

## **Why Isn't the U. S. Labor Policy-Making Process Characterized by the Dominance of Iron Triangles?: An Analysis of Policy Alliances in the 1980s**

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### **Introduction**

Political scientists and political sociologists have long examined the types of organizational actors that dominate the U.S. policy-making process. One such policy-making model developed during the 1950s and 1960s is the “iron triangle” model. This model supposes that U.S. policy-making in any particular policy domain is dominated by collaborations among three types of organizational actors: congressional committees/subcommittees, executive agencies, and special interest groups (Adams 1984). Some have referred to iron triangles as a “subsystem” (Freeman 1955, 5), a “subgovernment” (Carter 1964), or a “cozy little triangle” (James 1969, 126). Jordan (1981, 96) defined iron triangles as:

An image developed in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s to describe how decision making was segmented to different arenas. Decisions ... were seen as taking place in “triangles” composed of (1) the interest group(s), (2) the relevant administrative agency ... and (3) the relevant Congressional committees. Access to these triangles was difficult: even the Presidency or departmental head had difficulty impinging on these private worlds.

Thus, the iron triangle model suggests that U.S. policy-making in a particular domain is controlled by small, exclusive alliances of three types of organizational actors, which are

mostly autonomous from other power holders.

One main reason why these three types of actors allegedly form exclusive alliances is that the alliances constitute mutually beneficial relationships for the triangle actors. That is, each individual actor has material advantages to gain by supporting each triangle actor's interests and by excluding other actors from participating in the policy-making process:

This conjunction of forces fostered mutual self-help relationships: legislators enhanced reelection chances by approving and expanding budgets of programs likely to benefit constituents; agency personnel watched their organizations and influence grow as well as their independence from presidential direction; and interest groups helped legislators and bureaucrats alike while winning particularistic benefits (Pika 1983, 302).

Because of such mutually beneficial relationships, members of iron triangles supposedly form closed, united groups.

In spite of the initial popularity of the iron triangle model, later scholars criticized the model. Hecló (1978, 88) claimed, "the iron triangle concept is not so much wrong as it is disastrously incomplete." Hecló provided an alternative policy-making model: issue networks. This model, "the most commonly cited alternative to a subgovernment" (McCool 1990, 290), suggests that a great variety of actors are involved in policy-making, representing different kinds of interests. Hecló described the difference between iron triangles and issue networks:

Iron triangles and subgovernments suggest a stable set of participants coalesced to control fairly narrow public programs. ... Issue networks are almost the reverse image in each respect. Participants move in and out of the networks constantly.

Rather than groups united in dominance over a program, no one ... is in control of the policies and issues (Heclo 1978, 102).

Thus, according to the issue network model, a large number of organizational actors, beyond the types acknowledged by the iron triangle model, participate in public policy-making in the U.S., and membership in these networks is unstable, changing over different policy issues. Since no small stable set of actors controls policy-making, policy outcomes are supposedly unpredictable (Kingdon 1984).

Another alternative to the iron triangle model is Sabatier's model of advocacy coalitions. According to Sabatier (1993, 24), advocacy coalitions include not only the triangle actors but also "journalists, analysts, researchers, and others who play important roles in the generation, dissemination, and evaluation of policy ideas as well as actors at other levels of government." Although this model appears similar to Heclo's issue networks, Sabatier's model projects an image of more stable coalitions than issue networks. Sabatier (1993, 27) argued:

The lineup of allies and opponents tends to be rather stable over periods of a decade or so. Thus the framework explicitly rejects the view that actors are primarily motivated by their short-term self-interest and thus that "coalition of convenience" of highly varying composition will dominate policy making over time.

A recent study concerning iron triangles was conducted by Salisbury *et al.* (1992). Salisbury *et al.* (1992) examined agriculture, energy, health, and labor policy domains to see whether iron triangles existed in these domains. They investigated social characteristics, partisanship, policy specializations, and contacts between public officials and lobbyists. In their analysis, they did not discover characteristics of iron triangles in any of the above four areas. Salisbury *et al.* (1992, 149) argued, "we need more complex

images to catch the protean richness and complexity of the emerging systems of interest representation and policy-making.”<sup>(1)</sup>

Using the same data set mentioned above, Heinz *et al.* (1993) mapped out networks of lobbyists into spheres, and found that the maps in the four domains are characterized by “hollow cores,” indicating that no inner circle exists which acts as a dominant broker in all issues. The implication is that there is no core group of actors controlling U.S. policy-making.<sup>(2)</sup> They further denied the presence of iron triangles even in niches in these domains because niches are stricken with a high level of conflict, especially in the agriculture and labor domains:

The specialized policy niches that exist in the agriculture and labor domains are not iron triangles where the interest groups and their agency sponsors coexist in a harmonious, symbiotic relationship. Rather, these niches would appear to be specialized arenas of conflict where pitched battles are fought (Heinz et al. 1993, 217).

Scholars attribute various factors to the decline of iron triangles. Heclo (1978) pointed to the expansion of government activities, resulting in the mobilization of more different types of interest groups knowledgeable about policy issues. Gais, Peterson, and Walker (1984) argued that iron triangles are becoming less common because of the inroads made by citizen groups. They stated, “By mobilizing supporters and making efforts to move conflicts into broader political arenas whenever possible, the citizen groups diminished the autonomy of subgovernments, made policy outcomes less predictable, and forced the policy debate into forums open to public view” (1984, 183). Jones, who studied the energy policy domain, claimed, “the energy policy triangles came to be threatened in the 1960s by environmental groups” (1979, 104). According to Salisbury (1990), however, it was not just citizen groups but also various politically

active organizations that made iron triangles a less common phenomenon. Cigler and Loomis (1991) attributed the decline of iron triangles to many other factors including some institutional factors such as “congressional fragmentation, budget deficits, and enhanced representation of interests” (1991, 388).

In spite of the common observation that iron triangles may be less often seen in today's U.S. policy-making, some other scholars suggested that iron triangles do exist. Adams (1984) argued that U.S. defense policies are controlled by exclusive members of an iron triangle: defense contractors, the defense department, and key members of Congress. Ripley and Franklin (1980) believed that iron triangles tend to dominate in “distributive policies,” which refer to policies which allocate government procurement or subsidies to particular organizations for special projects. Other scholars such as King and Shannon (1986) and Gormley (1986) also suggested that iron triangles exist.

This article attempts to answer this apparent contradiction in research findings. I argue that the absence of organized opposition is the key to understanding where iron triangles are likely to dominate policy-making. Because of mutual benefits that accrue from iron triangles, triangle actors (congressional committees, government agencies, and interest groups) tend to naturally form close working relationships. Therefore, unless opposing alliances attempt to check their influences, the triangle actors' influences may become dominant.

In order to examine this relationship between organized opposition and iron triangles, this article examines the labor policy domain in the 1980s, a domain known to be stricken by a high level of conflict (Salisbury *et al.* 1987). This article will show that even in the contentious labor policy domain, basic structures of a possible iron triangle do exist; that is, a stable set of triangle actors work together in an attempt to control policy-making. However, consistent counter lobbying activities by opposing alliances prevent triangle actors from completely controlling the policy-making.

### **Criteria of Iron Triangles**

The operational criteria for iron triangles need to be clarified so that their presence can be objectively verified. I assume that an iron triangle exists in a policy domain, if an alliance of organizational actors meets the following criteria:

- (1) An alliance includes three distinct types of organizations: an interest group, an executive agency, and a congressional committee—a triangle alliance.
  
- (2) An alliance consists of a stable set of participants across multiple policy events within a policy domain—a stable alliance.
  
- (3) Members of an alliance control policy outcomes—a dominant alliance.

As the first criterion states, for an alliance to be considered an iron triangle, it needs to include at least an interest group, an executive agency, and a congressional committee. The presence of such actors is the basic requirement for an iron triangle. An alliance is referred to as a “triangle alliance” if its members include all three parties.

Although a triangle alliance has the potential to become an iron triangle, meeting only the first criterion does not make an alliance an iron triangle. The second criterion for iron triangles is that the alliance includes a stable set of members for a series of policy events. By definition, iron triangle actors tend to work together on multiple events in a policy domain. The same actors should appear repeatedly collaborating on multiple, related bills. Thus, there needs to be some constancy of the alliance membership.

Thirdly, meeting only the first and second criteria does not make an alliance an iron triangle. In addition, iron triangles must control policy outcomes. In other words, iron triangles have to win all policy fights with all actors working together to protect or further their interests. Thus, opposing alliances, if they exist, should not be able to defeat

iron triangles in a policy fight. If an alliance of policy actors meet these three criteria, it constitutes an iron triangle because three types of stable actors completely dominate the policy-making process.

## Data

Data analyzed in this article come from the U.S. National Labor Policy Project conducted by David Knoke in 1988.<sup>(3)</sup> By looking for organizational appearances in four sources (congressional hearings, the *New York Times* labor abstracts, labor lobby registrations, and Supreme Court amicus curiae briefs), Knoke found that more than one thousand organizations were involved in influencing labor policies between 1981 and 1987. From this population of organizations, he chose, as his target sample, only organizations that were mentioned a total of five or more times in the four combined sources. The resulting 117 organizations were the most prominent organizations in the labor policy domain. Knoke requested an interview with each of these organizations, and successfully completed interviews with 115 organizations. These 115 organizations include 20 labor unions, 28 business organizations, 10 professional associations, 35 public interest groups, 18 federal agencies/regulators, and four congressional groups.

The data set includes information on the organizations' activities related to 25 legislative policy events. Policy events refer to congressional legislative bills. Using the *Congressional Information Service* annual abstracts, Knoke checked all legislative hearings held from 1981 through 1987 by (1) the House Committee on Education and Labor, (2) the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, and (3) other committees which held several labor-related hearings. This inspection produced a list of 137 hearings, which Knoke categorized into 79 "scenarios" or "chains of related events" (Knoke *et al.* 1996, 74). Of the 79 events, he focused on 25 policy events for his investigation. For details of these events, see Knoke *et al.* (1996).

### Action Sets

Using this data set, Knoke and Pappi (1991) and Knoke *et al.* (1996) identified networks of organizational actors involved in the 25 labor-policy bills mentioned above.<sup>(4)</sup> They called these organizational networks “action sets,” which refer to a type of coalition involved in policy-making:

An action set ... consists of those collective actor organizations that consciously coordinate activities on a particular event. ... All members prefer the same outcome for the event, are directly or indirectly linked in a communication network, and collaborate in lobbying and other activities to influence policy (Knoke and Pappi 1991, 510).

Knoke identified action sets associated with 25 policy events in the following manner. In regard to each policy event, informants of all organizations were shown a list of all domain actors (both interest groups and government organizations) and were asked to check organizations with which they formed “a coalition to work together to reach the desired outcome.” Knoke and Pappi assumed that Organization X worked with Organization Y in an action set if one of the following three conditions was met: (1) X reported that it worked with Y; (2) Y reported that it worked with X; or (3) both X and Y mentioned an identical organization as the leader of a coalition they belonged to. By examining action sets in the labor policy domain, Knoke and Pappi (1991, 521) concluded, “In both the U.S. and Germany, national labor policy fights are typically orchestrated and conducted through action sets.” U.S. action sets were often led by the AFL-CIO, the Chamber of Commerce, or the National Association of Manufacturers. However, Knoke and Pappi did not examine what specific actors constituted these action sets, thus failing to indicate whether these action sets possibly constituted iron triangles. They only reported that labor unions were more likely than other types of organizational actors to participate in action sets. Thus, this article reexamines Knoke’s action sets to verify the presence or absence of iron triangles.



## **Findings**

Table 1 provides descriptive data on action sets associated with all 25 policy events. There are 48 action sets associated with 25 policy events. For example, Event #2 is associated with one action set supporting the passage of the bill. The members of the action set include only three labor unions. Event #3 is associated with three action sets: two sets pushing for the passage of the bill and one set opposing its passage. The first action set includes six labor unions and two public interest groups. The second action set includes 11 business organizations, two professional groups, one public interest group, four government agencies, and one congressional committee. The third action set includes five labor unions and four public interest groups. As one can see, the presence and absence of action sets as well as the type of organizations in the sets vary depending upon policy events. These action sets are examined further to see whether they meet the three criteria of iron triangles presented above.

### **Criterion #1**

First, I examined whether each action set constitutes a triangle alliance; that is, whether an action set includes at least an interest group, an executive agency, and a congressional committee. Of the 48 action sets, only three are triangle alliances. Other action sets lack at least one of the triangle actors. Thirty four action sets lack both congressional and executive-branch actors. One action set lacks both an interest group and a congressional committee. Six action sets lack congressional committees. Four action sets lack interest groups. Thus, only three action sets strictly meet the first criterion for iron triangles. These triangle alliances are associated with Events #3, #20, and #33.

However, four policy events (#13, #29, #30, and #31) have two separate action sets on the same side of the policy issue that together contain all three triangle parties. These action sets do not strictly meet the first criterion of iron triangles, because all three parties

Table 1. Action Sets and Their Characteristics

Event #	Action Set	Interest Groups				Gvrnmt Orgs		Total # of Actors	Event Outcome
		Labor Unions	Business Orgs	Professional Orgs	Public IGs	Gvrnmt Agencies	Cnrgssnl Cmmtts		
2	For	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	+
3	For	6	0	0	2	0	0	8	+
	For	0	11	2	1	4	1	19	
	Against	5	0	0	4	0	0	9	
5	Against	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	-
6	For	8	1	0	0	0	0	9	-
7	For	15	1	1	1	0	0	18	-
	Against	0	5	0	1	0	0	6	
8	None								-
9	For	5	0	0	2	0	0	7	-
10	For	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	-
11	For	6	0	0	3	0	0	9	-
12	For	11	0	0	2	0	0	13	-
13	For	0	3	0	0	1	0	4	-
	For	0	0	0	0	2	1	3	
	Against	10	0	0	3	0	0	11	
16	For	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	+
	For	0	3	3	4	1	0	11	
	For	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	
	For	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	
18	For	8	1	0	1	0	0	10	+
	For	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	
	For	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	
19	For	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	+
20	For	0	5	0	0	4	1	10	-
	Against	13	0	0	2	0	0	15	
23	For	11	0	0	0	0	0	11	+
	Against	0	5	0	1	0	0	6	
	Against	0	1	0	2	0	0	3	
24	None								-
28	For	14	1	2	0	0	0	17	-
	Against	0	17	0	0	1	0	18	
	Against	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	
29	For	15	0	1	6	0	0	22	-
	For	0	1	0	6	0	0	7	
	Against	0	14	0	1	0	0	15	
	Against	0	0	0	0	4	1	5	
30	For	16	0	0	9	0	0	25	-
	Against	0	7	0	0	1	0	8	
	Against	0	0	0	0	4	1	5	
31	For	15	0	0	6	0	0	21	+
	Against	0	17	0	1	1	0	20	
	Against	0	0	0	0	4	1	5	
32	For	9	0	0	1	0	0	10	+
33	For	10	0	0	0	0	0	10	-
	Against	0	15	0	1	2	1	19	
35	For	12	0	0	3	0	0	15	+
	Against	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	
36	For	8	0	0	0	0	0	8	+
	Against	0	6	1	0	1	0	8	

IGs stand for interest groups. PIGs stand for public interest groups.  
 + means the bill eventually passed, while - means that the bill failed to pass.  
 Event # is consistent with the numbering system used by Knoke *et al.* (1996).

are not represented in a single action set. However, since two action sets with the same policy position may have been able to coordinate their actions in a weak fashion, these action sets are further analyzed as “semi-triangle” alliances, as opposed to “genuine triangle” alliances.

## **Criterion #2**

The seven triangle alliances (three genuine-triangle alliances and four semi-triangle alliances) were further analyzed in terms of the second criterion for iron triangles: that is, whether the triangle alliances include a stable, overlapping set of organizational participants. It was found that five organizations (three business organizations, one executive branch organization, and a congressional committee) had overlapping memberships in all seven triangle alliances. These organizations are:

- (1) American Farm Bureau Federation
- (2) Chamber of Commerce of the United States
- (3) National Federation of Independent Business
- (4) Office of the Secretary of Labor
- (5) Republican members of House Labor & Education Committee

The five organizations above represent triangle actors, and they appear to constitute core members of a possible iron triangle in the policy niche surrounding the seven policy events. The presence of these stable participants meets the second criterion.

One important point to note is that the seven triangle alliances include not only the stable set of members mentioned above but also unstable, transient members. Eight organizations appear only once in the seven triangle alliances, and three organizations appear only twice in the triangle alliances. This finding indicates that stable, overlapping members worked together with unstable, transient members on these events.

### Criterion #3

The seven triangle alliances were next examined as to whether they meet the third criterion of iron triangles; that is, whether they controlled policy outcomes. By examining the relationship between triangle alliances' desired policy positions and actual policy outcomes, we can test whether the triangle alliances controlled policy outcomes. For example, if a policy outcome is in opposite to the policy position taken by a triangle alliance, it is clear that the alliance members did not control the policy outcome. On the other hand, if the policy outcome is in line with the policy position of the triangle alliance, the alliance members may have controlled the policy outcome.

See Table 2 for summary results on the seven triangle alliances regarding their desired policy positions and actual policy outcomes.

**Table 2. Triangle Alliance and Policy Outcomes**

Event ID	Event Names	Alliance Type	Policy Position	Outcome	Win or Lose
#3	<i>Job Training Partnership Act</i>	Genuine	For	Passed	Won
#13	<i>Amendments to 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act</i>	Semi	For	Failed	Lost
#20	<i>Teenage Sub-Minimum Wage</i>	Genuine	For	Failed	Lost
#29	<i>Parental/Disability Leave</i>	Semi	Against	Failed	Won
#30	<i>Raising Minimum Wage</i>	Semi	Against	Failed	Won
#31	<i>Advance Notice of Plant Closing</i>	Semi	Against	Passed	Lost
#33	<i>Stopping Double-Breasting</i>	Genuine	Against	Failed	Won

Table 2 shows that a genuine triangle alliance was supporting the passage of Event #3 (Job Training Partnership Act), and the bill passed. Thus, the triangle alliance won the policy fight. As for Event #13, a semi-triangle alliance was supporting the passage of Amendments to the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, but the bill failed to become law, indicating that the triangle alliance lost the policy fight. Event #20 shows that a genuine triangle alliance was supporting the teenage sub-minimum wage bill, and it failed to

become law. Again, a triangle alliance lost a policy fight. Events #29 and #30 show that the semi-triangle alliances were opposing the parental/disability leave act and a bill to increase minimum wage. Both bills failed to pass. Thus, the triangle alliances won both fights. Event #31 shows that a semi-triangle alliance was opposing the bill requiring the advance notice of a plant closing, but the bill passed. Thus, the opposing alliance won the fight. Finally, a genuine triangle alliance was opposing the passage of a bill (Event #33), which aimed to “stop ‘double-breasting’ by companies setting up non-union subsidiaries to side-step collective bargaining agreements” (Knoke *et al.* 1996, 257), and the bill failed to pass. The triangle alliance won the fight.

Overall, triangle alliances won four policy fights and lost three such fights. Thus, they won about 60 percent of the policy fights. If we focus only on genuine triangle alliances, they won two policy fights and lost one. This result indicates that the triangle alliances did not totally control policy outcomes. Thus, the triangle alliances do not meet the third criterion of iron triangles.

### **Opposing Alliances**

Because opposing alliances won three out of seven policy fights associated with triangle alliances, it is worth examining what types of groups constituted members of the opposing alliances and whether they included stable core members just as triangle alliances included stable core members. It was found that the following five labor unions had overlapping memberships in six or seven opposing alliances associated with the seven policy events:

- (1) AFL-CIO
- (2) Communications Workers of America
- (3) International Ladies Garment Workers Union
- (4) Service Employee International Union
- (5) United Auto Workers

The finding indicates that, just as triangle alliances consisted of stable core member organizations which worked consistently together in an attempt to control policy-making, five labor unions also worked consistently together in an attempt to check the triangle alliances' dominance in labor policy-making. The labor unions engaged in well-coordinated lobbying activities against the positions taken by triangle alliances.

Another finding to note is that just as triangle alliances included both stable and unstable members, opposing alliances also included unstable, transient members as well as stable members. Ten organizations appeared in the opposing alliances only once or twice. This finding indicates that the five labor unions formed the stable core of opposing alliances and worked together with more unstable actors.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

This article reexamined Knoke's labor-policy data set to determine whether his "action sets" could have actually constituted iron triangles. Three criteria of iron triangles were formulated, and were tested against Knoke's data. First, I found that, of the 25 policy events examined, only seven events were associated with genuine or semi-triangle alliances. A majority of policy events were not associated with triangle alliances because they lacked government actors (executive agencies and/or congressional committees). Apparently, government actors maintained some distance from interest groups. One possible explanation for this tendency may be related to the characteristics of the Reagan administration, which was in power during the period examined in this article. Because labor policy was not a high-priority item for the Reagan administration, government actors may not have been active participants in labor policy-making events. This lack of interest in labor policy issues may have contributed to the minimal presence of government actors in the action sets.

Second, I examined whether the seven triangle alliances met the second criterion of stable membership. I found that three business organizations, the Office of the Secretary

of Labor, and the House Labor and Education Committee (Republican members) were consistent members in the triangle alliances. This finding indicates that a basic structure for a possible iron triangle did exist in a niche in the labor domain, attempting to control policy outcomes.

When the triangle alliances were tested against the third criterion, I found that the triangle alliances were not able to totally control policy outcomes. Of the seven policy events, the triangle alliances won four policy fights but lost three, indicating that their chance of winning was about 60 percent. Apparently, "pitched battles" were being fought in the labor domain, as Heinz *et al.* described in their study (1993, 217). Therefore, the triangle alliances did not control policy outcomes.

One main reason for the lack of control by the triangle alliances may be that opposing alliances presented effective counter mobilizations. An analysis of memberships of opposing alliances showed that five labor unions constituted stable core members and worked together with unstable actors on specific policy events. Thus, this consistent opposition led by core labor unions was effective in preventing triangle alliances from becoming an iron triangle.

The results indicate that iron triangles did not characterize the labor policy domain in the 1980s. Although the structural features of a possible iron triangle existed, the triangles actors were unable to dominate policy-making, mainly because of intense, sustained lobbying activities by opposing groups. Thus, the influence of a possible iron triangle was effectively counterbalanced by opposing alliances. However, if opposing lobbying activities in the labor policy domain had been weak, the triangle alliance could have become an iron triangle by freely exercising dominant power.

My finding implies that if there is a policy area characterized by a lack of conflict, that is, a lack of consistent opposing groups, one may be able to observe iron triangles in action. In fact, a lack of conflict may explain Adams' (1984) observation that U.S. defense policies are controlled by an iron triangle and Ripley and Franklin's assertion

that iron triangles tend to exist in the distributive policy domain. These types of policies rarely involve consistent organized opposition. Thus, an absence of sustained organized opposition appears to help explain where iron triangles are likely to form.

## Notes

- (1) One problem with this study, however, is that they did not examine whether organizational triangle actors formed exclusive alliances in regard to specific legislative bills. They just investigated how close individual lobbyists are to different kinds of government officials in terms of social/partisan characteristics and regular contacts.
- (2) Since government officials were not included in the study of networks, it is not entirely clear whether they could have played a central role in each domain. However, Heinz *et al.* argued that this is not likely even if government officials were included in the study.
- (3) See Knoke and Kaufman (1992) for specific details of this data set.
- (4) They also analyzed 32 German labor policy events.

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## アメリカ労働政策と鉄の三角同盟 — 1980年代の政策連携の分析 —

〈要 約〉

石生 義人

この論文は、アメリカ労働政策分野においてなぜ「鉄の三角同盟」現象が起こっていないのかという疑問に答えようとするものである。David Knokeが収集したデータを再分析し、1980年代の労働政策に関わった115の組織アクターの連携にどのような特徴があったのかを調べている。具体的には、25の労働関連法案にかかわる組織連携にどのようなアクターが含まれていたのかを分析し、(1) 経済団体、(2) 労働省のOffice of the Secretary、(3) 下院の労働・教育委員会（共和党議員）が複数の法案に関して連携をしていることがわかった。この連携は「鉄の三角同盟」の構造的特徴は有しているが、どの程度政策結果に影響を与えているのかを調べてみると、これらの組織の政策方針と実際の政策結果が60%程度しか一致していないことがわかった。つまり、「鉄の三角同盟」と呼べるほどの影響力を行使していなかった。その主な理由は、労働団体を中心とする連携が、効果的な反対ロビー活動を展開していたからである。「鉄の三角同盟」現象は、連携を組む反対ロビー活動によってその影響力が弱められるため、敵対する組織連携がない政策分野においてのみ発生しやすいということが言える。