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## **GLOBAL NETWORKS: ISSUES AND TACTICS IN THE BAKUN DAM PROJECT**

*The role of global networks is increasingly important in influencing state's decision on grand project. Tactics and strategies are employed across borders to build up cases and arguments to influence state's decision. Global actors such as the non-governmental organizations particularly environmentalist groups adopt strategies that bypass their state and search out for international allies to bring pressure on their state from outside. Sahabat Alam Sekitar (SAM) and other international allies who are members of World Commission on Dam (WCD) rally campaigns for the severe environmental and social structure effect on the Bakun dam project. Global networks presented their findings on eight large dams that have put pressure on the Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) and the Malaysian government to reconsider the big-dam project. Here the discussions on tactics and strategies by global networks are vital because a similar analysis can be applied in examining the impact of global networks on state's decision. However, actions from global networks have to be consistent and continuous to convince state actors. Local networks have to find ways to redefine issues concerning environments and people who are affected as a way to maintain endorsement from international networks. If supports are not consistent and continuous, the impact of collective efforts from global networks is rather subtle or perhaps forgettable.*

*Keywords: Global Network, Bakun, Organization*

*Peranan jaringan organisasi global dalam mempengaruhi keputusan aktor dalam negara terhadap projek mega semakin penting. Strategi dan taktik merentasi sempadan digunakan oleh organisasi global untuk membina kes dan hujah yang rasional sebagai usaha untuk mempengaruhi keputusan negara. Organisasi global seperti badan bukan kerajaan atau kumpulan pencinta alam yang memperjuangkan isu alam sekitar telah mengaplikasikan strategi dan taktik yang melepasi sempadan negara dengan menubuhkan jaringan kerjasama di peringkat antarabangsa. Jaringan ini merupakan usaha untuk memberi tekanan terhadap dasar mana-mana negara yang tidak akur akan kepentingan pembangunan lestari yang mengiktiraf eko-sistem yang seimbang. Dalam melihat pembinaan empangan Bakun di Sarawak, jaringan organisasi global telah berkongsi maklumat lapan empangan besar lain di dunia sebagai bukti kepincangan projek tersebut. Usaha ini bertujuan untuk memberi tekanan terhadap Asea Brown Boveri (ABB) dan kerajaan Malaysia supaya mempertimbangkan implikasi pembinaan empangan Bakun ini. Artikel ini membincangkan hubungan strategi*

*dan taktik yang digunakan oleh organisasi jaringan global dengan usaha mempengaruhi keputusan aktor dalam negara. Walau bagaimanapun, usaha dan kerjasama organisasi jaringan global ini harus konsisten dan berterusan untuk mempengaruhi keputusan pemimpin negara. Jaringan organisasi tempatan juga harus mencari jalan mendefinisikan semula isu-isu berkaitan alam sekitar dan manusia untuk menarik perhatian jaringan organisasi global ini. Jika bantuan dan sokongan tidak berterusan dan konsisten, impak jaringan kerjasama organisasi global ini tidak memberi makna dan akan dilupakan.*

*Katakunci: Global Network, Bakun, Organisasi*

## **Introduction**

This paper discusses the issue of the Bakun dam project in Sarawak, Malaysia. The discussion includes other issues such as the effect on environments, the social structure of indigenous people, and the underlying problems of political factors. It also analyzes the tactics used by the domestic environmental non-governmental organizations as well as the environmental worldwide organizations, in order to lobby the Malaysian government and the Multilateral Economic Institutions. Such institutions as the World Bank (WORLD BANK), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), have been forced to change their position on the effect of big-dam projects on environments. In addition, the framework of the boomerang strategy and the persuasion tactics which is composed of four fundamental tenets define the webbing cooperation among non-governmental organizations to influence state's decision; the information politic, symbolic politic, leverage politic, and accountability politic.

Initially, Malaysia, comprising Peninsular Malaysia and the Eastern Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak on Borneo Island, occupies a land area of 328,550 square kilometers, with a coastline 4,675 kilometers in length. A federation of 13 states and 2 federal territories, Malaysia has a population of over 20 millions (July 1997 estimate). The diversified economy is characterized largely by light and heavy industry, agriculture and services, with the main income earners being electronic equipment, manufactured products, which include petroleum and natural gas, palm oil, timber, rubber, and tourism. Rapid industrialization and economic growth over the past two decades have transformed Malaysia from a predominantly agricultural country into an industrialized one.

In addition, Malaysia established the vision 2020 as a set of plan that envisages Malaysia to become a fully developed industrialized country. One of many ways outlined to achieve this goal is the big dam project. The Bakun dam project is assumed to be able to contribute in several ways:

- (a) To supply electricity. In recent years demand for power has increased up to 13% per year. The 2400 mega watt (mw) produced by the Bakun dam is expected to be required by the year 2000;
- (b) To increase employment opportunity;

- (c) To promote regional development and industrialization river regulation, tourism, and fishery;
- (d) To reduce air pollution through proper planning of precautionary measures that can control the negative impacts.

The Bakun dam was first examined more than 30 years ago by Australian surveyors. Subsequent studies identify numerous potential of Bakun dam to supply cheap hydroelectric. By 1986, the Malaysian government had decided to build the Bakun dam project. The Bakun dam if completely built has 204 meter in height, would be the largest dam in Southeast Asia. The cost for this mega project is about \$7 billion Canadian dollar that assumed to be able to generate 2400mw, which would provide electricity for both Sarawak and industrial cities in mainland Malaysia, through a cable under the South China Sea. At 650 kilometers, this cable would be the longest undersea cable in the world.<sup>1</sup>

However, the Bakun dam project invites a high controversial issue to environmentalist and local people against the Malaysian government. The Malaysian government claims that this project promises high electricity supply for the use of national development. In addition, Prime Minister Mahathir on September 24, 1991 explained the government's effort to support this hydroelectricity project tremendously. He stated "*We in the poor countries would like to have some cheap hydroelectric power. But all manner of campaigns are mounted against our proposals the World Bank will be used to deprive poor countries of cheap hydroelectric power. And all this after the rich countries have developed most of their hydro potentials...*" (Aliran, 1995:34). The Malaysian government argues that developed countries manipulate the environment issues to put pressure on the third world development, which is unfair for the third world development process.

On the other hand, the environmental NGOs view claims that this project destroys environments and social structure<sup>2</sup> of the indigenous people. In fact, this project would force the resettlement of 9,000 to 10,000 people in order to generate high cost electricity that no market might exist. Furthermore, domestic NGOs such as Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), the Consumer Association of Penang (CAP), The Ratepayers Association of Penang (RAAP), and the Third World Network (TWN)<sup>3</sup>, had sought support from the international environmental NGOs to collectively oppose the Bakun dam project. SAM that represents other domestic NGOs has been vociferous in its resistance to the Bakun

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.idsnet.org/resources/dams/bakun/bakundam.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The Bakun dam project would force about 9,000 to 10,000 members of the Kayan, Kenyah, Lahanan, Ukit, and Penan ethnic groups to resettle from their land. This action results in native people suffering from distress, dispossession, and poverty. The indigenous people can no longer participate in their cultural and traditional events. They can no longer gather together, farm, fish, weave, etc. <http://www.irm.org/programs/bakun/aa.000509.html>.

<sup>3</sup> SAM was founded in 1978 by its President, S.Mohammed Idris, a businessman who also started the CAP (1969), Asia-Pacific Peoples Environment Network (APPEN, 1983), the Third World Network (1984). SAM's other concerns include resource depletion, loss indigenous seeds, abuse of pesticides in agriculture and soil contamination. It has extensive news service and numerous single publications. SAM address is 27 Lorong Mentakal, 10250 Penang, Malaysia. Fax number: (604)-227-5705. [http://www.rightlivelivelihood.se/recipe.1988\\_4.html](http://www.rightlivelivelihood.se/recipe.1988_4.html).

dam project which threatens environmental quality. However, domestic NGOs in Malaysia faced many challenges to have their stand to sue (*locus standi*), which will be recognized by courts. Domestic NGOs are generally viewed with suspicion and stigmatization for their “anti-development” positions. Moreover, the political environments do not overtly encourage an open debate for this controversial issue. In fact, public discussion and essential information concerning the project has often been banned or has become inaccessible. Although Canada (British Columbia and Quebec) and other nations have increasingly rejected large dam, this technology is still being promoted in Malaysia, because the political environments hind the open debate and the free-flow of information. For example, the 17 feasibility and design studies made on the Bakun dam since it was first discussed, remained classified under the Official Secret Act (OSA)<sup>4</sup> (Spires,1995:12).

Therefore, the discouraging political sphere, and lack of financing, manpower, and research resources have encouraged SAM to find support from the worldwide environmental organizations. SAM has invited the International Rivers Network (IRN) shortly after the Environmental Report was released in 1995. The IRN evaluates the report and identifies numerous negative impacts which include: reservoir deterioration, downstream water pollution, salt water intrusion, risk of waterborne disease, loss of fish and wildlife habitat, and social structure of the indigenous people. (Alan Tan,2001:3-4).

SAM, IRN, the Brazillian Movement (MAB), Narmada Movement (NBA), the Berne Declaration, and the Association for International Water and Forest Studies (FIVAS)<sup>5</sup>, which all of them are members of World Commission on Dam (WCD), have collectively protested the IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programs that funded mega-dam projects all over the world. The most popular protest movement was the non-violent satyagraha movement in India by the NBA led by Medha Paker. These environmental organizations also organized the global protest in 1998 from World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle to IMF and WORLD BANK in Washington, extended to Melbourne and Prague (Easton,2000:1).

Meanwhile, in Malaysia, SAM with help from The Berne Declaration and other international NGOs, campaigned to address the environmental impact on the Bakun dam project at the international level. Sam has called the international NGOs to urge the Malaysian government and the Sarawak state to set up an independent commission to investigate and attend to all resettlement issues raised by the native people. At the international level, on November 23, 1997 the IRN led by Patrick McCully, and other NGOs organizations, had decided not to take part in the WCD conference in Washington

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<sup>4</sup> Official Secret Act (OSA) was amended in 1982 as an attempt to legally create a law that protect confidential information from being circulated in the society under the name of national security (Jomo,1999:68-69).

<sup>5</sup>The International Rivers Network (IRN) is a Berkeley, California-based human rights and environment group which work to support the rights of dam-affected communities and promote sustainable and equitable means of water and energy management. The Brazilian Movement (Movimentos dos Atingidos por Barragens – MAB) represents tens of thousands of Brazillian small farmers who have been displaced or are threatened by dams in Brazil, the Narmada Movement (NBA) the world’s largest and best-known anti-dam group is comprised of tens of thousands of villagers from the valley of the Narmada River. They have led a 15-year-long non-violent struggle against dams on the Narmada. The Berne Declaration is a Swiss NGO with 16,000 members, and FIVAS is an association for water and forest studies located in Norway.

D.C on November 24, 1997. This protest occurs because the WCD sponsors, the World Bank and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) have refused to allow fair representation from the dam-affected people and dam critics. The IRN and other NGOs criticized the World Bank and IUCN for their unbalanced view that excluded organizations representing people displaced by dams. The IRN argues that the WORLD BANK and IUCN need to be inclusive of the views given by NGOs. This protest successfully changes the WORLD BANK and IUCN position to accept independent and unbiased assessment of NGOs and dam-affected people in the future.

Due to the acceptable stand voiced by the World Bank and the IUCN, the WCD released a 389 page report titled “Dams and Development—A New Framework for Decision-making”, in London on 17 November, 1999. This report provides significant ideas on values, criteria, and guidelines for government reference on future decisions with regard to dam building (Eaton,2000:5). WCD has prepared the alternative ways to provide future energy in order to counter provocative questions from the World Bank and IMF. Previously, the World Bank and IMF have urged WCD to show them a clear and sustainable ways to provide food, energy, stability, and running water for those who need it most. Therefore, WCD conducted detailed reviews of eight large dams in Turkey, Norway, United States, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan, Brazil, and South Africa. It also prepared reviews on the large-scale dams for countries like India and China, as well as a briefing paper on Russia and the newly independent states.<sup>6</sup>

The commission found several substantial consequences with regard to large dam projects. The implications are:

1. Large dams deliver significant development services in more than 140 countries. On a global scale hydropower dams account for 19% of electricity generated and for an estimated 12-16% of global food production. 12% of large dams supply domestic and industrial water, and large dams provide flood control services in more than 70 countries.
2. Large dams display a high degree of variability in delivering predicted water and electricity services—and related social benefits—with a considerable portion falling short of physical and economic targets, while others continue to generate benefits after 30-40 years.
3. Large dams have demonstrated a marked tendency towards schedule delays and cost overruns.
4. Large dams have led to the loss of forests and wildlife habitat and the loss of aquatic biodiversity of upstream and downstream fisheries. The Commission found that efforts to counter the ecosystem deteriorations caused by the large dams had limited success.
5. The negative social impacts of the large dams reflect a pervasive and systematic failure to assess and account for the range of potential negative impacts on displaced and resettled people as well as downstream communities. Estimates

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dams.org/press/pressrelease.00743.htm>.

suggest that some 40-80 million dam-affected people worldwide have been displaced while the livelihoods of many more living downstream affected were not recognized. Mitigation, compensation and resettlement programs were often inadequate.

In spite of the significant findings regarding large dam projects, the Commission also examined the alternatives for meeting energy, water and food needs. They found that while there is far greater scope for utilizing these energies, there is no universal formula that precludes local and national conditions as being central to determining viable options. The alternative suggestions by the Commission are:

1. A number of environmentally and economically viable supply options are emerging, including wind and solar energy, recycling, and local water management. However, obstacles such as market, institutional, intellectual, and financial barriers limit the adoption rate of alternatives.
2. WCD suggests that each country has to improve its water system management, particularly in the irrigation sector through the reduction in water losses. An efficient system management and an upgrading of distribution technology can alleviate demand for new supply resources.
3. Demand-side management has significant potential and provides a major opportunity to reduce water stress and power requirements.

These set of several feasible alternatives to dams for water and energy resources development, are meant to be as a guideline to encourage the national government to carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages that might cost others substantially.

Based on the WCD large dams research findings, SAM closed involvement with the IRN, the Berne Declaration, Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens-MAB (Brazil), Narmada Bachao Andolan-NBA (India), and other 120 NGOs environmental actors, their collective actions have urged the Swedish-Swiss engineering corporation, Asea Brown Boveri (ABB)<sup>7</sup> to withdraw its operation from the controversial Bakun hydro-electric power in Sarawak, Malaysia. The NGOs sent a letter<sup>8</sup> to the ABB's senior executive, Percy Barnevik in Zurich, to warn that the company's involvement in the large-scale dam has directly contradicted with its principal stand on sustainable development. They added that even Sweden and Switzerland have long abandoned large-scale hydroelectric projects. The Bakun dam will involve the flooding of 69,640 hectares of land, an area larger than Singapore, including large tracts of forest, and the force resettlement of some 9,000 to 10,000 indigenous people belonging to Kayan, Kenyah, Kayang, Ukit, Lanang, and Penan ethnic groups (Jaura, 1996:5-6). In addition, the NGOs

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<sup>7</sup>The ABB was founded in 1988, the result of a merger between the European Engineering giants Asea of Sweden and Brown Boveri of Switzerland. The ABB had established itself as the dominant manufacturer of power generation equipment in several important Eastern European markets: moved aggressively into India, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, expanded in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa. <http://www.evb.ch/bd/abbl.html>.

<sup>8</sup>The letter was signed by Patrick McCully of the IRN, Mats Djurberg of the Swedish Society for Nature, Ellen Hofsvang of FIVAS in Norway, and other 29 members of European Parliament. (Jaura, 1996:6).

recalled that over the years the ABB had issued statements supporting the need for sustainable development. The company's 1994 report entitled "Asea Brown Boveri Environmental Management Programs" noted that protection of the environments was among its top corporate priorities and addressed the environmental issues in all its operation and public policy. The NGOs believe that the continuous participation of ABB will undermine seriously the company's reputation and that of other companies with the world business council for sustainable development.

Consequently, there are a few essential implications due to the intensive lobbying of the domestic and international NGOs. Firstly, the ABB terminated the \$5.4 billion agreement on September 3, 1997, with the Malaysian government. This is because the highly controversial environmental conflicts with the worldwide NGOs and the native people's objections regarding environmental destruction. Secondly, this termination had forced the Malaysian government to declare the reevaluation of the Bakun dam project. The announcement was made as part of a tactic to reestablish investor confidence and country accountability in the Malaysian future economy. Besides, the Malaysian government has to accept the fact that this project is unnecessary and financially wasteful. Moreover, the Sarawak state has already produced more hydro-energy up to 1700mw, which is adequately more than enough for the use of the country. In addition, other large-scale dam projects such as in the Mekong-Basin, Thailand, has high potential to supply energy for the Asian regional needs.

Moreover, the third implication addresses the Malaysian government's decision to compensate 15 indigenous communities for the destruction caused due to the first and second phases in the construction of the Bakun dam project. Obviously, the first and second phases of the Bakun dam project had brought hardships to most indigenous people from ethnic Kenyahs, Ukits and Kayans, where their villages were flooded and destroyed. The government has to locate resettlement areas for these native peoples and provide suitable living accommodations, basic infrastructure, such as schools, medical centers, and electricity and water supply, and lands for planting crops. However, the compensation and resettlement programs have created an on-going protest against the government's rhetorical actions. For example, a few hundred kilometers from the Bakun site sits the smaller Batang Ai dam, which was completed in 1985. For that project, 3,000 native people were relocated to an area lacking adequate farmland, basic facilities, and jobs. Many have not yet received fair compensation, and almost half of the dam-affected people have returned to areas near to their original homeland. As a result, the Bakun site resettlement and compensation programs appear not to have benefited from this experience. Resettlement plans have been marked by a general failure to consult those affected. As Nyaban Kulleh, a resident of one of the communities affected told a journalist in 1994, "*no one has come forward to tell us what is happening. We don't want to go against the government. But if the government wants the Bakun project, why don't they think of us? They say this is development but we don't think that flooding our homes is development*" (Jerome, 1994: 56).

Finally, the fourth implication highlights the extensive result from the reevaluation of the Bakun dam project. This reevaluation has more or less diminished the interest of foreign investors to work on large-scale dam projects in Southeast Asia. The salient example is the cancellation of the \$1.5 billion dam projects in Nam Thuen in Laos. These four substantial implications caused by the NGOs worldwide significantly

show how the effort of networks can tremendously change the national government position, the international perspectives on environmental issues, protect the rights of indigenous people, and strongly defend the vulnerability of unspoken environments.

## **Strategies and Tactics**

Based on the main issues addressed in the Bakun dam project, I analyze the tactics employed by domestic NGOs which entail the involvement of worldwide networks to put pressure on the Malaysian government. The boomerang strategy and the four persuasive tactics will represent the theoretical framework for this paper. Keck and Sikkink (1998) emphasize that the boomerang pattern appears when the government as the primary guarantor of rights, has blocked the domestic NGOs from addressing the issue. Thus, domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out for international allies to try to bring pressure on their state from outside.

Based on this pattern, SAM, that represents domestic NGOs in Malaysia, has faced great challenges and pressures from the Malaysian government to address the environmental impact on the Bakun dam project. In addition, the domestic political sphere has restricted SAM from organizing public debate and getting access to information, and has limited media coverage of opposing views from the dam-affected people. In fact, SAM and other domestic NGOs were banned through the legal device, the OSA, from disseminating information regarding the WCD findings on the environmental impact on the project. The absence of open access to information, lack of freedom for public discussion, lack of independent financial support, manpower and research resources, are the main reasons for SAM to invite worldwide environmental organizations to collectively intervene on the Bakun dam project. Therefore, SAM bypassed the Malaysian government and sought help from the international allies to put pressure on the Malaysian government. SAM has contacted powerful members of WCD such as, IRN, NBA, MAB, the Berne Declaration, FIVAS, and other 120 NGOs all over the world to campaign on the Bakun dam issues in order to gain support from the international organizations.

Furthermore, the four vital persuasion tactics provide a framework to understand strategies employed by SAM. Since the domestic and international NGOs do not have a legitimate powerful authority in the traditional sense, they use the power of information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and values within which states make policies. Thus, the environmental NGOs put effort into persuasion, socialization, and pressure of four tactics in order to influence powerful actors. The first tactic is the information politic. Information is powerful enough to bind the worldwide NGOs together and is substantial for network effectiveness. The environmental NGOs mutually exchange their information through telephone, e-mail, fax, and circulation of pamphlets, bulletins and newsletters. According to the sharing information phenomena, SAM has distributed information on the Bakun dam project to the environmental NGOs all over the world. The mutual exchange of information and ideas regarding the effect of large dam project has enabled them to challenge the national institution: the Malaysian government. As SAM and other relevant environmental organizations share the same values and goals of securing environments upon destruction, they believe that transnational networks will further their missions. In addition, SAM provides information to the transnational



networks, which is not available to be obtained publicly or might not be heard elsewhere. This information becomes comprehensive and very useful to activists who may be geographically distant. Moreover, the environmental activists will interpret facts and frame issues in terms of right and wrong in order to persuade people and to stimulate them to act. As a result, sharing information allows the transnational environmental networks to attain greater visibility to wider publics and multiply channels of institutional access. In addition, sharing information has great impact on the Multilateral Economics Institution (MEI), the Malaysian government and the ABB, because the research findings from the WCD environmental research studies have immensely managed to convince these three actors to change their positions on the large-scale dams, especially, the Bakun dam project.

The second persuasion tactic is the symbolic politic. This tactic includes the way of framing issues by identifying and providing convincing explanation for powerful symbolic events. Symbolic interpretation is part of the process of persuasion by which the domestic and transnational networks create awareness and expand their constituencies (Keck & Sikkink, 1998:22). Based on this tactic SAM and the international environmental NGOs frame the suffering of the indigenous people in Sarawak as a vital issue to attract worldwide attention. The destruction caused by the building of the Bakun dam constructions, which has demolished the native people's land and flooded their villages, has been used as an essential symbolic component to persuade international institutions and policymakers to change their minds. In addition, foreign journalists who came to Sarawak play an essential role in revealing the true situations of the native people's suffering conditions. For example, Bruno Manser, a Swedish activist spent five years in helping the ethnic Penan with the deforestation issues in Sarawak and was proactively involved with opposing the Bakun dam project. During his years in Sarawak, Bruno Manser had published numerous articles addressing the poor conditions of the indigenous people and the impact of environments.<sup>9</sup> Another environmental activist is Jerome Rousseau, who published his article on the Bakun dam project and the failure of resettlement planning for the indigenous people. This article not only provides a comprehensive critique on the Bakun dam project, but also contains pictures of the poor conditions of the dam-affected people.

Furthermore, SAM and transnational NGOs intentionally frame the issue of jeopardizing the indigenous people's health through the impact of the Bakun dam project. The IRN, especially, addresses the numerous ranges of implications - particularly, the risk of waterborne diseases due to the deterioration of downstream water quality, that will severely jeopardize the life of dam-affected people. Diseases such as cholera and diarrhea are the major concern of the indigenous people's health. In addition, as they previously do not receive a proper water supply, the polluted water caused by the dam construction would make the situation worse (William, 1995:6-5). Based on the tactic employed by SAM and the transnational environmental NGOs, and the individual role of foreign journalists, the symbolic pictures of dam-affected people are highlighted and have been successfully framed to attract international attention.

I dedicate the song or "parap" (an offering in song and rice-wine), translated by Jerome Rousseau, sung by a Kenyah grandmother to explicate the suffering of the

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<sup>9</sup> <http://forests.org/indomalay/netpanorama.html>.

indigenous people caused by the Bakun dam project.<sup>10</sup> This song could be viewed as a symbolic protest of the Bakun dam project that might inspire others to understand the hardships these indigenous people face in order to survive.

*“We are happy you came among us.  
For soon, we worry, we may drown  
Because of Bakun.  
We are mourning, due to our problems.  
Share your ideas with us, so we can have courage.  
Please help us, please tell your friend,  
And others in the world outside,  
That we have our problems  
So that you and they can help us, one way or other.  
Please remember us and our plight  
Wherever you go, wherever you may be”*

The third tactic is the leverage politic. This tactic promotes the need for political effectiveness that channels its powerful information and symbolic politics to target actors. In the case of the Bakun dam project, SAM and the transnational environmental organizations have collectively pressured the Multilateral Economic Institutions, the World Bank, IMF and IUCN, and the Malaysian government to change their positions on the large scale dam projects. SAM has contacted the powerful environmental NGOs to get involved with the Bakun dam issues. SAM has invited the IRN, MAB, NBA, the Berne declaration, FIVAS and 120 other environmental NGOs to lobby the Malaysian government and the MEI. As I have stated earlier in this paper, the demonstration of the IRN that represents other NGOs who are members of WCD, has led the protest on WCD sponsors (the WORLD BANK, IMF and IUCN) to fairly accept dam-affected people's views and carry this positive response to the WCD conference. The MEI has been forcefully pressured by the environmental NGOs to accept views from dam-affected people and encourage the MEI to refer to the environmental guidelines produced by the research studies on the impacts of big dam projects. This persuasive tactic is fruitful, as the MEI has changed its mind to accept the alternative of energy resources and the guideline for future decisions on the big dam projects' investment. In fact, the environmental guideline has great ideas on energy innovation, which emphasize solar and wind energies that might attract the MEI to invest in the research and development programs for future energy resources. Another significant contribution regarding the understanding of leverage politics is the success of the transnational environmental organizations in lobbying the ABB to terminate the agreement with the Malaysian government regarding the Bakun dam project. The termination of the agreement between the ABB and the Malaysian government has tremendously affected Malaysia's decision to continue building the Bakun dam project. As a result, the Malaysian government has to announce the reevaluation of this mega project.

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<sup>10</sup>Rousseau, Jerome, in “The Bakun Hydro-electric project and resettlement: a failure of planning”. Conference on the Bakun project, Kuala Lumpur, December 2-3, 1995.

The fourth tactic is the accountability politic. This tactic is used to expose the distance between discourse and practice (Keck & Sikkink, 1998:24). The transnational networks will make use of statements or reports by the government or other actors that contradict with practice. The available statements or reports made by the government or other actors will be used to question their accountability if their practice diverts from their discourse. This exposure could embarrass government and other actors that might try to cover the revealing facts. Based on the Bakun dam issues, the transnational environmental organizations have questioned the accountability of the ABB that claims to promote sustainable development and secure environments. The transnational networks have used the ABB's 1994 report entitled "*ABB Environmental Management Programs*" that claimed to protect environments as among company's top priorities. Yet, the practice diverted from its discourse when the ABB signed the \$5.4 billion agreement with the Malaysian government on the Bakun dam mega project. The transnational environmental networks sent a letter to the ABB's senior executive and warned that the company's involvement in the large-scale dam had directly contradicted its principal stand on sustainable development. The networks also provided the research findings on the environmental impact and the destruction of the indigenous people's societal structure. The tactic to expose the contradiction between discourse and practice as to question the accountability of the ABB, resulted in the termination of the agreement and strict evaluation on the Bakun dam project.

## **Conclusion**

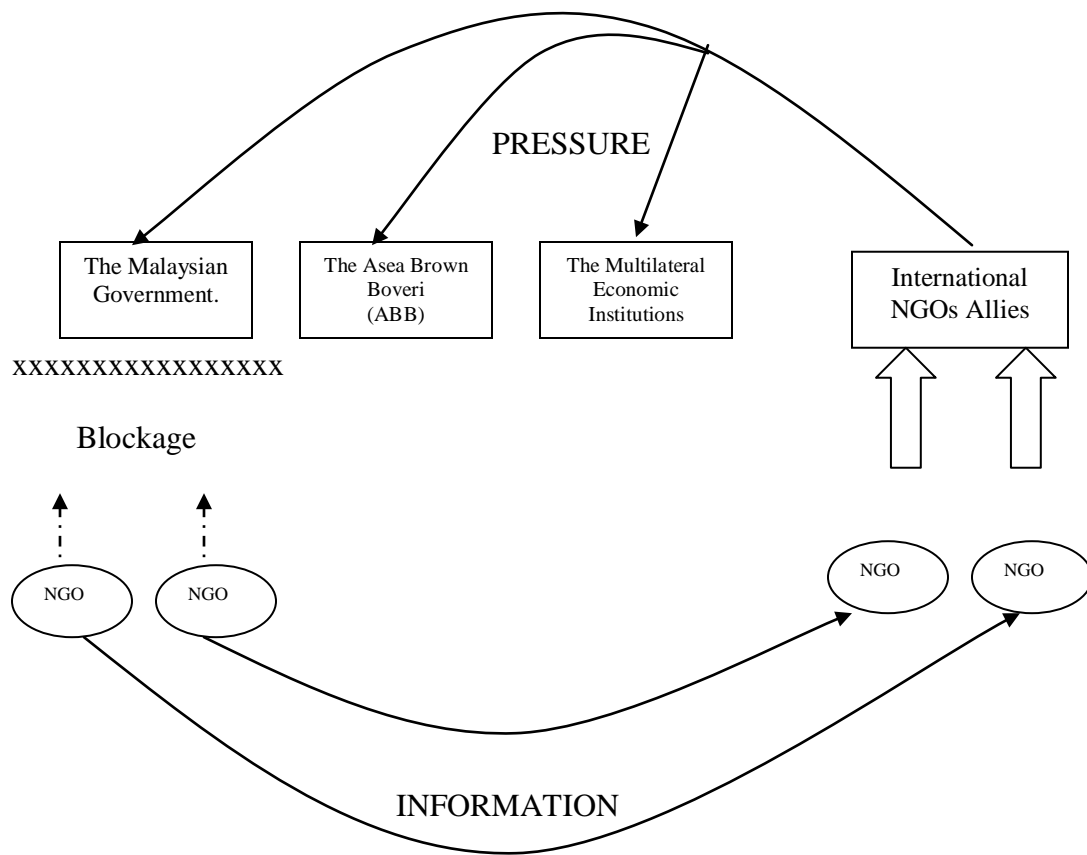
Overall, the application of four persuasion tactics employed by the environmental networks has contributed significantly to reevaluation of the Bakun dam project. The information politic, symbolic politic, leverage politic, and accountability politic, have immensely provided strategies to enforce the MEI, the Malaysian government, and the ABB to change their positions on the environmental issues. Although SAM and other domestic NGOs are less capable in terms of financial support, manpower, and face some political and legal constraints, effective cooperation with the environmental worldwide networks has helped domestic NGOs to achieve their goals: to protect environments and dam-affected people. As the international and domestic environmental organizations share similar environmental values, this factor has united them to mutually exchange ideas, information, and stand together to challenge the institutions.

Global networks direct their efforts and strategies to create pressure to the government. They exchange information, share findings of their research on the impact of big dam projects, and rally supports from various environmental groups to alert the state actors that the impacts of large-scale dams on environment and dam-affected people are crucial. Although global networks have a great influence to create awareness to people, international organizations, and private institutions, the state actors' decision and authority might overcome or overrule the external pressure.

In addition to the application of the four persuasive tactics, Figure 1, the boomerang pattern will explain how the process works even though this pattern has been reconstructed to fit in the Bakun dam analysis. When global networks are connected, they are more likely to spread ideas, share knowledge and information to facilitate their

agenda on building cases against big-dam projects. In addition, they also facilitate and mobilize pooling of resources that can be invested in conducting conferences and research on big-dam project and environmental impacts. Wide global networks help members access to broad sources of information and improve ways to influence state's actors.

**Figure 1** The Boomerang pattern on the Bakun dam project by global networks



The Boomerang model illustrated by Keck and Sikkink emphasizes that domestic NGOs are blocked by the national government and seek help from two distinct actors, another powerful foreign state and international NGO allies. On the contrary, model illustrated in Figure 1 has to exclude the foreign state as an actor, in order to fit in the Bakun case analysis. Therefore, based on Figure 1, SAM has been blocked by the Malaysian government to address the environmental impact on the Bakun dam project. SAM locates the powerful networks to deal with these issues. During this process, SAM exchanges and transfers information to the international allies to review and evaluate the potential consequences of the Bakun dam project. The international allies who are members of WCD, comprising of IRN, NBA, MAB, the Berne Declaration, FIVAS, and 120 NGOs all over the world, helped SAM to campaign for the severe environmental and social

structure effect on the Bakun dam project. After numerous WCD conferences and studies conducted on eight large dams, the international allies together with SAM have put pressure on the ABB and the Malaysian government to reevaluate the mega project. Furthermore, the information provided by the WCD research studies on large-scale dams has significantly changed the MEI positions on the environmental issues, and the guideline on alternatives resource energy would attract MEI to invest in new energy projects.

Furthermore, SAM and the transnational networks have succeeded in several ways such as, framing issues in ways that make them fit into particular institutions venues, using information and symbols to reinforce their claims, identifying targets and seeking leverage over powerful actors to influence the Malaysian government and MEI. Their actions have caused a few changes, such as procedural change at the international and domestic levels in prohibiting the MEI from funding any large dam projects in the future, and encouraging the ABB to reject the agreement with the Malaysian government that entails in turn the reevaluation of the Bakun dam project. These significant behavioral changes in Malaysia and MEI have dispersed and influenced other state actors to avoid planning and building large-scale dam projects. In fact, the WDC's proposal on alternatives energy has contributed new ideas for MEI and states actors to seek alternative energy for generating development projects. Consequently, SAM and transnational advocacy networks have gained success in influencing, lobbying, affecting, and promoting change within the national states actors and international institutions actors towards policy development.

Besides the boomerang strategy and the four persuasion tactics, there are other underlying issues that have been addressed along the discussion. Although the Bakun dam has been debated extensively and the outcome is satisfying, the need for greater openness and transparency in domestic political sphere is a fundamental requirement in viewing the environmental issues. In fact, the merits of a project such as the Bakun dam project should be publicly debated. It is well established that the effectiveness and legitimacy of environmental impact assessment and related decision-making processes are closely dependent on the openness and transparency of the policy process.

In Malaysia, however, this debate, and public discussion generally, has been hindered by restricted access to information and limitations on media coverage of opposing views. This is partly because the political environment hindered the open debate that led to abandon the important impacts on the environments and indigenous societal structure. Essential information concerning the project has often been inaccessible. For example, the 17 feasibility and design studies made on the Bakun dam project since it was first discussed remained classified under the Official Secret Act. Therefore, lack of public access to information and discussion became a major focus of controversy between 1994 and 1996 (Spires, 1995:23).

Furthermore, official publications only provide indications of government and project proponent perspectives on the controversy. These publications aim to demonstrate that the project will have a range of positive benefits for Malaysian and those directly affected. The government even asserts that the dam would have environmental benefits including less air pollution, flood control, reduced soil erosion, parks and wildlife sanctuaries. On the other hand, the environmental evaluation evidences from the IRN shows contradictory environmental impacts from the government report. As Patrick

McCully notes, "...the benefits the government provides are regularly exaggerated" (Borneo Post,1993:18). Consequently, the absence of open accountability within the government and the private sector allows the crony-capital to seek large profits from the disastrous Bakun dam projects that potentially will benefit them.

To sum up this point, in the face of the persistent obstacles enforced through legal device, the issue of openness, transparency, and public debate are fundamental to the effectiveness of civil society: the non-governmental organizations. The need for greater openness, transparency, and accountability in decision-making regarding the mega projects that involve the environmental aspects are substantially necessary to ensure that the consequences of the policy design are not going to deprive other people and environments. In addition, Malaysia needs to change its political perspective to one that will encourage more open-mindedness of freedom of information dissemination, public debates, and the growth of civil society.

In fact, Malaysia still needs to invest in environmental research study, as it proves to be internationally attractive to the worldwide organizations. Besides, the environmental issues are powerful enough to change the ambitious government's goal and finally leave the Malaysian government in a destructive financial loss of the initial investment due to the reevaluation of the Bakun dam project. Despite global networks and the boomerang tactics to persuade the government of Malaysia to reevaluate the Bakun-dam project, they failed to convince the Malaysian government to put a stop on the project. Continuously, issues on heavy sedimentation indicate a serious affect on the useful lifespan of the dam because it will reduce the volume of water and capacity of the dam.<sup>11</sup> Another concern associated to the Bakun-dam project is the Bakun submarine cables; a proposed undersea cables that will be the longest global link. The integrity of this investment project has been questioned to whether or not it will safeguard local interest especially when job opportunities will be largely open to foreign workers.<sup>12</sup>

Although the boomerang tactics provide a feasible framework to analyze the global networks role and impact, consistency and continuity to redefine and readdress the issue is substantial to maintain global endorsements. Local networks have to maximize the use of global networks to deter projects that produce hazard to environments and humans. Therefore, persuasive arguments are substantially necessary to formulate new ideas and to produce a set of implications that show the vulnerability of the big-dam project to people who are affected directly and indirectly.

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<sup>11</sup>New doubts over Malaysia's Bakun Dam, by Anil Netto, Southeast Asia, Jul 10, 2001. [http://www.atime.com/atimes/Southeast\\_Asia/IGI0Ae\)1.html](http://www.atime.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/IGI0Ae)1.html)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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