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Globalization and democratization: the response of the indigenous peoples of Sarawak

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ABSTRACT *Globalization is a multi-layered and dialectical process involving two consequent tendencies—homogenizing and particularizing—at the same time. The question of how and in what ways these contending forces operate in Sarawak and in Malaysia as a whole is therefore crucial in an effort to capture this dynamic. This article examines the impact of globalization on the democratization process and other domestic political activities of the indigenous peoples (IPs) of Sarawak. It shows how the democratization process can be an empowering one, thus enabling the actors to manage the effects of globalization in their lives. The conflict between the IPs and the state against the depletion of the tropical rainforest is manifested in the form of blockades and unlawful occupation of state land by the former as a form of resistance and protest. In some situations the federal and state governments have treated this action as a serious global issue between the international NGOs and the Malaysian/Sarawak government. In this case globalization has affected both the nation-state and the IPs in different ways. Globalization has triggered a greater awareness of self-empowerment and democratization among the IPs. These are important forces in capturing some aspects of globalization at the local level.*

Globalization is a multi-layered and dialectical process involving both homogenization and particularization, ie the rise of localism in politics, economics, religion and culture. In what ways do these contending forces operate in Sarawak and in Malaysia as a whole? This article examines how globalization affects the democratization process and other political activities of the indigenous peoples (IPs) of Sarawak, and shows how the democratization process is a force in capturing globalization.

Impact of globalization on democratization

Sarawak is one of the states in the Federation of Malaysia. Situated in the western region of the Island of Borneo and with a total area of about 724 450 square miles, Sarawak is almost as large as the whole of Peninsular Malaysia.

The population of Sarawak consists of several IPs, such as Iban, Bidayuh, Malays, Melanau, Kayan and Kenyah. Unlike Peninsular Malaysia, where the

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population is made up of about 55% Malays, 34% Chinese and 11% Indians and others, no single ethnic group in Sarawak is dominant. In 1998 the Sarawak population numbered 1.99 million, consisting of 5.6% Melanau; 21.4% Malays; 28.6% Iban; 8% Bidayuh; 6% other indigenous people; 27% Chinese; and 3.9% others, including non-Malaysian citizens (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 1998). Hence, unlike Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak politics and political alignments have been relatively fluid because no one ethnic group has a clear majority; each group must manoeuvre to seek the support of others (Leigh, 1974).

As in the other states of Malaysia, the concept of democracy and multiparty elections is not entirely new to Sarawak. In 1956 elections were held for the Kuching Municipal Council. Subsequently in 1963 the first general elections based on the three-tier voting system were organized (Poritt, 1997; 23–24, 27). It was, however, in June 1970 that the first direct elections were conducted, and resulted in no single party garnering majority support. The formation of a new state government, therefore, was beset with problems. As a result, a coalition government based on consociational politics was set up when the Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) joined the coalition and established a new government led by Parti Bumiputera (Sanib, 1985; 124–125). With this coalition, Sarawak entered the 1970s with the Malay-Muslims playing an important role in the state government until the present. The Sarawak state government has been based on a 'grand coalition' to ensure political stability and to generate economic growth.

However, political party formation and elections are only part of the democratic process. The popular phraseology that democracy is 'government of the people, for the people, by the people', is too formalistic, often associated with the US form of government. Western liberal democracy within a capitalist economy focuses on individual liberties. To the liberals, 'the ballot box [is] the mechanism whereby the individual citizens as a whole periodically confer authority on government to enact laws and regulate economic and social life' (Held, 1995: 17–18).

Nevertheless, Malaysian democracy is 'neither unambiguously democratic nor authoritarian' (Crouch, 1996); it has also been described as 'a semi-democracy or a democratic–authoritarian state' (Case, 1993, 1997). The government is elected through elections held once every five years at both state and federal levels. As citizens in a democratic state, the people are aware of their rights and obligations, although some tend to view the system as something imposed from above. This is evident from a survey conducted in Sarawak in September 1996.[1] The results of the survey indicate that the IPS are aware of the meaning of democracy, which is not only about holding elections, but also about allowing all views, particularly from the grassroots, to be heard and dissent to be voiced. For example, during the 1996 Sarawak state election campaigns, voters consistently raised issues related to land, logging, social justice and the Bakun dam project and its impact on the IPS in the Sungai Balui Valley.

Within this framework, one can pose questions about whether the democratic process has enriched some, but disadvantaged others. To what extent have the IPS aligned themselves with the system? Has the tide of globalization exerted

pressure towards greater political, social and cultural democratisation in Sarawak? In addition, is democracy perceived differently at various levels of representation? Besides holding and participating in elections, at the grassroots level, democracy revolves around the question of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom for local people to exercise their rights, for example to maintain a sustainable environment and have access to customary land.

This, however, does not mean that non-Western states are strangers to democracy, and democracy appears in various forms depending on the socioeconomic and cultural milieu of the society in question (Mittelman, 1996a: 8, Held, 1991: 139–172). In Malaysia, including Sarawak, democracy as an idea and practice has been expressed in the form of *musyawarah*, ie consensus in decision making, which has long been a salient feature of the indigenous political system. The appointment of village heads and *tuai rumah* (longhouse headmen) illustrates this.[2]

Although political parties and regular elections are recent phenomena, the idea and process of democracy are part and parcel of the indigenous communities and have been entrenched in their value systems. Among the IPs, democratic processes have long been practised even in the remote areas, eg *musyawarah*. The IPs fully understand their democratic rights in terms of land rights and environmental issues, and what they are fighting for. Regarding logging activities and the resistance to it, Along Sega' a Penan from Ulu Limbang, affirmed his rights when he said:

> The earth is like our mother, our father. If you from the government give orders to the companies to invade our land, you might as well cut off our heads and our parents' heads too. When the bulldozers tear open the earth, you can see her blood and her bones even though she can't speak … The forest is our home, our pantry, our department store and hospital. Whether we are bitten by snake, or suffering from a headache, a fever or an injury, our doctor has always been there for us … We always know how to get food in our undisturbed land and we aren't dependent on your hand-outs … Our land is not so large … We are in trouble because our land has been taken and we have been made poor … The fish in the river die because of the polluted water. The game flee because of the companies [timber companies]. Why doesn't the government discuss it and educate people about it? Our Chief Minister, Taib Mahmud, should revoke the timber licenses. Why won't he help us? If we don't blockade, who is going to listen to us? That's why I blockade. But Taib Mahmud shouldn't send the police and lay charges against us! It would be good if the Prime Minister would come to see me for himself! (Manser, 1996: 46–49)

Sega' 's grievances were shared by his fellow countryman, Saya' Megut. In his message to Sarawak's Chief Minister, Taib Mahmud, Saya' wrote:

> … What kind of a government is ours? Can this be considered a government when the people have no right to live on their traditional lands? The companies are pushing ever further into the interior. What is behind it? The government! Does it want to destroy the entire land so it can say 'That's where we have established a reservation for the Penans?' … We are tired of hearing the bulldozers penetrating our land. Our land is no longer the black edge of a fingernail. We have no other land. (Manser, 1996: 215).

Subsequently, on 22 August 1995, a group of 13 Penan from Ulu Baram signed a declaration which stated:

> Although the government demanded that we become settled, we have been ignored. Even our fields have been run over by bulldozers … We ask all our 'relatives', wherever you are, for help. Speak forcefully with our government so that it stops the companies and places our communal areas in Ulu Baram under protection. (Manser, 1996: 215)

Hydroelectric dam project

The IPs' commitment to maintaining their democratic rights can be seen in their struggle to protect the environment. Concern about the environmental impact has surfaced because a decade ago the Sarawak government forced the Iban of Batang Ai to resettle in a new area, as their longhouses were situated at the site of the proposed hydroelectric dam, supposed to be the first hydroelectric power dam in the state. The Batang Ai dam is situated in the Lubok Antu District in Sri Aman Division. It was completed and officially opened in August 1985. The people affected by the Batang Ai dam project were predominantly Ibans. The Ibans are not a landless people; they in fact own large tracts of land held under native customary rights. The dam project involved the resettlement of 29 longhouses above the dam and four longhouses below the dam site. The project has unquestionably brought some advantages, for each family in the resettlement scheme was given 11 acres of land, five for rubber cultivation, three for cocoa, two for padi or general farming land, and one acre for orchards. But the disadvantages seem to outweigh the positive impact. For example, there have been problems with loan repayment and the rapid depletion of the compensation paid. But the most important issue has been the erosion of the cultural identity of the Ibans in Batang Ai (Jayum A Jawan, 1994; 201–203, INSAN and authors, 1992). According to John Phoa:

> Resettlement from dam projects has meant a huge [sic] loss of customary tenure to the native lands. They also lost their ancestral land and customary rights, as well as sacred burial ground and the forest which have been a major source of their subsistence. The forest and customary rights are part and parcel of the traditional and *adat* (customary) law of the shifting cultivators. Such losses are often accompanied by the break-down of the social fabric of the indigenous peoples. (Phoa, 1996: 211)

With regard to cultural aspects, we have to take into account the worldview of the IPs. In general, the economy of the IPs is small-scale; their life is associated with their land, from which they derive their food and develop their culture. However, land ownership varies from one ethnic group to another. The Iban and Penan, for instance, are basically non-hierarchical, although there are some differentiations based on gender and age. Although essentially egalitarian, Iban have been aware of long-standing status distinctions among themselves of *raja berani* (wealthy and brave), *mensia seribu* (commoners), and *ulun* (slaves), with prestige still accruing to descendants of the first status, and disdain to descendants of the third. The Brooke dynasty, which ruled Sarawak from 1841 to 1941,

created political positions—headman (*tuai rumah*), regional chief (*penghulu*), and paramount chief (*temenggong*)—in order to restructure Iban society for administrative control, especially for taxation and the suppression of head-hunting (Sutlive Jr, 1992: 8). In the case of Penan, they know no hierarchy because they live in very small and independent groups; they have no need of chiefs and representatives (Manser, 1996: 26). The Kelabit, Kenyah, Kayan and Melanau practise a hierarchical social structure (King, 1993).

The IPs' respect for their land permits them to conserve their ecosystems for long-term use. Conservation, however, is in conflict with the Malaysian government in general and the Sarawak government in particular; under globalization, the latter seeks the integration of the economy into the open and free market system (Maiguashca, 1994: 368). As we shall see below, the IPs have become major victims of the policies that have been pushed by the globalization strategy. Market-led developments such as logging and hydroelectric power dams affect their economic system and their traditional livelihood. This is evident among the IPs within the Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) countries. Supported by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), their worsening plight has been highlighted in the mass media.

During the three APEC summit meetings in 1995, 1996 and 1998 NGOs have held their own parallel gatherings (Gaspar, 1997: 106), later known as the Asia–Pacific Peoples' Assembly (APPA). APPA is an annual forum which highlights concerns about the 'free trade, free market' model of trade and investment liberalization that APEC promotes. APPA seeks to resist globalization and to change its agenda. At a forum on 'Confronting Globalization: Reasserting Peoples' Rights', APPA participants reviewed the effects of globalization on specific areas, including land, food security and agriculture, migrant workers, women, the environment and forestry, human rights and democracy, privatization and financial deregulation, and youth and education. APPA considers globalization to be a process that concentrates capital and political control in the hands of a select few, rather than distributing them equitably among the masses. Globalization also contains economic and social contradictions, and countries with different levels of development are not treated as equals. As a result, developed nations are in a better position to exploit developing ones. Thus, the sustainable development agenda that emerged within APEC in 1993 is perceived as mere rhetoric. It cannot be denied that globalization, which thrives on the promotion of an ideology of consumerism and individualism, has accelerated environmental abuse the world over, intensifying the destruction of various ecosystems. At the same time, globalization has helped enhance rights consciousness and democratic impulses in significant ways. APPA has affirmed that 'What we need is true democratic cooperation among peoples and countries of the Asia–Pacific based on equality and mutual benefit, and upholding the realisation of the peoples' sovereignty and self-determination' (quoted in *The Sunday Magazine*, 13 December 1998).

While not supportive of the idea of a free-trade area, Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad sees APEC as being able to contribute to the well-being of its members. He also believes that there could be 'social and political spin-offs from the APEC process … which should be regarded as a

bonus' (Gasper, 1997: 75). Thus, in order to achieve the main goal and its bonus, the Malaysian state and big business give priority to its push for economic growth at the expense of the IPs and the environment. As such, Malaysia's logging companies continue to export raw hardwood and cut timber, leading to destructive deforestation. As shown in Sarawak, the IPs have been the most affected by the disappearance of the forests in areas where their native customary rights are supposed to be constitutionally guaranteed.

Indigenous movements throughout the world have begun to realize their rights and have voiced their special claims to the land (Maiguashca, 1994: 370). These movements have to some degree created uneasiness in Malaysia. Despite their differences, the IPs are eager to be part of the ongoing development. 'They look forward to a good life, a stable family, a peaceful community life and want to cultivate cordial relations with other groups in the larger national community … They want their self-pride and dignity to be respected and safeguarded' (Hasan, 1998: 3).

In 1997 the IPs were displaced for the second time in order to enable the Malaysian government to build the Bakun dam. Upon completion, the 2400-megawatt hydroelectric power project will transmit electricity by underwater cables not only within Malaysia, but also to a few neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. Since this RM13.5 billion[3] grandiose project has a great impact on the environment, the IPs who live around the proposed project and the environmentalists have made a number of protests. However, the government ignores their resistance. In fact, in the beginning the project was sold to Ekran Bhd, owned by a Sarawakian timber tycoon/hotel builder. Because of the 1997–98 economic and currency crisis, the federal government took over the project, which has now been postponed indefinitely. Nevertheless, resettlement of the affected 10 000 IPs residing in the reservoir zone has not, in the same way, been postponed.

The Prime Minister's announcement of the project's 'indefinite postponement' in September 1997 was regarded as a triumphant vindication of the project's 'many opponents'. These opponents always asserted that the mega-project would be a 'major economic disaster', quite apart from its 'socially and environmentally destructive impact' (Salleh, 1999). Since 'it poses grave threats to the economy, ecology and the livelihood of the affected indigenous people', the Coalition of Concerned Non-Governmental Organizations on Bakun, which comprises 40 NGOs, argued that the project should be scrapped. On 8 June 1999 the Prime Minister announced that the government was going ahead with the Bakun project and Tenaga Nasional Berhad would play the leading role when the stalled project resumed (*The Sun*, 9 June 1999). However, the power generation capacity of the dam will be scaled down to 500 megawatts, although there is 'a possibility of a higher figure'. The government promises to pay a total of RM950 million to take over from Ekran Bhd and other parties. The estimated cost of completing the project will be about RM5 billion. According to the Prime Minister, the government wanted to complete the project as soon as possible because of the rising demand for electricity following economic recovery.

Much of the energy produced by the scaled-down Bakun dam project would have to be consumed in Sarawak itself, because the government plans to site energy intensive industries in Sabah and Sarawak. The question is, will investors

bring energy-intensive industries there (*The Sun*, 9 June 1999)? This is unlikely, as Sarawak has spare capacity beyond its present and foreseeable future needs (Jomo, 1999). The Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak, George Chan, disclosed that Sarawak has excess capacity and does not need any more power. At the federal level the Deputy Energy Minister, Chan Kong Choy, was reported as having said that 'our reserve power supply of 45 per cent will be able to meet the nation's needs until the year 2000'. In fact, Chan emphasized that the new plants in Perlis, Perak and Kedah will provide about 3000MW (about 25% more) than the power expected to be generated by the proposed Bakun dam (Jomo, 1999).

To make way for the construction of the Bakun dam, a group of Bading (the sub-group of the Kenyah community) which has been residing in Long Geng settlement and Long Bulan are among the 10 000 IPs who have to be resettled. For the villagers, the question of resettlement is the main focus in regard to the Bakun project. They understood that, despite their protest against a project which might result in flooding their area, which includes many of their ancestors' graveyards, there was no alternative. So far they have avoided radical confrontation with the state. The strategy has been for the affected villagers to link up with NGOs to tell the world that they oppose the Bakum HEP, which will flood their homeland. To make the most out of the project, they want guarantees from the government that basic facilities such as clinics and schools will be made available, as well as easy access to towns so that they can sell their farm products (Tan Chee Beng, 1997: 164).

Although the downsized Bakun dam project was postponed, the resettlement of the indigenous dwellers living in the reservoir zone was to be implemented as previously scheduled. In fact, as stated by a Fact Finding Mission sent by the Coalition of Concerned NGOs on Bakun to Sarawak, the authorities there were 'rushing the resettlement' process; they wanted *Operation Exodus* to be completed by August 1999, despite the downsizing of the power generation capacity of the dam (*Harakah*, 14 June 1999).

It is thus clear that large-scale government development programmes have threatened the IPs. Their land is taken away in the name of development for the benefit of a few. The development activities such as hydroelectric dams, plantations or tourism projects uproot and forcefully displace the IPs. Furthermore, since mid-1995, the Sarawak government has been promoting the New Concept of Native Customary Land Development for large-scale oil palm plantations. Under this concept, the native customary lands will be leased out to private plantation company developers for a period of 60 to 90 years. As a result, the IPs will most likely lose the rights to their land. Some of the IPs oppose this kind of development, which will rob them of their customary land.

Logging activities

Besides the Bakun and Batang Ai dam projects, the IPs also face problem of logging. Logging operations may not only cause ecological disaster but also affect the economy and health of the indigenous peoples. 'In the hilly terrain,

logging reduced the water-holding capacity of the land, affecting many plant and animal species and destroying the food web. The IP's major source of protein, namely the wildlife and fish life in the forests and its waters, was severely depleted' (INSAN and authors, 1992: 17, 61, 65–67). The increased logging activities have also attracted the attention of environmentalists. As a result, the local population has become more conscious of environmental repercussions and of problems arising from logging, for they are the ones living closest to the forest and, therefore, are most threatened by the reckless destruction of their habitat.

Timber has been Malaysia's second largest export earner after petroleum since the early 1980s. In 1990 export earnings from timber and timber products amounted to RM8.9 billion—or 11.3% of total export proceeds—compared with RM10.6 billion for petroleum, RM4.4 billion for palm oil and RM3 billion for rubber (INSAN and authors, 1992: 1). Although by the end of the 1970s diminishing available forest resources and heightened public awareness of their grave environmental consequences had reduced logging in Peninsular Malaysia, timber production in both Sarawak and Sabah has nevertheless increased. By 1990 Sarawak accounted for 18.8 million, or 47%, of the 40 million cubic meters logged in Malaysia. At this rate, an average of 1850 acres are being taken out from Sarawak every day (INSAN and authors, 1992: III). The main buyers are Japan, taking 45% of the total, and Taiwan, 20%. Timber is exported to the EU (Phoa, 1996: 201), and timber concessionairy rights have become a coveted prize for political office and power, engendering a vicious circle of timber politics. Hence the political economy of timber has shaped and moved Sarawak politics, at least over the last two decades. The question is, who benefits from the timber activities? As pointed out by Edmund Langgu in Parliament, 'It would appear that after years of accelerated timber exploitation, very few rural dwellers have benefited directly except as labourers' (INSAN and authors, 1992: 17).

The Sarawak Study Group's pioneering study of logging in Belaga notes that political power and family connections with leading state government politicians primarily determine access to timber concessions. Another set of beneficiaries is the logging operators—urban ethnic Chinese Sarawakians—who actually run the timber extraction and export activities (INSAN and authors, 1992: VII).

Besides logging activities, the environmentalists have also highlighted issues such as illegal logging,[4] favouritism in granting logging concessions and corruption. Moreover, those who benefit most are the state government, concessionaries, timber contractors and sub-contractors. The timber workers, the majority of whom are IPs, account for less than 4% of recipients of the total gross income earned from the sale of timber, although they make up more than 95% of the total population of those involved in the industry. It cannot be denied that, on the one level, timber activities have helped Sarawak to develop, but for the population as a whole, the problems outweigh the advantages (Hurst, 1990: 91).

In response to criticism from the environmentalist movements, the governments accuse the latter of trying to cut off a growth-based economy at its early stages of development. They 'would deny poorer countries their best prospects

of escape from the poverty trap' (Hurst, 1990: 482). Therefore, some states are reluctant to facilitate co-ordination by establishing effective global governance mechanisms in relation to the environmental agenda.

The Malaysian Premier Dr Mahathir has said, 'the timber industry helps hundreds of thousands of poor people in Malaysia … we don't cut all trees when we do logging in the forests. Only marked mature trees are cut. We also do reforestation' (quoted in INSAN and authors, 1992: 2–74). He went on to say that 'Malaysia is a poor country and just developing, and it is important for it to earn a little revenue from its rich forest resources" (quoted in Manser, 1996: 272). Mahathir's views have been echoed by the Sarawak Chief Minister, Taib Mahmud, who claimed that 'the timber industry has helped to pull out more than half of those trapped in the poverty level [sic]. We develop big timber operations which would yield [sic] thousands of miles of roads and hundreds of bridges and at the same time provide jobs for the local people on a more secure and continued basis' (quoted in Manser, 1996: 205). James Wong, Sarawak's Minister of Environment and Tourism, who himself controls over 650 000 acres of forest concessions even argued that 'This land does not belong to the natives. It is state land' (INSAN and authors, 1992: 82). Yet the International Mission on 'Natives' Rights and Rainforests found evidence that Wong's own timber business, namely, Limbang Trading Company Limited, one of the country's most prosperous timber companies, sells timber from the protected species list of the government's Select Committee on Fauna and Flora (INSAN and authors, 1992: 82).

The lucrative nature of the timber industry helps to explain why the state government became more defensive and sometimes easily repealed its constitutional obligations to the IPs by ignoring their rights to customary land when it was challenged by protests and blockades from the indigenous communities. These protests are an exercise by the IPs in defence of their democratic rights. In October 1987 the Malaysian government took a harsh measure by detaining 42 IPs in Uma Bawang on charges of 'wrongful-restraint' because they refused to dismantle their blockades and 'unlawful occupation of state lands'. The IPs had been engaged in a seven-month blockade to halt the logging of their ancestral lands. The arrests were made following a major series of arrests in Peninsular Malaysia. Among those detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) was Harrisson Ngau, a Kayan and a social activist.[5] With the blockades of timber roads and with other kinds of resistance to forest destruction in Sarawak, international and Malaysian attention have been focused on the problem of logging and other environmental issues in Sarawak and Malaysia. However, these incidents prompted the Sarawak State Legislative Assembly to amend the Forest Ordinance on 25 November 1987, making it punishable by a two-year jail term and a fine of $6000 if a person set up a structure on a road constructed by a timber licensee or a permit holder. As a result, in December 1987 41 Penan and Kayan and two members of Friends of the Earth Malaysia were imprisoned. However, this arrest did not stop a group of Penan representatives from declaring that the amendment was unjust and reaffirming their right to build blockades on their own land to protect it.

The blockades were followed by a series of protests and blockades in other

areas, such as in Sungai Tatau, Bintulu in 1989, Long Geng Village in the upper Rejang River in 1990, and in Belaga District in July 1991. For the Tatau case, eight Iban launched a blockade to prevent the timber company, Daiya Malaysia Sdn Bhd from encroaching further on native customary land. In the case of Long Geng Village, eight Kenyah set up a human blockade to stop the logging activities in that area. As a result of the Tattoo blockade, eight Ban were sentenced to prison terms between six and nine months, after being found guilty of the charge of 'criminal intimidation'. Eight Kenya from the Long Geeing Village were forced to sign a bond of good behaviour for six months and were later released (Phoa 1996: 204). In August 1991 eight Bans were sent to prison following a series of protests involving more than 70 men, women and children in an attempt to protect their customary land rights from encroachment by a logging company, Uh Seeing Sawmill SDI Bad (Phoa 1996: 204; Gasper, 1997: 76–80). In Kanowit, another blockade occurred at Long Ajeng, Baram, where a group of Penan, with the support of other indigenous communities, organized a protest to prevent the logging of the area to which the Penan people claim customary rights. Besides arresting and charging the indigenous groups concerned, the state government also charged the individual protesters, including a local environmentalist, Anderson Mutang Urud, a Kelabit and leader of the Sarawak Indigenous People's Alliance (SIPA) from Long Napir in Ulu Limbang. He was charged under Section 42 of the Societies Act for alleged involvement in an illegal society and provoking unrest in February 1992.

In response to the indigenous peoples' struggle and protest movements, the state government accused green activists, such as Friends of the Earth Malaysia, the Green Peace movement in Germany and individuals such as Bruno Manser from Switzerland, of inciting the IPS to launch their protests and blockades. Commenting on this particular 'interference', Sarawak Chief Minister Taib Mahmud said, 'It is our hope that outsiders will not interfere in our internal affairs, especially people like Bruno Manser. The state government of Sarawak has nothing to hide. Ours is an open liberal society' *(Borneo Bulletin*, 19 July 1987, quoted in Manser, 1996: 160). To counter the allegations and criticisms, the state government tightened control over the entry of foreign environmentalists, journalists and film crews into the state. As pointed out by the Sarawak Chief Minister, foreign environmental activists 'have no right to come and stir up trouble in the State' (*New Straits Times*, 8 July 1991). At the same time, the government blacklisted individuals from foreign countries and Peninsular Malaysia, particularly Friends of the Earth Malaysia and Bruno Manser, from entering the state. The state government defended its timber policy on the grounds that 'Sarawak was heavily dependent on its logging industry to progress. Logging not only brought in revenues of several billion ringgit a year to the State in terms of export profits, it also generated business opportunities throughout the State. And it helped to feed more than 250 000 men, women and children of the State's population' (Ritchie, 1993: 61). In support of the state government, the Malaysian government has engaged foreign researchers to counter what it regards as misrepresented reports about Malaysian logging activities in 1992. The project, which cost between RM5 and RM10 million, focused on the socio-environmental aspects of the timber industry with special reference to

Sarawak, and was sponsored by the Malaysian Timber Industry Development Council and the Sarawak Timber Industry Development Corporation (Phoa, 1996: 208).

Although the response from the state and the federal government to the indigenous peoples' blockades and protest movements was to a certain extent negative, it nevertheless managed to attract international and Malaysian attention to the problem of logging in Sarawak. Overall, the globalization process has made it possible for the IPs to build up their networking with other NGOs in and outside the country. A number of people's organizations have arisen among the IPs, such as Uma Bawang Resident's Association in Sarawak, Sarawak Penan Association, Sarawak Indigenous People's Alliance (SIPA), Friends of the Earth Malaysia, with bases in Sarawak, and the Borneo Resources Institute (BRIMAS), an NGO which works on indigenous issues and acts as a research and resource centre on such issues. The protest movements, thus, should be seen in the wider context of globalization. They manifest the IPs' struggle in defence of environmental rights and social justice—'in other words, about a just state' (Majid-Cooke, 1999) and about a just social order for actors involved at various political levels, including non-state politics. Although the protest movements were easily quashed, the real grievances and deep-seated resentments persist.

Concluding remarks

In the above discussion we have looked at the impact of globalization on democratization, and how globalization forces have disrupted the indigenous peoples' everyday life by such processes as logging activities and hydroelectric dam projects.

Sarawak has benefited considerably from socioeconomic development, but uneven development and marginalization of certain groups, particularly the indigenous peoples, are also a reality. As mentioned, the integration of Sarawak's economy into a more open and free-market system has affected the indigenous people's everyday lives. Through state or private development activities, such as land development, the changes in agricultural activities, logging, road building, the expansion of urban areas and the development of hydroelectric power like the Bakun dam project, the indigenous peoples of Sarawak have been forcefully displaced and relocated to new areas.

The destruction of the tropical rainforest by logging activities in Sarawak is, in fact, not limited to local controversial issues such as blockades and unlawful occupation of state land between the indigenous peoples of Sarawak and the Malaysian/Sarawak governments. As noted, in some situations the federal and state governments have treated this problem as a serious global issue between international NGOs and the Malaysian/Sarawak government. In this instance, globalization has affected both the nation-state and the indigenous peoples in different ways.

In the case of Sarawak, globalization has triggered greater awareness among the indigenous peoples of self-empowerment and democratization, which are important forces in capturing globalization. The indigenous peoples of Sarawak have been more courageous and bolder than their counterparts in Peninsular

Malaysia. Through their blockades and protest movements, they have shown that they know how to use 'power' to speak and to resist the globalizing forces that threaten their way of life and economic activities.

Notes

[1] The research was conducted in Kuching, Samarahan, Asajaya and Simunjan. The research team consisted of Rashila Ramli, Bilcher Bala and Sabihah Osman, all of University Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Lim Phay Ing of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. The team concentrated on interviews and administering questionnaires in election campaign centres in Kuching, Asajaya, Samarahan and Simunjan. The team also closely followed election speeches given during the rallies organized by various political parties and independent candidates.

[2] In the past a longhouse headman (*tuai rumah*) was elected through discussions held on the *ruai* (a roofed balcony) of the longhouse. A ballot was cast by a simple show of hands. When the Brookes and the British colonized Sarawak, they created and appointed other political positions, namely, regional chief and paramount chief (Jayum A. Jawan, 1994: 46, Sutlive Jr, 1992: 8).

[3] The exchange rate before the July 1997 economic crisis was US$1 = RM2.50. After the imposition of selective capital controls in September 1998 the rate was fixed at US$1 = RM3.80.

[4] It is true that, in general, logging activities are legal, but sometimes the licensed logging companies do not work only in their given area. They often even go beyond the fixed boundary. For this reason, 'They destroy cultivated regions, plough through *temuda* (fallow rice fields) and fruit gardens, and bulldoze graveyards' (Manser, 1996: 90).

[5] The Internal Security Act (ISA) was first introduced in 1960, when the 12-year emergency was lifted by the Malayan government. The Act empowers the police to hold for up to 60 days anyone who acts in a manner considered prejudicial to the security of Malaysia. ISA gives the authorities wide powers of preventive detention. However, the ISA is now being used to curb freedom of expression and restrain people from criticizing the government.