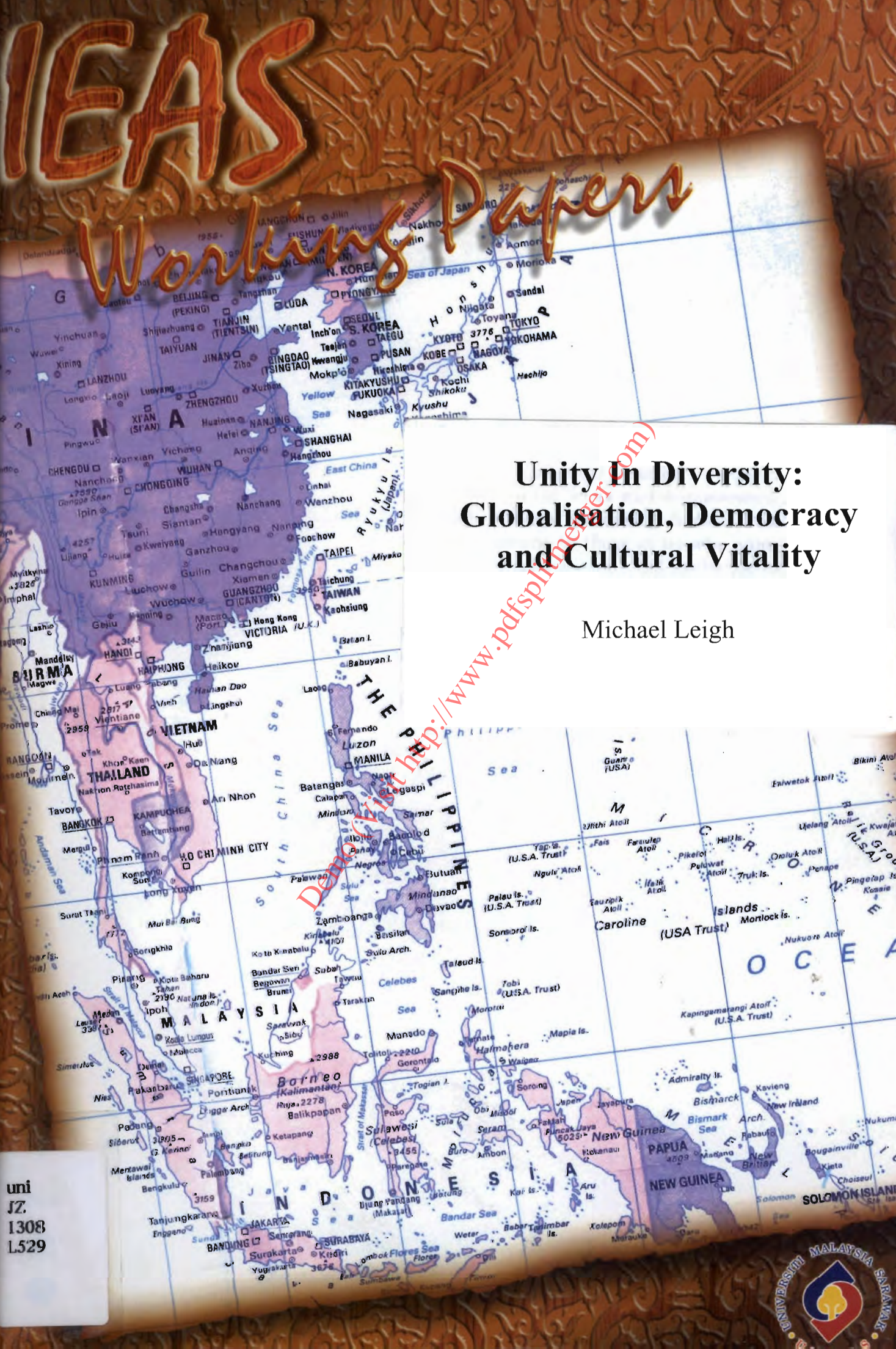


IEAS Working Papers



Unity In Diversity: Globalisation, Democracy and Cultural Vitality

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UNITY IN DIVERSITY: GLOBALISATION, DEMOCRACY AND CULTURAL VITALITY

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This paper focuses upon the highly contested usage of the terms: globalisation, nationalism, democracy and cultural identity – and the interplay of these concepts in a culturally vital society, Sarawak.

Globalisation has the potential to provide unimagined benefits to human kind, as well as to impose unimagined costs on the weak and dispossessed. What globalisation means to a Kurdish refugee wandering homeless in northern Iraq, is very different to what it means to those of us who enjoy almost instant on-line access to a wealth of information, and exchange of ideas.

Politically planet earth is still organized in units known as nations, and it is these nations that are best placed to obstruct or facilitate the processes known as globalisation. The key argument of this paper is that nation-states can only have sufficient strength and integrity to play a positive role if they can expand their democratic basis, and welcome the added strength that flows from fostering cultural vitality.

GLOBALISATION

We are now witnessing the emergence of the global economy in which capital, production, management, markets, labour, information and technology are organized across national boundaries.¹

On the one hand we have those who talk broadly and positively about globalisation as the new reality, reducing the significance of national boundaries and promoting the flow of goods, finance, services, ideas and people too – and of overcoming local idiosyncrasies in a borderless world. A universally free market has made it possible for different cultures and regimes to cooperate without the spread of domination or war, though whether that actually takes place is a different matter. Nations are able to seize the opportunities that arise from this global phenomenon and

¹ See, for instance, Manuel Castells, "The information age and the new international division of labor" in Martin Carnoy *et al.*, *The New Global Economy in the Information Age*, Pennsylvania University Press, 1993 p. 18.