themselves living in ghettos—neighborhoods either within or outside the city—where they worked constantly and had little hope for the future. In contrast to the emerging middle class, which began socializing in cafés and benefiting from the rise of supermarkets and cultural spaces, workers turned to sports clubs as their primary form of social engagement.

Another social outlet for the working class was night schools, which offered educational opportunities for workers excluded from mainstream society. As the working class became more isolated, crime rates increased, necessitating the modernization of law enforcement structures. These dire living and working conditions directly contributed to the rise in criminal behavior (Şahin, 2010, pp. 21–31).

The concept of confederation is of great importance in the organization of the working class. Confederations emerged in England in 1824, in Europe in 1878, and in Germany in 1890. Prior to the formation of confederations, organization typically began at the factory or sectoral level. However, once it became apparent that these fragmented, factory-based structures were insufficient to create significant impact, they began to merge, giving rise to the concept of confederations. Initially, federations were formed, followed by larger umbrella organizations—confederations. In hierarchical terms, trade union structures consist of federations and confederations organized under industrial branches (Karadoğan, 2017, pp. 2093–2099).

For example, several small labor institutions would come together to form a local workers' union. With the inclusion of other small enterprises at the local level, these unions evolved into federations. Subsequently, with participation from various industrial sectors and institutions, federations were consolidated into confederations. The confederation served as the highest-level structure. When industrial action such as a strike was proposed, even those sectors that were not initially in favor of striking could be involved under the confederation umbrella, allowing for quicker collective decisions. This was particularly vital for sectors with smaller workforces, whose actions would still be supported by the entire confederation.

In 1882, the Union of Labor Syndicate Chambers of France was established, marking a new phase in which trade unions began merging among themselves. Over the years, labor movements gradually gained legitimacy, and the official recognition of union organization was granted in 1884 (Yücedoğan, n.d., p. 185). The law enacted in 1884 permitted the establishment of trade unions without the need for governmental approval (Brizon, 1977, p. 545). It also guaranteed unions' independence from the state and acknowledged the principle of individual freedom to join trade unions (Şahin, 2018, pp. 118–130).

The waves of labor movements and strikes in France, Germany, and England contributed to raising class consciousness among workers, who increasingly realized their shared interests against capitalist exploitation (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, pp. 34–40). Another key development was the law of 27 December 1892, which proposed the establishment of conciliation committees to resolve collective disputes and arbitration boards for unresolved cases. These legislative changes contributed to a rapid

increase in unionization and the number of unionized workers in France (Özkiraz & Tulu, 2008, p. 114).

Labor movements in France gained significant momentum particularly during the Restoration era. Several associations were interconnected; among the most significant were the "compagnonnage" brotherhoods, composed of journeymen and solidarity societies (Erdoğan, 2016, pp. 15–17). To promote union solidarity, local (labor exchanges) and occupational organizations were formed. Early trade unionism in France was initially structured around labor exchanges, which were designed to facilitate agreements between workers and employers but soon became central institutions for union activity. These labor exchanges also played a critical role in the rise of anarchist ideologies in France.

Trade unions initially emerged at the workplace level and spread to factories. However, the expansion of workplace unionism also allowed employers to create dependent or cooperative structures aligned with their interests. Until 1893, union members often faced employer retaliation. After this date, unions began adapting to legal frameworks, largely influenced by legislation passed in 1890, which provided important protections (Price, 2016, pp. 115–175).

Although early union movements were suppressed under the influence of liberalism, they could not be excluded from constitutions as a recognized right by the end of the 19th century. Trade unions aimed to represent workers in negotiations with employers (Uçkan, 2001, pp. 157–161). With the growing strength of workers' unions, employer unions emerged in response to defend the interests of employers.

3. The Revolution of 1848 and Its Aftermath

When examining the process of unionization, it becomes evident that it was both the result of and the response to certain political causes. The reverberations of the French Revolution continued to influence events well into 1848 (Akşin et al., Zirveden Çöküşe Osmanlı Tarihi, vol. 2, p. 133). Much like the July Revolution of 1830, the February Revolution of 1848 was largely driven by capitalist and bourgeois interests (Tuncer, 2000, p. 24). In France, the industrialization movement that began in 1830 was initially entirely under bourgeois control. Although the working class was rapidly expanding, a large segment remained excluded from economic and social life (McNeill, 1994, pp. 460–468). This injustice was compounded by the fact that workers paid more in taxes than the bourgeoisie.

From 1830 onward, workers began forming unions and associations. These groups bore names such as "The Society for Human Rights," "Friends of the People," "The Society of Families," and "The Society of the Seasons." Although the February Revolution of 1848 seemed sudden and accidental, it was in fact the result of years of accumulated dissatisfaction (Marx, The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850, pp. 57–58). The lack of a clear objective or coordinated planning was one of its major shortcomings.

Moreover, the 1848 Revolution differed ideologically and class-wise from earlier uprisings. In contrast to previous revolutions, which had been dominated by liberalism, the 1848 movement also saw the emergence of nationalism and socialism (Turan, 2015, p. 367). By the mid-19th century, the consequences of the Industrial Revolution had created a large working class in both rural and urban settings. The poor, often living in large groups after migrating to cities, suffered from long hours, low wages, and repeated famines (Koç, 2003, pp. 7–9). Epidemics further deepened the hopelessness of the lower classes, and amidst this widespread discontent, a revolution—partially supported by the bourgeoisie—began to seem inevitable.

In The Communist Manifesto and Private Property, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels emphasized the need for a stateless and classless society. Revolutionary thought had gained wide support. The working class, heavily influenced by the later writings of Marx and Engels as well as the interpretations of Karl Kautsky and Vladimir Lenin, contributed to a growing atmosphere of chaos and unrest (Uslu, 2014, p. 3; Kaygın et al., 2019, p. 1067).

During this period, a united front of various social classes emerged. On 2 February 1848, this "People's Front" attempted to organize a demonstration calling for electoral reform and equal representation, but the government refused permission. Despite this, a speech and rally were held—attended only by workers and students, as the bourgeoisie abstained. That night, security forces opened fire on the demonstrators, and the event escalated into a full-scale uprising. What began as a

local protest in Parisian working-class neighborhoods on 22 February quickly evolved into a mass movement with the participation of metalworkers (Price, 2016, pp. 200–214).

The 1848 Revolution was fueled by the temporary cooperation of different social classes and occupational groups and spread to numerous countries across Europe. It was primarily supported by workers, students, and artisans. Artisans, in particular, had been severely affected by the surge in mass production and felt abandoned by the government, which failed to address their needs. The uprising thus triggered a wave of civil unrest and internal conflicts across many European nations (Price, 2016, pp. 200–225).

3.1. The Fall of Guizot and the Worker Uprising in the Second Phase of the 1848 Revolution

During that period, French Prime Minister François Guizot aligned himself with conservative forces, particularly Metternich, in an attempt to preserve the status quo in a Europe shaken by revolutionary upheaval. However, France was in complete turmoil, and severe economic crises were underway. Not only was Guizot unable to stop these developments, but he also failed to suppress the uprisings that broke out against his administration. Demands for electoral reform and a parliamentary assembly were categorically rejected under his rule. Public anger toward Guizot reached a peak, and one night, his home was stormed by insurgents. This violent attack, which resulted in numerous deaths, escalated the unrest and intensified the revolutionary fervor. An event known as the "March of the Dead" soon followed (Price, 2016, pp. 195–204).

On 23 February 1848, Guizot resigned. The next day, 24 February, King Louis Philippe abdicated in favor of his son after the army defected to the people’s side. However, as revolutionaries stormed the royal palace, Louis Philippe fled to England with his family. The revolutionaries took control of the Chamber of Deputies and formed a provisional government, which proclaimed the Republic (Şıvgın et al., 2017, p. 53). Despite the abolition of the monarchy, unity among the opposition could not be achieved.

The 1848 Revolution bore a proletarian character, with the working class standing against the bourgeoisie and demanding a social revolution. Their aim was the establishment of a social republic. Though the bourgeoisie retained formal power, the working class rejected its legitimacy. The demands for a social revolution were also alarming to the French peasantry. While the working class initially succeeded in seizing power, they lacked consensus on how to structure the new administration. A strategic misstep was the appointment of Louis Blanc to the new government. Although Blanc claimed to support workers, he was actually a proponent of private property and sympathetic to bourgeois interests—a pattern also seen in Lamartine.

The provisional government issued a declaration promising to defend the rights of workers. As a first step, National Workshops were established. Workers enrolled in these programs received a daily wage of 1.5 francs. Initially, around 100,000 workers were admitted to the National Workshops, but over time, more than 100,000 unemployed individuals from Paris and other provinces joined. Of these, about 10,000 worked in municipal services and earned 2 francs per day (Bookchin, 2017, vol. 2, pp. 154–157).

Elections were held—the first in Europe in which nearly all adult men could vote. However, the Republicans did not achieve the electoral success they had anticipated. In response, they refused to recognize the results, stormed the National Assembly, and demanded its dissolution and the establishment of a new provisional government at the Paris City Hall. At the same time, the National Workshops became gathering points for workers. Claiming that the workshops posed a threat to law and order, the government decided to shut them down, offering workers the choice of either joining the military or accepting jobs in rural areas. The workers rejected these options and began resisting the authorities. The revolt lasted from 23 to 26 June (Price, 2016, pp. 207–208).

It is estimated that around 1,500 people died during the suppression of the uprisings in France. The remaining unemployed workers were given a daily allowance of 1 franc without being assigned any duties. In this way, the anti-worker government succeeded in inciting the peasantry against urban laborers. Over time, the temporary administration was dissolved, and the National Workshops were permanently closed. General Cavaignac was appointed to lead the army and suppress the workers. Many workers were exiled, and socialist clubs and workers' associations were permanently banned.

France effectively came under a military dictatorship led by Cavaignac. Following the suppression of the June uprising, elections were held on 10 December 1848, and Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon, was elected president (Price, 2016, pp. 207–208).

Although the 1848 Revolution failed to achieve its ultimate goals, it was of great importance in terms of labor organization. It marked one of the key milestones in the history of the workers' movement, alongside the formation of the International Workingmen's Association and the brief experience of socialist government in 1871 (Mahiroğulları, 2005, pp. 41–46). The Revolution of 1848 emerged as a result of widespread dissatisfaction and unrest across much of continental Europe. With the support of economically disadvantaged masses, it was driven by the cooperation of various social classes and professional groups. The workers' expectations from the 1848 Revolution included the establishment of a free press, a constitution based on legal equality, the formation of a Ministry of Labor, the regulation of working hours, and the setting of a fair minimum wage.

4. France between 1850 and 1870

Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, who established a one-man rule, believed that the government's difficulties, especially with the approaching postponed elections, could only be resolved through the creation of an atmosphere of anarchy. In an attempt to provoke the political left into street protests, Bonaparte ordered the felling of the "trees of liberty" that had been planted in 1850. However, this provocation failed. These trees symbolized the revolutionary legacy of the working class, from 1789 through 1830 to 1848. Despite various obstacles, by-elections were held on 10 March 1850, and three leftist candidates from Paris succeeded in gaining seats in parliament.

On 2 December 1851, Louis Bonaparte executed a coup d'état and proclaimed the Second Empire, marking the beginning of the Bonapartist regime. The 1850s and 1860s in France were characterized by a Bonapartist dictatorship under which capitalism expanded significantly (Furet, 1989, pp. 31–39). Bonaparte labeled the working class a "red menace" and implemented repressive measures, while at the same time offering numerous privileges to capitalists. Nonetheless, the working class continued to grow. As state exploitation intensified, so too did the socioeconomic divide between classes, leading to increased attempts by the proletariat to organize (Yenihan & Ün, 2019, pp. 302–305).

In 1864, strikes broke out nationwide as French workers took to the streets to demand their rights. The foundation of the First International further strengthened the labor movement. Workers began forming mutual aid societies, credit associations, defense and solidarity groups, workers' clubs, cooperatives, and trade unions. This increasing organizational activity among workers gradually gave rise to political consciousness.

Bonaparte's authority declined by 1865. His regime failed to respond adequately to the growing labor movement in Prussia under Bismarck and also alienated the French bourgeoisie, particularly after the 1860 trade agreement with Britain. Unable to meet the demands of the bourgeoisie, the Bonapartist regime lost legitimacy. As repression continued, the working class took to the streets on behalf of all the oppressed. Bonaparte tried to capitalize on the war with Prussia to reverse his political misfortunes. However, contrary to his expectations, German unification was achieved, and France suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Sedan on 2 September 1870. This triggered a wave of popular outrage against the regime (Açık, 2008, pp. 101–105).

In 1870, approximately 200,000 workers participated in mass demonstrations in Paris, chanting slogans such as "Long Live the Republic" and "Down with the Bonapartes." This seriously weakened the authority of the Second Empire. On 4 September 1870, protestors stormed the National Assembly, demanding the restoration of the Republic and calling for national recovery in the face of military defeat. That same day, a new government was formed by monarchists and republican bourgeois elements. However, this new government was both reactionary and hostile to the people.

Parisian workers mobilized in response to the defeat at Sedan, arming the population and forming the National Guard Battalion, comprised largely of workers, craftsmen, and petty civil servants (Koç, 2011, pp. 45–59). The entire population and households were armed to resist occupation. The defense of France and the Republic also galvanized progressive intellectuals to support the workers. In 1871, the formation of the Central Committee of the National Guard in Paris

symbolized that the people had taken control of their own destiny. Revolutionary forces were growing stronger, with uprisings occurring in Lyon and Marseille in 1870 and 1871.

On 18 March 1871, workers pooled their resources to produce artillery. That evening, all state institutions came under the control of the workers and the National Guard. Red flags, symbolizing the proletariat, were raised over the Paris City Hall and the Ministry of War. During its activities, the Commune received support from mass organizations, trade unions, and revolutionary clubs (Price, 2016, pp. 136–145). Working-class women, in particular, played an active role in the struggle (Urhan, 2015, pp. 30–35).

Although the Paris Commune lasted only 72 days, it was a landmark event in the history of the working class. Workers were both the architects and the defenders of the Commune. The French labor movement at the time was influenced by three main currents: Blanquists, anarchists, and Marxists.

One of the Commune's greatest challenges was its inability to form an alliance with the peasantry. Although the Commune made efforts to establish such an alliance, it failed to recognize its strategic importance. Physical barriers and the siege of Paris by occupying forces also prevented rural participation in the 18 March Revolution. Counter-revolutionaries, by contrast, built strong ties with the peasantry and waged propaganda campaigns against the Commune. The clergy also launched anti-revolutionary activities in rural areas.

The Paris Commune and the March 18 Revolution inspired revolutionary activity in many towns, including Lyon, Marseille, Toulouse, and Le Creusot. Agents of Adolphe Thiers infiltrated Paris in an attempt to suppress the Commune. Revolutionary forces attacked Paris on 20 May, and military units entered the city on 21 May. Fierce street battles and barricade warfare ensued. The struggle lasted for days as women and children joined in the defense of the city. The counter-revolution managed to regain control after about a week, an event later termed "The Bloody Week." Working-class neighborhoods saw the fiercest clashes, and many communards were executed. Others were imprisoned or exiled to the colonies. In the end, liberty was defeated, and tyranny and counter-revolution prevailed (Price, 2016, pp. 225–244).

5. The Relationship Between Trade Unions and Politics

Trade unions are among the key actors in politics. Initially, the relationship between unions and politics was not clearly defined; in some cases, a single organization functioned both as a political party and a trade union—such as the relationship between the TUC and the Labour Party in the United Kingdom (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, pp. 34–40). This relationship grew more intense by the 20th century (Erdoğan, 2016, pp. 3–4). The logic of the union–politics relationship can be explained through the narrow and broad definitions of the concept of politics. In the narrow sense, politics refers to the administration of state affairs and foreign relations—that is, the art of governance. In the broader sense, politics refers to the struggle to seize power in a country and the attempt to directly or indirectly influence decisions affecting issues of public concern (Mahiroğulları, 2012, pp. 9–23).

Whether trade unions are allowed to engage in political activities largely depends on a country's internal legal system and its political regime. In developing or underdeveloped democracies, unions' political activities tend to be restricted by law. However, in pluralist democracies, union involvement in politics is typically left unregulated (Çelik, 2000, pp. 46–54).

The union–political party relationship generally emerges from mutual need. While unions seek connections with political parties to better advocate for workers' rights, political parties pursue such relationships to gain voter support and increase their chances of attaining power. In this sense, the relationship is one of mutual benefit. Trade unions have consistently employed political functions to address the problems of the working class. Sometimes they have directly established political parties to represent workers in parliament; at other times, they have engaged in lobbying efforts to have their demands codified into law (Şahin, 2018, pp. 118–130)

After World War II, growth and low unemployment characterized many countries, but the economic crises of the 1980s and 1990s, exacerbated by Cold War conditions, resulted in high unemployment. Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the exploitation of cheap labor in underdeveloped countries and a radical shift in labor and union policies within the context of new technological conditions (Koç, 1997, pp. 1–8). Although trade union alliances with political parties are

often rooted in the defense of labor rights, economic and ideological factors have also played significant roles. These relationships are, at their core, based on practical interests. Nevertheless, ideological divisions have led to the increasing politicization of unions, resulting in frequent schisms, as not all union leaders share the same ideological orientation (Mahiroğulları, 1998, p. 76)

In France, two dominant currents have shaped trade unionism: anarcho-syndicalism and Marxist unionism. Anarcho-syndicalism opposes both the state and capitalism, aiming to minimize the union's obligations to the state. Its primary mode of action is the general strike. The ideas of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), founder of anarchism, gained traction within the labor movement. The reason anarcho-syndicalism took root in France—as opposed to wealthier nations like the UK and the US—lies in France's relatively limited economic prosperity. The first union to embrace anarcho-syndicalist ideas was the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), founded in 1895. It equated class struggle with organizational effort (Erdoğan, 2016, pp. 3–17).

In 1895, a significant portion of French unions came together to form the CGT, a national confederation. That same year, local union centers were also established with the aim of uniting workers from various industries in different cities. These local centers later united into a national confederation. In 1902, two umbrella organizations merged, consolidating the labor movement under a single body (Baştaymaz, 2016, pp. 11–17).

Trade unions play crucial economic, social, and political roles (Güler, 2015, pp. 10–15). To date, three models have emerged regarding the relationship between unions and political parties: the dependent model, the independent model, and the semi-dependent (hybrid) model (Mahiroğulları, 2004, pp. 349–351)

5.1. Dependent Model

Trade unions aiming to engage in political activities are generally characterized as either doctrinaire or reformist in nature (Mahiroğulları, 2012, pp. 9–23). The relationships formed between these unions and political parties fall within the framework of the dependent model. Unions that pursue political functions more actively than economic ones—or aim to exercise both functions equally—typically seek close relationships with political parties to achieve their goals (Bayar, 2016, pp. 190–193). This model is mostly found in one-party totalitarian regimes and centrally controlled socialist countries, where unions are completely dependent on the state and the ruling political party. Such dependence is compulsory.

In countries governed by civil dictatorships glorifying the state or under military juntas, the dependent model prevails. In some cases, the sole ruling communist party claims to act in pursuit of socialist revolution. In these contexts, the role of the union becomes nearly indistinguishable from that of the state. Free collective bargaining and the right to strike are absent, meaning unions also lack economic functions. Examples include centrally planned socialist states between 1950 and 1980, such as Tito's Yugoslavia and Cuba. Some African and Asian countries with single-party rule—like Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and Ghana—also reflect this model.

In military junta regimes, unions serve not to protect members' interests but to increase their loyalty to the regime. In countries such as Syria and Iraq, unions controlled by the Ba'ath Party functioned primarily to disseminate the party's doctrines among their members (Selamoğlu, 2003, pp. 64–90). In the Soviet Union, a typical example of the socialist model, trade unions were described as "primary schools of communism." Even unions managed by opposition figures were encouraged to maintain links with communists. As a result, many communists infiltrated trade unions and eventually assumed leadership positions within them.

5.2. Independent Model

The independent model refers to a system where trade unions maintain autonomy from the state, political parties, and capital. In this model, unions do not align with a specific political party but rather maintain an equal distance from all parties within the political system. Union activities typically focus on collective bargaining. Political action is not the end goal but rather a means of achieving better social and economic conditions. Unions may establish indirect ties with any political party when it serves their interests. The primary concern is to improve the living and working conditions of their

members, rather than pursuing broader societal reforms. This approach is also known as professional economic unionism or pragmatic unionism.

American trade unionism serves as a prime example of the independent model. Based on the principle of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies," American unions have supported both Democratic and Republican parties in various elections. However, especially during the Cold War era following World War II, unions often acted in cooperation with the state and ruling elites. In fact, U.S. trade unions were frequently used as instruments of American foreign policy.

Other examples of the independent model include the Austrian Chamber of Labour, Turkish unions such as Türk-İş, Hak-İş, and DİSK, and the French Confédération Générale des Cadres (General Confederation of Managers) (Sezer & Çavuşoğlu, 2016, p. 168).

5.3. Semi-Dependent Model

The semi-dependent model refers to a relationship in which trade unions either establish organic ties with political parties or maintain close cooperation without forming formal alliances. In this model, unions maintain independence from the state, yet they often cultivate affiliations with political parties that align with their ideological or strategic interests. However, they are not entirely dependent on these parties. Positioned between full dependence and full independence, these unions follow an intermediate path (Mahiroğulları, 2004, pp. 354–356)

After 1980, the nature of union-government relations evolved into a more pragmatic form, bringing about global change. A liberal governance model emphasizing freedoms and ending conservative regimes became dominant, making the semi-dependent model more prevalent and attractive.

The semi-dependent model itself is divided into two subtypes:

Semi-dependent with Organic Ties: In this subtype, unions—particularly those aligned with labor—establish relationships with socialist or democratic parties. In some cases, unions even founded their own political parties based on these ideologies. This model is commonly seen in the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries. Unions not only provide material and moral support to political parties but may also take leadership roles within them.

Semi-dependent without Organic Ties: This involves unions engaging in narrowly defined political activities and aligning with political parties they find ideologically favorable, especially during elections, without forming institutional or organic bonds. Such unions may support these parties publicly or indirectly. German trade unions, certain umbrella unions in Japan (such as SOHYO), and the Indian National Trade Union Congress serve as examples of this subtype (Mahiroğulları, 2004, pp. 360–364).

During World War II, trade unionism in France experienced divisions regarding whether or not to resist the Nazi occupation. A pivotal moment came on July 18, 1940, when General Charles de Gaulle, speaking via Radio London, called upon the French nation to resist German occupation (Manfred, 1977, p. 15). Consequently, some unions played an active role in defending France during the war. After France regained independence in 1941, unions resumed their previously suspended activities (Erdoğan, 2016, pp. 15–17).

Following World War II, the United States sought to suppress the influence of socialism, attempting to neutralize unions in the process. French unions opposed this approach. Serious tensions developed between unions and the French state, and many unions openly challenged state policies. During the 1968 uprisings, almost all unions—excluding Christian unions—participated in mass mobilizations. However, after 1980, union-state relations in France became more intense than in earlier periods, with unions aiming to secure greater rights for workers through closer cooperation with the state (Aydoğanoğlu, 2011, p. 33).

A series of economic and social reforms implemented after 1980 increased the influence of unions. The Auroux Laws, in particular, played a pivotal role in enhancing union rights and institutionalizing collective bargaining. A defining feature of contemporary trade unionism in France is its pluralism. Key reforms enacted in 1993, 2003, and 2007 significantly improved workers' rights.

In some sectors, labor strikes organized by unions garnered significant public attention. During these protests, major unions such as the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail), CFDT

(Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail), FO (Force Ouvrière), SUD (Solidaires Unitaires Démocratiques), UNL (Union Nationale Lycéenne), and UNEF (Union Nationale des Étudiants de France) coordinated their efforts with other civil society organizations. Nevertheless, some unions criticized the protests as excessive, and this sentiment was echoed by segments of the broader public (Erdoğan, 2016, pp. 15–17)

Throughout history, there has always been a working class; however, the development of modern working conditions as we know them today only became possible with the Industrial Revolution. Consequently, the earliest and simplest forms of unionization emerged alongside industrialization. The harsh working conditions that followed the Industrial Revolution made it imperative for workers to organize against their employers. In France, the path of industrialization differed significantly from that of England. While industrialization in England led to the transformation of the peasantry into the working class, in France, the working class was primarily composed of urban commercial groups. This divergence brought with it a host of socioeconomic challenges.

The French labor movement emerged as a response to the hardships imposed by industrialization and sought to critique the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. In both France and Europe, the bourgeoisie initially led the labor movement. As trade capitalism advanced and liberal economic policies were adopted, the working class was left without institutional support. The Enlightenment period in Europe, through its emphasis on humanism, revealed the increasingly dire conditions of the working class, which in turn encouraged the bourgeoisie to offer partial support. The bourgeoisie first extended its support during the Revolution of 1789 and increased it sporadically thereafter. However, such support was often conditional; when the labor movement began to threaten the bourgeoisie's own interests, it frequently withdrew and left the workers to struggle alone.

A historical review of union development in France reveals that forms of worker organization existed even prior to the Industrial Revolution. One of the earliest examples was the compagnonnages—guild-like fraternities of journeymen that date back to the 15th century. Additionally, mutual aid societies, guilds, and journeyman associations were established to support workers. Initially, mutual aid societies aimed to ensure miners returned safely from work and provided financial support during illness or economic hardship. For uninsured workers, these organizations were often a lifeline.

Although attempts were made in the early 19th century to ban these mutual aid societies, such efforts failed in the face of mass resistance, leading to the eventual lifting of the bans. Once restrictions were removed, trade unions began forming rapidly. Still, the process of establishing unions as legally recognized entities was neither immediate nor straightforward. The development of unionism in France came only after a long history of clashes, strikes, uprisings, and resistance. Conflicts dating back to 1501 still resonate today, and the first recorded strike took place in 1711.

In 1791, the Le Chapelier Law granted freedom to commerce and industry while simultaneously banning labor unions, collective bargaining, and strikes. Existing unions and guilds in France were dissolved. Nevertheless, in the late 18th century, mutual aid associations continued to flourish, enabling workers from various professions to unite and support one another.

Initially, labor organization was based on individual factories and work units. However, as factory-based models proved inadequate, workers across various factories began to unite, forming federations often along sectoral lines. These federations then consolidated into larger confederations that encompassed all sectors. Confederations held broader decision-making authority, and adherence to their resolutions became mandatory—greatly enhancing their influence.

In 1882, the Union of Labor Syndicate Chambers was founded in France. The legal recognition of trade unions followed shortly after, in 1884. A law passed that year granted trade unions the right to organize without prior approval, formally institutionalizing their activities. Additionally, the law guaranteed unions' independence from the state and affirmed the principle of individual union freedom. On December 27, 1892, a conciliation committee was established to resolve collective disputes, with unresolved matters to be referred to an arbitration board. These developments solidified the legal framework of the labor movement in France and enhanced its institutional reliability.

CONCLUSİON

Although trade unions were subjected to employer assaults up until 1893, after this date employers began to comply with legal regulations. Another significant event that marked the labor struggle and the rise of the union movement was the Revolution of 1848. Following the persistent struggles of the working class since 1830, their demands for rights continued throughout the period of 1850–1870, leaving a profound mark on France's political landscape. It is evident that in their pursuit of rights, the working class not only influenced the political structure of France but had a widespread impact on the political, social, and economic spheres across Europe.

The emergence of trade unions cannot be considered independently of political structures. From their very inception, unions have exerted political influence, and their relationship with politics has continued even after their formal establishment. The connections unions forged with political parties can be analyzed through three major models: dependent, independent, and semi-dependent. The semi-dependent model itself contains two distinct subcategories.

By the 20th century, trade unions had evolved into powerful and influential organizations. As monopoly corporations from advanced capitalist countries expanded their capital into "Third World" nations, they gradually brought those economies under their control. Year by year, unions strengthened their political influence. One of the most defining socio-political developments of the 20th century was the unification of workers and other laborers in Russia, which led to their ascent to power in the final years of World War I. The October Revolution of 1917 resulted in the establishment of the world's first socialist state. The following year, World War I ended, and capitalism began to adopt new organizational methods. The Fordist model—based on assembly lines and conveyor belt systems—became widespread in factories. By 1920, the number of unionized workers worldwide had reached 50 million.

Trade unions also played critical roles during wartime. For instance, when Germany confronted France, the French government organized and armed Parisian workers to defend the capital. With the support of the unions, Paris was saved.

Even today, the political impact of unions in France remains significant. The union-politics relationship has left deep scars on France's political structure, especially during the early phases of unionization. While unionization is now recognized as a legitimate right, it was only achieved through political struggle and, at times, direct interventions in the political balance of power.

As this study has shown, it was through revolutions and uprisings that trade union rights were gradually secured. Even in modern France, when confronted with injustice by those in power, the working class continues to take to the streets—just as their forebears once did. In recent years, including during the COVID-19 pandemic (when protests had already begun), French workers have taken to the streets in defense of their rights.

Notably, opposition parties in France have supported the labor movement's demands—especially those directed at President Macron. However, this support for domestic labor rights starkly contrasts with the opposition's silence on the exploitation of workers in former colonial territories. This contradiction reveals the hypocrisy of France's human rights policies, exposing the gap between their internal advocacy and external neglect.

REFERENCES

- Açık, E. H. (2008). *Geçmişten günümüze Türkiye Fransa ilişkileri.* IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık.
- Ağaoğulları, M. A. (1989). Fransız devriminde birey-devlet ilişkisi (1789-1794). *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 44*(3)
- Akşin, S.,ət al. (t.y.). *Zirveden çöküşe Osmanlı tarihi 1600-1908* (Cilt 2). Milliyet Kitaplığı.
- Aydoğanoğlu, E. (2011). *Dünya'da ve Türkiye'de sendika - siyaset ilişkisi* (2. Baskı). Kültür Sanat Sen - Kültür ve Turizm Emekçileri Sendikası; Mattek Matbaacılık Basım Yayıncılık.
- Ballı, N. H., & İlhan, M. (t.y.). Emeklilik sendikacılığının hukuki süreci / Emekli sendikasının meşruiyeti. *Toros Üniversitesi İİSBF Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi,* 7(12).

- Baştaymaz, T. (2016). *Sendikacılık akademisi ders notları: Ekonomik sistemler ve sendikacılık* (Y. Alper, Ed.). Türk-İş Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu.
- Bayar, L. S. (2016). Demografik faktörlerin sendikal bağlılık düzeyi üzerine etkisi; İşçi sendikaları üzerine bir araştırma. *Ömer Halisdemir Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi, 9*(4).
- Bookchin, M. (2017). *Devrimci halk hareketleri tarihi: Fransız devriminden ikinci Enternasyonele* (D. Keskin, Çev.; İ. Yıldız, Ed.; Cilt 2). Dipnot Yayınları.
- Brizon. Pierre, *Emeğin ve Emekçilerin Tarihi*, Onur Yayınları, Ankara, 1977
- Cindemir, H. (2017). Kamu görevlileri sendikacılığında İngiltere, Fransa, Almanya ve İsveç örnekleri. *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences, 2*(16).
- Çelik, A. (t.y.). *Vesayetten siyasete Türkiye'de sendikacılık 1946-1967.* İletişim Yayınları.
- Dereli, T. (1974). *Aydınlar, sendika hareketi ve endüstriyel ilişkiler sistemi: Genel olarak ve Türkiye'de.* İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Dereli, S. (2019). Sendikacılıkta yeni bir perde: Toplumsal hareket sendikacılığı. *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 5*(10).
- Demirbaş, M. (1995). *Sendikaların iktisadi olmayan faaliyetleri ve bu faaliyetlere ilişkin bir araştırma* (Yüksek lisans tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İşletme Fakültesi, Personel Yönetimi Ana Bilim Dalı). İstanbul Üniversitesi.
- Ekinci, E. (t.y.). Devrimden günümüze Fransız siyasal sisteminin evrimi. *Cilt 6, Sayı 1.*
- Erdoğan, H. (2016). *Türkiye'de bir baskı grubu olarak sendikaların 1960 sonrası ekonomi ve siyaset üzerindeki etkisi* (Yüksek lisans tezi, Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İktisat Anabilim Dalı). Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi
- Ferguson, N. (2011). *Uygarlık: Batı ve ötekiler* (N. Elhüseyni, Çev.; T. Erdoğan, Ed.). Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Furet, F. (1989). *Fransız devrimini yorumlamak* (A. Kuyaş, Çev.). Alan Yayıncılık.
- Gökalp, İ. E. (2013). İletişim teknolojileri ve sendika. *ODÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 4*(7).
- Hof, U. (1995). *Avrupa'da Aydınlanma: Avrupa'yı kurtarmak* (Ö. Arıkan, Yayına hazırlayan). Afa Yayıncılık.
- Jensen, C. S. (t.y.). Sendikacılık: Farklılıklar ve benzerlikler – Avrupa, ABD ve Asya üzerine karşılaştırmalı bir inceleme (F. Man, Çev.). *Journal of Industrial Relations,* Kopenhag Üniversitesi.
- Kalaycıoğlu, S., Rittersberger-Tılıç, H., & Çelik, K. (2008). Değişen işçilik ve sendika. *Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 25*(1).
- Karadoğan, E. (2017). Sendika ve konfederasyon ilişkileri açısından sendikaların konfederasyon hareketliliği: Liman-İş örneği. *Çalışma ve Toplum Dergisi,* (Cilt ve sayı belirtilmemiş), 2093–2099.
- Kaygın, E., Zengin, Y., & Topçuoğlu, E. (2019). Endüstri 4.0'a akademik bakış. *İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi, 33*(4).
- Koç Yıldırım. (2003). *Türkiye'de işçi sınıfı ve sendikacılık hareketi*. Kaynak Yayınları.
- Koç, K. (2015). *Türkiye'de sendikaların geleceği: Dünya örnekleri çerçevesinde Türkiye için model önerisi* (Çalışma ve sosyal güvenlik eğitim uzmanlığı tezi). T.C. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı, Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Eğitim ve Araştırma Merkezi.
- Koç Yıldırım. (2011). 1789 Fransız Devrimi ve 1917 Ekim Devrimi üzerine notlar (Jakobenlik-Bolşeviklik). *Bilim ve Ütopya Dergisi*, (Sayı 205).
- Kozak, İ. E. (1992). İşçi sendikalarının tarihi gelişimi (İngiltere örneği). *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 0*(37-38).
- Kul, A. (2016). *Küreselleşmenin Türk işçi sendikaları üzerine etkisi* (Yüksek lisans tezi, T.C. İzmir Kâtip Çelebi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Finansal Ekonomi Anabilim Dalı). İzmir.
- Kuyucuklu, N. (1982). *İktisadi olaylar tarihi*. İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Bernaciak, M., Gumbrell-Mccormick, R., & Hyman, R. (2014). Avrupa'da sendikalar zor zamanlara yaratıcı tepkiler. *FES International Policy Analysis*.

Mahiroğulları, A. (2012). Sendika-siyaset ilişkisinin teorik çerçevesi ve günümüzdeki düzeyi. *HAK-İŞ Uluslararası Emek ve Toplum Dergisi, 1*(2).

- Mahiroğulları, A. (1998). *1980 sonrası Türk ve Fransız sendikacılığı* (Doktora tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Çalışma Ekonomisi ve Endüstri İlişkileri Anabilim Dalı). İstanbul Üniversitesi.
- Mahiroğulları, A. (2005). Endüstri devrimi sonrasında emeğin istismarını belgeleyen iki eser: Germinal ve dokumacılar. *Cilt 0, Sayı 32.*
- Mahiroğulları, A. (2004). Teorik çerçevesi ve dünyadaki uygulamalarıyla sendika-siyaset, sendika-siyasal parti ilişkisi. *Marmara Üniversitesi İ.İ.B.F. Dergisi, 19*(1).
- Manfred, A. Z. (1977). *Yakın çağlar tarihi, 1938 İkinci Dünya Savaşından günümüze 1968.* Konuk Yayınları.
- Marx, K. (t.y.). *Fransa'da sınıf mücadeleleri 1848-1850* (E. Özalp, Çev.). Yordam Kitap.
- McNeill, W. H. (1994). *Dünya tarihi* (A. Şenel, Çev.; 3. Baskı). İmge Kitapevi.
- Miller, F. B. (1962). Sendika içi demokrasi. *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 0*(13).
- Özcan, C. (t.y.). *Türkiye'de sendika-siyasi parti ilişkisi: TKP Atılım dönemi'nde DİSK-TKP örneği* (Yüksek lisans tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Uluslararası İlişkiler Anabilim Dalı). İstanbul Üniversitesi.
- Özdemir, Z., & Güler, M. A. (t.y.). Ekonomik İşbirliği ve Kalkınma Örgütü ülkelerinde sendika yoğunluğu-işsizlik ilişkisi. *Gazi Üniversitesi İİBF, Çalışma Ekonomisi ve Endüstri İlişkileri Bölümü.*
- Özkiraz, A., & Tulu, N. (2008). Sendikaların doğuşu; Türkiye ve Batı Avrupa ülkeleri karşılaştırması. *Sosyal Bilimler Araştırmaları Dergisi, 21*(1).
- Price, R. (2016). *Fransa'nın kısa tarihi* (2. Baskı, Ö. Akpınar, Çev.). Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi.
- Quataert, D. (2016). *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu 1700-1922* (A. Berkay, Çev.). İletişim Yayınları.
- Rude, G. (1988). *Fransız devrimi* (K. Koçak, Ed.). İletişim Yayınları.
- Sander, O. (1989). *Siyasi tarih ilkçağdan 1918'e* (9. Baskı). İmge Kitapevi Yayınları.
- Savran, S. (t.y.). Sendikaların krizi mi, sosyalistlerin krizi mi? *Devrimci Marksizm Dergi*si. http://www.devrimcimarksizm.net/sites/default/files/sungur-savran-sendikalarin-krizi-misosyalistlerin-krizi-mi.pdf
- Selamoğlu, A. (2003). İşçi sendikalığında yeniden yapılanma ve örgütlenme modeli. *Kocaeli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 6*(2).
- Selik, M. (2015). *100 soruda iktisadi doktrinler tarihi* (2. Baskı). Gerçek Yayınevi.
- Sezer, Ö., & Çavuşoğlu, H. (2016). Türkiye'de siyaset-sendika ilişkisi açısından Türk-İş: Bayram Meral ve Salih Kılıç dönemi. Gümüşhane Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 7(18).
- Şahin, H. (2010). Türkiye'de işçi sınıfının gelişim süreci ve geçmişten günümüze işçi hareketi (C. V. Uygur, Ed.). *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi(7).*
- Şahin, N. (2018). Ülke karşılaştırmaları ışığında Türkiye'de sendika-siyaset ilişkisinin değerlendirilmesi. *Fırat Üniversitesi İİBF Uluslararası İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi, 2*(1).
- Şıvgın, H., & diğerleri. (2017). *Geçmişten günümüze Türk-Fransız ilişkileri* (H. Çakmak, Ed.). Elif Yayınevi.
- Talas, C. (1970). Değiştirilen Sendikalar Kanunu (274 sayılı) uluslararası bağlantılarımız ve anayasamız. *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 25*(4).
- Talas, C. (1975). Sendikacılık ve toplum. *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 30*(1).
- Taş, Y. (2012). Toplumsal sınıfların değişim sürecinde sendikalar ve sendikaların geleceği. *Emek ve Toplum: HAK-İŞ Uluslararası Emek ve Toplum Dergisi, 1*(1).
- Tuncer, H. (2000). *19. yüzyılda Osmanlı-Avrupa ilişkileri 1814–1914.* Ümit Yayıncılık.
- Turan, N. S. (2015*). İmparatorluk ve diplomasi: Osmanlı diplomasisinin izinde* (2. Baskı). İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.

- Uçkan, B. (2001). Sendika güvenliğinin teorik çerçevesi ve endüstri ilişkileri sistemine etkisi. *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 56*(3).
- Urhan, B. (2015). Sendika içi demokrasi ve sendika içi kadın örgütlenmesi. *Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 0*(69).
- Uslu, A. (2014). Avrupa'da erken dönem sosyalist teori ve işçi hareketleri (1830–1840). *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi, 9*(1)
- Vovelle, M. (2017). *Gençler için en güzel Fransız Devrimi* (Y. Aşçı Dalar, Çev.). Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları.
- Yenihan, B., & Ün, Ç. B. (2019). Sendika içi demokrasi üzerine bir karşılaştırma: İşçi sendikaları ve kamu görevlileri sendikaları. *Adıyaman Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*(33).
- Yücedoğan, G. (t.y.). Fransa'da basın sendikacılığı olgusu. *İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi.*
- Yüksel, H. (2014). Emek kavramının ortaya çıkışında rol oynayan tarihi dönüm noktalarının süreç merkezli değerlendirilmesi. *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi, 19*(2).