

Trade Union Unity under Political Party Pluralism

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Trade Union Unity – Terms & Scenario

Trade Union Unity - General

- ❖ Absence of Pluralism / Competition between Trade Unions
- ❖ Trade Union Monopoly – 2 Models
 - legal monopoly – legislation (China)
 - political monopoly – by consent (Germany) – always threatened with break-up

Trade Union Unity under Political Party Pluralism

- ❖ Legal monopoly unlikely - Union Unity only as Political Monopoly
- ❖ Political Party Pluralism: at least two parties / free elections / change in Government
- ❖ Three possible scenario for Trade Union Center (TUC)
 - Autonomy from all Parties
 - Alliance/coalition with Governing Party
 - Alliance/coalition with Opposition Party

My topic / Question :

***“How can trade union unity exist
in a Multi-party System?”***

My Conclusion / Answer:

***“Trade union unity will only survive if trade unions
do not closely affiliate with a political party”***

Mode of Arguing:

General model with simplified scenario

(not empirical-historical based on cases)

Scenario Model

4 - Actor Model

- **Political Party I – Governing (PP I - Gov)**
- **Political Party II – Opposition (PP II - Op)**
- **TU - Leadership**
- **TU – Membership**

4 Types of Interests

- ❖ **PP I – Gov: Stay in Power**
- ❖ **PP II – Op: Get into Power**
- ❖ **TU-Leadership:**

Interest is Org. based: Keep Unity (Monopoly), get re-elected, improve Finances and Membership, etc.

- ❖ **TU-Members:**

Interest ext. based: Higher Wages / Better Working Conditions

Scenario I: Trade unions linked to PP-Op

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Assumptions:

PP-Gov: conservative – break monopoly of Union – push pluralism - econ. Policies liberal – reduce wages

PP-Op: leftist

Consequences for TUs

TU: Leadership and Membership

both interested in change of Gov. / econ. Policies

both interested to maintain alliance with PP-Op.

Impact on TU-Unity:

Stable Situation – no tension – no reason for TUs to cut alliance with PP-Op.

Scenario II: Trade unions linked to PP- Gov

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Assumptions:

Electoral victory of leftist party with support from TU
Trade Union expects compensation for support

Context: 1 – economy booming

Context: 2 - economy in crisis

Scenario II.1 – Econ. Booming - Consequences for TUs

PP-Gov (leftist) delivers to TU

TU-Leadership: legal & pol. support for org. strength (tax exemption, check-off, barriers against rivals, etc.)

TU-Membership: support for wage increase

Impact on TU-Unity:

Stable Situation – no tension – no reason for TUs to cut alliance with PP-Gov.

The Crisis Scenario

Scenerio II.2 – Econ. Crisis - Consequences for TUs

Assumption: PP-Gov (leftist) under pressure to reduce wages

TU-Leadership: legal & pol. support for org. strength still possible if cost-free for economy

TU-Membership: frustrations from wage decrease

Consequences for Trade Unions – 2 cases

Case 1: Stick with alliance – tension between TU-leadership and TU-membership will grow

Case 2: Step out of alliance – tension between TU-Leadership – members will decline

Impact on TU-Unity:

Unstable – tension within Union high – tension will reduce only when break-up of alliance with PP-Gov – if alliance maintained, break-up of union likely – end of politically coordinated TU-Unity

Conclusion

Trade Union Unity in a Multi-Party-System can not be maintained if the union gives up its organisational autonomy and builds a close alliance with one party.

When circumstances changes (economy crisis), a Union has to cut its link to a Political Party or otherwise, will break-up its own unity.

Unions should link to Political Parties according to ideologies and programmes, but should of tactical or strategic partnership and maintain organisational autonomy.