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# **Democratization and Causes of Public Participation in Macau: from 2009-2014**

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## I. Introduction

There is a remarkable phenomenon that People's Republic of China (PRC), with a population of over 13 million, seldom provokes chaotic issues that leads to serious social instability. Chinese citizens, for most of the time, acknowledge the authority of the state and obey its law regardless of how it is against their own inclination and interests. The underlying factor that triggers such "harmonious" atmosphere is undoubtedly the authoritarian system adopted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of the PRC. Back to post-1949 era when Mao Zedong established a so-called "new democracy"<sup>1</sup>, he intended to recruit representatives over the society and to form various consultative groups. By engaging people at different society level into the political arena, it stimulated people to modernize and industrialize China (Brown, 2011). Yet such ideal situation did not come true and what even worse was that the infrastructure of elections, different political parties and potential sources of power that lay beyond the control of CCP were all removed. The CCP thus dominated the key areas of people's political, legal and increasingly, economic and social life. Not until 1978 when Deng Xiaoping emerged a step-by-step reform<sup>2</sup>, it focused on the necessary tasks of modernizing its agriculture, handling its relations with foreign countries, and, most

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<sup>1</sup> Kerry, B. (2011). *Ballot Box China: Grassroots Democracy in the Final Major One-Party State* (*Asian Arguments*). London: Zed Book Ltd., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew, G. W. (1988). *Communist Neo-Traditionalism*. University of California Press, p. 228.

importantly, enforcing the “open-door” policy which involved a larger extent of democracy to retrieve its economy as the first priority (Walder, 1988). Chinese leaders nowadays are more willing to talk about “democracy”; the only difference is they define such western ideology in its own way. The top leaders promote a strong rationale that they are mandate to govern its people rather than to enforce a one party dictatorship. PRC leaders are still strictly bounded by the long-established one party principle and the CCP, after several decades of establishment, remains by far the most powerful party within the PRC. It controls the People’s Congresses, the government and the court with an unchallengeable position.

Macau, being the special administrative region (SAR) in China, enjoys a high degree of autonomy in accordance to the Macau Basic Law. Under the provision of this law<sup>3</sup>, Macau can establish its own executive, legislative and independent judicial power including that of final adjudication without interference from the Chinese government. It is believed that by exercising the separation of power and the duty to safeguard the rights and freedom of the Macau citizen, the Macau government can pursue a greater extent of democracy comparing with the situation in the PRC. With such remarkable characteristics of a SAR, Macau is now enjoying a prosperous development in this

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<sup>3</sup> For more details, please see Macau Basic Law Article 2, Legal Affairs Bureau.

utopia. Ranking at the world's forth richest territory in terms of GDP per capita in 2014, in accordance to the World Bank report, specialists have commanded such phenomenon as a new "economic miracle" among Asian countries. Despite of the global financial disasters, such as the collapse of large financial institutions which were caused by the downturn of stock exchange market in 2007 to 2008, Macau still survived the long periods of economic stagnancy. The determining factor that saves Macau from the burden of a relatively large population with little resources is a free market induced by a democratic society. Seemingly the democratic factors had derived sufficient elements for the society to maintain its status quo yet for political scientists they often doubted the extent of democracy in Macau and thus paraphrased in the question "Do Macau has democracy?" Being the former Portugal colony that was passed back to the mainland China in 1999, it had came over weighty issues about self-rule and democracy confronting with its motherland, China, in recent decades. Under the policy of "one country, two systems", whether the Macau SAR can enjoy a high degree of autonomy by the principle of "Macao people ruling Macao" is still in question. Such hidden blast had finally explored in 25 May 2014 when there was over 20,000 Macau citizens protested against "the Bill of Greeds and Privileges" imposed by the government<sup>4</sup>. The bill was drafted by the Macau Secretary for Administration and Justice a month before

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<sup>4</sup> Eddie, L. (2014, May 26). Massive protest slams Macau bill. *The Standard*.

the protest without consulting public opinion. Under the Bill of Greeds and Privileges, it secures the Macau Chief Executive from criminal prosecution while in office. It also ensures that the retired Chief Executive, as well as his principal officials, will continue to receive a monthly payment at around 70 per cent of his or her monthly salary (Luk, 2014). Macau Conscience, led by Sou Ka-hou, thus organized several demonstrations and surrounded the Legislative Assembly with over 7,000 protestors to fight against this unbearable exploitation towards every citizen. Yu Wing-yat, a professor in the University of Macau who worked on the political research field, had made commends on such issue<sup>5</sup>. He empathized that the central government is inappropriate to handle Macau citizens as they were in the former Portuguese colony period. They see the Macau political aggressiveness as if they are more stable than Hong Kong. The protests against the Bill of Greeds and Privileges, however, have marked “an eruption of public discontent that had built up over the years.”

For several decades, the Chinese officials has repeatedly mentioned the term “democracy” in their policies, regardless of how the one-party dictatorship still existed and rooted in the entire political system. They claimed themselves to be in the process of democratization, if not, started to adopted the process. With the background

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<sup>5</sup> Ejinsight. (2014, May 27). Macau protesters to lay siege to Legislative Assembly.



knowledge of how “democracy” is being practiced in China in the past and leaping forward to significant reforms in recent years, in particular their attitudes on corruption, it is likely to identify the pattern of “democratization with Chinese characteristics” which may contradict to the conventional development in most western countries. The propensity of the Macau government towards the extent to enforce a democratic practice in its region seems to be largely constrained by the Chinese government. Yet with an increasing number of economic and social changes in Macau, it reveals the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the government to cope with such modification. The hidden public discontent, as a response to the government’s deficiencies, had overwhelmed political consciousness within each citizen. This awaken consciousness can result as a “social crisis”, as such, it is important to define the causes of different economic and social changes and examine how the government response to these changes and, more importantly, how the citizens call for political participation in the institution to deal with the changes.

## **II. Research Hypothesis**

Any institutions wishing to compare democracy and the process of democratization in different countries in a systematic manner requires a specific form of approach or



measurement contingent upon its unique political environment<sup>6</sup>. Unlike other concepts such as economic development and national income, the entire picture of democracy can merely be observed straightforwardly in a unilateral way. This concept is constituted by a number of profound statistical researches and later in-depth analyses in a multi-dimensional approach to help determine how democratic a political system is, or whether it is democratic at all. Robert Dahl<sup>7</sup> listed six measurements for democratic order to examine the extent to “full democracy” in a political system (Dahl, 1989).

1. Citizens must maintain a harmonious relation with others in order to generate a common good. As previously introduced by Schumpeter, participants are required to equip similar political consciousness and avoid contradictions that may harm their interests.
2. People must share similar and equal social background and characteristics to avoid political conflicts and sharp disagreements over the public good as described above.
3. Population must be relatively small to avoid heterogeneity and disharmony. These enable leaders to acknowledge of the city and of their fellow citizen and lastly to

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<sup>6</sup> Christian, W. H., Patrick, B., Ronald, F. I., & Christian, W. (2009). *Democratization*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., p.25

<sup>7</sup> Robert, A. D. (1989). *Democracy and its Critics*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p.18

serve as the sovereign rulers of the city. Leaders thus are able to response and to represent its people.

4. Citizen must be authorized to assemble or make direct effect on decisions about the government policy. Law, regulations and other official bills must consult the public first while the leaders are required to cope with their response with a symmetrical order.
5. Citizen participation was not limited to the meeting of the Assembly who actively participating in the administration of the city. A fair and open election of leaders generated a group of broad representative elites from the public.
6. City-state must remain fully autonomous to reject infiltration of foreign forces. The state must have an independent political system that can represent a government elected by its people, rather than some external forces.

Scholars argue that the term “democracy” cannot be treated as a simple concept in the sense that people oversees the importance of such concept and oversimplified the logic behind. Dahl’s measurements on democracy undoubtedly go beyond the minimum requirements to stipulate democracy. They are ideal standards to enact upon by any actual political institutions yet because of the constraint of length of this paper, it will largely focus on political participation and the degree to which citizens can make

decisions in government policy so as to measure democracy in Macau.

Political participation in Macau is playing a significant role in the process of democracy. Starting from 2009, there are over 20 large scale demonstrations in Macau and the participants of the demonstration had hit up to 3,000 for most. The May 1 protest, October 1 protest and the December 20 handover protest are regularly organized each year in Macau, with the May 1 as the largest one. Due to a rapid expansion of economic development, the number of participant between 2009 and 2011 was slightly decreased and such phenomenon was declared as a result for the government policies to alleviate citizens' burdens and improve their standard of living. With the "cash sharing scheme" and other policies to reallocate the resources back to the citizens, political participation in the form of social unrest, at that time, had mitigated. Yet in the year 2012 and 2013, the number of participants rebounded and, nonetheless, the frequency of demonstration also increased. Out of these demonstrations, the protest against Bill of Greeds and Privileges in 2014 was the largest demonstration ever happened after the handover since 1999. It is obvious that economic and social status in Macau is having unavoidable and uncontrollable changes. The Macau government merely response to these changes due to the fact the Chinese government does not grant full sovereign to this small peninsula. In accordance to the Macau Basic Law, Macau government needs to seek approval from

the Chinese government when the policies confront the Chinese interests or when it is concerning about the relationship between the Central People's government and the Macau government<sup>8</sup>. When the government is unable to response to these economic and social changes, more Macau citizens are likely to participate in the political arena. From these it is clear that there is a rising propensity for citizens to be more willing to voice out their opinion through political participation in forms of protest and demonstrations. As such, this paper argues that the propensity for Macau citizens to participate actively in politics is contingent upon the rapid economic and social changes as well as the government's reluctance to political reforms. With more and more economic and social changes take place in Macau while the Macau government is unlikely to cope with all these changes, there will be an equivalent increase for citizens to call for democracy in terms of political participation.

### **III. Literature Review**

The term “democracy” has a broad understanding of meaning. The former Portuguese governor had first introduced the idea of “democracy” into Macau in 1976 when citizens could vote for the members of the Legislative Assembly. At that time, however, the local Portuguese were the only eligible voters and the members in the Legislative

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<sup>8</sup> For more details, please see Macau Basic Law Article 143, Legal Affairs Bureau

Assembly were all Portuguese. Macau citizens could not vote for their governors and could not be voted as its member. Not until 1984 the government passed laws and accepted a few groups of Chinese people to become eligible voters. After the decolonization of the Portuguese leaders and the handover of Macau back to its motherland, China, the Macau citizens are now obliged with a greater sense of democracy and political consciousness. As such, the government needs to make prompt response to foster democracy in Macau. It is, therefore, important to first examine such broad and vague ideologies in different aspects.

### 3.1 Democracy

Democracy, in theory, involves the central doctrine in the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people they govern. It serves as a contract that binds the rulers and its people in the sense that the action taken by the rulers is only legitimate when the people agreed. Rulers do not have any power until the people gives them. Joseph Schumpeter<sup>9</sup> developed the concept of democracy into a modern classical model, with core elements including the will of people as the source and the common good as the purpose (Schumpeter, 1947). He further established another theory of democracy that institutional arrangements, which aim at arriving political decisions,

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph, A. S. (1947). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper, p.269

acquired the power of individuals to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote. By these, the institution equipped a fair, honest and periodic election.

Robert Dahl described the nature of democracy in two dimensions, namely contestation and participation<sup>10</sup>. These two dimensions serve as a mechanism to examine the extent of how democratic a political system is; to compare different systems in different regions and; whether the system are becoming more or less democratic (Dahl, 1989).

After comparing democracy in different regime, the next step is to understand the major driving forces that induced the process of democratization. The causes vary in different regime in different period of time, depending on the nature of the authoritarian regime.

Samuel Huntington<sup>11</sup> had come up with several approaches to explain the transitions towards democracy (Huntington, 1973). In his "interrupted democracy" model, the democratic atmosphere had already taken place in the region for a relatively sustained period of time. Due to vast economic and social changes which resulted in social instability, it leads to a further suspension of democratization processes. Huntington then established three steps of such transition. A state should first come to the collapse

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<sup>10</sup> Robert, A. D. (1989). *Democracy and its Critics*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, p.19

<sup>11</sup> Samuel, P. H. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, p.47

of the nondemocratic regime, following the inauguration of the democratic regime, and then finally the consolidation of the democratic system. In these steps, people need to reach a widespread consensus about the method of electing their government in order to consolidate democracy. When such a government comes to power as the consequence of free and open elections, it formulates public policy and exercises control over the various institutions of the state. The entire transition mainly involves three central activities in these processes: negotiations, compromises and agreements. Negotiation and compromise among political elites were the most typical activities in the democratization processes. Leaders of key political forces bargained with a number of social groups in society. Such “democratic bargain” between these two forces aims at specific areas. First, authoritarian regimes, with its nature to maintain a hegemony power structure, restrict political participation especially on those with conflictual relationship. Ruling group in authoritarian regime often neglected the importance of particular opposition leaders and political parties when making serious decision or reform. Democratization, thereby, required accepting this group of conflicting units as legitimate participants in politics. Second, moderation is required in tactics and policies by the included leaders and groups. Both ruling group of the authoritarian system and the opposition leaders in the society must agree to abandon violence and any commitment to revolution. They must accept existing basic social, economic and



political institutions and work through elections and parliamentary procedures in order to achieve power and put through their policies. Agreements are thus being drawn within an acceptable, if not, satisfying arrangements for the transition to democracy.

### *3.2 Political Participation*

The fact that the process of democratization can merely be measured in a clear and simple has made a significant choke point to the process itself. Such process does not have a clear formula or a list to clarify whether Macau has democratization or not. As Schumpeter has listed six areas in achieving full democracy, citizens' political participation seize upon a large portion in promoting democracy thus it is important to focus on what political participation is. This is a concept can serve as a specific index or standard to examine how the process of democratization is being practiced in Macau. By coming up with how people are participating in the political arena, it can draw the conclusion on how the government responses to the participating group of citizen and therefore access the process of democratization. As such, it is important to understand the concept of what is political participation.

The definition of political participation is relatively complex as it is largely influenced by the selection of political system adopted by the public sector. As such, it varies from

different countries with different systems yet all of these heterogeneous factors contribute to one single objective, that is, to influence the government. Patrick Conge<sup>12</sup> had come up with a general and precise ideological framework of political participation in the sense that it is broad enough to cover the changes involved in the environment and, on the other hand, there are still a number of limitations in which some of the social behaviors must be neglected. Based on these assumptions, he defined such concept as “any action or inaction of an individual or a collectivity of individuals which intentionally or unintentionally opposes or supports, changes or maintains some features of a government or community.” (Conge, 1988) In his study, he further divided the definition into three aspects. First, political participation indicate political protest and violence in the society. Citizens have an inborn propensity to participate in unconventional forms of political behavior, mainly by means of political redress such as membership in different non-governmental organizations (NGOs), protest, demonstrations, occupational strikes, boycotts and other unofficial form of political response. It also examines relations between these activities and acts related to the political system. When there is an absence of a mechanism, particularly an electoral system that effectively represents the citizens’ voices, it is more likely for political

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<sup>12</sup> Patrick, J. C. (1988). The Concept of Political Participation: Toward a Definition. *Comparative Politics*. 20, 241-249.

redress in forms of social unrest such as protest and violence. Second, the relations among an individual's ideology, values, and willingness to engage in political protest are examined. It identifies the attitude of an individual toward the degree to accept political protest. Conge had made a research showing that there are a substantial number of citizens in most western countries who are tolerant towards various types of political behaviors, including those of the aggressive one such as political protest and violence. Moreover, for citizens who claimed to be more tolerant towards political aggressiveness tends to be those who are highly educated. It is also shown that specifically, the young generations pronounced greater tolerance towards political protest and violence. The propensity for protest in most western countries is tied with the changes in political environment, that is, an individual's political values shifted from one to another and resulted in different level of acceptance in various kind of political action are. Third, they clarify the so called "political enthusiasm" and the "political apathy" among individuals when there are undesired or dissatisfied issues in their society. This can be divided into personal issues, including the citizens' standard in material sense, or political issues, such as the bills passed by the government. The former adheres with the economic development, social changes and other areas concerning one's material lives. The latter deals with how the government establishes promulgation on new laws and regulations, and how they response to the needs of its people. For some scholars

and political theorists they did not make a clear distinction between “aggressive behavior” including demonstration and strike and “violent act.” They defined the term with a much broader connotation that includes both violent actions and what is variously defined as illegal, unconventional, or unorthodox behavior. Conge thus emphasized that what may be violent activities in one place or time may not have equivalent result as in another. The concept of political violence varied from situation and it cannot be strictly identified. This problem is particularly acute in cross-cultural research where people are indisposed in such issue.

Ian McAllister and Stephen White<sup>13</sup> have another view in defining political participation and thus come up with a generalized form of activities in three areas: the act of voting, political activism including protest and demonstrations, and citizens’ involvement in social groups (McAllister and White, 2009). First, the act of voting is the most direct and conventional method to influence the political affairs about the government. It places high pressure on decision-makers, since the result will determine which party occupies government and is therefore in a position to exercise its power. It also represented an affirmation of the system itself. Second, political activism has a

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<sup>13</sup> Christian, W. H., Patrick, B., Ronald, F. I., & Christian, W. (2009). *Democratization*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., p.187

broad coverage of element. It includes unconventional political activism, involving such activities as the distribution of samizdat; compliant activism, mainly concerning party-initiated work; social activism, involving residential and neighborhood groups; and contacting public officials. These political activism represents the degree to which individuals will cooperate together in order to influence decision-makers and requires a reasonable level of cooperation and initiative, as such, we should expect to find higher levels of communal activities in the established democracies where there is a more developed and complex civil society. Third, the most effective activities that McAllister and White had suggested in citizens' involvement in social groups were participating in different campaign and communal activity. Campaign activities involve actively engaging in the in the process in election campaign. Examples can be persuading people and attending governmental public meetings. On the other hand, communal activities concerned with organizations involvement within the local community. Examples can by working for the party or working for others.

### 3.3 Local Research Review

Herbert Yee had conducted a number of surveys with aims to investigate on Macau citizens' acknowledgement on the term "democracy."<sup>14</sup> In his 1991 survey, there is a

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<sup>14</sup> Herbert, S. Y. (2001). *Macau in Transition: From Colony to Autonomous Region*. Palgrave, p.87

significant number of Macau citizens who response to the survey as if they do not care about “What is a democratic government” or “Does Macau have democracy.” Not until the 1999 survey, citizens have a remarkable change in terms of the question “the government is elected by the people” from 9.6 per cent to 32.3 per cent. From these numbers it is proved that the concerns of politics have profound increase within a decade. Citizens are more willing to talk about politics and involve in political participation.

In accordance to Lo Shiu-hing’s point of view<sup>15</sup>, political participation in Macau can be represented in two forms of activities, namely the elections and public organized activities. The most consequential elections in Macau includes the election of the Macau membership to the National People’s Congress of the PRC, the election of the Macau SAR Chief Executive, and the direct and indirect seats elections held for the Macau Legislative Assembly. Apart from the Macau membership in the NPC, the power distribution of the Macao Chief Executive election indeed is centralized instead of democratic elements. The characteristics of a “patron-client relations” between the elected Chief Executive and the Central Government has been dominating the elections, where the most powerful patron, Beijing, shapes its potential clients on the election committee to elect the sub-patron such as Ho Hau-wah and Chui Sai-on. The election

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<sup>15</sup> Sonny, L. (2008). *Political Change in Macao*. Routledge, p.43

of the member in the Legislative Assembly, on the other hand, has been a “vote-buying game” for some of the candidates particularly in the 2001 and 2005 Legislative Assembly election.

Public organized activities are regarded as citizens’ protests and demonstrations which have emerged as the most prominent form of participation after the Macau handover in 1999. The increase of public organized activities in Macau is the result of an increasing influence of political activism from its neighboring region Hong Kong, together with an increasing political consciousness of the Macau citizens. People, in order to foster their interest in the ruling of the government and make their voice heard, they took actions in forms of political participation, demonstrated on streets and express their opinion about the government performance and policies through the TDM and other social media. It is to note that political efficacy is also a significant measurement on political participation. Only when citizens are confident in the impact of their political actions on government policies will they incline to take actions.

#### **IV. Analytical framework**

The fact that Macau can merely acquire the entire process of democratization does not result to a step down in its political reform. Many democratic countries, such as Britain



and the U.S., do not fulfill all the requirements of becoming a democratic state yet they are still able to enforce democratization. In order to avoid the rising tides of social unrest and instability, Macau must encounter a complex and prolonged experience before it finally comes to the victory of democracy. The Macau government should at least coped with the status quo in the political arena and establish political reform, particularly in the enforcement of political participation. With more citizens engaging in the political arena and their attempts to influence the government, it can create a broader sense of representation of the public voice and thus reduce the possibility of social unrest and instability carried out by citizen in forms of protests and demonstrations. In order to avoid these, the Macau government should accept the social conflicting groups as legitimate participants in politics and bargained in specific areas.

Conge<sup>16</sup> had expanded the concept of political participation into six major aspects, compounded with a total of twelve elements as another analytical boundary. To cope with the Macau status quo, this paper frames a political basis to explain the Macau current phenomenon (Conge, 1988). First, political participation should include both active with passive forms of expression. In active means it refers to the action of voting

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<sup>16</sup> Patrick, J. C. (1988). The Concept of Political Participation: Toward a Definition. *Comparative Politics*. 20, 241-249.

and campaigning for a political party while in the passive means, it refers to the feeling of patriotism and an awareness of political issues. Citizens can register to become an eligible voters and vote for the members of the Legislative Assembly in Macau and at the same time respect the region and voice out their opinions in different media such as TDM to provoke their enthusiasm in political issue. Second, both of the aggressive form of behavior that embraces civil disobedience and the nonaggressive form that act within a series of more “conventional” activities should be accepted and being included in form of political participation. As mentioned by Huntington, activities organized by some social groups, such as the Macau Conscience, their social influence under various kind of aggressive form of behavior should also be recognized by the government but not to neglect their significances. Third, political participation can aim at either a structural objective or a nonstructural in the sense that efforts to change or maintain the form of governmental authorities and their decisions can be included or, in contrast, be limited. The goal of participation is unambiguous, yet the methods by which citizens seek to exert political influence are many and varied. Forth, regardless of the structural differences in the objectives of political participation mentioned above, it also involves governmental as well as nongovernmental variations. In such sense, political participation can, on one hand, be limited to behavior that directed towards governmental authorities, policies, and institutions, and on the other hand, includes

phenomena outside the realm of government. Fifth, political participation can be either mobilized or voluntary actions. Behavior of political participation should be sponsored and guided by the government to enhance its welfare. On the other hand, the term should also be confined to behavior initiated by citizens in pursuit of their interests. Sixth, the result of political participation can be an intended or an unintended outcome, meaning that behavior that has an unintended consequence for a government should also be defined as political participation.

## **V. Research Methodology**

### *Personal interviews*

Conducting interviews is a personal method in terms of collecting data about an individual's preference, ideas and possible behaviors, and is conducted by interviewers using a standardized set of questions<sup>17</sup>. Unlike questionnaire survey or other data collecting methods, each interview has different scripts that are contingent upon specific instructions for different interviewer in the sense that it includes rooms for them to record personal observations and comments from the respondents. In addition to this, when conducting an interviews, the interviewer has the opportunity to request for

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<sup>17</sup> Anol, B. (2012). Social science research: principles, methods, and practices. *Textbooks Collection*, p.78

clarifications on any issue that needs further explanation or ask several follow-up questions. The most common type of interview used in social science research is personal or face-to-face interview. Interviewer conducts their interview directly with their targeted respondents by asking a set of questions and recording their responses. Interviewers provide a general background of a topic for their respondents and that they can express their ideas within such boundary based on the provided questions. This method is largely adopted for studies that use individual people as the unit of analysis. Although other units of analysis, such as groups, organizations or ethnic and nation groups, also conduct different forms of interviews, such as group interviewing, in their studies, personal and face-to-face interviews require using a specific person as a “key informant” on behalf of its units.

The personal interview “aims to get in-depth information from the interviewees”<sup>18</sup>. It is particularly helpful in conducting a research where the subject matter is potentially sensitive.” It focuses on a given set of pre-defined questions that are covered in turn and a pre-defined theme or area and allow a discussion to take place between researcher and interviewee on that particular theme. This paper had included three personal

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<sup>18</sup> David, W. (2000). *The Researcher's Toolkit: The Complete Guide to Practitioner Research*. USA and Canada: RoutledgeFalmer, p.47

interviews conducted with Sou Ka-hou, Chou Kwok-ping and Chao Teng-hei respectively. They are members of the Macau Conscience in which they actively participate in a number of demonstrations and protests in Macau over the past few years. By interviewing with them, the information is more precise on the reasons of social unrest. This research, with all the findings and writings, was being conducted within ten weeks. The constraint on length of time to conduct the entire research limits the possibility to make interviews with more political activists.

#### *Descriptive Statistics from the government*

Descriptive statistical analysis refers to “statistically describing, aggregating, and presenting the constructs of interest or associations between these constructs.”<sup>19</sup> The Macau government, in particular the Statistics and Census Bureau, Government Printing Bureau, Financial Services Bureau and the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau, published yearly statistical data and information concerning economic and social development in Macau. Such information is publicly accessible and user-friendly. With the provision of this statistical information, it helps to make the analysis more precise in the sense that it draws the background of some in-depth analysis as the

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<sup>19</sup> Anol, B. (2012). Social science research: principles, methods, and practices. *Textbooks Collection*, p.128.

support of my arguments.

## **VI. Findings: Causes of the Increase in Political Participation in Macau**

It is important that an individual's civic consciousness of political participation is growing much more rapidly than the pace of institutional reform in Macau. Social and economic changes, including urbanization, increase in literacy and education, economic development, mass media expansion have extend political consciousness, multiply political demands, and broaden political participation in different areas. These changes undermine traditional sources of political authority and traditional political institutions. The rates of economic and social mobilization and the expansion of political participation are high while the rates of political organization and institutionalization are low. As a result, it induces political instability and disorder. To cope with it, the government must extend political participation by promoting a higher level of democracy so as to mitigate the possibility of social crisis.

### *6.1 Social modernization*

The correlation between social mobilization and social unrest is undoubtedly an important aspect in understanding political participation. With the increase in the degree of literacy, education, urbanization and media exposure, individuals are more likely to

participate in politics. Comparing the number of students further their studies with a bachelor degree in Macau<sup>20</sup>, there were 7,094 university students in the academic year 1999-2000 during the post-handover period. About a decade, the number of high education students had tripled to 25,212 in the academic year 2011-2012. On the other hand, there are only 9 institutions in Macau providing a higher level of education in Macau. There is a new institution, University of Saint Joseph formally became an official institution in 2009, providing different programs for post-high school graduates. They acknowledge the importance of democracy from other neighboring region, such as Hong Kong in this case, and arouse the youth consciousness in actively participating in a number of demonstrations. A research<sup>21</sup> on the “Youth participation among different associations and political activities in Macao” conducted by the Macao Youth Federation in 2012 has reported that 40 per cent of the young generation had been participating in various kind of political activities in different channels (Yin, 2015). The NGOs in Macao are playing a significant role in bridging youth to political participation. With over 60 per cent of young eligible voters participating in the election on members of Legislative Assembly, it suggested that there is a widespread of attention of civil rights among the youths. The report has also stated that a number of youth associations

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<sup>20</sup> For further information, please see Survey to Education in 1999/2000. Statistics and Census Bureau.

<sup>21</sup> Yifen, Y. (2015). The Political Participation of Macao Residents and Proper Participation Channels. *Academic Journal of “One Country, Two Systems*. 4, 158-168



have organized several polls and discussions based on public policy issues. More youth groups grant the opportunity to express their political views on a variety of controversial issues. In addition to this, the rising political consciousness of the youth in Macao is reflecting their activism in public issues and serves as a way to safeguarding their own interests (see Figure 1 for summary of this development). Yet there is always a lack of protection of young and educated voters to engage in various form of political participation. In the interview with Chou Kwok-ping, he had strongly declared such issue as the government's deficiency. Chou Kwok-ping is a political activist who regularly participates in a number of social activities and conducts outstanding social researches on political studies in Macau. He, as the former professor of the University of Macau, was dismissed by the university. In the interviews with him, he said that the reason that he was being fired was highly related to his political activities on “democratic elections”, “anti-corruption” and other aggressive political participation. He commended that the potential protestors in the society will be undoubtedly the younger and professionals who have had high education level. However, these active political participants are not protected in the sense that they are suppressed by the pro-government forces. He made further suggestions that there is a strong insufficiency of public media for Macau citizen to voice out their opinion. The social media, such as the Macau Daily News and TDM, are pro-government. They seldom accept the anti-

government voices from the public and thus the form of political participation in Macau is strictly limited.



*Figure 1* Development of youths' mentality on political participation. (Compiled by the author)

## 6.2 Economic depression

Social unrest and instability can be seen as a response of rapid economic change that coupled with the slow development of political institutions. Macau has experienced a rapid economic depression associated with a serious structural problem hidden in the developing sector for many years - the singularization of industry. As the former Chief Executive of the Macau SAR Edmund Ho has once noted in the 2002 Fiscal Policy Address<sup>22</sup> "It is clear that an industrial structure is taking shape in Macao with the gaming sector as its 'head', and the service industry as its 'body', driving the overall development of other industries." (Fiscal Policy Address, 2002) The Macau government oversees the consequences the singularization of tourist industry. The region since then had put nearly all its resource in the development of tourism and

<sup>22</sup> For details, please see 2002 Policy Address. Government Printing Bureau.

eventually the economy is over-relying on such industry. Tourism, still being the sole developing industry in Macau, has finally met its depression.

*Table 1* A comparison on public and gaming revenue and public expenditure

	Percentage Change in 2015 Q1	MOP
Public revenue	32.9%	282.9 billion
Gaming revenue	33.1%	239.3 billion
Public expenditure	N/A	117.8 billion

Source: A summary from Central Account from the Financial Service Bureau.  
[http://www.dsfgov.mo/download/finance/2015/E\\_generalLedger201510.pdf](http://www.dsfgov.mo/download/finance/2015/E_generalLedger201510.pdf).

As shown in Table 1, the Financial Service Bureau<sup>23</sup> has reported that public revenue in 2015 Q1 has decreased by 32.9% to 282.9 billion MOP due to a constant fall of gaming revenue from casinos by 33.1% to 239.3 billion MOP. Meanwhile public expenditure has soared up to 117.8 billion MOP. Because many citizens are as well over-relying to such solely developing industry, it rises a number of concern from the public that the huge amount of public surplus that has been maintained over years will come to an end and citizens from different public and private sectors will encounter sudden job lost, collapse of public welfare mechanism, and even the entire economic

<sup>23</sup> For details, please see Central Account (2015) from Financial Services Bureau.

system. Lu<sup>24</sup> has commanded in Chinese Briefing that the monopoly status of the gaming industry in the economy presents an unstable factor to the sustainable development of Macau (Lu, 2012). It is, therefore, estimated that the government will face a period of depression in the coming years. Lei Kuok-keong, the vice president of the Forefront of the Macau Gaming, had drawn attention to the government's responsibility to solve the problem of singularization of industry in Macau on the May Day protest in 2014. There are over 35 per cent of the workers among the six gaming enterprises hiring foreign workers and a number of local workers are receiving warning letters with unreasonable excuses<sup>25</sup>. In addition, even when the tourist industry is booming with lots of hot money flowing into the economy, it only benefits foreign enterprises but not local community. The NGOs, therefore, demonstrate on the May 1 Labor Day striving for their benefits within the tourism industry. He said that in the current situation, it is the Macau government to launch effective policies to cope with the current problems faced by the working class. In the interview with Chao Teng-hei, he agreed that the Macau government should set forth the interest of Macau citizens as priority. Chao Teng-hei is a member of the Macau Conscience and the former president of the New Macau Association. He pinpointed that the increasing number of Chinese

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<sup>24</sup> Yao, L. (2012, October 22). Macau's Path to Economic Diversification. *Chinese Briefing*.

<sup>25</sup> M. T. Yeung had posted a public message about the Call for demonstration on May 1 2015 on April 27, 2015. For more details, please see the link in the reference list.

immigrants had harmed the interest of local citizens and they are worrying about the allocation of resources among the locals and immigrants. The government, however, does not mitigate the hidden worries of its citizen by effectively targeting the core of the situation and citizen are still suffering and as a result, people come out and protest against the government's policies.

### *6.3 Legislative Assembly and its Composition of Members*

It is interesting to investigate on why there is a sudden blast of social unrest within a decade in Macau. When people talk about democracy, they mostly mean universal suffrage with the spirit of “one people one vote” to elect their leaders. In Macau, however, the absence of a democratic voting mechanism on electing the Chief Executive has limited the level of democracy in the political environment. In 2014, it is reported that there are over 282,588 eligible voters<sup>26</sup>, yet the Election Committee for electing the Chief Executive of the Macau SAR is only composed by 400 members, coming from three sectors. Though these three sectors include the (1) industrial, commercial and financial sector; (2) cultural, educational sectors and other professions; and (3) labor, social services, religious and other sectors, it is commended as a “coterie

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<sup>26</sup> For more information, please refer to Provisional registers of electors lists released for public inspection for 10 days from Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau.

election” by various scholars and media. Citizens thereby switch their attentions to the formation of the Legislative Assembly, where it provides a higher degree of political participation for every eligible citizen. The Legislative Assembly is composed with 33 seats, with 14 directly elected members, 12 functional constituency members, and 7 nominated members. Within these 33 members, 29 of them are pro-government and only 4 are pro-democracy. This asymmetrical division of seats ignited the anger of citizen that the government has always neglected the voices from the public. The Legislative Assembly, with less than half of the democratic composition, merely responds to the needs of the citizen. In 2012 there was a political reform from the government that they added two seats to the directly elected seats from 12 to 14, but also added 2 seats to the functional constituency seats from 10 to 12. It is obvious that there is little progression in such reform. In the election on members of Legislative Assembly in 2013, the Macau Sunday Post had interviewed a citizen on street and asked about his attitude towards the election<sup>27</sup>. “The election means nothing,” he said, “as everything will be decided by Beijing at the end of the day.” He further declared that would not go on street and call for “something you could never achieve.” (Lam, 2015). In the interview with So Ka-hou, he said that the Macau government needs to adopt a more open system that every vote from eligible voters can influence the government to

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<sup>27</sup> Jeffie, L., “Macau holds low-profile election”, *South China Morning Post*, 15-9-2013.

achieve true political participation. So Ka-hou is the president of the New Macau Association. He organized routine protest on different aspect of social issues and the 2014 May Protest against the Bill of Greeds and Privileges was organized by So Ka-hou. He is also the organizer and spokesman of the Macau Conscience. In his view, eligible voters in most of the democratic states use “votes” to represent themselves in the political arena. However, due to the serious lack of representativeness in both of the Chief Executive as well as the election of the members in the Legislative Assembly, there are more citizens coming out and protest. He borrowed the example from Taiwan that, “it is far better for members in the Legislature Assembly to fight against each other inside the parliament, rather than citizen themselves coming to the street and protest against the government.”

#### *6.4 Discussion*

After the handover of the Macau SAR in 1999, Macau citizens have adopted a low profile in political activities. Some researchers even commended Macau citizens as “political apathy” and most of them are satisfied by the cash sharing scheme launched by the Macau government every year since 2008 from its taxing on the gambling revenue. In recent years, however, Macao citizens have dramatically changed of their attitude compare to former Portuguese colony period. They have been extensively participating in the policy consultation activities in different governmental projects



such as the infrastructure on Light Rail in Macau. The rising civic consciousness of an individual in political participation of is the result of social modernization that triggered active participation in the advisory activities held by the government based on different public policy and their active expression of interests and demands to them. On the other hand, the downturn of economic development has reflected the increasingly widespread awareness of participation of Macao citizens, especially when facing some public issues confronting the interests of each citizen. They change their previous attitude of “political apathy” and actively built several communication channels with the government to maximize their influence on the decision on public policy. The Macau government, in response to the social and economic changes, is reluctant to make effective policies to cope with citizens’ needs. The election of the Chief Executive and the composition of the member in the Legislative Assembly are both lack of representativeness from the public and, in addition to such deficiencies, more citizens are striving for their interests in terms of protest and demonstrations.

## VII. Conclusion

For several decades, the Chinese officials has repeatedly mentioned the term “democracy” in their policies, regardless of how the one-party dictatorship still existed and take root in the entire political system. They claimed themselves to be in the process of democratization, if not, started to adopted the process. With the background knowledge of how “democracy” is being practiced in China in the past and leaping forward to several reforms in recent years, it is likely to see the pattern of “democratization with Chinese characteristics” which may contradict to the conventional development in most western countries. The propensity of the Macau government towards the degree to allow a democratic practice in its region seems to be largely constrained by the Chinese government. Chinese government does not provide full sovereign for Macau and that the government needs to seek approval from the Chinese government when the policies confront the Chinese interests. The government is, therefore, unable to response to these changes, leading to an increase in the number of Macau citizens who participate in the political arena. As such, this paper argues that with the permanent increasing changes in economic and social environment in Macau while the Macau government is unlikely to solve all these problems, there will be a permanent increase for citizens’ political participation.

The term “democracy” has a broad understanding of meaning. Joseph Schumpeter developed the concept of democracy as an institutional arrangement which aim at arriving political decisions and acquired the power of individuals to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote in a fair, honest and periodic election. Robert Dahl described the nature of democracy in two dimensions, namely contestation and participation. These two dimensions serve as a mechanism to examine the extent of how democratic a political system is; to compare different systems in different regions and; whether the system are becoming more or less democratic. Samuel Huntington established three steps for process of democratization. A state should first come to the end of the nondemocratic regime, following the inauguration of the democratic regime, and then finally the consolidation of the democratic system. The entire transition mainly involves three central activities in these processes: negotiations, compromises and agreements. Authoritarian regimes, with its nature to maintain a hegemony power structure, restrict political participation especially on those with confronting relationship. Ruling group in authoritarian regime often neglected the importance of particular opposition leaders and political parties when making serious decision or reform. Democratization, thereby, required accepting this group of conflicting units as legitimate participants in politics.

In Conge's study, he divided the definition of political participation into three aspects. First, political participation examines relations between these activities and acts related to the political system. When there is an absence of a mechanism, particularly an electoral system that effectively represents the citizens' voices, it is more likely for social unrest such as protest and violence. Second, the relations among an individual's ideology, values, and willingness to engage in political protest are examined. It identifies the attitude of an individual toward the acceptance of political protest. Third, they clarify the so called "political enthusiasm" and the "political apathy" among individuals when there are undesired or dissatisfied issues in their livings. McAllister and White have another view in defining political participation and thus come up with a generalized form of activities in three areas: the act of voting, political activism including protest and demonstrations, and citizens' involvement in social groups.

The methodology used in this paper includes three personal interviews and use of descriptive statistics from the government. The former one provides opportunity the interviewer to clarify any issues raised by the respondent or ask probing or follow-up questions. It includes personal or face-to-face interview, where the interviewer works directly with the respondent to ask questions and record their responses. The latter is statistical data and information published by the Macau government yearly that concern

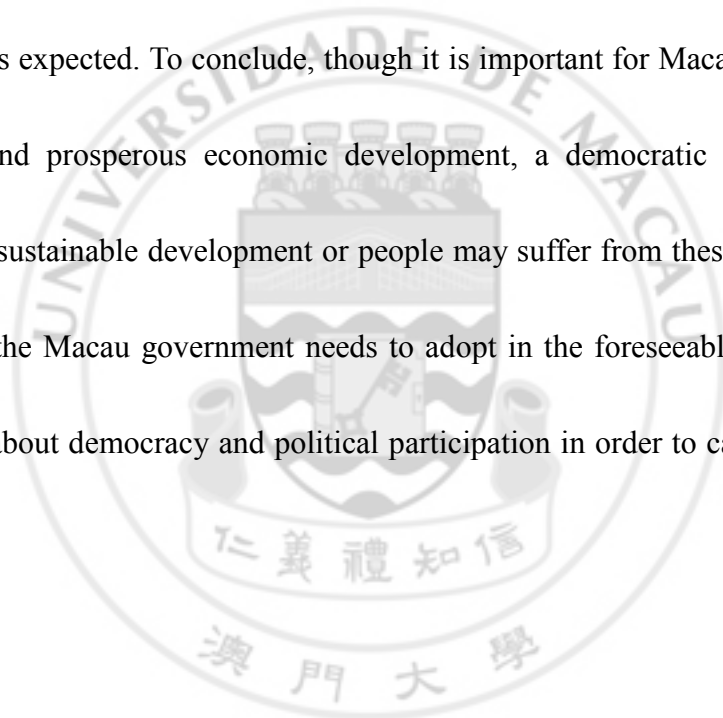
about economic and social development in Macau. Such information is publicly accessible and user-friendly. With the provision of this information, it helps to make the analysis more precise in the sense that it draws the background of some in-depth analysis as the support of my arguments.

There are three main causes for the increase in political participation. First, the correlation between social mobilization and social unrest is undoubtedly an important aspect in understanding political participation. With the increase in the degree of literacy, education, urbanization and media exposure, individuals are more likely to participate in politics. Second, Social unrest and instability can be seen as a response of rapid economic change that coupled with the slow development of political institutions. Macau has experienced a rapid economic depression associated with a serious structural problem hidden in the developing sector for many years - the singularization of industry. Third, the asymmetrical division of seats in the Legislative Assembly in Macau ignited the anger of its citizens that the government has always neglected the voices from the public. The Legislative Assembly, with less than half of the democratic composition, merely responds to the needs of the citizen. Due to the serious lack of representativeness in both of the Chief Executive as well as the election of the members in the Legislative Assembly, there are more citizens coming out and

protest. The rising consciousness of the political participation of Macao citizens is the result of social modernization that triggered active participation in the public policy advisory activities held by the government as well as their active expression of interests and demands to them. On the other hand, the downturn of economic development has reflected the increasingly widespread awareness of participation of Macao residents, especially when facing some community-based public affairs concerning the interests of each citizen. The residents have changed their previous attitude of “political apathy” and proactively sought communication and dialogue with the government to understand its rationale and explanations while exerting influence on the public policy. The Macau government, in response to the social and economic changes, is reluctant to make effective policies to cope with citizens’ needs. The election of the Chief Executive and the composition of the member in the Legislative Assembly are both lack of representativeness from the public and, in addition to such deficiencies, more citizens are striving for their interests in terms of protest and demonstrations.

With the attribution of the Macau government to maintain a harmonious society, it is clear that they should take further responsibility adopting a high profile in political reforms. It has been years for the Macau government to take the first step in the political reform in 2012 and now they should be ready for the next step, where democracy can

finally be achieved with a broad sense of representativeness of public voices. The Chinese government behind is fear about another political reform that may shrink their relationship with Macau, and more importantly, their interest in Macau. They are paying more attention not only in our neighboring region Hong Kong as in the past decades but started to focus on the relationship with Macau. It seems that the mission for Macau government as well as its citizens on achieving a higher extent of democracy is not as easy as what is expected. To conclude, though it is important for Macau to maintain a harmonious and prosperous economic development, a democratic environment is necessary for sustainable development or people may suffer from these. The forgoing decision that the Macau government needs to adopt in the foreseeable future should also concern about democracy and political participation in order to carry out fruitful society.



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