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**Media critiques on the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) program:  
A critical discourse perspective**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study is a critical discourse analysis (CDA) on the media critiques on the implementation of the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) program. The study is aimed at describing the socio-cultural practices of the news items in the mass media about the MIFEE program. The sociocultural practice analysis is a CDA in the macro level, which is related to contexts outside the texts. Contexts, in this case, include situational contexts, i.e. related to a specific society, culture, or polity. The study is qualitative research; data sources are news items about critiques to the MIFEE; data collection is done by the listening and note taking technique; and data analyses are done by the pragmatic equivalence method. The study is backed by content and semantic data validities. Reliability of the study is assessed by intra- and inter-rater reliability techniques. Findings show that critiques to the MIFEE program can be described under five categories, namely: 1) critiques on the disruption of the forest ecosystem, 2) critiques on the system of the local food, 3) critiques on the violation of human rights, 4) critiques on land forfeiture, and 5) critiques on the failure of the MIFEE program.

**Keywords:** MIFEE, food resilience, indigeneous culture

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**INTRODUCTION**

Food resilience is a discourse that becomes a focus in every period of the Indonesian governments. The discourse has become a government program since the era of the colonial government until those of the Od Order, New Order, and Remormation. The food resilience program is believed to have great influence on the life of the people at large in the economic, political, social, and cultural aspects. The *Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate* (MIFEE) program is one of the historical records of food resilience in Indonesia and the world. This large program, which takes place in Merauke, involves the participation of many parties including the Government, investors, and indigeneous land owners. There are a large number of stake interests in this program; not only concerning with rice self-provision but also with politics and market opportunities.

Agricultural questions and food resilience in Indonesia and world-wide have become topics of concerns by writers and researchers, For example, Scott (2017) states that agricultural development occurs, in fact, in places with abundance of resources. In many textbooks, Susan (2007), in *Food for Beginner*, Jamthani (2008) in *Lambung Pangan Menata Ulang Kebijakan Pangan* [Food Estate Restructuring Food Policy], Kudhori (2008) in *Ironi Negeri Beras* [Irony of the Rice Country], McMahon (2013) in *Feeding Frenzy: the New Politics of Food*, and McMichael (2021) in *Food Regimes and Agraria Questions* discuss everything that is related to food resilience in Indonesia and the world. More specifically, studies on food resilience and the MIFEE program have also been conducted. Savitri (2013), in *Corporations and the Politics of Land Acquisition*, discusses much about the MIFEE program and all the impacts that it raises. Santosa (2015), in "Acceleration of the Development of Food Estate to Elevate the National Food Resilience and Self-provision" discusses the MIFEE program from the angle of views of economic policies.

This article describes program implementation that is deemed not maximal and inclined to be slow so that efforts are needed for alternative solutions in order that MIFEE can become a historical

record of food development in Indonesia and the world. Meanwhile, the study conducted by Ramadayanti (2020) from the perspectives of legal laws, “Efforts in the Protection of the Rights of the Indigenous People after One Decade of the MIFEE Program through Citizen Law Suits”, is conducted by using the normative judicial method and science-based legal law analyses. The study presents the effective law suits in demanding the responsibilities of the state. Citizen law suits are used to sue the Government for things that are regarded as negligent in fulfilling the rights of the people. In a wider scope, the mass media have also given information, reviews, and criticisms concerning the MIFEE program from various views and backgrounds. The mass media are also seen as an effective medium to launch such campaigns. Analyses of such media become important discourses to be studied.

The present study is focused on media criticism issued on the MIFEE program. From this study, it is expected that it will be known the angles of views of the media in looking at this program. Discourses on the MIFEE program will be analyzed by using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. This approach contains the concept that language, as a form of social practices, has an interactive impact that is often not felt by man (Fairclough, 1989), (van Dijk, 1984), and (Wodak, 1996). When language is more generally seen as part of an action, linguistic analyses will be generally seen as something that is done by man on and with another man and the world (Graham, 2018). Fairclough, (1992) divides this analytical study into three parts. First, use of discourses refers to the linguistic use as a social practice so that it produces a number of implications. Discourses are categorized into three dimensions; namely: 1) *texts*, 2) discourse practices, and 3) sociocultural practices. Secondly, texts are analyzed by looking at the words, semantics, and sentence structures. Discourse practices belong to the dimension that is related to the production and consumption of texts. In this dimension, the interpretation of a text is based on the production, dissemination, and use of texts. In the production phase, analyses will be concerned with those who are involved in the text production (who produces the text). Analyses can be done from the smallest stage to the biggest (capital owners). Analyses of the text dissemination are used to know what media are utilized to discharge the texts. Differences in the media to distribute the texts will bring about different impacts. In the consumption phase, analyses are used to know what parties become the consumers or readers of the text. Third, the sociocultural practice concerns with analyses of the macro stage which deals with contexts outside the text. In this case, contents can include the cultural and political situations of a particular society. Analytical levels can cover situational, institutional, or social aspects. In this study, the sociocultural practice becomes the main focus of discussion. The question can be phrased as how the MIFEE program is represented by the media.

The CDA approach is often used to dismantle authority controls. Controls may not necessarily be physical in forms, but they can also be mental or psychological (Eriyanto, 2006). The dominant group tries to make the lower group to behave as the former does. They can do it because they have the access such as money, knowledge, position, or higher education. The role of CDA researchers is to try to negate and emphasize various authority relations which are full of overlaps and show how life is supposed to proceed. Researchers expose criticisms on the slacking system of the authority and the structure which is dominating or oppressing (Neuman, 2002). CDA researchers are not positivistic in that research must be value free in front of the research subjects. On the contrary, critical analyses do begin from a specific view or value held by the researcher (Neuman, 2002). The researcher’s siding and position on the discourse being studied will determine the results of the interpretation of the discourse. Values and morality become a primary foundation of the CDA research such as when there is a discrepancy in the position of women as compared to that of men. A CDA researcher is like an activist who is struggling for the rights of the oppressed and has commitment to what is being fought for. The use of CDA studies is to uncover unbalanced social practices and find negation processes of the real social relations, dismantle myths, and show how life should be (Denzin, Norman K., Lincoln, 2017; Neuman, 2002). CDA research can change an unbalanced world, a world dominated by the authority, revealing authority that is used to oppress the marginal group. Fairclough’s views on explanatory critiques and critical language awareness are oriented towards these foregoing in the intent to divulge authority relations for the sake of social changes that are egalitarian.

MIFEE program studies have been carried out by several researchers. The MIFEE program study was conducted by Savitri (2013). This study discusses the MIFEE program using an economic policy perspective. Santosa (2014) discusses the implementation of programs that are considered not optimal and tend to be slow, so it is necessary to find alternative solutions so that MIFEE can record history in

the development of food in Indonesia and the world. Ramadayanti (2020) examines this program from a legal perspective. The three studies looked at the MIFEE program from an economic, policy and legal perspective. In contrast to this research, MIFEE studies through Critical Discourse Analysis, especially media criticism of this program, have never been carried out. Through this research, it will be seen how the media represents the MIFEE program and how the media positions itself in relation to this program. This research will add to the study of the MIFEE program using a different perspective.

## METHOD

The study was designed in the frame of descriptive qualitative research. By using the descriptive qualitative research method, intended information can be obtained concerning the phenomena experienced by the research subjects, holistically and descriptively, in the forms of words and sentences, within a specific natural context, using various natural methods (Moleong, 2007). Through this descriptive qualitative research approach, the present study was aimed at revealing the phenomena of media critiques on the *Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate* (MIFEE) program which can be used for evaluation purposes for many parties. Data resources for the study were news items about the MIFEE program in the international news site of *Mongabay* (*mongabay.com*), national magazine news of *Tempo* (*tempo.com*), and online news portals (*suara.com*). The determination of this media is based on the reason that the media can represent various parties. In addition, the media is considered capable of presenting news accurately and reliably. *Mongabay* is an independent news media focused on environmental issues, nature conservation and sustainability. *Mongabay's* vision is to provide a better understanding of biodiversity and global environmental issues to the wider community. *Tempo* is known for its commitment to journalistic integrity, independence and quality reporting. The media plays an important role in conveying news, promoting transparency and contributing to public discourse. *Suara.com* is known for its comprehensive coverage of political developments in Indonesia, including election news, government policies and political analysis. These three media are independent media owned by the private sector. The data sources for this research were news discourse about the *Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate* (MIFEE) Program, totaling 23 news items obtained from 12 international online news sources (*Mongabay*), 9 national online news sources (*Kompas*), 4 online news portal (*Suara.com*). Data was collected when the MIFEE program was launched (2010) until now (2023).

The research data were sociocultural practice news about the MIFEE program. The sociocultural practice analysis is a CDA in the macro level, which is related to contexts outside the texts. Contexts, in this case, include situational contexts, i.e. related to a specific society, culture, or polity. The research instruments were human instruments, the researchers, who collected data, analyzed the data, interpreted results of the data analyses, and reported the research findings. The Fairclough model indicators of discourse indicators was used for the data management. The analysis is divided into three dimensions, namely text analysis (linguistic analysis) by paying attention to vocabulary, semantics and sentences. Next, the analysis will be continued by including cohesion and cohesiveness, how words and sentences are combined to form a unified discourse. And the next dimension is the sociocultural practice dimension. This means that the social context outside the media influences how this discourse appears in the media. Data collection was done by listening and note-taking and data were analyzed descriptively quantitatively using the pragmatic equivalence technique. This method is used because the research data relates to contexts outside language, which are related to media criticism. Data were validated by content validity and semantic validity. Content validity is considered capable of expressing the concepts to be measured, namely the textual aspects of media criticism of the MIFEE program. Meanwhile, semantic validity is used to interpret data taking into consideration whole meanings to discover aspects of discourse and socio-cultures.

The reliability measure of the study was estimated by intrarater reliability; i.e. re-examining the data repeatedly scrutinizing on the text meaning and aspect related to the research foci till accuracy of data understanding is reached. Meanwhile, data reliability was reached by inter-rater proceedings of discussions with colleagues to look at the correctness of the interpretations in the data analyses. From the two reliability measures, it was expected that the maximal number of data and aspects of the research problems could be gathered in order to obtain the maximal number of accurate research interpretations and findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The involvements of the Government and the private sectors, domestically and overseas, have been highly dominant in the MIFFE program. Interventions from the private parties were so influential on the Government policies to the point that a variety of rules and regulations were issued providing much ease and monetary facilities, tax holidays, and commitment to provide land as much as needed. This mega project has become an interest for various parties, unexceptionally the media. Looking at the many disparities felt in the project, the media then tried to persuade all parties to re-look, review, and evaluate the MIFFE program.

*Mongabay* as the international mass media, *Tempo* as the national mass media, and *suara.com* as the local mass media provide criticism of this program. *Mongabay* is an independent news media focused on environmental issues, nature conservation and sustainability. Founded in 1999 by Rhett A. Butler, *Mongabay* operates as a non-profit organization and maintains a website that provides environment-related news, articles, reports and information. *Mongabay's* vision is to provide a better understanding of biodiversity and global environmental issues to the wider community. The *Mongabay* website offers extensive coverage of issues such as deforestation, climate change, biodiversity, renewable energy, conservation and a variety of other environmental topics. *Mongabay* aims to provide its readers with accurate, balanced and reliable information. This media seeks to bridge the gap in understanding environmental issues, educate the public about the importance of nature conservation, and encourage sustainable actions to protect biodiversity and environmental sustainability. Through its wide and in-depth coverage, *Mongabay* is an important source of information for scientists, environmental activists, policy makers, and the general public concerned with environmental issues. *Tempo* Media is renowned for its commitment to journalistic integrity, independence, and quality reporting. It plays a vital role in the Indonesian media landscape by delivering news, promoting transparency, contributing to public discourse, and holding those in power accountable. *Suara.com* is known for its comprehensive coverage of political developments in Indonesia, including election news, government policies, and political analysis. These three media are independent media owned by the private sector.

Discussion of CDA with the focus on inter-textuality is always hand-in-hand with authority relations so that the analysis of inter-textuality relations with hegemony becomes important (Munfarida, 2014). The relation between a text and another is complementary in nature so that texts influence each other in each meaning. The media saw various impacts caused by the MIFEE program. One of the important roles of the mass media is to examine the power possessed by the government. A story is written because an event (text) occurs. In connection with this incident, the media criticized this program. The critiques of the media on the MIFFE program are categorized as follows: 1) critiques on the disruption of the forest ecosystem, 2) critiques on the system of the local food, 3) critiques on the violation of human rights, 4) critiques on land forfeiture, and 5) critiques on the failure of the MIFFE program. The purpose of the mass media in criticizing the government is not to create tension or damage relations with the government. Instead, the mass media aim to act as independent watchdogs that play a critical role in maintaining the balance of power and ensuring that governments act in the best public interest.

### Discussion

#### *Critiques on the Disruption of the Forest Ecosystem*

The purposes of the MIFEE program is, among others, to manage the forest land to become industry-oriented plantation and farm lands. The media and researchers, however, see this as a threat to the people and and ecosystem of Papua. Through the project, government and foreign investors have claimed the land as their own possession. There is no appropriate solution to replace the forest as life resources for people and the indigenous people. The following shows quotations of the impacts of what the MIFEE project has done to the forests in Merauke.

*Kala MIFEE Hancurkan Hutan Merauke dan Singkirkan Suku Malind* [When MIFEE Destroys the Forests of Merauke and Dislocates the Malind Tribe]

(*Mongabay*, 21 October 2012)

*WALHI: Hutan dan Masyarakat Adat Papua Terancam Proyek [WALHI: Forests and Indigeneous Customs of Papua Endangered by Project]*

(Mongabay, 3 August 2021)

The text titles above position the forest as an object that receives impacts from the MIFEE project. The words “destroy” and “endanger” refers to the negative impacts of the project. The media regard that the project of food resilience in the name of development has caused damages to the forest ecosystem. The Marind tribe, in the village of Zanegi, Animba district, Merauke regency, has lost their access to make use of the natural richness and forest products. The forest for them is a life living, land of their ancestors. When the forest is gone, they not only lose their life environment, but they lose everything. Besides becoming their sources of foods which provide sago, hunted animals, fruits, and other living needs, the forest, in the Malind-Anim cosmology, is also regarded as “mother” as associated with the giver of life and religious gate to connect with the gods and goddesses in the middle of the forest. Various other activities to make important decisions are also done in the middle of the forest. The relation between the tribal people and the forest can also be seen from the meaning of the clans using plant symbols; for example, the name Gebze is symbolized by the coconut tree, Samkakai by the kangaroo, Mahuze by sago, Kaize by the kasuari, or Basik-basik whose clan identity is represented by the boar (King et al., 2011).

In structured ways, and using legal bases, the Government and investors seize the rights of these indigeneous people of their land and forests. A variety of techniques are used by the corporations to manipulate, intimidate, and invent ploys to snatch the land belonging to the people. Moreover, even the area of the Sagu village that has a historical value is impacted by the project. People find difficulties in getting hunted animals, fishing, and clean water sources. The disruption of the forest ecosystem also has an impact on food intakes which can cause poor nutrition. The compensating money cannot restore the quality of the life of the Malin tribe as before.

Plantation projects always involve large corporations or investors because such projects are backgounded by the promises of big profits which become the key factor in the political economy of plantation in Indonesia (Li & Semedi, 2021). The MIFEE program is not separated from the history of agricultural economy in Asia. Marx (in Wittfogel, 1967) explains that agricultural economy is based on the absence of individual property rights because all ownership of land belongs to the authority and because of regional economic autonomy systems. Marx states that the geographical conditions of Asian countries support this political economic system; only the strong centred authority can provide the agricultural agrarian system. This Asian “production mode” that lasts in the other Eastern countries like China and Rusia is the basis of oriental depositism. Oriental depositism does not happen just like that because the hydrolic agricultural leaders are influential people. Embryos of depositism arise when people of authority begin to afford to obtain extra incomes by maximizing earnings, or being ‘greedy’, instead of maximizing production. —“Terror is the inevitable consequence of the rulers’ resolve to uphold their own and not the people’s rationality optimum” (Wittfogel, 1967).

The threat to the disruption of the forest ecosystem is initiated by the fact that land acquisition of the food resilience program is supported by the issuance of the Decree of the Environmental Minister Number 24 Year 2020 about the Provision of Forest Area for the Development of Food Estate. This regulation states that the provision of land for the development of food estate projects may be done on protected and/or productive forest areas. This policy is the same as making it legal deforestation in the name of food resilience. The land area used for providing land for the food estate project can reach millions of hectares. If this is realized, the value of the logged trees will reach hundreds of trillions of rupiahs, and will cause damage to a vast area of natural forests.

If the MIFEE program is continued, it will not only disrupt the forest ecosystem, but it will also become a threat to all. According to Crook and Short (in McDonnell, 2021), state that grows with a spirit of capitalism becomes the main factor of ecocides. The main motivator of capitalism is the drive to collect capitals so that other things, including social relations, are not priorities. But, this is true not only for capitalism; colonialism is also genocide since it is a process of systematic domination in the forms of the taking over of authority area and/or behaviours of a group or individual. Under a capitalist

system, the taking over of authority is followed up by the running of industrial activities by national and international corporations which cause ecological destructions.

West Papua has a long and unique history of colonialization and genocide. Colonialization in West Papua happens in three phases of colonialization, decolonialization, and recolonialization. The genocide that happens in West Papua is relatively unknown or, as it can be said, ignored.—“West Papua has a unique and extensive history of colonization and genocide. Its history of colonization can be considered one of “colonisation, decolonisation and recolonization,” and its history of genocide is relatively unknown by many or perhaps, ignored” (McDonnell, 2021). Furthermore, analyses about genocides in West Papua can be made more specific. The genos in West Papua consist of various indigenous tribes so that each genocide brings about a different impact to the tribes. — “Therefore, when using a culturally-centred and ecologically-engaged genocide lens each colonial policy and project can be analyzed as genocidal in relation to the specific indigenous group(s) it impacts, because each group also displays a unique genos” (McDonnell, 2021). This means that, when using the approach that is centred on cultures and involves ecology and from the view of genocide, every colonial policy and project can be regarded as genocide in relation to the particular impacted group. The culture-centred approach lays an emphasis on the importance of understanding and respecting the values of the cultures, practices, and knowledge of the indigenous people. In this context, when a colonial policy or project is carried out without paying attention to or respecting the cultures and knowledge of the indigenous people, it can be regarded as an act of genocide. Such policy or project may have the purpose to ruin cultural identities, eliminate traditional practices, or persecute indigenous people physically or culturally. Approaches that are based on ecology, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of considering the inter-relations among the indigenous groups and their natural environments. In this context, a colonial policy or project that disrupts ecosystems which are vital for the indigenous tribes, such as destroying the natural resources which are important for the running of their life, can be regarded as genocide because it may cause the threat of the extinction of the tribe. In addition, the previous statement also mentions that every indigenous group experiences a unique genocide. This means that the impacts of colonialism in the indigenous tribes cannot be regarded in general; i.e. they must be analyzed in the specific contexts of every group. Different ethnic groups may face different threats of genocides in regards to different cultures, geographical locations, histories, and the natures of their relation with their natural environments. In summary, it can be stated that, by using the approaches that are based on cultures and ecology and the view of genocide, a colonial policy or project can be analyzed as a genocidal attempt on a specific indigenous group as every other group also experiences a unique genocide depending on their cultural identities and relations with their natural environments.

### ***Critiques on the Local Food System***

The Sago tree or *rumbia* can be much found in various places in Indonesia. In the eastern regions of Indonesia, the sago tree is used as a source of the main food for the people. Sago is identical to the staple food of the Papuans. The process of making the sago begins with the cutting down of the sago tree which is 15 to 20 years old; i.e. when it reaches its maximum growth. Sago can be made into *papeda*, sago flake, roasted sago, sago flake coconut sugar, roasted sago coconut, etc. Sago is also the main ingredient for various cakes, biscuits, noodles, chips, syrups, etc. Sago is the food system for the Marind people of Papua. Since the running of the MIFEE program, they find sago difficult to get.

*‘Kelapa Sawit Membunuh Sagu’: Kondisi Suku Marind Papua Jadi Tesis Terbaik di Australia.*  
[‘Oil palm kills sago’: The condition of the Marind Tribe in Papua Becomes the Best Thesis in Australia.]

(Tempo, 30 July 2020)

The title of the news item above depicts that the MIFEE program has a direct impact on the food resilience of the local inhabitants. The use of the metaphor ‘Oil palm kills sago’ is an indirect critique; because of the MIFEE project, sago, which is the staple food of the people, is difficult to find. This problem attracts the attention of researchers in anthropology. Chao (2020), an Australian anthropologist, carries out a study about the impacts of the deforestation and expansion of the oil palm plantation on the local inhabitants in the MIFEE program. Before the presence of the MIFEE program, the forest is a source of foods like sago, kasuari, boar, and fish. People treat the forest, trees, and animals as part of

their family so that they have emotional relations culturally among the natural creatures. The Marind tribe and their forests are linked together and are unseparable. According to Chao (Chao, 2018), the forest is not just a resource that they can use, but is also life in itself.

The MIFEE program is not only an expansion of oil palm plantation in the eastern region of Indonesia, but there are also other varieties of plants, such as rice. In general, the government of Indonesia sees MIFEE as a plantation mega project that makes rice the backbone of the state revenue. The total area of the land is divided into 50% for the food estate, 20% for the oil palm industry, and 30% for the cane sugar industry. The food estate consists of several clusters of rice, corn, beans, and fruits. This will have an impact on the change of the food consumption pattern from sago to rice. Trends to the consumption pattern has happened since a few decades back because of the boom of the conversion of forests into rice fields and incoming of the food subsidy with the main commodity of rice.

The problems of agriculture and food resilience in Indonesia and the world draw the attention of writers and researchers; such as (Scott, 2017) who states that the development of agriculture runs exactly in areas with abundant resources and that there is no strong evidence for the association of the beginning of agriculture and food crises; “finally, there appears to be no firm evidence associating early cultivation with the disappearance of either game animals or forage” (Scott, 2017). Scott assesses the theory that agriculture is done as a the only response to food shortage is not satisfactory; but there has not been any alternative which is more admissible. According to Scott, cereal cultivation has a lot of influence on the success in the formation of young countries because only cereal can be subjected to taxation.— “The key to the nexus between grains and states lies, I believe, in the fact that only the cereal grains can serve as a basis for taxation: visible, divisible, assessable, storable, transportable, and ‘rationable’” (Scott, 2017). There are three reasons for cereal cultivation in the earlier countries. First, cereal grows in a land piece that must be harvested at the same time. In contrast, cassava or potato, for example, have a longer range of harvest time; and if they are harvested too early, it will raise a loss because they decay fast. Besides, the control to the farmers is easier to do; i.e. by burning down the crop that is ready to harvest so that there is no other choice for them than to move out. The state can also force a certain technique of planting to intensify harvest so that estimation of taxes can be made even before harvest time. To avoid the possibility of tax evasion, the state usually regulates irrigation so that farmers cannot run ahead of the planting schedule. The second reason is the ease in distribution and the third the ease in large-scale transporting. What is said by Scott above is practised by the government, without considering the local wisdom of the regional inhabitants (Merauke). People are forced to shift the staple food from sago to rice.

According to the historical records, change of the food consumption patterns happens in coincidence with various projects of the opening of rice fields commenced by the Dutch government in the district of Kurik in 1955. These projects are then followed by the implementation of transmigration programs in the 1970s. Parts of the Merauke area impacted by the transmigration locations start to know rice as staple food. Change of the food pattern from sago to rice happens after 2010 through the MIFEE program. Land of 1,2 million hectares in the Marind Anim area is made into food industries of oil palm and sugar cane and food resilience industries in the form of land opening for corn and bean.

### ***Critiques on Violation of Human Rights***

The running of the MIFEE food resilience project raises various impacts of violences of human rights. In practice, the project involves many transnational corporations which execute eviction, demolition of important objects and places belonging to the indigenous people, torture and violence, pollution of the area, and discrimination of labour forces.

“Organisasi Masyarakat Sipil Bawa Kasus Miffee ke Sidang HAM PBB” [Organization of Civil Society Brings forth MIFEE Cases to Court of Human Rights of UNO]

(Mongabay, 10 June 2015)

A cluster of civil society organizations bring forth a number of cases of the human right violences of the MIFEE project to the first session of the business and human right work forces of UNO in the year 2015. They charge that the project is a corporation agenda to expand the food and energy sector in a massive scale. Various issues are brought up such as that the program is an economic development in

which the government has issued rules and regulations that support and facilitate business corporations to conduct annexation of the land of the indigeneous people.

A case like this has motivated Li and Semedi (Li & Semedi, 2021) to write a book, based on their research, entitled *Hidup Bersama Raksasa* [Living with Giants]. In their views, the plantation is a machine to collect land. The capital and workforce are under the control of the central authority to acquire profits. The plantation is also a piece of political technology which regulates the land and people to become a new subject and a new world. All this undertaking has caused the MIFEE program to impact humanrights violences on the local people. Furthermore, Li and Semedi (Li & Semedi, 2021) state that the language used in the Indonesian Constitution clarifies hierarchies. A number of verses are not centred on the rights of the citizens but on the duties of the state to provide advantages such as peace, prosperity, and development. As it is in the family, the parents have their duties but the children only own a few rights. An implication of this model is that they treat the people like small children so that they are not able to provide protection when the children are in vulnerable positions. The officials, politicians, and indigeneous leaders become supporters of the business companies because they have been controlled by the corporation authorities. Meanwhile, the lower people are left to struggle on their own.

The MIFEE, which is thick with the spirits of colonialism and capitalism, does not at all take into consideration the life of the Malind tribe in Merauke. Deforestation in infrastructure building ruins the entire forest ecosystem, eliminating water and food resources, and increase the pollution of water, land, and air. In the district of Elikobel, the fertilizers used by the MIFEE in their farming land has polluted the river water so that people have to walk five kilometres to get clean water. Many plants in the gardens of these people are dying. In the village of Zanegi, PT Selaris Inti Semesta (PT[Ltd.] SIS), violates the concensus of allowing a space of the radius of two kilometres from the sacred ancestor sites, hunting area, and sago forest but leave a mere 100 to 500 metres. Besides, the massive building activities make air pollution and have an impact on the quality of the sago they plant. Fish of many endemic species perish; and those which endure life change forms. Food crises followed by malnutrition and hunger break out, especially impacting children. In 2013, five babies die because of diseases related to malnutrition. The compensation money intended to buy food to compensate the seizure of the land has stopped since 2011. These impacts are irreparable. Even the solution to “replace” the defoliation of the land is out of sense; i.e. by forcing non-local plants like oil palm. This, instead, has severed the cultural despoliation of the Malind people related to their relation to the sago plant. “[Sago palms] ... are celebrated as symbols and sources of fertility and nourishment. Their propagation defines customary land boundaries and natural resource use within the landscape, producing rooted identities among those who manage, exchange, and consume their starch” (Chao, 2018). This statement shows that the sago palm is highly respected as a symbol of fertility and nourishment. The distribution of the sago plants is used to define the boarders of the tribal area that uses the natural resources in the landscape giving them an identity to manage, exchange, and consume the sago they produce. The sago palm is a plant that has important advantages in the cultures of the people in the different areas. It grows in a large quantity and gives sago flour that is an invaluable food resource. The sago flour is obtained by treating the inner part of the tree trunk. The sago palm is regarded as a fertility symbol because of its ability to grow well in places where other plants can rarely grow. The sago plant is often regarded as a source of fortune and abundant nutrition. Other than that, the sago palm also plays a role in building cultural identities within the societies who rely on the sago as staple food. Besides being a symbol and nourishment source, the distribution of the sago trees also has important social and cultural consequences. Tribal lands and boarders of areas are related to the ditribution of these sago plants. The society who manage, exchange, and consume the sago flour construct a firm identity and tie a strong relation to the natural resources on which they rely. In summary, the sago palm does not only function as a food source, but it also has a deeply rooted function in the cultural, social, and economic aspects in the life of the society who relies on this plant.

### ***Critiques on Land Forfeiture***

Various policies have been issued by the Government in the frame of supporting the success of the MIFEE program. It is unfortunate that the role of the state through the various regulations has, instead, severed the seizures of land and deforestation in Papua.



*Catatan dari Papua: Konflik Agraria Belum Usai, Bagi-bagi Hutan kepada Pemodal Jalan Terus* [Notes from Papua: Agrarian Conflicts are not Over. Rendering of Forests to Investors Goes on]

(Mongabay, 1 Januari 2018)

Agrarian conflicts in Papua are caused by the issuances of various policies such as the rendering of new consents for plantation and mining, for function shifts, and implementation of the agrarian reform without the deliberation and consent from the tribal societies who are holders of the tribal rights. Along 2017, the Government has issued new permits for plantation and mining. The Minister of Life Environment and Forestry gives out the consent for letting the forest areas for oil palm plantations for three companies of oil palm plantation and food industry; namely: PT.[Co Ltd] Bangun Mappil Mandiri in Mappi Regency (18,006 hectares), PT. Agriprima Cipta Persada in Merauke Regency (6,200 hectares), and PT Menara Wasior in Wondama Bay Regency (28,880 hectares). So, the total area given out to the three companies in 2017 is 53.806 hectares wide. Meanwhile, the Government issued another new permit for six mining companies, four of which are in Papua; namely: PT Wira Emas Persada in Nabire (1,242 hectares, PT Aurum Wira Persada in Nabire (13,880 hectares), PT Trident Global Garmino (17, 830 hectares), and PT Madinah Qurrata'ain in Dogiyai (23,340 hectares). These latter four companies are gold exploration companies. (Mongabay, 2018).

These policies are issued as part of the state program *Nawacita* and middle-range program of the Government of President Joko Widodo. These policies are deemed as having violated the constitutional rights and rights of the indigeneous people of Papua because they are made in random ways. In Papua, there still exists the Law Number 21/2001 about Papua Special Autonomy. Verse 43 (item 4) of this Law and its explanation regulates that the provision of the tribal land for any purpose must be through deliberation with the tribal communities in order to form concensus. In practice, however, these policies are decided on without consultation, socialization, and deliberation with the tribal communities as the legal authority and owner of tribal lands. This practice is not in line with the agrarian reformation since it is not oriented to the acknowledgement of protection to rights on lands and solutions to agrarian conflicts. Papuans are not people without land. At present, they are faced with the problems of land seizure and elimination of their access to their own land. Various organizations of civil societies urge the government to stop the seizure of the Papuan land because it is against the constitution and violates the human rights.

Li and Semedi (2021) state that the main characteristic of the extractive rezim, which has long existed in Indonesia, is the ability of the state officials, private cronies, and politicians to plunder anything in any way because they have the authority. It seems that they were invulnerable to the law, institutionalized, and hierarchical. On the contrary, these practices are unclear, regulations are contradictory, space structure programs are incoherent, and accountibilities are low. Furthermore, various statistical calculations that are proposed are not easy to read; but there are domains that are uncalculable because nobody knows exactly the meaning of specific statistics (Mears, 1981).

### ***Critiques on the Failure of the MIFFE Program***

Food resilience programs have been implemented in Indonesia since the time of the Dutch occupation. At first, the Dutch Government formed a food institution, *Stichting Het Voedingsmidlenfonds* (VMF) during the end of April, 1939. The establishment of the VMF was motivated by rice problems that were important and needed special regulation from the government. Subsequently, in the late 1957, there was a sharp rise in the price of rice that had an impact on the decrease of the earning of people who had a fixed income. The Government then took action by launching a policy of rice physical distribution to secure the food needs of the military and civil servants. Another effort was stabilizing the price of rice at the retail level and appealing the indigeneous faction of the people to participate by paying part of their income in the form of rice with the aim to maintain the real earning of the people (Mears, 1981). During the New Order era, Indonesia was able to cover the domestic need of rice (1984) without having to import it and was, even, able to produce rice over the domestic need. The over-production of rice also brought another problem; the spare rice could not be exported because of the higher price than the world price and the quality did not match the standard quality of rice of the world. In this New Order era, the era of President Soeharto, there existed a project of peat moss of one million hectares called the *Mega Rice Project*. This project modified the peat moss to become a farming

area to produce food resources needed by the people. In practice, however, the government was able to harvest rice only once. Meanwhile, the remaining 1,4 million of hectares of the peat moss was wrecked and caused damage in the ecosystem. Then, in the eras of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and President Joko Widodo, there came into being this food resilience program, the MIFEE project. This project has drawn the attention of environmental observers nationally and internationally. The biggest impact of the MIFEE program for the Malind indigeneous tribe is that they lose their living rights.

*Sebut Program Ketahanan Pangan Sejak Soeharto Kerap Gagal karena Ada Aktor Korporasi*  
[Mention Food Resilience Programs since Soeharto has often failed because of the Corporation Actor]

(Suara.com, 28 June 2021)

WALHI [Indonesian Non-governmental Environmental Organization] questions why the Government does not learn from and evaluate the failures of the previous food resilience programs. The present MIFEE program has been laden with political interests. There are corporation actors who intend to acquire big fortunes. The presence of corporations in the agricultural sector can stamp out the life of small farmers. In addition, the main focus of the project is initially the cultivation of rice, corn, bean, and other food plants. In reality, however, currently, the project is controlled by the industries of oil palm cultivation and industrial food forest.

In relation to various programs executed in the name of people's welfare, Harari (2014) gives an explanation that the humanistic root of people is still young and fragile. Up to the present time, according to Harari, man's effort to be happy ends up, instead, in unhappiness. Even although they have made damages of ecosystems everywhere, man actually experiences a lower level of humanity welfare. In such a condition, it is not impossible that scientists end up in making monsters that carry destruction. Now, man is the most authoritative creature on this earth, but this authority is not balanced with responsibility. Besides, happiness is more difficult to achieve and man never comes to feel satisfied. "*Behind the meteoric rise of both science and empire lurks one particularly important force: capitalism*" (Harari, 2014). Harari then concludes the book *Sapiens* with the statement "*Is there anything more dangerous than dissatisfied and irresponsible gods who don't know what they want?*" (Harari, 2014). Various programs that are held by the government and various other parties must not become capitalistic programs which only pursuit to accumulate fortune as much as possible on a production cost as small as possible which, later, brings destruction to various life structures, such as, including that of, the MIFEE. Financial rules and regulations corrode the humanistic side, changing man into robber who sees the world as a commodity that can be sold. The success of life is seen simply as the ability to increase production 5% a year (Graeber, 2011). The spirit of capitalism manufactures giant loan machines, which make debtors do intensifications of productions causing destructions in the social life and ecology of the environments —"*Starting from our baseline date of 1700, then, what we see at the dawn of modern capitalism is a gigantic financial apparatus of credit and debt that operates-in practical effect-to pump more and more labor out of just about everyone with whom it comes into contact, and as a result produces an endlessly expanding volume of material goods*" (Graeber, 2011). Honour, which formerly is attached to every man, after money and debts are found, has become a determiner of authority which is able to legalize the unrooting of esteem of one man by another man.

## CONCLUSION

The various criticisms given by the media to the MIFEE program show that the media has a role to check the power possessed by the government. With criticism, the mass media helps maintain government accountability and transparency. It ensures that the government is held accountable for its actions and decisions to the public. Mass media criticism can force the government to take responsibility for the policies, actions or decisions it makes. The mass media has a role as a watchdog that helps prevent abuse of power, corruption or ethical violations by the government. Mass media criticism can encourage the government to be more transparent in carrying out its duties. Mass media criticism can defend the public interest, express grievances or problems that the government may not pay attention to or ignore, and voice community concerns. Mass media criticism of the government can also serve as a driving force for change and improvement. By identifying weaknesses or deficiencies in government policies

or actions, the mass media can stimulate constructive change, improve the quality of government, or improve existing policies. This research can be continued to find out the public's response to criticism made by the media. The focus could include analysis of participation levels, accessibility of information, mechanisms for public consultation, and the role of communities in decision-making regarding land use and resource allocation.

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