Chapter 14

Trade Union Representation in the Philippines

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Introduction

This chapter discusses the various characteristics of maritime trade unions in the Philippines within the wider context of the history of the country's industrial relations and labour movement. The main historical focal points in the country's labour environment and how these shaped industrial relations today is introduced in the first section. In the second section the development of seafarers' representation in the country and the profile of their trade unions in the context of the country's labour history is discussed. The final section concludes with a discussion of the trends and challenges faced by unions representing Filipino seafarers today.

Philippine Industrial Relations: A Brief History

The history of the organisation of labour in the Philippines stretches back more than a century with the national union movement being formed as early as 1902. At this time the establishment of the *Union Obrera Democratica Filipina* (UODF) unified small-scale community-based workers' guilds '*gremios*' in Manila and its immediate environs (Carroll 1961). This was at the time when the country was transitioning from Spanish colonial rule to official American occupation and the labour movement in the decades that followed grew out of the nationalistic independence fervour of the times. Consequently labour unrest and organisation became a political concern prompting the colonial government to institutionalise the regulation of trade unions and their members. Despite this, unions and labour leaders grew in influence and

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number and developed the collective aim of achieving national independence and self-governance. As a result there was a coalition of political party interests and those of union organisations. Subsequently, strong union leaders formed disparate union federations based on political ideologies and it is this fragmented nature of the labour movement which endures into the present day and could be said to account for much of the lack of progress made in the formation of a unified labour interest in the Philippines.

The early 1930s saw the beginnings of the Communist Party here and the socialist political movement that influenced the growth of communist-leaning trade unions in this country. The growing militant side of the labour movement prompted the new government to curtail its increasing membership by setting up the *Department of Labor* and the *Court of Industrial Relations* which in practice was used to identify union links to the militant movement and suppress strike action through a system of compulsory arbitration (Dejillas 1994). The hostility towards left-leaning trade unions continued up until the early 1950s, mitigated only by the *Industrial Peace Act* in 1953 that put an end to compulsory arbitration and paved the way to collective bargaining.

Collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) have since become the basis of labour relations and dispute management. By the early 1970s, unions had increased both in number and in influence. However, there was growing dissatisfaction with the enforcement of CBAs and ineffectual court decisions on labour conditions and wage determinations. This discontent was exacerbated by the failure of import substitution policies. Large-scale strikes resulted which disrupted major businesses and industrial progress. The state's response under the then President, Ferdinand Marcos, was to curtail union rights and freedoms, leading to the proclamation of Martial Law in 1972. The Marcos dictatorship would continue up until 1986 when the actions of various social movements culminated in the 1986 People Power Revolution that ushered in a democratic transition. The 1986 Constitution then established the basis for all political, economic, and social freedom in the country and its society (Table 14.1).

In 2015, there were 19,067 trade unions registered with the *Department of Labor and Employment* (PSA 2017). These had an estimated membership of 1.964 million workers. In these estimates, unionised workers in the Philippines in 2015 accounted for more than 5% of the total workforce. As a measure of real values, however Erickson et al. (2001) warn that union membership estimates by the Philippine government are based on self-reportage by unions and union federations—which, in order to project union power, are often largely overestimated. A more accurate depiction of the unionised workforce is the number of workers officially covered by CBAs, which the state has recorded since the early 1960s (Fig. 14.1).

Figure 14.1 shows that the highest number of CBA-covered workers was during the early 1990s (peaking at 1993 with 608,876 workers) which can be attributed to the positive structural and institutional changes made in line with democratisation project which started with the 1987 constitution (Abinales and Amoroso 2005).

Table 14.1 Distinct periods of industrial relations development in the Philippines

Period	General policy/ Period description	Period highlights	Latent political economic environment
Pre- 1902	Feudal Economy	1870s–1890s—Workers’ guilds or ‘ <i>gremios</i> ’ emerge in Manila among ‘printers, barbers, tobacco workers, and wood-workers’ (Ramos 1978, p. 100)	Spanish colonial era establishes feudalistic ownership of land and labour enforced by Spanish governors, and the Filipino-Hispanic elite
1902– 1908	Post-Hispanic beginnings	1902—establishment of the <i>Union Obrera Democratica Filipina</i> (UODF), unifying the <i>gremios</i> (see Carroll 1961) Union membership estimated to have reached the 20,000 mark and union leaders organise large-scale strikes (Ramos 1978)	Transition period from Spanish to American colonial rule Militancy of unions begins to emerge alongside the political independence movement of the times
1908– 1935	Laissez Faire/ Union growth	1908—the American colonial government establishes the <i>Bureau of Labor</i> (Binghay 2007) entrenching elite interests over peasant groups 1930—Communist Party of the Philippines (PKP) is organised and is the nascent socialist movement in the early 1930s	Strong union leaders start to set up disparate union federations based on political ideology and merge with political parties Increasing civil strife and political unrest over American colonisers
1935– 1952	Compulsory Arbitration/ Repressive state control	1936—Court of Industrial Relations is established, with jurisdiction over all labour disputes (Damaso 2001) Commonwealth Acts 103 and 213 imposes compulsory arbitration and compulsory registration of labor unions with the Department of Labor—which is used as a mechanism for suppressing militant left-leaning labour movements (Dejillas 1994)	Commonwealth government is established giving Filipino elites greater political power Lack of meaningful reforms in the pre-war period (early 1940s); worsening political unrest among radical trade unions
1953– 1972	Industrial Peace	1953—Magna Carta for Labor or the Industrial Peace Act is passed into law 1960s—Unprecedented increase in the number of strikes, losing man-days ‘ranging from 523,000 in 1961 to 1.4 million in 1972’ (Ramos 1978), virtually disrupting economic activity on a national scale Number of registered unions rises from 836 in 1953 to 2522 in 1966 (Abinales and Amoroso 2005)	Collective bargaining is introduced together with the increasing influence of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Damaso 2001) Post-war political climate now encourages union independence Ideological differences among union federations and their leaders prevails

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Table 14.1 (continued)

Period	General policy/ Period description	Period highlights	Latent political economic environment
1973– 1986	Martial Law; Restricted labour movement	1972—Martial Law is declared by the Marcos administration 1974— <i>National Labor Relations Commission</i> and the <i>Overseas Employment Development Board</i> under a new <i>Labor Code</i> created to regulate both internal labour and emerging external migrant workers	Seeks to curtail freedoms of left- leaning organisations and restrict labour activities of trade unions and their federations (Abinales and Amoroso 2005) to prevent mass action and limit growth of communism
1986– 1997	Tripartism and union growth	1986—Martial Law is lifted; new Philippine constitution is passed 1989—Act on voluntary arbitra- tion 1994—Tripartite response to Structural Adjustment marks a consolidated effort of the state, representatives of the labour movement, and capital, to align its interests towards national economic growth	Late 1980s to early 1990s sees the early stages of democratic transition which guarantees state protection of freedoms of association, trade union rights, and voluntary arbitration (Damaso 2001) Tripartism, co-operation with government, unions, and busi- nesses, is heavily promoted Unions put emphasis on legal- ism and minimum legal com- pliances of both workers and management but much less on collective bargaining negotiations
1997- present	Managing globalisation	1997 and 2008 Financial Crises	Since the late 1990s there has been a move towards neo-liberal policies promoted by the new democratic government policies (APL 2006) through alliance- building and social movement unionism (Ranald 1999; Aganon et al. 2008)

Currently however, the number of workers covered in CBAs is steadily declining and has done so since 2006. The dramatic drop in 2006 is seen as a culmination of two financial crises affecting the East Asian region. The country saw its export growth dropping to -16.2% and import growth rate to -13.3% in 2001 (Wang and Whalley 2010) which accompanied unprecedented job losses and the growth of the informal sector and the rise of labour flexibility in the formal sector (see for example, Bitonio 2012; Ofreneo 2013).

Fig. 14.1 Collective bargaining coverage in the Philippines. Adapted from: Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) (2015, 2017)

Unionising Seafarers

The union movement among seafarers began to take shape during the *Industrial Peace* era. This was a time when unions and union federations from a wide range of industries in the Philippines began to grow in number and strength. During this period (early 1960s), two seafarer-led labour groups emerged focussing on the interests of workers employed on board foreign-flagged vessels. The Associated Marine Officers' Union of the Philippines (AMOUP) was established in 1960 by Captain Gregorio Oca, organising the marine officers within three major shipping companies and was centred in the port of Manila, one of the major ports in Asia-Pacific. On the ratings side, the Associated Seamen's Union of the Philippines (ASUP) was set up in the same year to organise unlicensed seafaring crew from the country. Issues surrounding unionism at the time revolved around low wages, compensation for occupational sickness, injury and death, and poor working conditions brought about by the emergence of open registries or flags of convenience (FOCs) where cheap unregulated labour in developing countries like the Philippines became an attractive source of manpower for the world's merchant fleet.

Growing concerns about the state of labour regulation and decent work on board ships gave rise to the increasing relevance of maritime trade unions on the home front. By 1970, the two Manila-based labour groups had merged to form the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) under a conservative union federation namely the Philippine Transport Workers Organisation (PTWO).¹ Shortly afterwards, the union became the first maritime

¹The union federation was founded by Roberto Oca Sr., kin of AMOUP founder Capt. Gregorio Oca. Today PTWO has evolved into the Philippine Trade and General Workers Organisation (PGTWO), one of the country's 135 union federations (in 2012) spanning unions from transport, services, manufacturing, textile, metal, paper, wood, food & beverage, and electronics industries.

union in the Philippines to be affiliated with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)—the biggest most influential global union federation in the world's shipping and maritime labour sector.

A factor which proved significant in establishing a global minimum wage in the maritime industry was the emergence of the Philippines as a competitive supplier of seafarers to the world's ships outperforming traditional maritime countries in Europe and America. An additional factor was the ITF affiliation of AMOSUP and later other emergent maritime unions. Local statistical data on maritime trade union membership are irregular and oftentimes unpublished by state and non-state entities in the Philippines. Recent estimates derived from the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (2013), suggest that more than a third of Filipino seafarers deployed in 2012 were unionised and in a study by Amante (2004), about 47% of the seafaring workforce in the Philippines were estimated to be unionised based on the study's survey using a randomised sample. This considerably exceeded union density as estimated in 2015 where out of the total workforce only about 5% were unionised (PSA 2017). The maritime sector is therefore a unique case when it comes to unionisation compared to the majority of industries in the country.

This high level of unionisation of workers may be partly attributed to the nature and structure of labour in a globalised industry. To a large extent it is shaped by flagging out and the ITF's 'Flags of Convenience' campaign. A diagram simplifying the unionisation of Filipino seafarers is depicted in Fig. 14.2. What may be identified here as one of the main determinants of whether seafarers will be unionised is the ship's status as an FOC vessel—which means they will be under strict regulation by the ITF through a global network of inspectors based in ports around the world. Under threat of collective action from seafarers' and dockers' unions in these ports, ships are pressured to meet minimum wage and labour conditions standards set by the ITF and the ILO (for a detailed discussion see Lillie 2006). These ports acting as 'choke points' along the industry's supply chain are crucial to the ITF's campaign to regulate the unregulated FOCs, according to the union's head of strategic research.²

It is within this globalised system that maritime unions in the Philippines operate. At present, there are six existing maritime trade unions in the Philippines representing seafarers who work on ocean-going ships (Table 14.2). These unions vary in size of membership, type of seafarers, union affiliations, services and benefits to its members, as well as size of their CBA portfolio (i.e. number of CBAs with ship owners).

AMOSUP The largest of these trade unions by far is the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP). According to their own estimates, they had an active membership of more than 80,000 seafarers in 2010 (AMOSUP 2010). If this is an accurate depiction it suggests that AMOSUP members comprised about two-thirds of the total maritime trade union members in that year.

²Presentation by Dr Jeremy Anderson (28 March 2014), in the University of Westminster, London, UK, organised by the British Universities Industrial Relations Association (BUIRA).

Fig. 14.2 Diagram of CBA coverage for Filipino seafarers

Table 14.2 List of maritime trade unions in the Philippines

Acronym	Trade Union Name
AMOSUP	Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines
PSU	Associated Philippine Seafarers Union
UFS	United Filipino Seafarers
ISLA	International Seamen's Mutual Labor Association
POSU	Philippine Officers and Seamen's Union
MATEU	Mariners & Allied Transport Employees Union

It is also an affiliate and member of the ITF and maintains a seat in both the Overseas Workers' Welfare Administration (OWWA) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) tripartite consultation committees, representing Filipino seafarers. The union, more importantly, directly negotiates with ship owners and companies on CBAs for their members. In their own publication in 2010, they report that apart from securing employment and 'fair wages' for members through CBAs they also provide a *Provident Fund* where companies agree to contribute an amount of money towards a lump sum that the seafarer will receive upon retiring at the age of 50 and also serves as an insurance mechanism for the seafarer member and their dependents (AMOSUP 2010). This serves as a pension fund that secures workers' retirement pay given that seafaring work is done on non-permanent contracts. Other services of the union include legal assistance, a *Welfare and Mutual Benefit Plan* for members and dependents, medical services as well as education and training. The union maintains a head office in Manila establishing adjacent properties for the benefit of their members such as:

- (1) The *AMOSUP Training Center*, where members can attend short courses beneficial for their employment and employability at sea such as Basic Safety Training, Navigational Watch, Radar Simulator Course, General Tanker Familiarisation Course, Engine Room Simulator, Ship's Simulator and Bridge Teamwork, among many other skills based courses.
- (2) The *Seamen's Hospital* where both union members and their dependants are given free medical service and medicine. They also operate three other regional hospitals for seafarer members.
- (3) The *AMOSUP Sailors' Home* where they provide free board and lodging to official members in transient.
- (4) The '*Slop Chest*' which is basically a grocery and supplies shop for the members and their dependents to purchase items on credit.

The Philippine Seafarers' Union (PSU) is the second largest maritime union in the Philippines with a membership of about 11,000 seafarers—accounting for 9% of the total maritime union membership. It was established in 1984 and is also an affiliate of the ITF. It is active in international labour discourse as a member of the Asian Seafarers' Summit (an initiative of the All Japan Seamen's Union), and the Norwegian/Asian Seafarers' Committee (NASCO) that is run in consultation with the ITF. Like AMOSUP, PSU (2013) reports that it has engaged successfully in securing CBAs for its members since 1984 as well as in delivering other services like the

Welfare Aid Program that provides medical and health aid/insurance benefits to members and free legal assistance.

Another maritime trade union operating nationally in the Philippines is the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) that was established in 1994 and has since built a considerable membership of around 3000–4000 seafarers. It publishes a widely successful Filipino maritime newspaper *Tinig ng Marino* (Voice of the Mariner), circulated among the world's Filipino seafarers. The UFS engages in securing employment and CBAs for members and provides them with free employment-related legal assistance (UFS 2012). However, the union does not have well-established programmes like those of AMOSUP and PSU. Nonetheless, it does engage with lobbying, campaigning and social movement activities to push for seafarers' rights in national, and sometimes international, policymaking forums.

Similarly other seafarer trade unions, such as the International Seamen's Mutual Labor Association (ISLA), the Mariners and Allied Transport Employees Union (MATEU)—with a combined membership of around 15,000—engage in comparable social movement activities, although much of their work remains unreported and unpublished. Apart from these trade unions, there are also company-specific maritime trade unions that are estimated to have Filipino seafarer members numbering under 5000 workers.

Features of the Philippine Maritime Labour Movement

Cronyism

One of the main impediments to economic development has long been considered to be cronyism in Philippine state institutions, dating back to the Marcos administration (Kang 2003; Abinales and Amoroso 2005). Cronyism, a term referring to acts of favouritism and preferential bias based on kinship and close personal relationships, is endemic in Philippine politics and society and was borne out of its colonial heritage of drawing leaders and agents of the state from the powerful elite (Hutchcroft 1998). Such a feature of Philippine governance became firmly established during the Marcos administration (1965–1986) and was responsible for pushing the country into crippling debt (Wurfel 1988). Although the regime ended in 1986, propelling a nationwide democratisation project into the 1990s, crony capitalism has led to wide inequalities between the elite and poor. According to the World Bank (2015) income inequality between 2012 and 1988, with a GINI coefficient, was 40.8% in 1988 and 42.2% in 2012. Cronyism as a form of governance has permeated public and private institutions over the last half century, engendering widespread corruption in many ways and undermining the democratisation project in the Philippines, (see for example De Dios and Ferrer 2001).

Cronyism as a type of governance is apparent in the organisation of the maritime labour movement in the Philippines and is manifested among the more prominent

maritime trade unions through the stranglehold of leadership by a select few. For instance, in its 60-year long history, the most prominent trade union in this sector, AMOSUP was instituted and led by a former seafarer Gregorio Oca up until his death in 2010. He was succeeded by his son, Conrado Oca, who whilst lacked seafaring experience, served in senior positions in the union and its affiliated organisations such as the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) and the Seamen's Hospital in Manila (see AMOSUP 2016). Similar senior positions within the union and its affiliated organisations are held by Oca's immediate and extended family. Likewise, UFS and PSU, since their establishment in the late 1980s to the early 1990s, have been under the control of the same group of people for more than two decades.

Cronyism within the maritime labour movement is exacerbated by the virtual lack of democratic procedures within the unions. There is a complete absence of union elections despite some unions ostentatiously maintaining their commitment to democratic principles. For example in UFS' constitution and by-laws, the first aim of the union was to "To establish an effective, free and democratic trade union organization dedicated to the welfare of the workers" (UFS 2012). For these unions, however, the arbitrary appointment of a union president lies in a board of governors usually occupied by a close-knit group and supported by a similarly close-knit set of senior union management. In turn the appointment of cronies to senior union management, in the case of AMOSUP including its affiliated organisations, lies within the control and influence of the union president. Arguably cronyism in the maritime labour movement may be said to have been a key element in the continued strength and power of the industry as a whole without undue resistance. More generally, the lack of union democracy is argued by many unionists to make unions more efficient and create a less militant workforce, which is more agreeable to employers increasing job opportunities for Filipino seafarers. Nevertheless such an entrenched elite hampers the democratic processes within the unions since internal union democracy is 'likely to reduce chances for corruption' and build stronger, more participative membership' (Luce 2014). The result therefore in the case of the Philippine maritime labour sector is that of a passive union membership base led by crony leadership within the union organisation.

Servicing

Another common feature apparent across the Philippine maritime labour movement is its adoption of the servicing logic of action. Used in the context of trade unions strategy, Bacharach et al. (2001) define logics of action as frameworks of rationale informing union decisions with the aim of "legitimizing the union to its members, securing commitment of its members and attracting new members to the union" (p. 7). In this section I frame servicing as a form of union strategy whereby the union, working as a professionalised body is relied upon to translate members' interests into a set of services such as wage bargaining and the protection of members in employer

disputes as well as providing other non-wage bargaining services to members in exchange for membership fees (Bacharach et al. 2001; de Turberville 2004). In the context of the Philippine maritime unions however, the adoption of the servicing logic goes only as far as the representation of members through centralised wage bargaining and the delivery of non-wage benefits to fee-paying members through a professionalised union organisation. What is unique in the Philippine case is that due to the way in which seafarers are employed with solely temporary contracts, unionising seafarers operates at a top-down level. That is to say the unions engage new employers into a collective bargaining agreement independent of the latter's employees. As such, seafarers when offered a contract by an employer with an existing collective bargaining agreement will automatically be required by employers to buy into a unionised contract. Seafarers therefore have very little agency over becoming fee-paying union members. Hence, the traditional rationale for servicing as an approach to attracting new individual workers may not fully apply in this case, what can apply however is that servicing can be seen as an approach to legitimise the union to its members.

In terms of centralised collective bargaining for members, ITF affiliated unions have the ability to negotiate at peak-level through the International Bargaining Forum (IBF) which brings to the bargaining table key global employers' organisations such as the International Maritime Employers' Committee (IMEC) and the International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ) to negotiate an almost industry-wide pay scale in FOC ships (Lillie 2006). The result for union members of ITF affiliated maritime unions in the Philippines is a considerably higher base salary compared to those with non-CBA contracts and indeed compared to the minimum salaries prescribed by the POEA Standard Employment Contract. Arguably the positive pay differential is an incentive for workers to become union members.

More importantly in terms of legitimising the union to its members as a rationale for servicing, most prominent maritime unions in the Philippines are very advanced in terms of delivering non-wage services as we have seen earlier in this chapter. Services such as those offered by AMOSUP like free medical care through its seafarers' hospital, legal services, board and lodging, are mimicked by other unions, albeit on a smaller scale. Such non-wage benefits for union members are all geared towards justifying the union fees required from seafarers under CBA contracts.

Fragmentation

While there is a general trend among maritime trade unions in the Philippines to adopt a servicing logic to legitimise themselves to members, the ways in which they project themselves to advance seafarers' interests with the state and with capital is fragmented in approach. Generally, the union movement in this case adopts two competing approaches to advance workers' welfare in regulatory bodies, *co-operative* and *adversarial*. A co-operative union approach in this case refers to unions'

involvement with multi-party discussions with state agencies and employer representatives to meet worker and employer interests. An adversarial union approach refers to unions' involvement in more militant ways to advance purely workers' interests.

The most prominent maritime trade unions in the Philippines are indeed divided between these two approaches. Whilst AMOSUP, PSU and to some extent ISLA adopt a more co-operative approach, UFS adopts a somewhat adversarial approach. Co-operative unions tend to be active in participating in committees on key sectoral issues with state agencies and employers' representatives to create dialogue and co-operation among the different stakeholders within the maritime labour industry. In 2011 for example, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) established the Maritime Industry Tripartite Council (MITC) as a policy-consulting group consisting of maritime unions such as AMOSUP, ISLA, and PSU and employers' associations like the Filipino Association for Mariners' Employment (FAME) and the Filipino Shipowners' Association (FSA). MITC was instituted with the aim of developing new policies to advance maritime employment and enhance the welfare of Filipino seafarers and port workers (DOLE 2011). In particular it aims to co-opt key stakeholders from capital, labour and the state, in policymaking for the domestic and international maritime sector, as well as domestic port labour, such as the drafting and enactment of the *Rules and Regulations Governing the Employment and Working Conditions of Seafarers Onboard Ships Engaged in Domestic Shipping* in 2013 (DOLE 2013). In addition it responds to current issues requiring multi-sectoral attention. For example in January 2018 there was an MITC consultative meeting on the sinking of the MERCRAFT three passenger vessel in 2016 which was due to alleged shortcomings within government regulatory bodies (see Andes 2018). While independent assessments have yet to be made in relation to the impact of the MITC and other dialogue bodies within which maritime unions engage, in terms of enforcement, the policymaking function of such bodies is to a certain extent producing results.

For other maritime unions, advancing the welfare of maritime workers is done using a more adversarial approach. Some unions believe that a co-operative approach dilutes the ability of unions to fully represent workers' interests in the public sphere. The adversarial approach includes the mobilisation of union members to protest and express dissatisfaction towards government bodies as well as by means of legal recourse against individual government officials. In 2015 for example, UFS reports the holding of mass protests involving over 2000 seafarers including their families and other labour groups over a series of alleged malpractices within the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA). Similarly in 2017, UFS filed individual graft charges to current and former MARINA officials in the Office of the Ombudsman pertaining to the "alleged arrogation of authority in the implementation of [the Executive Order 909, Series 2010] giving incentives in the use of brand new vessels" (Nonato 2017). Neither example however is unique and is in fact routine behaviour for UFS forming part of its overall strategy in representing workers and seafarers in general. In a self-published article by the UFS (2015), it proclaims that

the “union never tire of calling on MARINA’s doors to carry out what is right and just on behalf of Filipino seafarers”.

Conclusion

Maritime trade unions in the Philippines are a reflection of traditional Philippine governance and are enduring institutions within an increasingly neo-liberal environment. There has been a decline in unionisation in the Philippines but the ways in which maritime unions have structured themselves have enabled them to break free from the narrative of union decline. One reason is that unions enjoy a large pool of labour in an industry where there is a high global demand for such labour. Consequently within this pool, unions are able to gain a strong base for membership in terms of volume. Another reason is that although this large pool of labour consists of temporary contract workers, unions here benefit from the ITF being a global union federation. FOC shipowners are forced to collectively bargain with a national union thus ensuring local ITF affiliates maintain their membership. A third reason is that unions are able to justify their role to members by adopting a servicing logic, thus benefiting members beyond wage bargaining.

Nevertheless there are several challenges to the continuing development of these maritime unions. First, unions are circumscribed by the entrenched system of cronyism which impinges on the ways in which their large membership is governed. A select few, with vested interests, prevent the implementation of democratic values within the union organisation. It could be argued that a passive membership is being engendered because members are not empowered to elect their leaders or to direct the activities of the union. An elite minority identifies and formulates union strategy and direction whilst neglecting to consider the interests and views of its members. Secondly, while the unions’ adoption of the servicing logic helps them in legitimising their role among fee-paying members, they fail to represent workers’ interests at the workplace level. Finally, while some unions have been able to advance workers’ agendas, fragmentation among the major trade unions over the approach to adopt creates problems in delivering this agenda. For example, ITF affiliated unions tend to be more co-operative in their approach and work with the state and capital to strike a balance between the interests of workers and interests of employers in policymaking. In contrast, unions that are independent of ITF affiliation tend to reject a co-operative approach and adopt a more adversarial one by favouring mass mobilisation of members. In some cases they pursue legal cases against government agencies to increase pressure on policymakers to recognise workers’ interests in many aspects of maritime regulation.

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