Title: The Hegemonic Breaking of Intra-European Labour Solidarity: How the AFL’s “Free” Trade Unionism and Labour INGOs’ National Sovereignty Clause Skew EU Docker Solidarity Today.

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**Introduction**

“The American-led liberal order has existed within a larger bipolar Cold War distribution of power. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Cold War hostilities, this ‘inside system’ became the ‘outside system’. The liberal order was thrown open and exposed to the entire world.”


“As Samuel Huntington argued long ago, the American imperium is ... powered by the spread of transnational organizations that have evolved out of American groups, both governmental and nongovernmental.... Typical of American expansion is not the acquisition of foreign territory and the power to control but the penetration of foreign society and the ability to operate there freely (as neo-Marxist theories of neocolonialism have rightly emphasized).”


By contrast to Marxist-derived theories of labour internationalism and the Tillyan tradition, the more prominent studies of transnational contention and advocacy of the last two decades, pace Keck and Sikkink (1998), are founded on Neo-Kantian liberalism and anti-statism, and precepts of INGO beneficence and detachment from structures of power. Such Kantianism re-emerged amidst the post-Cold War liberal euphoria, launched in academia by Fukuyama’s end of history thesis. From labour’s perspective it assumed that, after half a century of Cold War polarisation and a century of the secular-religious divide, labour INGOs could more readily create seamless transnational campaigns through which to defend and even revolutionise the rights of labour. By contrast, this study’s re-interrogation of a successful transnational campaign in Europe identifies trenchant problems that derive from institutions of representation that were created in the 1940s when the leaderships of those same INGOs colluded in the construction of the Cold War and of a US-led hegemonic order. Path dependent institutions that are lodged in current day INGOs’ constitutions have transmitted the labour-dividing politics and norms of the US-led order that underlay and survived the Cold War. In the era of neoliberal globalisation, not only does the mobility of transnational capital and the power of neoliberal governments and supranational bodies challenge INGO-led labour transnationalism, but so too does the institutionalised legacy of INGOs’ participation in the construction of US hegemony. For, with respect to the organisation of world labour, the bricks and mortar of US hegemony were laid by a transnationalising clique of American unionists and INGO leaders.
This lack of independence between contemporary INGOs’ mobilising problems and the post-WWII construction of a US-led hegemonic order suggests that, though students of Labour Contention have tended to eschew the social science historical research that Charles Tilly was famed for, they would do well to revive it. And though they rarely cross into the discipline of International Relations, they might take cues from recent developments there. These developments include: critiques of Kantian via media Constructivism for its tendency to reinforce liberal discourse (Barder and Levine 2012; Grovogui 2006); a return to rather than circumvention of historical analysis in the wake of the Cold War (Elman and Elman 2008; Reus-Smit 2008); an attunement to uneven and unequal development (Hobson 2011; Kamran 2013); and attention to the link between liberal internationalism and US hegemony (Dunne 2010; Gill 2012; Herschinger 2012; Ikenberry 2010).

This study originally set out to identify the key coordination and mobilization problems encountered by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and its regional arm, the European Transport Workers (ETF) during their 2001-3 campaign against the European Commission’s Directive On Market Access to Port Services, and it sought to delineate the mechanisms that resolved those problems. In the process I found that, whereas a number of problems were resolved for the duration of the campaign, the key problems were systemic. Many large (and mainly southern) European unions were not affiliated to the ITF/ETF, while the national affiliate that was affiliated blocked the ITF/ETF leadership from bilateral engagement with that non-affiliate and its INGO, the International Dockers Council (IDC), which was also mobilising against the Directive. To the naked eye, this issue might seem endogenous to the countries concerned and to the region of southern Europe in particular, but decades of scholarship on uneven and unequal development, instead, caution us against such Modernist assumptions. Indeed, linking the national and international organisations of labour was a certification clause in these INGOs’ constitutions. This “national sovereignty clause” effectively endowed the first national affiliate from a country with a veto power against further affiliations from that country.

Thus, I switched research methods and embarked on a journey into historical scholarship, new archival research and process tracing to understand the origins of that clause and the endowment of sovereign rights to the “first affiliate.” I so found that beneath today’s coordination and mobilization problems lies a liberal
internationalist order of labour-fragmenting norms and Cold War institutions of representation that were promoted by ITF leaders of the 1940s *purposely* when they found themselves in accord with the anti-communist preferences of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and saw reward in attracting that conservative but colossal affiliation market, replacing the ITF’s socialist goals with the AFL’s “free trade unionism” and revising the ITF’s constitution to achieve this end. Together AFL and ITF leaders proceeded to sabotage an historical effort by unionists around the world to build upon the Resistance culture of unity, promoting, first, a split in the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) to establish the Cold War emblem of “western” labour, the International Confederation of *Free* Trade Unions (ICFTU); and, then, splits in domestic union movements with a large communist component, often doing so in partnership with US government agencies. The new, small but “free” trade unions were thus internationally certified as representatives of national labour in the new and “free” international.

Using ethnographic data collected in nine OECD countries between 1999 and 2006, the first section of this paper identifies: (a) the coordination and mobilization challenges that the ITF/ETF leaderships encountered in the course of their Campaign; and (b) the mechanisms those leaderships devised and the identities they promoted to resolve the problems they faced, respectively across the intra-familial axis, referring to problems within and between the ITF and ETF, and the extra-familial axis, referring to the ITF/ETF’s impediments to coordinating action with the IDC. Most importantly, it (c) compares the nature of the problem resolving mechanisms and identities across the intra- and extra-familial axes. The last entailed the more onerous but vital coordination challenge, because the IDC held most of the large unions of southern Europe and the largest of two docker unions in Sweden. Founded in 2000 by docker unions supporting of the Liverpool Dockers’ Campaign (cf. Gentile 2010), the IDC’s affiliates had proved their mettle for mobilisation and the IDC was keen to do so again against the Directive. And yet sovereigns in the ITF/ETF from countries with competing unionism would not countenance any cooperation with it. In order to coordinate the campaign with the IDC, the ITF/ETF leaderships created new but time-consuming mechanisms designed to by-pass those sovereigns’ power.

In the second section of this paper, we enter the ITF’s archives to locate the origins and purpose of that debilitating sovereignty clause. When was it first instituted,
who anointed the first sovereign, how and why? The historical investigation brings us to a critical juncture of national and international history, WWII, when J. H. Oldenbroek, leader of the ITF, linked his organization to the transnationalising network of AFL cold warriors on a mission to spread the word of “[communist party] free trade unionism”. Oldenbroek willingly converted to the new gospel, reframing and reconstituting the ITF, and then undermining the nascent WFTU and new, Resistance-inspired unitary unions in southern Europe. The ITF’s new norms and institutions were internationalised and would prove resilient over time, cracking but not breaking during Détente between the USA and the USSR and following the latter’s collapse.

Finally, we return to the twenty-first century’s EU Campaign and take a closer look at the smaller southern European unions affiliated with the ITF/ETF and the one country there, Italy, in which all confederations were (now) affiliated but which did not mobilise for the EU Campaign. Analysis of this now long fragmented region and of an acrimonious exchange between the ITF and the Italians suggests the tendency towards a hierarchical stratification of INGO campaign goals and interests in favour of (northern) regions with greater representation.

Methodologically, this study is founded on the Contentious Politics program, conducting mechanism analysis and tracing small and large scale political change from the perspective of non-elite actors (Tilly and Tarrow 2007). But it also builds out from that program to draw upon the insights of Historical Institutionalism, focused on path dependency and critical junctures (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Lustik 1996; Thelen 2003); Critical International Relations, including World Systems Theory and Gramscian perspectives, attuned to the hegemonic orders that Tillyans tend to miss¹ (Amin 2006; Arrighi and Silver 1999; Cox 1987; Gill 1991; Rupert 1995); and postcolonial theories of sovereignty, which hone in on the hierarchical stratification of national sovereignty that emerges from imperial orders (Grovogui 2002, 2006).

The EU Directive Campaign
Early in 2001, the European Commission formally proposed a Directive on Market Access to Port Services (hereafter, the Directive), designed to foster the liberalization of port services and greater intra- and inter-port competition. The ITF Docks Section perceived the Directive as a threat to ports with union controlled labour pools. These tend to cluster in the “Northern Range”, from Hamburg to Le Havre. And the ITF was
particularly concerned about the Directive’s proposed introduction of “self-handling”, a practice whereby port users might avail themselves of seamen and potentially non-unionized labour to perform dockers’ work (Interviews: Rotterdam 2005). The ITF’s leadership interpreted self-handling as a threat to all European dockers’ unions and quickly initiated a campaign to ensure that, at best, the European Parliament would vote down the Directive, or, at least, remove references to this practice. For the moment, I note simply that, in so far as the abolishment of self-handling was the London-based ITF leadership’s goal, and that the Northern Range was seen as the necessary priority, the EU Campaign was a resounding success. In November 2003, following three years of industrial action, demonstrations, lobbying, and petitioning, the European Parliament rejected the Directive in toto.

But the cross-border coordination and mobilization of European dockers that eventually achieved that result was not linear. ITF campaign building was more contentious than has been suggested (cf. Turnbull 2006, 2010). There were three major axes of contention: first, between the London-based ITF secretariat and major affiliates, especially Germany; second, between the ITF secretariat and the Brussels-based ETF secretariat; and third, between the ETF/ITF and the IDC, a new docker INGO that represented docker unions that were not, in the main, affiliated to the ITF/ETF.

The two intra-familial axes of contention

Soon after the Directive’s launch, the London-based leadership of the ITF Docks Section called for days of action, instinctively marrying the EU campaign to the ITF’s Flags of Convenience (FOC) campaign. The FOC deploys a transnational network of ship inspectors, drawn from ITF dockers’ unions, to secure contracts for seamen whose employers register their ships in non-union countries (Lillie 2004). From London’s perspective, the FOC provided a successful model and an experienced network of inspectors. Moreover, that leadership thought, the ITF had the authority to initiate an EU Campaign because the Directive emanated from a supranational body rather than from national authorities (Interviews: Brussels 2005; Rotterdam 2005).

But this FOC-inspired approach was in stark contrast to that of the ITF’s nation-state based affiliates, each of which perceived varying degrees of threat. Affiliates
frequently wanted time to assess the domestic impact of the Directive and to meet with their “social partners” and politicians prior to any cross-border coordination. Thus the leadership of Germany’s Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft (Ver.di), approached German Members of Parliament (MPs), German Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and representatives of northern German states with ports, and then wrote a position paper to distribute to German MPs (Interviews: Berlin, Hamburg 2005). In assessing its situation, Ver.di’s position paper allowed room for a form of self-handling on condition that it complied with nationally authorized regulations. Such latitude on the issue of self-handling, however, guaranteed Ver.di a collision course with the ITF.

Tension peaked at the ETF Docks Section meeting of 20 November 2001, presided over by Ver.di’s national head, Manfred Rosenberg. The ITF feared that Ver.di’s paper would form the basis of ETF discussion and signal to the Commission that self-handling might be acceptable under certain circumstances. For their part, the ETF secretariat and other ETF/ITF affiliates objected to the ITF’s coupling of the EU Campaign with the FOC Campaign, which could potentially drown out the former and miss the key political targets, EU institutions and the European Parliament. Thus, in addition to the ITF/national affiliates axis, the ITF-ETF axis also came to the fore.

Throughout 2002, concerns about the ITF’s top-down approach were vociferously brought to the attention of the ITF’s General Secretary, David Cockroft—by the ETF, by Ver.di, and indeed by a rank and file delegation from the Belgische Transportarbeiders Bond (BTB) (Interviews: London, Brussels, Antwerp, Barcelona 2005). This last group was concerned: that campaign planning needed to be brought closer to the ground; that Antwerp was one of the Directive’s key targets and yet ITF coordination with Belgium had thus far been inadequate; that Europe’s largest port, Rotterdam, was not mobilizing and hence could break the campaign in its Northern Range epicentre; and, finally, that there was a yawning gap in the Northern Range net due to the fact that Le Havre, organized by the French CGT, was not an ITF.

The general secretaries of both the ITF and the ETF responded to the concerns, agreeing that there was a need to bring the campaign closer to the ground and to focus on EU institutional targets and events – a strategy more closely resembling Tarrow’s (2005) “New Transnationalism”, which emphasizes inter-national coordination designed to target supra-national institutions. They thus passed the baton for
campaign organizing to the ETF. This had several advantages: the ETF shared the ITF’s national affiliates in Europe; was based in Brussels, close to EU institutions; and was also a recognized participant in EU committees such as ECOSOC. But to access port-level union leaders, the newly reformed ETF needed additional grassroots support.

On the recommendation of the ETF General Secretary, Doro Zinke, the ITF head, David Cockroft, approached Ver.di docker and Hamburg Labour Pool Works Councillor Bernt Kamin in September 2002 (Interviews: Hamburg 2004; Brussels, London 2005). A docker with considerable leadership experience, including as chair of the Hamburg Labour Pool and leader of Ver.di’s Vertrauensleute, Kamin commanded the respect of dockers and works’ councillors in Germany as well as Ver.di’s leadership in Berlin; he had training in group dynamics; he was multilingual; and, as a German Communist Party activist, he had in the past participated in cross-border networking with French CGT activists (Interviews: Berlin, Brussels, Hamburg 2005; Hamburg 2004). Kamin was to liaise with Eduardo Chagas, the ETF’s new Docks Section Coordinator from Portugal, and, indeed, they were to complement each other: Chagas focused on organizing national and EU-level lobbying and Kamin focused on port-level network building along the Northern Range. For its part, the ITF was now to focus more on garnering international support for Europe’s dockers.

Abstracting the above analytical narrative, we can identify a combination of mechanisms that resolved the two intra-familial axes: routine organizational meetings; official correspondence; a direct rank and file appeal to senior office-bearers; responsive top leadership in each organization; multi-scaled organization; and a basic division of campaign labour across intra-familial INGOs. Critically for our purposes, I note that at the heart of these mechanisms lies direct and transparent channels of communication and mutual recognition. However, any hint of direct channels of communication and mutual recognition could not be invoked to resolve the EU Campaign’s third axis of coordination problems – the inter-familial axis, between the ETF/ITF and the IDC.

**The inter-familial axis and the national sovereignty clause**
The ITF/ETF versus IDC axis was the crucial axis to resolve, even in a campaign that privileged mobilisation in northern Europe: first, because the IDC contained France’s
CGT dockers who dominated the port of Le Havre in the Northern Range; and second, because the IDC contained the larger of the two port worker unions in Sweden, the Swedish Dockers’ Union (SDU), which represented most of the dockers in Gothenburg just north of the Range. A new organization, the IDC was prepared to recognize the ITF as a competitor-partner and invited the ITF early in the campaign to work jointly with it. But the ITF/ETF leaderships could not accept the invitation as they were effectively banned from engaging in bilateral relations with the IDC by ITF/ETF affiliates who had national competitors that were affiliated to the IDC.

With the notable exception of the North American west coast’s International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU), no IDC affiliate was also affiliated with the ITF. Some had not applied for affiliation and some, such as the SDU, who had signalled their attention to apply, had been effectively barred by their already affiliated national competitor. An ITF first affiliate’s power to exclude its domestic competitor from international certification does not derive from its size. In fact, the ITF port affiliate in countries with competing unionism is often the smaller union – in Sweden, Spain, Greece, France, and, until the 1970s, Italy. Rather that affiliate’s power derives from a clause in the ITF’s rules for affiliation which holds that:

Application for membership of the ITF shall be addressed to the General Secretary, who, after having received all appropriate information and after consulting other organisations of the same country already affiliated with the ITF, shall submit such application to the Executive Board, which shall have power to accept or reject it. (ITF Constitution: Membership and Obligations, Rule 2) [emphasis added]

Once instituted in a constitution, this clause becomes a powerful mechanism of deterrence from application. Current and past ITF general secretaries describe the ITF affiliation process as follows: A potential affiliate sounds out other national affiliates and/or the ITF Secretariat informally. Where an objection by a current national affiliate is signalled to the would-be applicant or to the ITF Secretariat, the application does not proceed, thereby saving all concerned the embarrassment of a public rejection (H. Lewis, emails to author 2006; Interviews: London 2005). While some first affiliates have historically chosen to share rather than to hoard their sovereign power, many have not. Among those who have not, domestic level vitriol rebounds onto the international level, such as to block even informal recognition of the competitor.
From the earliest days of the Campaign, the ITF/ETF leaderships were effectively barred from direct and official communication with the IDC by affiliates in Sweden and Spain, but also some in Latin America, each of whom had domestic competitors who were affiliated with the IDC. Such affiliates had led a consensus against cooperation with the IDC at various regional and international ITF meetings.²

“Brokerage” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007:215) was tried. One of the ITF’s most strategically powerful affiliates and lone duel affiliate, the ILWU, organized an International Solidarity Conference in Long Beach, USA in August of 2001 to muster support for it during difficult negotiations with its employer, and, in the process, to attempt to broker bilateral dialogue between the two INGOs. The ILWU’s effort succeeded in registering the two organizations’ appearance at that conference and their support for resolutions critical of the ILWU’s employers and the EU Directive, with the desired effect of instilling concern in employer associations. But in fact, the two INGO representatives at the meeting passed each other like ships in the night (Interviews: San Francisco 2003). They did not proceed to cooperate for the EU Campaign. Thus, not even brokerage, a cooperation and mobilisation expanding mechanism, proved effective in breaching the power of the clause because, I suggest, brokerage assumes recognition between two parties. Indeed, the ILWU’s conference prompted some sovereigns of labour to move motions to expel duel affiliates, including the ILWU, from the ITF.

At the 2002 ITF Congress in Vancouver, the General Secretary, David Cockroft, radically watered down proposals for the expulsion of dual affiliates, such as the ILWU, and condemnatory motions against the IDC, eventually achieving a motion that simply decried organizational division as a weakening of international docker solidarity. The final resolution read that the ITF:

CALLS ON all affiliates to do everything possible to avoid continuing divisions in the international organization of port workers.  
CALLS ON the Secretariat to widely distribute information on the work of its Dockers’ Section to all dockers’ unions worldwide.

But even this did not satisfy the opposition, such as that of the Swedish Transport Workers Union (STWU), whose rivalry with the SDU for sole right to the national port contract was long-standing and bitter. Prior to the motion going to print, Cockroft was
forced to delete the word “all” in the last paragraph and an unpublished postscript was added to the Congress minutes as follows:

The Secretariat has been asked and has agreed and promised not to send any information to a Dockers’ union in a particular country which is not affiliated to the ITF without consulting of and in agreement with the ITF affiliated Dockers’ Union in that particular country (ETF/ITF files, authenticity and events confirmed, Interviews, London ITF, 2005)

Such sovereign tenacity in countries with competing dockers’ unions threatened even a *simulation* of international unity. To stay with the case of Sweden: when the IDC-affiliated SDU heard about the ITF’s FOC/EU Day of Action, the SDU resolved to strike for two hours alongside the ITF’s STWU, despite the fact that the IDC had not called for the day. When, only weeks later, the IDC declared its own day of action against the Directive, the STWU did not return the favour (Interviews: Stockholm 2005). Instead, the leadership of the STWU’s dockers’ section issued a circular to STWU members declaring that the union would not participate in or sympathize with the actions taken by the SDU, concluding:

The decision at the same time means that the work duties that are normally performed by the Dockers’ Union, as directed by company management, should be performed by members of the Transport Workers Union. (Swedish Transport Workers’ Union Circular, No. 216/2001.)

In short, the circular was a direction to “scab” on striking SDU workers, a direction which, fortunately for the Campaign, the STWU’s rank and file disobeyed.

When the baton of Campaign organizing was passed to the ETF, countering the blocking of inter-INGO coordination by ITF/ETF sovereigns in countries with competing unionism became a priority.

**By-passing the national sovereignty clause**

In the months following the ETF’s November 2001 meeting, there was a change of campaign tactics that would experiment with creative new mechanisms designed to by-pass the power of the national sovereignty clause. Central to those by-pass mechanisms would be one I call, “hat-switching”, i.e., encouraging ITF affiliates to speak to IDC affiliates using an identity that pertained to another level of union organization, one that could not directly implicate them as pertaining to one or other
INGO. To operationalize that mechanism, however, a new mobilizing structure – an organizational container for the new identity – was also necessary.

To lay the groundwork, Kamin and Chagas first created a caucus of intra-family cross-border organizers in the Northern Range, consisting of the heads of the unions of Belgium and Germany, and a union activist from the difficult to mobilize, mega-port of Rotterdam, Niek Stam. This intra-familial caucus served to draw the Campaign closer to the ground, to encourage members to understand that each union faced different institutional limits and had different capacities to act, and to accept the deployment of a variety of performances in the labour repertoire that would nevertheless cause simultaneous cross-national disruption (Interviews: Hamburg 2005). ETF caucus members thus started running intra-familial information meetings at their ports.

Second, to begin the process of inter-familial linkage, the ETF caucus first mobilized its members’ language skills and political party networks. The ETF’s Belgian affiliate was to play a central role, because Belgium did not face the problem of competing unionism across the INGO divide, and its rank and file had already shown itself anxious to link up with Le Havre’s dockers. Thus, rank and file leader, Mark Loridan contacted Le Havre’s dockers and organized an unofficial meeting at Marseilles. There the delegates spoke to each other as dockers who represented their specific ports rather than as national unionists pertaining to an INGO (Interviews: Barcelona, London 2005). The success of this meeting inspired the ETF leadership.

Nevertheless, replicating this strategy of unofficial meetings at the ETF’s leadership level was hazardous. The IDC was led by Julian Garcia, head of Spain’s Coordinadora, and personal animosity between him and the leader of the ETF’s Spanish affiliate, the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) was at fever pitch. Thus the ETF and IDC general secretaries met secretly when chance found them in the same country. The secret meeting failed as the two leaders could not agree on how to address each other, i.e., which union/INGO “hat” to recognise in the other (Interviews: Barcelona, Brussels 2005). Paradoxically, it was the EU itself that permitted a resolution to the problem: Chagas found that hat-switching was effective in an institutionally brokered setting, i.e., EU-committee meetings, such as ECOSOC, to which both INGO leaders were invited and at which they could communicate directly as fellow members of the committee rather than as INGO leaders (Interviews: Brussels
Chagas and his IDC interlocutors were to take increasing advantage of this institutional opportunity as the Directive process passed through its various readings.

On the ground, however, where industrial action had to be coordinated, there was no ready-made structure that could sustain hat-switching over time. To build on the success of the Marseilles meeting, another secret meeting was tried, this time at an airport between the IDC’s Garcia and Teresa Alert, and the BTB/ETF’s Baete and Ver.di/ETF’s Kamin. Each donned his/her port-level hat so as to allow some distance from their INGO personas (Interviews: Hamburg 2004; Antwerp, Barcelona 2005). This meeting built some confidence between these individuals, but the plan still suffered from its secrecy and the related fear of ETF/ITF sovereigns, especially Spain’s UGT, should they come to know of it. The Chagas/Kamin caucus thus resolved to create a regional conference of port workers, i.e., a new and contingent mobilising structure, one which could be convened in a country that did not suffer the INGO divide. The caucus called for a “Northern Range Conference” to be held in Antwerp, and BTB head Bob Baete issued invitations to other union leaders to attend the regional conference as representatives of their ports. Hat-switching would now deliver in a sustained manner at the grassroots level too.

At that first Northern Range Conference of 15 November, 2002, Le Havre’s CGT dockers attended, and openly strategized with their port-level counterparts in ETF unions. IDC Eurozone Meeting minutes show that IDC affiliates had authorized Le Havre’s dockers to be the connector between the two groups of affiliates; and the Conference minutes clearly indicate that all the unionists present were there as unionized port representatives, not as affiliates of an INGO. Nevertheless, each attendee tacitly welcomed the fact that each representative would report back to their INGO and so ensure the coordination of action and unity of message across the INGO divide (Interviews: Hamburg 2004; Brussels, Antwerp, Barcelona, Stockholm 2005).

Hat-switching and port-level regional conferencing, conducted in a country with no competing unionism across the INGO divide, allowed national unionists to agree to lobby national and EU officials and to engage in coordinated disruption during Euro action days/weeks that would, in turn, coincide with key meetings of the Commission, the EU Parliament, and the Council of Transport Ministers. Thus ensued the concerted lobbying of national transport ministers and MEPs; a major demonstration in Brussels in February 2003 in time for the meeting of the EU Transport Committee; and, in
March 2003, industrial action across Europe, featuring a variety of performances from the labour repertoire, in tandem with a Euro-demonstration in Strasbourg in time for the European Parliament’s second reading of the Directive. That Euro-demonstration saw the ETF/ITF’s Belgian and the IDC’s Spanish and French affiliates protesting in unison and helped force the EU Parliament to recommend amendments that the ETF, the IDC and their affiliates all saw as “an acceptable compromise” (Interviews: Brussels, Barcelona, Stockholm 2005).

In response to this docker victory, the EU Commission launched a conciliation procedure that could have led to the use of the its power to reject any and all of the Parliament’s amendments. In counter-response, the caucus called for a second Northern Range Conference, held in Antwerp on 27 June 2003, where the hat-switching ETF and IDC affiliates turned their joint attention to the ETF’s mega-Rotterdam, where little mobilization had occurred. At this conference, Niek Stam proposed that a Northern Range conference be held in Rotterdam itself so as to induce Dutch dockers and their works councillors to attend, hear and speak about the Directive, and eventually obtain their backing for industrial actions and demonstrations (Interview: Rotterdam, 2005). Indeed, at the 1 September Northern Range Conference in Rotterdam, many Dutchmen attended and agreed enthusiastically to host a demonstration in Rotterdam, while the IDC affiliates started planning a simultaneous demonstration by the IDC in Barcelona.

And thus it was that, at the 3 November Euro-demonstration, mainly ETF/ITF affiliates plus the IDC’s CGT dockers mobilized in the thousands in Rotterdam, and mainly IDC affiliates mobilized in the thousands in Barcelona in what appeared to employers, politicians and the general public alike as formal docker unity across the INGO divide. When the EU Parliament met to vote on the Directive on 29 November 2003, the Directive was voted down—narrowly, but definitely down.

Thus to return to our comparison of the mechanisms that resolved the ITF/ETF’s coordination and mobilization problems: With respect to the intra-familial challenges, the ETF/ITF’s general secretaries responded to organizationally channelled complaints and rank and file grievances about the London-based strategy and passed the baton of strategizing to the ETF leadership in Brussels. The ETF changed the campaign’s course from a top-down transnational strategy to one that recognised nationally diverse performances and capacity, and it established a new grass-roots
caucus. Mutual recognition and institutionalized communication channels were key to coordination.

With respect to the inter-familial problems, on the other hand, at the heart of which lay the power of the national sovereignty clause, the ETF/ITF was forced to devise more creative but also more resource-consuming means. It in fact hat-switched in order to avoid its INGO Self, and created/appropriated organizational settings to accommodate the new identities: At the leadership level, the ETF availed itself of the opportunities offered by an EU institution to converse with IDC leaders as members of that EU institution; and at the rank and file level, where there was no ready-made mobilising structure to accommodate a new hat, the ETF caucus created regional conferences (convened in countries that did not have split unions) at which affiliates of both INGOs could speak to each other as port level representatives.

**Searching for the origins of labour INGO dualism**

The unity of action that was constructed across the INGO divide is not to be taken for granted. Its construction consumed considerable energy and time – over almost two years – all because of the power that one constitutional clause endowed select affiliates. We must ask: What are the origins of the ITF/ETF’s national sovereignty clause? And how might we explain the fact that, in the countries where there are competing national unions, the ETF/ITF’s sovereign tends to be the smaller of those countries’ port unions? Further, we know that: split unionism is more prevalent in southern Europe; the minority unions in southern Europe tend to be social democratic unions, whereas the larger unions there tend to have communist or Anarchist origins; and the majority of the ETF/ITF’s affiliates all over Europe are social democratic unions.

A clue to the origins of the national sovereignty clause is that it first appeared in the ITF’s constitution in 1946. Prior to that, the ITF had operated under a constitution dating from 1920 that merely stated:

The affiliation to the I.T.F. shall be effected through the Executive Committee, after application in writing and after recognition of the duties which the Federation imposes. Should well-founded objections be raised to the affiliation of any organization, the admittance of such organization may be refused or revoked. (Rules VI and VII, Report of the proceedings to the ITF’s Ninth Congress, Christiana, March 1920)
In this rule no priority of consultation was accorded to any potential appellant, whether from the same national state or not. Even though objections would more likely have emanated from a union in the existing country—given the familiarity, alliances and antagonisms that domestic interaction ensures—this is not indicated. Instead, the post-1946 ruling grants an existing affiliate a privileged right to consultation and agreement before another from that country may be admitted.

The first appearance of this clause immediately following WWII pulls us towards a most contentious critical juncture of world history that began with the anti-fascist union of socialist, communist and denominational unions. Whereas the Second and Third Internationals had frequently erupted in enmity in the 1920s and 1930s, differences were largely put aside in Europe during WWII to fight Nazism. This produced the Resistance culture from which emerged the cross-ideological WFTU in 1945 – a historical moment that was brought to a bitter end in 1949. Our question, however, is whether the national sovereignty clause’s appearance at this time was a random co-occurrence or an associated one.

The US Hegemonic Origins of the National Sovereignty Clause
Historians of labour and the Cold War in Europe, Africa and South America strongly testify to Katzenstein’s and Huntington’s assertions, cited at the start of this paper. US societal forces were major agents of the projection and construction of US hegemony – specifically, leaders of the AFL, such as those who founded and ran the Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC)—David Dubinsky, Matthew Woll, William Green and Jay Lovestone—and allied immigrant labour networks (cf. Carew 1984, 1987; Filippelli 1989, 1992; Romero 1992; Waters and van Goethem 2013; Weiler 1981, 1988; Welch 1995; Wilford 2002, 2003;). But historians rarely note that some non-American agents of labour actively sought US society so as to embed themselves in networks there and then emulated their norms. Those agents included INGO leaders, first among whom was the ITF’s.

J. H. Oldenbroek assumed effective control of the socialist ITF soon after the outbreak of WWII when the ITF’s long-standing Dutch general secretary Edo Fimmen, fell ill. Where socialist Fimmen had long sought to create a world federation of unions based on a fusion of confederal and industrial organizations, not unlike that proposed after WWII by the WFTU; and where Fimmen looked both eastwards and westwards
for new affiliates so as to bridge the socialist-communist divide (cf. Fimmen1924),
social democratic Oldenbroek sought ITF expansion westward across the Atlantic and
neglected the east. Indeed, as is well known, backed by the anti-communist leadership
of the AFL, Oldenbroek was later to become the ICFTU’s first General Secretary (cf.
Weiler 1981). But what is little known is that Oldenbroek was not a coincidental ally,
nor a late associate of the FTUC; he began a quest for an alliance with AFL leaders
during WWII, indeed, even before the US joined the war.

The ITF’s archives indicate that Oldenbroek was keen to tap into the American
affiliation market, but he was not simply driven by Michelsian concerns for “ITF
autonomy” from the post-war WFTU, as argued by Lewis (2003). Rather, Oldenbroek
held a deep antipathy for communist organizations and sought like-minded allies, first
and foremost among the AFL’s cold warriors during WWII and long before rumours of
a new east-west international organisation were whispered. When, in 1940, the ITF
decided to simply “explore the possibilities of expansion in [the USA]” but did not
stipulate a US confederation to pursue, Oldenbroek went beyond his mandate and
cut off the option of affiliation from the CIO. Permitting him that latitude were wartime
conditions that precluded routine checks and balances by ITF councils such as the
Executive Committee or Congress, which could not convene as most unionists were
now soldier/citizens at war. But Oldenbroek did not even consult his full Management
Committee, the only functioning war-time committee.

First, in September 1940, in the middle of the vitriolic war between the AFL and
CIO, Oldenbroek took it upon himself to write to Harry Lundeberg, leader of the AFL-
affiliated Seamen’s International Union (SIU) to express sympathy with the SIU in its
dispute with the CIO’s National Maritime Union. Then, in December 1941, during his
trip to North America as a Dutch delegate to the ILO, Oldenbroek sought out and held
discussions with Green, Woll and the AFL’s ILO representative, Robert Watt, as well as
with Lundeberg. Writing back to his deputy in London, Tofahrn, he concluded that:

[the CIO transport unions are] ‘suspectively radical’, the AFL - CIO situation
‘fairly complicated, and we of the I.T.F. would therefore be wise to stick to the
A.F. of L. I have done this by putting myself on good terms with Green, Watt
and Woll. I have won Matthew Woll for my plans. Next Monday he will present a
memorandum I have prepared to a Council meeting of the A.F. of L...’

The SIU affiliated in 1942. According to a letter of complaint that Tofahrn sent
John Marchbank, chair of the Management Committee, Oldenbroek and Lundeberg:
concluded an agreement without precedent [sic] in the annals of the ITF, namely that after affiliation a conference shall be called to harmonize the policies of the ITF and of the [SIU].” [emphasis added]

But Marchbank too was keen on westward expansion. During a tour organized by the ITF’s just-launched New York office, Marchbank was scheduled to entertain the heads of the AFL and TUC, and he contacted and received funds from the New York Labor Chest, which was dominated by New York-based David Dubinsky.

The American transport unions were nevertheless to take many years to entice, both those of the AFL and the autonomous but nevertheless conservative railway unions (cf. Lewis 2003). For, early in 1943, European unions, including some national leaders within the International Federation of Trade Unions, started discussing the possibility of dissolving that organisation and creating a new international organisation in the cross-ideological spirit of the Resistance, one that would also include the CIO in the west, and the Soviets in the east. Under such conditions, no AFL and railway union would join the ITF. The ALF baulked at the suggestion of an east-west bridging international, while Oldenbroek launched an effort to “harmonize” ITF policies with the AFL’s. I note that, by this time, Oldenbroek and Omer Becu, manager of the ITF office the two established in New York in May 1941 in part so as to better access the Americans, were well ensconced in the AFL’s New York based circles.

Oldenbroek drafted a document on the reconstitution of European trade unionism for his Management Committee and presented a fuller version to the first wartime meeting of the ITF’s Executive Committee and General Council in November 1944. Under the sub-headings, “Not only European” and “Conditions of Admission,” Oldenbroek made clear that it was time to jettison European ideological traditions, specifically socialism, if the ITF were to expand into the USA. He proposed instead that the ITF adopt the “Principles of Free Trade Unionism.” Having given the committee only lunch-time to read the document, and following only a few suspicious questions from the French CGT representative, Garcias, the document was accepted, thus instigating a normative revolution and massive “frame alignment” (Snow, Rochford, Worden and Benford 1986) away from the ITF’s longstanding critique of capitalism and socialist goals. It bears noting that, across the Atlantic, in that same month of November 1944, Oldenbroek’s old Labor Chest friends in the AFL led their interventions at the AFL national convention in Orleans with a motion to create (turn
themselves into) the “Free Trade Union Committee” to promote an offensive against “communism” in the labor movement. The motion was passed.

In February 1945 the World Trade Union Conference was held and proclaimed that the constituent conference of the WFTU would be held in September 1945 in Paris. One month later, in March 1945, Oldenbroek announced to his Management Committee that the ITF should design a new constitution and convene its Congress.\(^{18}\) To objections, largely again from the CGT’s Garcias, that such measures contradicted efforts to construct the WFTU and to incorporate the international trade secretariats as WFTU trade departments, Oldenbroek silenced his critics by referring them to a 1938 ITF Convention call for the revision of the ITF’s constitution.\(^{19}\) The drafters of the constitution would be Tofahrn and Oldenbroek.\(^{20}\)

The ITF Congress met in Zurich in May 1946, Oldenbroek's above mentioned policy document was presented and accepted, and a new constitution was passed to help the process of harmonising the ITF with the AFL and, now, to also lay the ground for resisting the ITF’s incorporation into WFTU. The new constitution introduced a dissolution clause that required a large majority vote at yet another bi-yearly congress before the ITF could be dissolved and incorporated into the WFTU.\(^{21}\) This clause bought him two years of time, during which he engaged in an intense recruitment campaign among colonial and South American unions, many of them small, in order to stack the eventual ITF vote against a decision to integrate with the WFTU.

But Oldenbroek’s 1944 policy paper included another significant element, one that introduced less a principle of the AFL and more one of social democratic unions in Benelux countries. In a section headed, “What about Denominational Organizations?” Oldenbroek made very clear that he was strongly opposed to opening the ITF to another branch of unions that the WFTU-proposers were looking to include: “Catholic and Protestant” unions. Minutes of the EC/MC meeting of 1944 and subsequent meetings, culminating in the 1946 Congress and its Constitutional Committee, show that the “no admission to denominational unions” case was supported forcefully and vociferously by the Belgian and Dutch delegates. With Oldenbroek, these saw denominational unions as established years earlier to break the strikes of social democratic unions.\(^{22}\) Following considerable debate at the 1944 meeting, during which French and British unionists inclined towards including denominational unions, the
Belgians proposed a solution that marks the first suggestion of our national sovereignty clause:

De Witte [Belgium]: Appreciating that the situation might differ from one country to another, he would suggest that affiliation could only take place with the agreement of the affiliated national organization concerned.23

The meeting eventually resolved to reject denominational unions *a priori*, hence eliminating the need for a conditional clause. However, the sovereignty clause was again raised in the course of debates on amendments to the draft constitution at the 3 May 1946 Executive meeting and later that month during the Congress. Oldenbroek’s draft had concentrated the power to admit new affiliates in the hands of the Executive; but when a Finnish amendment proposed that admission be a WFTU-compatible condition, ie by making membership of a national confederation a prerequisite for application, the matter was referred to a constitutional committee.24 Composed of ITF delegates from Belgium, France, Britain, Denmark, Austria and Holland, this committee decided in favour of a proposal by the Belgian delegate whereby the EC would take its cue from the existing affiliate of the same country.

And so it happened that, at the 1946 ITF Congress, Oldenbroek and the Belgian and Dutch ITF delegates led the way to establishing a social democratic veto against the admission of Christian and any other competing national unions to the ITF.

The ITF was the first post-WWII labour INGO to introduce the national sovereignty clause, but its leadership and Belgian and Dutch associates also promoted its internationalization. The announcement of the Marshall Plan in mid-1947 provided both Oldenbroek and the FTUC with the opportunity to split the WFTU and to create the communist-free ICFTU. Who was or was not to be invited to the constituent meeting was critical. First, the July 1949 preparatory meeting determined that no communist union would be invited by definition and new norm, i.e., they were not “free” trade unions.25 Second, backed by Luxembourg, Denmark, and Switzerland, the Dutch and Belgian participants again insisted on and won a stipulation that no Christian union would be invited to the constituent conference unless the existing “secular” (read social democratic) union of a country agreed.26 These countries’ affiliates in turn each refused to allow their Christian competitors an invitation. Only the AFL’s newly created *Force Ouvriere* in France permitted its Christian counterpart to attend, as the AFL’s main concern was to build as large an anti-communist
organization as possible, while the AFL’s newly created Libera CGIL in Italy, a largely Catholic break-away from the unitary CGIL, was in the throes of spinning the fiction that it was neither Catholic nor associated with the Christian Democrats, but was rather – and proudly – the union closest to the AFL’s ideal of apolitical unionism (cf. Gentile 2014).

The ICFTU’s constituent conference of December 1949 again split over the religion issue: Many unions agreed with the AFL that Christian union might be permitted to join if they also agreed to withdraw from their own INGO, the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions Christian (IFCTU), which they did not. Others held tenaciously to Christians’ a priori exclusion. The solution found was, again, to make consultation with existing affiliates (i.e., those non-communists invited to the constituent assembly) a constitutional clause. Indeed, the ICFTU’s sovereignty clause was strengthened by comparison to the ITF’s blueprint: To the Belgians’ stipulation of “consultation” with the existing affiliate, the AFL added “and agreement”.27

**Fragmenting European Labour Sovereignty and Path Dependency**

Introducing international institutions of representation and certification premised on union division was not the post-war ITF leadership’s only negative legacy to its current day descendants. It also participated in the fragmentation of Resistance-formed unitary unions, especially in southern Europe, where these contained large components of communists. Historians have documented the role of the FTUC in splitting unions in non-dictatorship southern Europe, the alliances it formed with the US State Department and intelligence agencies following the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, and the financial and organisational resources it obtained from the US government and Marshall Plan bodies as it strove to create “free” trade unions (Carew 1984, 1987; Filippelli 1989, 1992; Romero 1992; Weiler 1981). But what is little known is that the ITF was also an active participant in these activities and even began ahead of the war’s end. These activities resurrected old ideological boundaries at the national level and, after the war, helped supply new sovereigns to the ITF and ICFTU.

First, following the establishment of the ITF’s New York office in May 1941, Omer Becu and Oldenbroek evolved into close collaborators of the Labor Desk of the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA. A new wartime creation headed by William Donovan and Arthur Goldberg, the OSS Labor Desk’s brief
was to gather intelligence from, channel funds to, and engage in military operations through non-communist workers and underground unionists in Europe. Transport workers and unionists were of particular military-strategic value to wartime efforts and the ITF’s long track record in resistance activities in both this war and in the Spanish Civil War held it in good stead. Brokering the connection between Oldenbroek and the OSS was the AFL’s Jay Lovestone, who provided Goldberg with a letter of introduction to Oldenbroek when Goldberg visited London in September 1942 to establish an OSS Labor Desk there (Van Goethem 2006: 264). The ITF would now engage in “real joint action” (Van Goethem 2006: 263) with the OSS – on a strictly sectarian basis that would deprive the ITF of the cross-ideological cooperation that national underground movements in Europe were now finding imperative. Thus, for instance, the ITF and OSS resourced non-communist factions of the CGT in north Africa under Albert Guigui but not communist ones.28

Critically, as the Allies prepared to land in Sicily in 1943, Oldenbroek arranged with the OSS for ITF unionists to accompany the army up the peninsular. Among his aims were: to reach social democratic activists in France and Germany, and to make contact with Italian transport workers in liberated territory.29 Thus, early in 1944, double ITF/intelligence activists, Hans Jahn and Pier Paolo Fano, organised conferences of rail workers in Bari and Naples and succeeded in establishing a railway union in this southern part of the country. But what bears emphasising is that, during this process, they ignored those Resistance unionists in still occupied Italy – socialists, Catholics and communists – who were preparing to launch the unitary CGIL upon Rome’s liberation. As such, they engaged in a drawing and hardening of sectarian boundaries whereas the organised locals were struggling to soften them through Resistance alliances and the formation of a unitary confederation. When the CGIL was declared by the three ideological groupings, in the historic Pact of Rome of June 1944, the ITF’s new railway union was the only major industrial union in Italy to remain outside it.

Second, in the midst of the contentious lead-up to the founding of the ICFTU, Oldenbroek called for a conference of non-communist dockers and seafarers unions. Held in Rotterdam in August 1949, Oldenbroek led intensely red-baiting debates,30 from which emerged the ITF sanctioned, but ultimately FTUC controlled, Vigilance Committee against Communism in the Mediterranean. This committee sought to break
CGIL and CGT dock strikes in France, Italy and Greece against the shipment of Atlantic Pact arms and of French arms to Indochina. Its most notorious success – led by the FTUC’s now European representative, Irving Brown and funded by the CIA – was a violent episode of strike-breaking in Marseilles, using, in part, Corsican criminals (Carew 1998; Lewis 2004). Such activities were designed to weaken communist unions and to support and legitimise the fledging national docker and seafarer unions that were established by the FTUC and internationally certified by the ITF.

This cold war order of labour was long-lasting. Whereas the 1970s’ OPEC crisis and the strengthening of the European Community prompted Europe’s national confederations to create the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), which in turn led to many European confederations opening the door to their competing Christian confederation (cf. Gumbrell-McCormick 2013), Détente between the USA and USSR in the 1960s did not generate the same effect for communists or Anarchists. Italy was the notable exception when its sovereigns of labour, CISL and UIL, operating under novel conditions of domestic unity-in-action with the CGIL, fought to have CGIL admitted into the ETUC. They finally won the battle against “non-sovereign” objections by Germany’s DGB when the CGIL agreed to reduce its status in the WFTU to that of an “associate” (Archivio Storico CGIL, Roma). CGIL industrial unions subsequently joined European and trade secretariats such as the ITF.

The fall of the Berlin Wall signalled political opportunity for broader sovereign largesse, but, within the traumatised docker sector, the results were again less than optimal, sometimes due to spin-off effects from the ITF’s distant politics: The CGT affiliated with the ETUC and ICFTU, but its docker union did not affiliate with the ETF/ITF because of its collective memory of the ITF’s strikebreaking in Marseilles (Interviews: Barcelona 2005). On Spanish docks, the sovereign UGT dockers’ union eventually permitted entrance of the communist Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO) to the ETF/ITF on condition that the CC.OO would never allow in the larger, Anarchist inspired Coordinadora (Interviews: Barcelona 2005). As for Greece, even more fragmented than its southern European brethren – by a civil war, Truman Doctrine intervention, and FTUC activity – Greece was statistically ensured that few port unions would gain INGO certification.

It was no accident that these same, excluded unions were to found the IDC following their long support for the Liverpool Dockers Campaign of 1995-8 and the
ITF’s belated and limited support for that historic campaign (Gentile 2010). As the orphans of a past bifurcation of labour in INGOs they had nowhere to go, but the experience of a common struggle brought them together into a new organisation. Indeed, even the Portuguese dockers’ union which, unusually for southern Europe, was a social democratic union with no major communist competitor in the port sector, left its affiliation with the ITF in abeyance following an ITF Conference in Miami in 1997: At that conference, the Liverpool Dockers and some of their non-affiliated supporters had been invited to argue the case for supporting their campaign; but when the leader of Spain’s Coordinadora, Garcia, tried to enter the meeting room, the sovereign UGT’s representative physically barred his entrance. Repulsed by this rejection of its major regional partner, the Portuguese leadership stopped attending ITF functions and joined the IDC (Interviews: Barcelona 2005; Brussels 2006).

But what of the IDC’s key Scandinavian affiliate, the SDU, established only in the early 1970s, long after the Cold War? The SDU’s origins were strictly domestic. For thirty years the STWU’s dockers had engaged in rank and file revolts against their then notoriously corrupt leadership, culminating in separation in 1972 (Gentile 2006). The rebels established the SDU, which quickly grew to represent just over half of Sweden’s dockers. But when, in 1974, the SDU leadership signalled to the ITF its intention to apply for affiliation, it was informed that the STWU would not allow it in. The still in place national sovereignty clause ensured that there was a mechanism available that could generate a new generation of exclusions.

Thus, the SDU too became a founder of the IDC and one of the key unions that today’s ITF/ETF had to hat-switch for in order to conduct its docker campaign.

**Back to the EU Campaign: Missing Italy in the ITF’s absent southern Europe.**

But what of ITF sovereigns in countries with split unionism, especially in the region of sovereign fragmentation par excellence, southern Europe? How, apart from blocking coordination across the inter-familial divide, did they contribute to the Campaign? In fact, no southern European ETF/ITF affiliate mobilized to any great extent during the EU Campaign, in part because most were too small and lacked the capacity to, and in part due to competitive vitriol. In Spain, the CC.OO dockers lobbied in Brussels and petitioned in Spain, but the also small UGT dockers’ union refused to engage in a campaign that the Coordinadora was also fighting in (Interviews: Barcelona 2005).
Greece’s ITF affiliates were resource poor and did not yet use email, so they missed some of the ETF’s news and reacted belatedly to the rest (Interviews: Brussels 2005). But it was the non-mobilisation of Italy that requires special analysis. As we saw above, in Italy all three competing confederations were now affiliated to the ITF, so neither size nor domestic competition are relevant.

The immediate reason for Italian unions’ lack of mobilization was, much like that of the German affiliate early in the Campaign, an openness to “self-handling” if subordinated to other principles such as contractual rights, training, and health and safety; but unlike the German case, the INGOs made little effort to understand and address its situation. In fact, the Italian unions were already familiar with self-handling, because it already existed in Italian law. Italian port unions had just emerged from 20 years of government-led reforms in response to a loss of port trade to northern European ports. The reforms privatized dock work, which had been controlled by docker cooperatives, the compagnie portuale; they forced the beleaguered compagnie to reduce their number and convert into private labour pools; they created new workforces pertaining to new terminal operators; and they introduced self-handling. The battles over the reforms were intense, especially in Genova. But through struggle, the unions’ paradoxically re-directed the reform process such as to empower the national unions and even won Italy’s first national port workers’ contract, the right to represent the new terminal workers and the right to a seat on port authorities. The new law (L.84–94) had introduced self-handling in principle, but Italian unions had achieved its curtailment in practice. Its application was made conditional on the use of a professionally trained and specifically dedicated workforce that was guaranteed standard payments. As such, according to Italian unionists, seamen, by definition, could not easily be passed off as a “specifically dedicated” port workforce (Interviews: Rome, Piacenza, Livorno 2005).

During the EU Campaign itself, Italy’s transport unions were participating in the confederations’ Articolo 18 campaign, which mobilized record numbers of workers and citizens against the Berlusconi government’s proposed abolition of the job protection clause of Italy’s Workers’ Statute. Transport unionists held that diverting resources to the EU campaign was difficult, but nor did the ITF’s slogan – “No Self-handling!” – offer them room to conjoin the two campaigns through frame bridging (Interviews: Rome 2005, 2006). According to Italian unionists, had they supported the campaign’s
a priori rejection of self-handling, they would have risked the government re-launching the reform process and unravelling the delicate tapestry they had laboriously woven.

The Italian confederations tried to explain their situation to the ITF at one mid-campaign meeting, but they found little openness to their contribution and dilemmas (Interviews: Hamburg 2005; Italy 2007). Indeed, some northern European special caucus members simply wrote off Italians during their interviews with me as people who spoke “at length but said nothing” if not something convoluted as opposed to a Finnish delegate at the same meeting whose contribution, one interviewee relayed with admiration, was “a short and sweet ‘I agree’” with a motion (Interviews: Hamburg 2004, 2005). There was little patience for complexity and nuance at those general meetings, especially when Italy had no major southern European union partner in the fora with whom to press discussions of uneven regional development.

No special mechanisms were designed to understand and address Italy’s position, as had instead been the case for Germany, and no “southern Range conference” was conceived of. The campaign’s first London-based organisers and their advisors, noting the Directive’s apparent targeting of the north-western corner of Europe, proceeded to focus the campaign on this epicentre rather than to explore how the Directive might have contradictory effects among regions of labour.

The Italians resolved to limit their dissent within the ETF/ITF and to tread a tightrope in their communications with politicians. For example, in March 2003, in response to ETF requests to affiliates to lobby their ministers, they sent letters to Italian and EU parliamentarians revealing a concerted effort to both protect their own new reality and to express their solidarity with the ETF/ITF campaign at the same time. Assisting their effort was the fact that the ETF/ITF had just viewed the Parliament’s amendments to the Directive an acceptable compromise. But this moment of confluence and potential bridge-building did not withstand the Commission’s “conciliation” phase and the INGOs’ subsequent intensification of the campaign...

In the days leading up to the EU Parliament’s final vote on the Directive, the ITF distributed a leaflet with “10 good reasons to oppose the Directive” to all MEPs, listing the names of all its affiliates, including the three Italian unions. The Italians had stopped attending ETF/ITF meetings, because they had felt “the lone wolf,” and were thus unaware of the publication of the “10 good reasons” (Interviews: Rome 2005). Those “10 good reasons” included specifics which, the Italians held, they could not
have supported openly. Armed with the leaflet, a Christian democratic Italian MEP, Luigi Cocilovo, emailed the ITF, accusing it of distributing false information and *claiming* that the Italians’ position constituted a recommendation to vote for the Directive. The ITF’s Dock Section in London relayed the incident in writing to all three Italian unions, stating that if the politician’s contention was correct, it represented a breach of solidarity with other European unions and stood Italian unions side by side with Italian ship owners. The tone of the letter was condescending and reprimanding, and it even cited Belgium as a country that did not likely face a threat from the Directive and yet was at the forefront of activities – whereas, as we saw earlier, Belgium unions were indeed a target of the Directive and had great incentive to act.

Infuriated, the national secretaries of all three Italian unions – both old and recent sovereigns – jointly replied the next day, 13 November 2003, stating that Italy’s position had been made clear at a meeting in Barcelona and in writing, and that it was precisely out of solidarity with and respect for the ITF that they had not publicized their dissent, limiting themselves instead to communicating their difference to the ITF and to not joining the ITF’s actions. The unions’ letter ended by noting the ITF’s unauthorized use of their names on the leaflets distributed to MEPs, an act, the authors stated, that rendered in vain their efforts to be discreet. Nevertheless, soon after, the unions wrote to Italian MEPs and copied the letter to the ETF’s Chagas, repeating that the Directive did not alter the current reality in Italy, but that they understood the ETF’s concerns about the Directive’s potential impact in other countries. As such, the letter maintained, the Italians’ view should be considered as distinct from that of others, who in turn, were exercising their autonomy responsibly. Whereas the Italian unions’ written communications to Italian MEPs had made no recommendation as to how to vote in the European Parliament, FILT-CGIL representatives now spoke with some parliamentarians close to them and explicitly recommended abstention (Interviews: Rome, Piacenza 2005).

The entire episode was poisonous for ITF-Italian affiliate relations, especially for the ITF’s relations with the larger, more recent affiliate, FILT-CGIL. The closure to a consideration of Italy’s problems of northern competition, followed by a bumptious letter at the end of the campaign, pushed it further from the ITF.
The year following the EU Campaign, the more conciliatory ETF sent Chagas to Italy to extend an olive branch to FILT and attend its congress. For their part, FILT leaders could not recall similar effort to get to know their union, while, for his part, Chagas returned to Brussels “astounded” by the “sophisticated and highly political nature” of the congress debates he had witnessed, a unique experience over his career as a unionist and ETF official, he held (Interview: Chagas, Brussels, 2006). That noted, a comparative regional optic suggests that the communication problems between the ITF/ETF and its Italian affiliates are emblematic of a region with a low level of representation in the ITF/ETF, a region now so fragmented within and between borders, that it escapes the special-effort processes of coordination and the mechanism invention that the best of the EU Campaign demonstrated in abundance.

To put the problem of southern Europe in counterfactual terms: Had the ITF’s political and institutional choices been otherwise long ago such as to support rather than to split unitary unions in southern Europe, and to privilege labour internationalism over cold wars, there would have been far less union fragmentation within and across southern European countries and more open clauses of certification. Consequently, not only would the ITF/ETF not have experienced the high risk, high resource consuming need to create special mechanisms designed to by-pass the power of select national sovereigns in order to engage in inter-familial coordination with the IDC; but the campaign’s organizers might have seen the need to promote a southern-based caucus and conference in addition to the northern caucus and North Range Conference. At such a point, the discrepancies in interest and threat across these regions might have become apparent, and more universal principles, frames, priorities and goals constructed.

Where to for theories of labour contention?
This exposé of a current day transnational campaign’s coordination and mobilization problems, the identification of the constitutional clause that lay at the heart of the more difficult problem of coordinating action across two families of INGOs in the same sector (the ITF/ETF and the IDC), and that clause’s tracing back to a critical juncture that saw labour INGO and US union leaders participating in the construction of a pro-US Cold War order of labour, shows that the US hegemonic order was inscribed in the ITF/ETF’s very fabric. Today’s ETF/ITF leadership was hoist with a petard created by
its 1940s leadership. Historically speaking, the ITF/ETF as organisations were not independent of the EU Campaign’s coordination problems, nor of domestic and international level competing unionism, and nor of the fragmented sovereignty of southern Europe. The leaderships’ resort to hat-switching to disguise the INGOs’ hegemonic Self, and their creation of an alternative transnationally-linked port-level structure that could accommodate a new identity worked well in unlocking that hegemonic order and contributed mightily to the EU Campaign’s success; but it was innovation contingent on that leadership and was resource intensive. Short of a radical revision of the constitution, or of a concerted effort to amalgamate the competing INGOs into a new organization, such Self-avoidance efforts will remain contingent on each campaign’s leadership and consume significant resources.

Theoretically, however, this study encourages us to develop a theory of labour contention and hegemony, one that scrutinises the structural role and the norm-setting power of the US labour movement and labour INGOs. As Arrighian world systems theory and Gramscian international relations scholars suggest, hegemonic states typically project values and create international institutions that conform with their own self-image, and thus each hegemon creates a “new modernity” from such projections (Arrighi 1996; Rupert 1995; Taylor 2002; Wallerstein 2002). Under the current hegemonic order, this was no less the case for the bloc of social forces that formed transnationally through and even with the US state. This transnational network projected the image and preferences of the hegemonic state’s own labour movement, and it promoted more hegemonic friendly unions by struggling, first, to delegitimize domestic unions -- both within and outside the USA -- with more counter-hegemonic images of labour internationalism, and then to certify them internationally as sovereign representatives of their national workers.

But this study also encourages us to look closely into that most critical of all junctures – war – and its effect on worker and union identities and goals. Tilly was famed not only for his work on contention, but also for his work on war and state-building (Tilly 1985, 1992). But this did not distinguish hegemonic from non-hegemonic states and society, as it did not tie war to contention tightly (but see Tarrow 2015). These tasks lie before us.
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1 cf. Gentile, 2011 for the neglect of hegemons, hegemony and political parties in Tilly’s polity model.


3 Translated from the original Swedish by Dr. Hanna Baeck, Mannheim University.

4 The STWU’s rank and file had been exposed to the SDU’s canteen discussion regarding the day of action and the two constructed common cause. But underlying the common cause was the historically shaped knowledge that the SDU’s dockers would have resisted any “line-crossing”, by resorting to the time-honoured performance from the docker repertoire of pushing line-crossers overboard.

5 IDC Eurozone Minutes 7/11/02 and 23/10/03.
uce that combines

1. Eduardo Chagas, ETF.

–

19 November 2003.


2. Rome


4. Directive, but could not recall recommendations being made to her by unionists, whether for or against the

5. former union official with CISL,

6. contact with Cocilovo himself. One Italian MEP from

7. FILT

8. of the amendments during the conciliation process would meet with European unions’ opposition.

9. Oldenbroek used the same refrain: MSS 159/1/3/54.

10. According to the ITF’s letter to the Italian unions, the Italian MEP maintained

11. that the Italians had recommended

12. “svolta da personale non

13. handling not be “svolta da personale non

14. MSS 159/1/3/54 ITF Executive Committee, January 1946, Zurich.

15. MSS 159/1/3/52 Minutes ITF EC/MC Meeting 24–26 November 1944; and MSS 159/1/85 ITF Report on

16. ITF Executive Committee, December 26 April 1942.


18. MSS 159/1/85 ITF Report on Activities and Financial Report Proceedings for the years 1938 to 1946;


22. MSS 331/88 (100) p.18 ICFTU.


25. MSS 331/88 (100) p.18 ICFTU.

26. The above mentioned postwar ITF representative of the CGT, Garcias, expressed repeated concern at post-war

27. Executive meetings about whom the ITF might have contributed funds to during the war and, prior to his leaving

28. MSS 238/IT/7/1 Letter Tofahrn to Marchbank 26 April 1942.

29. MSS 238/IT/7/1 Letter Tofahrn to Marchbank 26 April 1942.

30. MSS 159/1/3/54 ITF Executive Committee, January 1946, Zurich.

31. MSS 159/1/3/52 Minutes ITF EC/MC Meeting 24–26 November 1944; and MSS 159/1/85 ITF Report on

32. ITF Management Committee meeting 15 May 1943, London. MSS

33. ITF Management Committee meeting. March 1945. MSS

34. Even to objections from the social democratic British and Swiss delegates at the ITF Executive Council Meeting

35. of January 1946, stating that the drafting of a constitution contradicted the new reality that was the WFTU,

36. Oldenbroek used the same refrain: MSS 159/1/3/54.

37. MSS 238/IT/7/1 Letter Tofahrn to Marchbank 26 April 1942.

38. MSS 159/1/1/13. MSS 238/IT/7/1 Letter Tofahrn to Marchbank 26 April 1942.


40. MSS 159/1/3/52 Letter Tofahrn to Marchbank 26 April 1942.


42. 159/1/185 ITF Congress Proceedings 1946 Zurich. For the history of the “Chest” and Dubinsky’s International


44. ITF Management Committee and General Council, November 1944.

45. The CGT was a unitary organization at this time, and though the transport leader traditionally sent to the ITF had

46. been a socialist, this meeting saw the entrance of Garcias, a French Resistance hero and a leader of the CGT’s

47. communist wing.

48. ITF Management Committee meeting, March 1945. MSS

49. Even to objections from the social democratic British and Swiss delegates at the ITF Executive Council Meeting

50. of January 1946, stating that the drafting of a constitution contradicted the new reality that was the WFTU,

51. Oldenbroek used the same refrain: MSS 159/1/3/54.


53. MSS 159/1/3/54 ITF Executive Committee, January 1946, Zurich.

54. MSS 159/1/3/52 Minutes ITF EC/MC Meeting 24–26 November 1944; and MSS 159/1/85 ITF Report on


57. MSS 159/1/85 ITF Report on Activities and Financial Report Proceedings for the years 1938 to 1946:


60. 26 MSS 292919.11-p.3 Preparatory International Trade Union Committee, July 1949, London.

61. 27 MSS 331/88 (100) p.18 ICFTU.

62. The above mentioned postwar ITF representative of the CGT, Garcias, expressed repeated concern at post-war

63. executive meetings about whom the ITF might have contributed funds to during the war and, prior to his leaving

64. the ITF during the break-up of WFTU, Garcias sent Oldenbroek a stinging rebuke for his divisiveness from the war

65. onwards. MSS

66. Author research in progress.

67. Cf. Joint International Dockers’ and Seafarers’ Conference, Rotterdam 26–30 August 1949. MSS 159/1/5/F/4


69. Letter to Pietro Lunardi, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, 25 March 2003 from M. Sommariva, FILT-

70. CGIL, Gianni Ursotti, FIT Trasporti.

71. The CGT was a unitary organization at this time, and though the transport leader traditionally sent to the ITF had

72. been a socialist, this meeting saw the entrance of Garcias, a French Resistance hero and a leader of the CGT’s

73. communist wing.

74. ITF Management Committee meeting, March 1945. MSS

75. Even to objections from the social democratic British and Swiss delegates at the ITF Executive Council Meeting

76. of January 1946, stating that the drafting of a constitution contradicted the new reality that was the WFTU,

77. Oldenbroek used the same refrain: MSS 159/1/3/54.