Another explanations for the Voting Behaviour: a case study of Macao's 2021 Legislative Assembly Elections

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Abstract

The seventh Legislative Assembly Elections of Macao was held on 12 September 2021. One of the historic incidents was recorded when several campaign lists were disqualified from participating in the elections after the closure of accepting registrations from citizens for the elections. After the elections, there were record-breaking low turnout and high white votes and void votes. Although the Committee on Electoral Affairs of the Legislative Assembly analyzed that the main reason was that the weather was too hot and due to the burst out of the CoVid-19 epidemic, which affected voters' willingness to vote, whereas the explanations for the high blank votes and void vote rate were not fully provided. However, the general opinion in the lay people impressed that they were related to the disqualification of those candidates. In fact, voters' intention to vote can be explained in many ways. This article attempts to apply the concept of civic culture to analyze the phenomena of blank votes and low turnout rate in this election.

Keywords: elections, civic culture, blank vote, voter turnout

Introduction

On December 20, 1999, the Portuguese administration on Macau had marked with a full stop signaled the end of Portugal occupation over the tiny enclave of for more than 440 years. After this day, Macau was returned to the motherland, People’s Republic of China (PRC), and became the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) of the People's Republic of China. According to the provisions of Article 2 of the Basic Law of the MSAR, the Macao Special Administrative Region would "practice a high degree of autonomy and enjoy the power of executive management, legislative power, independent judicial power and the power of final adjudication", and Annex II of the Basic Law stipulated the method for the formation of the Legislative Assembly, stipulated that the members of the Legislative Assembly should be held by permanent residents of the Macao SAR, and most of the members would be directly or indirectly elected. In addition, seven members appointed by the Chief Executive remained unchanged. However, the method for forming the first Legislative Assembly was otherwise stipulated. According to the "Decision of the National People's Congress on the Method for the Formation of the First Government, Legislative Assembly and Judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region" in 1993, the first Legislative Assembly of the Macao Special Administrative Region shall be composed of "the last Legislative Assembly of the former Macao. The decision and the relevant provisions of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative

Region.... After the confirmation made by the Preparatory Committee of the Macao Special Administrative Region, one can become a member of the “first” Legislative Council of the Macao Special Administrative Region" after the handover in December 1999, with a term of office until October 15, 2001. In other words, all the members of the first Legislative Assembly of the Macao SAR after the handover were not formed by the administration of the Macao SAR government, but were taken over by all the members of the last Legislative Assembly elected since the Portuguese administration before the handover. Accordingly, the second Legislative Assembly elections held in 2001 was the first election run by the Macao SAR government. This served as a way of maintaining smooth transition to the newly established Macau SAR government. The elections of the Legislative Assembly which was officially led by the Macao SAR government, namely the second Legislative Assembly of the Macao SAR, would not be held until nearly two years after the handover. Having administered and accumulated experience in holding five Legislative Assembly elections after the handover, there was no unexpected or even extraordinary phenomenon could be found in the course of those elections. However, the seventh Legislative Assembly elections held in 2021 recorded a large number of blank votes and low turnout rate which were more than all the elections before. This unexpected result had aroused a lot of speculation from the community and the observers as well. Most of the general public believed that this was related to the disqualification (DQ) of some campaign lists which were described as democratic camps. From the perspective of studying campaign strategies and electoral policies, these speculations are logically acceptable even at the absence of community-wide survey, and certainly different theories could be adopted, if applicable, as analytical tool. Based on civic culture and voting behaviour, this article will analyze the phenomena of low voter turnout and high blank vote in this election.

Civic Culture and Voting Behaviour

Whether voters will go to the polls on polling day, and how candidates can persuade to support them, have long been a concern for governments and political groups, including politicians. The former is related to voters’ practice of voting intention, and the electoral administrators (government) and candidates (politicians or political groups) have different point to note, and the turnout rate or the number of blank votes are important indicators to test voters’ support for the government; the latter is related to voters' final voting choice, among those the party that is most concerned to the electoral result is often the candidates. Therefore, it would be the candidates' electoral strategies to master the

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final choice of voters. As far as the situation in Macao is concerned, many scholars have discussed it from different perspectives, such as Eilo Yu's “Formal and Informal Politics in Macao Special Administrative Region Elections 2004–2005”, Lo Siu-hing's “Political Participation from Elections to Protest”, and Kwong Kam-kwan's “Democratization and Patron-Client Politics in Macau: The 2005 Legislative Assembly Elections”, etc. However, it is relatively important for the administrators to study the decision of voters’ participation and voting. Therefore, studying the civic culture and voting behavior of voters become very meaningful.

Civic culture can be understood as political culture of people in a given community. Political culture refers to "political attitudes, political beliefs, and political values, such as efficacy, tolerance, and trust. These factors affect not only citizens' attitudes in daily life, but also citizens' perceptions of political participation." In terms of perspective, political culture refers to "the ideas, beliefs, values, traditions and practices that underlie political institutions. All cultures are constructed, not the product of nature or fate." Such emergence is the product of social, political, and economic dependencies based on the interaction of history, chance, environment, and other variables. Political trust and political participation are positively correlated. On the other hand, research has found that young people see political action as meaningless because it does not bring about any change. As for the voter's decision not to vote, Andre Blais believes that their answer can be roughly deducted as three answers: "can't, won't, no one told them to vote". In terms of their political participation, they can be divided into four modes: lack of resources, psychological participation, political mobilization and

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rational choice.\textsuperscript{11} Of the four models, all but the first, which is mainly concerned with the role of political parties, seem to be related to voters and the government. Almond and Verba construct these civic qualities as civic culture, which they define as "the political system as internalized in the cognitions, feelings, and evaluations of its population. People are induced into it just as they are socialized into nonpolitical roles and social system. Conflicts of political cultures have much in common with other culture conflicts, and political acculturative processes are more understandable if we view them in terms of the resistances and the fusional and incorporative tendencies of cultural change in general".\textsuperscript{12} They classified political culture into threefold classifications: parochial political culture, subject political culture and participant political culture:\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{Parochial Political Culture}

This classification asserts that people are not proud of their political system and have little expectations. They don't care about politics, they don't know much about politics, they rarely talk about it, they have neither the will nor the ability to participate in politics. They have no political competence or sense of efficacy and feel powerless in the current situation. In other words, their political system, the input and output of political and administrative processes, the orientation of self in the political system, etc., are all at a low level close to zero, in some local autonomous communities, and in centralized power such as Africa Political cultures in chiefdoms and kingdoms are all classified as parochial. Although the development of more specialized roles in these societies may mean the onset of more diverse political orientations, even larger and more differentiated polities may be dominated by parochial political cultures.

\textit{Subject political culture}

Here, less democratic than a participatory political culture is classified as subject political culture, where people still understand that they are citizens and pay attention to politics, but they do so more passively. They follow political news, feel uncomfortable discussing politics, tend to have a high frequency of polarized political systems and the output of the system, but are not actively involved, believing they can only influence politics within the confines of talking to local officials. They don't usually think of organizing a group. They have low political competence and efficacy; and some of them may feel powerless. At the general level, even the

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 630-633.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp. 17-23.
manifestation of political institutions such as politics, administration, or downward mobility is essentially a passive relationship that sometimes appears to be inadequate in a subject political culture. They said they would vote, but many were not keen to vote. They are less likely to trust others and less likely to recall opinions as children. Democracy is more difficult to take root in cultures where people are used to seeing themselves as subjects rather than participants.

Participant political culture
In participant political cultures, such as in the United State and United Kingdom, people understand that they are citizens and are concerned with politics. They are proud of their country's political system and are willing to discuss it. They tend to take on the role of "activist" of themselves in the regime, although their perception and evaluation of this role may vary from acceptance to rejection. They believe they can influence politics, and they may organize a group to protest injustice. As such, they exhibit a high degree of political competence and political efficacy. They will take pride in voting and believe that people should be involved in politics. They are active in their own communities and often belong to voluntary organizations. They are likely to trust others and recall being involved in family discussions as children. Participant political culture is clearly the ideal soil for maintaining democracy.

In the following discussions, this article will attempt to explore the voting behavior of 2021 Macao’s Legislative Assembly elections via the application of the three classifications of civic cultures by Almond & Verba, together with the four modes of political participation affecting the voting decisions of voters discussed by Blais, as a theoretical framework for the following discussion, to analyze the low turnout and blank votes in the 2021 Macau Legislative Assembly elections. The logic of applying these two theories is because of the nature of their citizen participation basis.

Macao’s Legislative Assembly Elections since 1992
The historical development of the Legislative Assembly before the handover can be traced back to the democratization of Portugal in 1974 where it immediately opened the prelude to the third wave of democratization in the West, and its influence involved its neighbor countries. After the

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14 Samuel Huntington has made a period of observations and conducted researches on the changes in political systems and their effects, and published a series of remarkable and influential work on the subject. For the origin and impacts of this democratization movement in Portugal, please read Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the remaking of World Order*, New York: Touchstone, 1997; and for the discourse on changes of political systems, please read Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968; and about the causes and consequences of this wave of democratization in Portugal, please refer to *Carnation*
democratization of Portugal, the government was already elected by the people. Therefore, Macau, as an enclave under Portuguese administration, inevitably "democratized" the way the legislature was formed. In 1976, the "Macau Organic Statute" was promulgated, which stipulated that the Legislative Assembly should be elected by elections, and the first Legislative Assembly elections was held in the same year. Although the candidates for this elections were limited to Portuguese nationals, it could be regarded as an election with democratic elements. However, these elections had always been rumoured to be infiltrated by illegal or irregular acts of buying and selling votes. However, since these elections were limited to minority elections and there was no electoral law regulated, even if the taint was not clear but no remedy was taken. In October 1989, the Basic Law Drafting Committee and the Advisory Committee launched a public consultation on the "Discussion Paper on the Structure of the Basic Law (Draft) of Macau", including the political system after the handover, so the Portuguese government revised the "Macau Organic Statute" in 1990 to increase two seats each in the direct elections and indirect elections in 1991 midterm elections (i.e. by-elections) in order to comply with the "Basic Law" on the Legislative Assembly seats after the handover.

The midterm elections determined the number of seats for the 1992 and 1996 Legislative Assembly elections. Whether it was the mid-term elections in 1991 or the general elections in 1992 and 1996, the irregularities canvassing and voting process, as well as the buying and selling of votes, were already known to the public. Some said that this was because the Portuguese government was already a sunset regime in Macau and had no intention of managing it; some said that voters are afraid of being retaliated by being known to have received benefits and did not vote; some said that voters did not understand the meaning of voting at all. And some voters even thought that it was just a medium in exchange for benefits.


\[\text{15} \text{About the development of Macau’s Legislative Assembly in 1976-1992, please read Lo Shiu Hing, Political development in Macau, Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1995.}\]


\[\text{18} \text{The process of these irregular behaviours can be located in some academic articles, such as Richard Louis Edmonds and Herbert S. Yee, "Macau: From Portuguese Autonomous Territory to Chinese Special Administrative Region", The China Quarterly, 1999, pp. 801-817; and Herbert S. Yee, "Money Politics and Political Mobilization in Macau: The 1996 Legislative Assembly elections", Asian Survey, Vol. XXXVII, No. 10, October, 1997.}\]
The voting behaviours of the Macao Legislative Assembly after the handover

The second-term Legislative Assembly elections in 2001 was the first Legislative Assembly elections held in the Macao SAR after the handover. The government attached high attentions to this elections, especially trying to change people’s impression on various irregular behaviours in the past elections. Before this elections, the government passed the Law No. 10/2000 " organic law of the Commission against Corruption of the Macau Special Administrative Region " and Law No. 3/2001 "Law on the Election of the Legislative Assembly of the Macao Special Administrative Region", giving the Commission Against Corruption the statutory power to prosecute those involved in the elections if any irregular behavior was found. In addition, the Committee on Electoral Affairs of the Legislative Assembly encouraged citizens to register as voters before this election, and carried out a large-scale clean election campaigns which made the citizens feel that the Macao SAR government really had the determination to enforce the law. These actions were very different from that of the Portuguese era. It is interesting to observe that the number of voters in the 2001 Legislative Assembly election has increased, the voting behavior has been strengthened, and the turnout rate is lower than that of the two elections in the 1990s. (see Table 1)

Table 1: Number of registered voters and turnout rate in the Legislative Assembly elections before and soon after the handover, 1992-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Registered Voters</th>
<th>Voted</th>
<th>Turnout %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>48137</td>
<td>28526</td>
<td>59.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>116445</td>
<td>75093</td>
<td>64.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>159813</td>
<td>83644</td>
<td>52.34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As can be seen from Table 1, the elections after the increase of seats in the Legislative Assembly in 1992 to the first Legislative Assembly elections after the handover, the registered voter continued to increase and the turnout rate in 1996 increased significantly. The number of voters had doubled from 1992, and the turnout has also increased significantly. The number of voters in 2001 increased by more than 30% compared with 1996, but the turnout rate fell sharply. The reason may be that the voters of this term believe that the newly established Macao SAR government is truly determined to combat bribery, and does not dare to exchange their votes for benefits. Meanwhile, they do not

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Part of the sources come from the field observations of the author with high reference value. For more details,
understand that this is the right of citizens, so they did not go to vote. Moreover, voters have long decided that buying and selling votes is not something special. On the contrary, some voters believe that voting in elections is a rare opportunity to earn extra benefits. Since it is only once every four years, they will of course participate enthusiastically. However, the Macao SAR government after the handover displayed a firm determination to fight against vote buying and took deterrent action against it. One might believe that the Macao SAR government had a different approach of combating corruptions from the Portuguese government. Voters thus should know the price for taking or accepting bribery. Similarly, candidates who wanted to be elected through bribery did not dare to rashly engage in illegal acts such as buying votes, and, in addition, the campaign strategies that could catalyze voter support, such as spending resources to launch election propaganda, distributing small gifts, and mobilizing votes to drive votes, had been greatly cooled down. In this way, it is not difficult to explain the sharp drop in the voter turnout in the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections.

However, on the day of 2005 Legislative Assembly elections, none of the accused persons was formally convicted and imprisoned because of the bribery in the 2001 Legislative Assembly elections. The voter turnout for the four Legislative Assembly elections from 2005 to 2017 was between 55% and close to 60%, which was quite encouraging. (See Table 2.) However, among the results of this elections, not only the valid votes was lower than the past six terms, including the MSAR second elections in 2001, which was considered to be the lowest voter turnout since the handover. The 2021 elections was the historic lowest than that of all other Macao Legislative Assembly elections. Although the general public, including researchers, mostly believe that it has a close relationship with the DQ of three candidates who are identified as democratic camps.20

please read Herbert S. Yee, “The 2001 Legislative Assembly Elections and Political Development in Macau”, Journal of Contemporary China (2005), 14(43), May, 225-245.

Table 2: Comparison of votes after the reform of seat numbers 1992 - 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Valid votes</th>
<th>turnout %</th>
<th>Blank votes</th>
<th>Void votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021##</td>
<td>137279</td>
<td>42.38</td>
<td>3141</td>
<td>2082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>174872</td>
<td>57.22</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>151881</td>
<td>55.02</td>
<td>1083</td>
<td>4280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>149006</td>
<td>59.91</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>6498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>128830</td>
<td>58.39</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>3272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>83644</td>
<td>52.34</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>2116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996**</td>
<td>75093</td>
<td>64.49</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>2128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992++</td>
<td>28526</td>
<td>59.26</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


++ data of this term cannot be located in government website, these data are mentioned in Herbert S. Yee, “Money Politics and Political Mobilization in Macau: The 1996 Legislative Assembly elections”.


**Analyses**

The blank votes reflects, to a large extent, the dissatisfaction of voters with the government or the campaign lists, including the candidates. The former includes the performance and effectiveness of the administration; the latter includes the lack of choices of the favorite candidates or the performance of the dissatisfied politicians, etc. Of course, it also includes many other reasons. Apart from the blank vote rate, another concern of the results of this Legislative Assembly election is the dramatic downturn of voter turnout rate. As Tong Hio Fong, Chairman of the Committee on Electoral Affairs of the Legislative Assembly, analyzed at a press conference after the votes counting session, the decrease of turnout rate was caused by the extreme hot weather, so voters were reluctant to come out to vote;21 he also pointed out that whether the number of void votes was really high was a matter of

21 Comparing the weather forecast of these two election, the weather reported on 17-9-2017 was ranging from 28°C to 35°C, whereas the weather reported on 12-9-2021 was ranging from 27°C to 33°C. It is quite clear to put that the weather in 2017 elections was generally higher than that of 2021. Tong may have to explore his analysis bit further. Please refer to the following website of these two days respectively: http://www.283u.com/2017aomen/9yue.html and http://www.283u.com/day/0912aomen.html, (2-6-2022).
opinion. There were many reasons for the void votes, but they did not respond to reporters' questions about the reasons for the historic high blank vote rate.\(^{22}\) To explain this phenomenon, common sense tells that the DQ incident appears to be one of the main causes, but not the only one. As this article has already reviewed multiple academic research articles from different periods, the reasons that influence voting behaviour can be influenced by different political cultures and have different tendencies. For example, Herbert Yee observed that the political culture reflected in the election of the first Legislative Council in Macau revealed that voters were passive or even indifferent. Further, one of the reasons why voters were politically mobilized to vote was that they had a lot to do with obtaining benefits.\(^{23}\) A poll conducted by Kwong Kam-kwan in the third Legislative Assembly elections found that apart from associations playing a role of major mobilizing force, voters responded that they would choose candidates who would only focus on people's livelihood (i.e. to catalyze their benefits) rather than merely focused on political work; but if the candidate focused on both people's livelihood and political work, voters would also support them. This finding reflected that the political issues that the pro-democracy advocates were not a popular choice.\(^{24}\) Eilo Yu's research on the administrative issues of the fourth Legislative Assembly elections found that even though the revised "Macao Special Administrative Region Legislative Assembly Election Law" had strengthened anti-bribery law enforcement, such as the abolishment of voter cards and introducing penalties.\(^{25}\) Notwithstanding, it still found that many Societies attracted votes by offering benefits.\(^{26}\) Furthermore, before the 2013 polling day, the CAC arrested staff members of an association surnamed Ho and citizens surnamed Vong for allegedly offering benefits to influence voters' voting decision,\(^{27}\) and on the 2017 Legislative Assembly election day, some associations to which the campaign lists affiliated were found to offer breakfasts to the elderly.\(^{28}\) Such ad hoc activity was

\(^{22}\) Tong Hio Fong, Chairman of the Committee on Electoral Affairs of the Legislative Assembly, held a press conference after the vote counting completed, but did not respond to a reporter's question about such a high percentage of blank vote was caused by the DQ incident, giving rooms of speculations of voters on this issue. "Legislative Assembly Elections News Live", TDM-Macao Broadcasting, 2.08am on 13-9-2021. And read also the Press Conference on "2021 Legislative Assembly Elections Preliminary Counting Completed", 13-9-2021, Government Information Bureau of the Macao SAR, https://www.gcs.gov.mo/detail/zh-hant/N21IMGVLV0K?6. (26-5-2021).


\(^{27}\) "Macau holds the fifth Legislative Assembly, elections, a case involving bribery has been detected", Sina News Centre, Sina, http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2013-09-15/094228220466.shtml, (28-5-2021).
suspected of being related to electoral misbehaviours and complaints were made to the CAC, etc. From the political culture of the past Legislative Assembly elections, it is not difficult to find that attracting votes through offering benefits is one of the common methods of canvassing votes. From this point of view, it can be seen that the exchange of benefits is a common political mobilization method reflected in the Macao Legislative Assembly elections. Of course, it does not mean that it is the only campaign strategy. However, it can explain that the citizens of Macao are not enthusiastic about participating in politics on a daily basis, and many citizens even refuse to talk about politics. Meanwhile, the voter turnout can often reach a high level of around 60%. In this regard, it can be preliminarily defined that the political culture of Macao belongs to what Almond & Verba classifies the parochial political culture.

**Changing of political culture**

Nevertheless, the political culture exposes a subtle change in the 2021 Legislative Assembly elections. Although Macao, like other cities world-wide, was influenced by the CoVid-19 pandemic, candidates were unable to carry out campaign activities openly as before, and the Committee on Electoral Affairs of the Legislative Assembly had implemented initiatives to promote clean elections frequently and demonstrated its determination to combat vote buying in early 2021, driving the open electoral campaign activities in public places become very sparse. Moreover, the sudden DQ action taken against the democratic camps alerted other candidates of the possible u-turn of political ideology rendered from the top administration. Assuming that there is really a campaign list intended to offer benefits to voters, it would be a bit difficult and deterred by the Committee on Electoral Affairs of the Legislative Assembly’s propaganda. Therefore, the low turnout was to be expected. As for the issue of blank votes, one could recall the discussions on the theoretical framework of political culture above that the parochial political culture believed that "they have neither the will nor the ability to participate in politics"; in addition, under the epidemic prevention measures, there was a lack of what Blais said the "political mobilization and rational choice". Further, due to habit or urban issues or other reasons, a certain number of voters, who might still retain voting intention, voted on the polling date. These group of voters had not been politically mobilized to vote for a given list or even discontented with certain political subjects (including, of course, DQ incident), so they came out to vote to vent the momentary anger.

28 “Offering breakfasts on polling day does not constitute vote bribery?” AAMacau Media, https://aamacau.com/2017/09/28/%e6%8a%95%e7%a5%a8%e6%97%a5%e6%b4%be%e6%97%a9%e9%a4%90%e4% b8%8d%e6%a7%b8%e8%88%90%e8%b3%84%e9%81%b8%ef%bc%9f-%e5%ad%b8%e7%a4%be%e6%89%b9%ef%bc%9a%e5%bb%89%e7%bd%b2%e6%8e%aa%e8%be%ad%e6%8a%a1%e7 %b3%8a/, (28-5-2022).
Combining the campaigning activities and tactics of the Legislative Assembly elections from the first term of the Macao SAR to the present term, we can see that Macao voters basically belong to a subject political culture with parochial political cultural legacy. That is to say, they are now evolving to a more subject political culture from parochial political culture but the latter is still influencing the indigenous senior people. Macao people tend to be, obviously the new generations, politically mobilized to vote due to the campaign tactics of political groups or candidates and the emergence of liberalism from the west. On the one hand, most of the political mobilization methods are related to Blais's political mobilization model and rational choice model.\textsuperscript{29} From the campaign strategy perspectives, including the campaign strategies of political groups or individual candidates, we can see that the election results, especially the figures of voter turnout that the government is relatively concerned about, are closely related to the government's publicity methods; on the other hand, the number of seats won of each campaign list and the electoral victory of individual candidates, will be concerned so much by the candidates and the government. So it has been a lot to do with the candidates' campaign ability to canvass votes and political mobilization. Referring to Herbert Yee's research findings on the 2001 second Legislative Assembly election quoted above, he found that the government had vigorously promoted clean elections and fought against bribery, which greatly discouraged some voters who wanted to exchange votes for benefits, and also discouraged campaign agents from being bold. Continuing the bribery tactics of the Portuguese era can help to explain the reasons behind the plummeting voter turnout. Even so, the blank vote rate of this term is the lowest since the handover in 1999. However, since the 2001 elections happened to be the first election after the historic handover of Macau, voters would take a wait-and-see attitude even if they were discontented with the political development and hesitated to make any move. This has unavoidably created a phenomena of low turnout and blank votes. It is a pity that the political and cultural model of the electoral bribery culture during the Portuguese governance is deeply rooted in the people, and some citizens who lack the awareness of democratic elections believe that the election is once every four years for earning "extra income" and enjoy free-lunch. The opportunity for delicacies, coupled with the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration in the 1980s, officially established Portugal’s “trusteeship” role in Macau. Since then, it would be helpless if one relied on her administrative effectiveness alone. Thus, it can be seen that her administrative determination seems to be weakening as the day of handover draws nearer, and local residents do not have high expectations but hope for changes after the handover.

\textsuperscript{29} For more discussions, please read Kwong, Kam Kwan, "Democratization and Patron-Client Politics in Macau: The 2005 Legislative Assembly Elections" and Andre Blais, "Turnout in Elections".
Although there is only a few number of bribery cases officially reported to the relevant law enforcement agencies, many local people would agree that electoral corruptions are very common in this tiny city. In fact, Tong Hio Fong, Chairman of the Committee on Electoral Affairs of the Legislative Assembly, has continued to promote policies against these suspected irregular election tactics in early 2021, and it can be seen that the increasing laws and policies tackling on electoral irregular activities are reasonably formulated. It reflects the gradual increase of electoral frauds but not making troubles to voters. Yet, the political culture of Macao voters has actually begun to shift. In the 2017 election, some dramatic changes can be observed in the turnout rate and blank vote rate. Voters' awareness and attention to candidates' electoral commitments seems to be driven by the catastrophic damage of typhoon Hato just three weeks before the polling date. Voters' voting intentions and attitudes are mobilized by the incident, thus displaying a clear mode of subject political culture. Nonetheless, this topic has been deviated from the main theme of this study, it will be put aside for the time being and will be reserved for another topical study, such as campaign strategy. Therefore, in addition to the opinions generally accepted by the general public, the results of this election especially the analysis of low turnout and high blank vote, the civic culture proposed in this paper can provide another neglected explanation for such unique phenomena.

**Conclusion**

One of the reasons for the historically low turnout and high blank vote in 2021 Macao’s Legislative Assembly elections is due to subject political culture and psychological participation. Ironically, this paper finds that subject political culture does not bring forth high turnout whereas political incident creates negative impression towards the elections. It does not mean that voters are given up political participation but, by the same token, they will psychologically participate only. Legitimacy may thus be undermined. Several studies have shown that the voter turnout in past Legislative Assembly elections is not necessarily related to voters' fulfillment of their civic responsibilities, but more to a variety of other reasons, among which the candidates' campaign strategies and mobilization ability together are the usual main factors. However, casting a blank vote unveiling voters’ discontentment with politics or candidates is both a vent and a message, which is very ironic. It seems that the regulatory authorities and the successfully elected members of the Legislative Assembly need to seriously face up to these phenomena they may have to do some "work" in a short period of time to reverse the negative perceptions of the public. Although, maybe this is just a phenomenon unique to this term, and the next term in 2025 may turn things around. If it is true, it is only an episode in the history of the election of the Macao SAR. However, if the results of the next elections are not too far from this one, or if the blank vote falls to a low level but the turnout rate does not rise much, it may
also affect the credibility of the entire legislature. If politicians leave it or deal with it later, they may lose the opportunity to carry out remedies, and it will take more effort to improve in future.

Reference


[10] Ikuo Kashima, "New Discourse on Political Participation and Political Equality: A Comparative Analysis of Seventeen Countries (Regions) in Asia and Europe", in Guo


