Introduction

Accountability, which refers to the answerability and responsibility of government officials, is generally considered essential to the achievement of good governance (Moncrieff, 1998). However, the operationalization of accountability is an unresolved issue. In other words, the question of how we make officials truly answerable and responsible to the people is still under debate. Rodan and Hughes (2014) summarize four approaches to understanding the constitution of accountable government: namely, liberal accountability, democratic accountability, moral accountability, and social accountability. Accordingly, accountability is the interplay between government officials and the people through these four approaches, which can help us to understand the extent to which officials are answerable to and sanctioned for their acts. Thereby, accountability may not have a real operational definition because, by nature, it is contextual and shaped through government-mass interactions.

This paper aims to understand accountability by examining the case of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) through an application of Rodan and Hughes’ four approaches to accountability. Its main purpose is to study the political interplay between the Macao people and government for the purpose of making a more accountable government. Its argument is that liberal and democratic accountabilities are not well institutionalized in Macau and that, instead, the MSAR government relies mainly on moral accountability to socialize the public. Leaning toward the liberal approach, the MSAR government has been trying to socialize the moral standards of the Macao masses in order to guide the public’s demand for accountability. Specifically, it is cultivating the Macao public for the accountability of government departments’ malpractice and wrongdoing through the Commission Against Corruption (CCAC) and Audit Commission (AC), which are the arms of executive branch for internal accountability. To an extent, the MSAR government is successfully appeasing the public’s demand for accountability through the construct of an image of self-accountability within the administration. Nevertheless, due to changing socio-economics circumstances, civil society has been mobilizing for government accountability through a social approach because the Macao people have not been satisfied with the results of the self-accountability measures arranged by the administration. Thereby, the continuation of civic mobilization has widened the government-mass gap, which is curbing the governance capacity of the MSAR in the long run.

In the following, we will first revisit the concept of accountability and discuss Rodan and Hughes’ four approaches to explaining it. To understand the accountability issue in the MSAR, two cases will be used for illustration: namely, the organization of the 2005 East Asian Games and the construction of Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system. These cases demonstrated the malpractice of the MSAR government in controlling the spending of public money for construction projects that
anger the public; in response, the government requested the CCAC and AC to investigate corresponding departments for problems with government construction projects and to publish reports in order to address public anger against the government for over-spending.

**Approaches of Accountability**

Bovens (2007:450) defines accountability as “a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct; the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences.” According to Bovens, accountability includes two processes. First, the actors have to explain and justify their actions to the masses, which refers to actors’ answerability to the people. Second is sanctioning the actors for their wrongdoing in order to show their responsibility. Placing this concept in a government context, Barreda (2014:308) defines accountability as “the possibility, on one hand, of obliging politicians and public officials to report and justify their decisions and, on the other, of disciplining them for their behavior.” In other words, public officials have to be accountable to the public such that the former have to be answerable for their decisions to the latter and could be sanctioned for their acts.

To operationalize accountability in real politics, Roden and Hughes (2014) summarizes four approaches: 1) liberal accountability, 2) democratic accountability, 3) moral accountability, and 4) social accountability. Liberal accountability focuses on an institution accounting for officials’ actions with rules and laws. A well-established institution that consists of rules and laws defining the scope and the procedures required to hold officials accountable is needed. The accounting process can occur within the administration, when the executive branch has its own arms to investigate officials, through the legislature, which holds the power to request officials and administrators to testify in the assembly, and through the judicial branch, if officials are suspected of violating laws (Kettl, 2009). Certainly, there are laws defining the responsibilities of, as well as the proper sanctions over, officials for their violations of rules and regulations.

Democratic accountability is based on an electoral process through which incumbent officials have to respond to public questions for their acts taken inside the government. During an election period, candidates run their campaigns to persuade voters to give them electoral support, which involving lots of candidate-electorate interactions (Fortunato & Shannon, 2016:133; Rodan & Hughes, 2014:9). Electorates can take the candidate’s campaign activities (e.g., forums and rallies) as platforms for posing their questions about incumbents’ behaviors and work when they were holding public office. If the incumbents cannot sufficiently justify their decisions and acts, electorates can exert the sanction of not casting a ballot for the incumbent in order to block their re-election (Barreda, 2014:308).

Moral accountability emphasizes the motives of officials and centers on the idea that their acts have to conform to the moral ideologies and ethical standards of the general public. Moral ideologies are set in “conformity to received codes of behavior” that assume “pre-eminence in evaluating the conduct of power holders” (Rodan & Hughes, 2014:12). It can be sourced from traditional metaphysical and charismatic customs and practices. Such moral and ethical standards for the guidance of official’s behaviors are the result of the interplay between the citizens and the
government. On the one hand, officials can adjust their administrative practices to citizens’ expectations of the government. On the other hand, a government can socialize the public to the norms of administrative practice that fit its administrative styles and interests so as to avoid citizens’ attempts to question their acts. For example, the Vietnamese communist regime promoted a campaign “Study and Follow Ho Chi Minh’s Moral Example” and tried to project an image to the public that would prove that government officials would behave in ways that the former Vietnamese communist paramount leader, Ho Chi Minh, suggested, promoting the idea that the communist government would behave without sanction and improve the administration by itself, without the public needing to hold officials accountable (Ibid.: 112-115). Such a maneuver is meant to reduce public pressure for accountability among government officials. To Roden and Hughes, accountability is, by nature, contextual, such that how, and for what, government officials should be accountable is based on a government-citizen interplay that constructs officials’ moral and ethical standards.

Social accountability relies on civic engagement and movement behind making officials accountable, answerable, and responsible for their acts. Barreda (2014:309) refers to social accountability as “the action of control and demand of accountability, exercised through the actions of different groups of civil society, or even individual persons, with the purpose of publicizing governmental errors, introducing new issues into the public agenda or activating the agencies of horizontal accountability.” Instead of accounting for officials in government institutions, citizens can make them answerable and responsible by exerting pressure through political mobilization.

Among the four accountability approaches, the liberal approach is usually regarded as at the core of holding officials accountable within government institutions. The effectiveness of liberal accountability relies mainly on rules and laws that define the scope and extent to which officials have to answer and be responsible for their acts. If the rules and laws that have been set for liberal accountability do not result in satisfying public demand, citizens can shift to democratic and social accountability to exert political pressure on officials. On the other hand, the government can counter maneuver the public’s pressure for accountability through the use of moral accountability, shaping moral and ethical standards to those of public officials. The aggregated effect of answerability and responsibility achieved through government institutions, electoral processes, the enforcement of moral and ethical standards of officials’ behavior, and civic engagement draws a complete picture of accountability.

The Organization of 2005 East Asian Games in Macao

In 1996, before the handover, Macau was granted the right to organize the 4th East Asian Games, held in 2005. Like many countries organizing mega sports events, the MSAR government faced the problem of over-spending for the 2005 games. Initially, the Macao government did not propose a complete budget to the legislature. Instead, the government incorporated the spending of East Asian Games into the annual budget of the MSAR without indicating which parts of the budget were earmarked for the Games. Due to pressure from the legislature, in 2004, the government presented a complete budget of MOP2 billion for the Games to the legislature. The Macao legislature then began keeping close track of the spending for the Games, requesting that
the government updated the assembly on the spending. In early 2005, the government increased the budget to MOP2.6 billion, but, in the middle of 2005, a few months before the Games, the government further adjusted the budget to MOP5 billion, more than a double the original, 2004 proposal (Journal of Va Kio, 18 May 2005:24). Macau’s public was shocked and questioned the authorities on their failure to monitor and control expenditures. Manuel Silvério, the chair of the East Asian Games Organizing Committee, which was the government department responsible for the organization of the Games, explained that Macau did not have qualified sport facilities for the Games, so it had to construct sport centers starting from nothing. Silvério also remarked that the organizing committee could not have a fixed budget and had to revise the budget frequently in response to situational changes (Journal InforMacau, 28 May 2005:1).

The public and the legislature were not satisfied with the explanation and kept asking for more detailed information about the spending for the Games (Va Kio Daily, December 2006:13; The Citizens, 3 November 2006:1). For instance, legislators Kwan Tsui Hang and Au Kam San questioned the government about whether there was any mechanism for supervising the organization of the Games. However, Fernando Chui Sai-on, the Secretary for Society and Culture, who was responsible for the organization of the East Asian Games and became the Chief Executive in 2009, did not answer these queries directly and only indicated that the government would review the regulations and procedures to avoid over-budgeting the public project (Macao Daily News, 2 November 2006:B05). Instead of answering public questions about the over-spending, the Chief Executive, Edmund Ho, requested that the Audit Commission (CA) investigated the financial accounts of the East Asian Games organizing committee, which was funded by the MSAR government. Nevertheless, the pro-democracy legislator, Antonio Ng, Kuok Cheong and Au Kam Sun proposed a legislative hearing so that the assembly could investigate the case (Cheng Pou, 27 November 2006:4). However, the pro-government legislators opposed the hearing and voted down the hearing motion (Journal San Wa Ou, 20 December 2006:2). Legislator Chan Chak Mo argued against the hearing, emphasizing that he supported the government for requesting the CA to account for the spending on the organization of East Asian Games but that a hearing by the legislature would be counter-productive to this investigation (The Citizens, 20 December 2006:2). Legislator Kwan Tsue Hang opposed a hearing by the legislature and said that the Commission Against Corruption could investigate for possible corruption and mal-administration, if necessary. Yet, the pro-government legislators, the majority in the assembly, supported the government accounting for its administration by ordering the CA investigation (Macao Daily News, 20 December:B01).

In November 2006, the CA (Audit Commission, 2006) published its first report on the East Asian Games organization. It alleged that there was financial malpractice among the Games’ organizers. The overall expenditures for the Games was MOP4.4 billion. The CA indicated that the Macau government originally planned to renovate existing sports facilities for the Games, but that organizing committee decided to build new sport centers instead, and only renovated two existing sports facilities, which substantially increased expenditures. In addition, the Macau government had no budget when proposing its project for the Games and did not have a master plan for the construction or renovation of the sport facilities. The CA’s second audit report (Audit Commission, 2007) explained the overwhelming expenditure on the East Asian Games as due to the fact that the organizing committee kept changing the design of sport facilities. It also criticized the
organizing committee for its lack of communication with the other departments involved in the
construction projects for not having sufficient supervision over the contractors’ work. Worse, the
government contract did not specify the responsibility of contractors for poor construction quality
and project delays. Due to its nature as a private company, the organizing committee was not
required to follow government regulations and procedures for financial management, and the
authorities did not exert sufficient supervision over the committee.

On the other hand, the organization of East Asian Games involves bureaucratic corruption. In
December 2006, Ao Man-long, the Secretary for Public Works and Transport, was arrested for
corruption. Some of Ao’s corruption charges involved the construction of facilities for the 2005
East Asian Games. Ao’s corruption case showed that the organization of East Asian Games did not
just include mal-practice inside the government administration but also involved the violation of
laws and regulations.

The CA’s reports fulfilled the demand for answerability, providing numerous details about the
problem of the East Asian Games organization. However, there was no sanction of or disciplinary
action against individual officials for malpractice in the organization of the Games, except Ao Man-
long, for corruption. Instead, in response to the CA’s audit reports, the government merely
indicated its inexperience with organizing mega sport events and promised to reform the
administration to guard against future malpractice. The case of the East Asian Games showed that
the accountability of the MSAR government only referred to answerability without responsibility.
Such phenomenon reflects the domination of liberal accountability, mixed with the use of
administrative accountability, in the MSAR. Other approaches to accountability are dysfunctional
and ineffective for holding government officials responsible.

First, the legislature and judicial branches played too little a role in accounting for the government.
As mentioned above, pro-democracy legislators proposed a hearing, but they were voted down
by the majority, pro-government legislators. The judicial branch did not investigate any official,
excepting the corruption of Ao Man-long. This showed legislative and judicial favoritism toward
the executive branches and suggested that liberal accountability was limited to the administration
and not extended to the legislature and judiciary.

Secondly, democratic accountability did not serve as an effective means of sanctioning officials
and politicians. Fernando Chui, the Secretary for Society and Culture, was the principal official
responsible for the organization of the East Asian Games. He became elected the Chief Executive
in 2009. The Chief Executive of MSAR is selected by an election college, which is dominated by
pro-government social groups (Yu, 2006). Ordinary citizens could not use ballots to sanction Chiu
if they were not satisfied with his performance. On the other hand, although citizens could, in the
legislative direct elections, sanction incumbents who opposed a hearing in the legislature to
investigate the Games, they could not sanction legislators who were elected through an indirect
election while there were several legislators appointed by the Chief Executive. In this respect, the
MSAR is not a democracy with universal suffrage, and citizens cannot make public officials and
politicians accountable simply with the use of ballots.

Thirdly, while some social accountability did emerge, it was not significant in this case. In the 2007
May Day demonstration, some labour groups demonstrated for various social problems in Macao.
They also registered their complaint against corruption inside the government, as illuminated by
Ao Man-long’s construction projects. Some also asked Chief Executive Edmund Ho to step down. The demonstration resulted in a police-mass collision. However, the campaign did not bring about the sanction of public officials. Indeed, the public did not campaign against malpractice in the East Asian Games; instead, they complained about the decline of living quality and the overall poor performance of the MSAR government. Thus, they did not generate sufficient political pressure to sanction officials for their handing of the budget for the Games.

In response to public criticism, the government, on one hand, had the administrative branch investigate the “internal” problem and, on the other hand, tried to persuade the public to lower their moral and ethical stance toward government officials (who, after all, were inexperienced in organizing a mega sport event). At the same time, the government pledged to improve rules and regulations in order to guide and monitor the works of government officials more effectively. Such maneuvers seemed to effectively counter public pressure for official responsibility.

The Construction of Light Rail Transit System

By contrast, Macau’s over-spending on its Light Rail Transit (LRT) system construction provides an example of the public demanding the accountability of the government. After the handover, the Macao government began to study the possibility of a mass transit system in the city. The Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway (HKMRT) was appointed to provide consultancy for the project. In 2007, the government decided to construct the LRT, as recommended by the HKMTR. In 2009, the government published the “First Phase of Construction Plan of LRT System 2009” and indicated that the cost of the project was 7.5 billion. However, the public found that the HKMRT originally proposed a budget of 4.2 billion in 2007, and it questioned the almost 80 percent cost increase. Pro-democracy legislators Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San requested that the government provide a detailed explanation (The Citizens, 21 October 2009:5). The Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT), the government department responsible for the construction of the LRT, did not answer for the budget increase, but it promised that it would work hand in hand with the CA and CCAC to control the budget and address any possible malpractice in the spending of public money (Macau Daily News, 31 October 2009:B01).

In 2011, the CA published the first audit report for the construction of LRT and indicated that the GIT miscalculated the budget of the project, which should have been 8.7 billion instead of the 7.2 billion presented in 2009 (Audit Commission, 2011). This indicated that 90 percent of the contracting-out items were outsourced without open tendering and that 27 out of 29 budget items did not appear in the original budget. The audit report brought about severe public criticism against the GIT. Responding to the CA’s audit report, the GIT promised to introduce an internal monitoring mechanism and set up a working group for the improvement of financial management and quality control for the LRT project (Macau Daily News, 25 May 2011: A03).

The CA conducted another audit report for the LRT project the following year. It estimated a budget increase to 14 billion and criticized the GIT’s budget estimation method (Audit Commission, 2012). Furthermore, the CA found that the GIT did not have written instructions and guidelines for contractors to help them control budgets. At the same time, the CCAC published another report on the malpractice of the GIT in the LRT construction project (Commission Against
The report resulted in legislative and public criticism against the GIT (Cheng Pou, 8 September 2012:1), and a labour union protest that followed demanded responsibility from government officials (Macao Daily News, 30 September 2012:C05). In response to the public anger’s, the Chief Executive, Fernando Chui, ordered the Secretary for Transport and Public Work, who is the principal of the GIT, to follow the CA’s recommendation to control the budgets of the LRT project (Macao Daily News, 10 September 2012:A03).

The CA published the third audit report for the LRT project in 2015, which indicated that the GIT had not revised its project budget since 2012 and predicted that the overall expenditures would be tremendously exceeded in the 2012 budget (Audit Commission, 2015). It also found that the project lagged behind schedule, as the GIT failed to oversee the work progress of its contractors.

Again, the public and legislator criticized the GIT for its failure to control the budget and progress of the LRT project. For instance, legislator Chan Meng Kam urged the government to determine the responsibility for the problems (Exmoo News, 22 January 2015:29), and legislator Jose Coutinho criticized the GIT for lacking transparency in the management of the LRT project (The Citizen, 23 January 2015:2). However, the legislature seemed to be reluctant to hold the MSAR government accountable for its poor performance in the LRT project. The pro-democracy legislators Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San motioned a hearing to request officials testify in the legislator about the various problems of the LRT project (Macao Daily News, 24 January 2015:B01). However, the pro-government legislators, who were the majority in the assembly, voted down the motion. The pro-government legislators merely supported having oral and written government explanations instead of investigating the problem through a hearing. On the other hand, the media began criticizing the government for failing to take action on the problems, corresponding to suggestions by the CA, CCAC, and the public (All About Macau, 19 January 2015). However, civil society did not show strong mobilization to hold the government accountable for its problems managing the LRT project.

Further, the government did not receive strong political pressure to hold individual officials responsible, and no official was sanctioned or punished for the malpractices that occurred during the implementation of the project. Instead, Chief Executive Fernando Chui issued a dispatch to the Secretary for Transport and Public Works requesting that latter supervised the GIT in reviewing the internal rules and regulations, in accordance with the CA’s suggestion (Macao Daily News, 20 January 2015:B01).

Similar to the case of the 2005 East Asian Games, in the LRT project, the MSAR government relied on administrative accountability to hold itself answerable for its acts. The legislative and judicial branch did little to account for the actions of the executive. In terms of democratic accountability, Chief Executive Fernando Chui was re-elected in 2014. In the campaign, he did not face a significant challenge in light the LRT project, nor was any pro-government legislator defeated in the 2013 legislative election due to their reluctant to investigate the LRT project through a hearing. Civil society, in other words, did not generate sufficient pressure aimed at social accountability. In responding to public pressure, the government, on one hand, appointed its internal accountability arms, CA and CCAC, to oversee an investigation. On the other hand, it tried to project a sense that the government administration would undergo self-improvement with the Chief Executive supervising the administration of reforms. Some noted that the government
established a good internal supervision mechanism by deploying the CA to keep accounting the LRT project (Macau Daily News, 25 May 2011:B05). Nevertheless, the element of responsibility seemed to disappear in the accountability process.

How Does the MSAR Government Hold Itself Accountable?

The cases of 2005 East Asian Games organization and LRT construction project demonstrate that the accountability of the MAESR government appeared mainly in the form of the administrative means of the liberal approach. The phenomenon of administrative accountability in the MSAR is a reflection of its political system. Macao is not a democracy with universal suffrage, and the public does not have a powerful enough ballot to hold the Chief Executive accountable. Although there are 14 legislators selected through direct elections, there are 12 indirectly elected legislators who are selected by social groups that are dominated by pro-government organizations and 7 who are appointed by the Chief Executive. The majority of the legislature is pro-government, leading the assembly to be protective of the executive branch rather than applying their legislative authority to check the government. The political institution, per se, limits the public’s ability to adopt a democratic approach to making public officials and politicians accountable.

Furthermore, the Macao masses are inactive in their political mobilization for social accountability. As Yee, Liu, and Chan (2011) argued, Macao’s mass political culture is a subjective type of Almond and Verba’s categorization (1965): they pay attention to politics and public affairs but seldom mobilize and campaign to fight for their political interests. Civil society is relatively weak when it comes to persistently exerting political pressure to hold the government responsible for malpractice.

On the contrary, the government, to an extent, is successfully adopting moral accountability to shape to public’s expectation of government actions. In the two cases, the government consistently argued that the malpractice was mainly due to the inexperience of government officials. It is noteworthy that, during the colonial era, the Portuguese occupied all senior positions inside the government. The Portuguese authorities began the localization process in the civil service in the final years of sovereignty’s return to China (Yee, 1993; Lo, 1995). Some local Chinese officials were promoted from junior to senior rank in a very short period of time. This colonial legacy shaped the moral and ethical standards to which the Macao public held MSAR officials: citizens came to accept that the wrongdoing of the administration would be inevitable. Nevertheless, the government would have its own agencies (namely, the CA and CCAC) keeping checking on and digging out problems in the administration for the purposes of enacting reform and improvement when it deemed these necessary. Indeed, the public is appreciative of the efforts of CA and CCAC since their criticism against other government departments echoes the concerns of many Macao people. The performance of the CA and CCAC reinforces the public moral stance toward the MSAR government, with the latter holding the mechanisms for self-criticism and self-improvement. The results is an avoidance of any other approaches toward accountability except administrative accountability. Thereby, the MSAR government could socialize the general public to be tolerant, if not outright accepting of, administrative accountability with answerability, but without responsibility.
Nevertheless, the MSAR has been established since December 1999. Inexperience as justification for malpractice is losing its ability to convince the Macao public to hold the officials as the administration to a relatively low moral standard. Indeed, there is increasing public discontent against the administration’s performance, and the mass has been gradually mobilizing against the MSAR. If the government continues to perform outside of the expectations of the Macao public and accountability without responsibility persists, the government-mass gap will be widened in the long run and probably bring about social mobilization that may cause social and political instability.

**Conclusion**

Generally, accountability is defined as answerability and responsibility and the expectation that public officials will have to answer for and explain their behaviors and decisions as well as be sanctioned for wrongdoing. However, accountability is not always a linear practice in this conception but is often exercised as a result of the interplay between government and the people. Indeed, as the case of Macao shows, accountability can exist in the form of answerability without responsibility since Macao’s non-democratic political system and weak civil society block democratic and social accountability. The MSAR government, meanwhile, can successfully maneuver the moral accountability approach to shape public moral and ethical standards toward government officials. It projects an image that the government can self-improve through its administrative arms by identifying internal malpractice and recommending improvements. To date, the inexperience of officials has been the justification for wrongdoing. The Macao experience demonstrates that the meaning of accountability is a product of an ideological struggle between the government and the people, as Rodan and Hughes argued. The extent to which officials are answerable and responsible is the result of a political game in which the government and the people compete to shape the moral and ethical standards of officials.

**References**


How can we make the government to be accountable?
A Case Study of Macao Special Administrative Region

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Introduction

Accountability, which refers to the answerability and responsibility of government officials, is generally considered essential to the achievement of good governance (Moncrieff, 1998). However, the operationalization of accountability is an unresolved issue. In other words, the question of how we make officials truly answerable and responsible to the people is still under debate. Rodan and Hughes (2014) summarize four approaches to understanding the constitution of accountable government: namely, liberal accountability, democratic accountability, moral accountability, and social accountability. Accordingly, accountability is the interplay between government officials and the people through these four approaches, which can help us to understand the extent to which officials are answerable to and sanctioned for their acts. Thereby, accountability may not have a real operational definition because, by nature, it is contextual and shaped through government-mass interactions.

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In 1996, before the handover, Macau was granted the right to organize the 4th East Asian Games, held in 2005. Like many countries organizing mega sports events, the MSAR government faced the problem of over-spending for the 2005 games. Initially, the Macao government did not propose a complete budget to the legislature. Instead, the government incorporated the spending of East Asian Games into the annual budget of the MSAR without indicating which parts of the budget were earmarked for the Games. Due to pressure from the legislature, in 2004, the government presented a complete budget of MOP2 billion for the Games to the legislature. The Macao legislature then began keeping close track of the spending for the Games, requesting that...
the government updated the assembly on the spending. In early 2005, the government increased the budget to MOP2.6 billion, but, in the middle of 2005, a few months before the Games, the government further adjusted the budget to MOP5 billion, more than a double the original, 2004 proposal (Journal of Va Kio, 18 May 2005:24). Macau’s public was shocked and questioned the authorities on their failure to monitor and control expenditures. Manuel Silvério, the chair of the East Asian Games Organizing Committee, which was the government department responsible for the organization of the Games, explained that Macau did not have qualified sport facilities for the Games, so it had to construct sport centers starting from nothing. Silvério also remarked that the organizing committee could not have a fixed budget and had to revise the budget frequently in response to situational changes (Journal InforMacau, 28 May 2005:1).

The public and the legislature were not satisfied with the explanation and kept asking for more detailed information about the spending for the Games (Va Kio Daily, December 2006:13; The Citizens, 3 November 2006:1). For instance, legislators Kwan Tsui Hang and Au Kam San questioned the government about whether there was any mechanism for supervising the organization of the Games. However, Fernando Chui Sai-on, the Secretary for Society and Culture, who was responsible for the organization of the East Asian Games and became the Chief Executive in 2009, did not answer these queries directly and only indicated that the government would review the regulations and procedures to avoid over-budgeting the public project (Macao Daily News, 2 November 2006:B05). Instead of answering public questions about the over-spending, the Chief Executive, Edmund Ho, requested that the Audit Commission (CA) investigated the financial accounts of the East Asian Games organizing committee, which was funded by the MSAR government. Nevertheless, the pro-democracy legislator, Antonio Ng, Kuok Cheong and Au Kam Sun proposed a legislative hearing so that the assembly could investigate the case (Cheng Pou, 27 November 2006:4). However, the pro-government legislators opposed the hearing, emphasizing that he supported the government for requesting the CA to account for the spending on the organization of East Asian Games but that a hearing by the legislature would be counter-productive to this investigation (The Citizens, 20 December 2006:2). Legislator Chan Chak Mo argued against the hearing, emphasizing that he supported the government for requesting the CA to account for the spending on the organization of East Asian Games but that a hearing by the legislature would be counter-productive to this investigation (The Citizens, 20 December 2006:2).

In November 2006, the CA (Audit Commission, 2006) published its first report on the East Asian Games organization. It alleged that there was financial malpractice among the Games’ organizers. The overall expenditures for the Games was MOP4.4 billion. The CA indicated that the Macau government originally planned to renovate existing sports facilities for the Games, but that organizing committee decided to build new sport centers instead, and only renovated two existing sports facilities, which substantially increased expenditures. In addition, the Macau government had no budget when proposing its project for the Games and did not have a master plan for the construction or renovation of the sport facilities. The CA’s second audit report (Audit Commission, 2007) explained the overwhelming expenditure on the East Asian Games as due to the fact that the organizing committee kept changing the design of sport facilities. It also criticized the
organizing committee for its lack of communication with the other departments involved in the construction projects for not having sufficient supervision over the contractors’ work. Worse, the government contract did not specify the responsibility of contractors for poor construction quality and project delays. Due to its nature as a private company, the organizing committee was not required to follow government regulations and procedures for financial management, and the authorities did not exert sufficient supervision over the committee.

On the other hand, the organization of East Asian Games involves bureaucratic corruption. In December 2006, Ao Man-long, the Secretary for Public Works and Transport, was arrested for corruption. Some of Ao’s corruption charges involved the construction of facilities for the 2005 East Asian Games. Ao’s corruption case showed that the organization of East Asian Games did not just include malpractice inside the government administration but also involved the violation of laws and regulations.

The CA’s reports fulfilled the demand for answerability, providing numerous details about the problem of the East Asian Games organization. However, there was no sanction of or disciplinary action against individual officials for malpractice in the organization of the Games, except Ao Man-long, for corruption. Instead, in response to the CA’s audit reports, the government merely indicated its inexperiance with organizing mega sport events and promised to reform the administration to guard against future malpractice. The case of the East Asian Games showed that the accountability of the MSAR government only referred to answerability without responsibility. Such phenomenon reflects the domination of liberal accountability, mixed with the use of administrative accountability, in the MSAR. Other approaches to accountability are dysfunctional and ineffective for holding government officials responsible.

First, the legislature and judicial branches played too little a role in accounting for the government. As mentioned above, pro-democracy legislators proposed a hearing, but they were voted down by the majority, pro-government legislators. The judicial branch did not investigate any official, excepting the corruption of Ao Man-long. This showed legislative and judicial favoritism toward the executive branches and suggested that liberal accountability was limited to the administration and not extended to the legislature and judiciary.

Secondly, democratic accountability did not serve as an effective means of sanctioning officials and politicians. Fernando Chui, the Secretary for Society and Culture, was the principal official responsible for the organization of the East Asian Games. He became elected the Chief Executive in 2009. The Chief Executive of MSAR is selected by an election college, which is dominated by pro-government social groups (Yu, 2006). Ordinary citizens could not use ballots to sanction Chiu if they were not satisfied with his performance. On the other hand, although citizens could, in the legislative direct elections, sanction incumbents who opposed a hearing in the legislature to investigate the Games, they could not sanction legislators who were elected through an indirect election while there were several legislators appointed by the Chief Executive. In this respect, the MSAR is not a democracy with universal suffrage, and citizens cannot make public officials and politicians accountable simply with the use of ballots.

Thirdly, while some social accountability did emerge, it was not significant in this case. In the 2007 May Day demonstration, some labour groups demonstrated for various social problems in Macao. They also registered their complaint against corruption inside the government, as illuminated by
Ao Man-long’s construction projects. Some also asked Chief Executive Edmund Ho to step down. The demonstration resulted in a police-mass collision. However, the campaign did not bring about the sanction of public officials. Indeed, the public did not campaign against malpractice in the East Asian Games; instead, they complained about the decline of living quality and the overall poor performance of the MSAR government. Thus, they did not generate sufficient political pressure to sanction officials for their handing of the budget for the Games.

In response to public criticism, the government, on one hand, had the administrative branch investigate the “internal” problem and, on the other hand, tried to persuade the public to lower their moral and ethical stance toward government officials (who, after all, were inexperienced in organizing a mega sport event). At the same time, the government pledged to improve rules and regulations in order to guide and monitor the works of government officials more effectively. Such maneuvers seemed to effectively counter public pressure for official responsibility.

The Construction of Light Rail Transit System

By contrast, Macau’s over-spending on its Light Rail Transit (LRT) system construction provides an example of the public demanding the accountability of the government. After the handover, the Macao government began to study the possibility of a mass transit system in the city. The Hong Kong Mass Transit Railway (HKMRT) was appointed to provide consultancy for the project. In 2007, the government decided to construct the LRT, as recommended by the HKMTR. In 2009, the government published the “First Phase of Construction Plan of LRT System 2009” and indicated that the cost of the project was 7.5 billion. However, the public found that the HKMRT originally proposed a budget of 4.2 billion in 2007, and it questioned the almost 80 percent cost increase. Pro-democracy legislators Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San requested that the government provide a detailed explanation (The Citizens, 21 October 2009:5). The Transportation Infrastructure Office (GIT), the government department responsible for the construction of the LRT, did not answer for the budget increase, but it promised that it would work hand in hand with the CA and CCAC to control the budget and address any possible malpractice in the spending of public money (Macau Daily News, 31 October 2009:B01).

In 2011, the CA published the first audit report for the construction of LRT and indicated that the GIT miscalculated the budget of the project, which should have been 8.7 billion instead of the 7.2 billion presented in 2009 (Audit Commission, 2011). This indicated that 90 percent of the contracting-out items were outsourced without open tendering and that 27 out of 29 budget items did not appear in the original budget. The audit report brought about severe public criticism against the GIT. Responding to the CA’s audit report, the GIT promised to introduce an internal monitoring mechanism and set up a working group for the improvement of financial management and quality control for the LRT project (Macau Daily News, 25 May 2011: A03).

The CA conducted another audit report for the LRT project the following year. It estimated a budget increase to 14 billion and criticized the GIT’s budget estimation method (Audit Commission, 2012). Furthermore, the CA found that the GIT did not have written instructions and guidelines for contractors to help them control budgets. At the same time, the CCAC published another report on the malpractice of the GIT in the LRT construction project (Commission Against
Corruption, 2012). The report resulted in legislative and public criticism against the GIT (Cheng Pou, 8 September 2012:1), and a labour union protest that followed demanded responsibility from government officials (Macao Daily News, 30 September 2012:C05). In response to the public anger’s, the Chief Executive, Fernando Chui, ordered the Secretary for Transport and Public Work, who is the principal of the GIT, to follow the CA’s recommendation to control the budgets of the LRT project (Macao Daily News, 10 September 2012:A03).

The CA published the third audit report for the LRT project in 2015, which indicated that the GIT had not revised its project budget since 2012 and predicted that the overall expenditures would be tremendously exceeded in the 2012 budget (Audit Commission, 2015). It also found that the project lagged behind schedule, as the GIT failed to oversee the work progress of its contractors. Again, the public and legislator criticized the GIT for its failure to control the budget and progress of the LRT project. For instance, legislator Chan Meng Kam urged the government to determine the responsibility for the problems (Exmoo News, 22 January 2015:29), and legislator Jose Coutinho criticized the GIT for lacking transparency in the management of the LRT project (The Citizen, 23 January 2015:2). However, the legislature seemed to be reluctant to hold the MSAR government accountable for its poor performance in the LRT project. The pro-democracy legislators Ng Kuok Cheong and Au Kam San motioned a hearing to request officials testify in the legislator about the various problems of the LRT project (Macao Daily News, 24 January 2015:B01). However, the pro-government legislators, who were the majority in the assembly, voted down the motion. The pro-government legislators merely supported having oral and written government explanations instead of investigating the problem through a hearing. On the other hand, the media began criticizing the government for failing to take action on the problems, corresponding to suggestions by the CA, CCAC, and the public (All About Macau, 19 January 2015). However, civil society did not show strong mobilization to hold the government accountable for its problems managing the LRT project.

Further, the government did not receive strong political pressure to hold individual officials responsible, and no official was sanctioned or punished for the malpractices that occurred during the implementation of the project. Instead, Chief Executive Fernando Chui issued a dispatch to the Secretary for Transport and Public Works requesting that latter supervised the GIT in reviewing the internal rules and regulations, in accordance with the CA’s suggestion (Macao Daily News, 20 January 2015:B01).

Similar to the case of the 2005 East Asian Games, in the LRT project, the MSAR government relied on administrative accountability to hold itself answerable for its acts. The legislative and judicial branch did little to account for the actions of the executive. In terms of democratic accountability, Chief Executive Fernando Chui was re-elected in 2014. In the campaign, he did not face a significant challenge in light the LRT project, nor was any pro-government legislator defeated in the 2013 legislative election due to their reluctant to investigate the LRT project through a hearing. Civil society, in other words, did not generate sufficient pressure aimed at social accountability. In responding to public pressure, the government, on one hand, appointed its internal accountability arms, CA and CCAC, to oversee an investigation. On the other hand, it tried to project a sense that the government administration would undergo self-improvement with the Chief Executive supervising the administration of reforms. Some noted that the government
established a good internal supervision mechanism by deploying the CA to keep accounting the LRT project (Macau Daily News, 25 May 2011:B05). Nevertheless, the element of responsibility seemed to disappear in the accountability process.

**How Does the MSAR Government Hold Itself Accountable?**

The cases of 2005 East Asian Games organization and LRT construction project demonstrate that the accountability of the MASR government appeared mainly in the form of the administrative means of the liberal approach. The phenomenon of administrative accountability in the MSAR is a reflection of its political system. Macao is not a democracy with universal suffrage, and the public does not have a powerful enough ballot to hold the Chief Executive accountable. Although there are 14 legislators selected through direct elections, there are 12 indirectly elected legislators who are selected by social groups that are dominated by pro-government organizations and 7 who are appointed by the Chief Executive. The majority of the legislature is pro-government, leading the assembly to be protective of the executive branch rather than applying their legislative authority to check the government. The political institution, per se, limits the public’s ability to adopt a democratic approach to making public officials and politicians accountable.

Furthermore, the Macao masses are inactive in their political mobilization for social accountability. As Yee, Liu, and Chan (2011) argued, Macao’s mass political culture is a subjective type of Almond and Verba’s categorization (1965): they pay attention to politics and public affairs but seldom mobilize and campaign to fight for their political interests. Civil society is relatively weak when it comes to persistently exerting political pressure to hold the government responsible for malpractice.

On the contrary, the government, to an extent, is successfully adopting moral accountability to shape to public’s expectation of government actions. In the two cases, the government consistently argued that the malpractice was mainly due to the inexperience of government officials. It is noteworthy that, during the colonial era, the Portuguese occupied all senior positions inside the government. The Portuguese authorities began the localization process in the civil service in the final years of sovereignty’s return to China (Yee, 1993; Lo, 1995). Some local Chinese officials were promoted from junior to senior rank in a very short period of time. This colonial legacy shaped the moral and ethical standards to which the Macao public held MSAR officials: citizens came to accept that the wrongdoing of the administration would be inevitable. Nevertheless, the government would have its own agencies (namely, the CA and CCAC) keeping checking on and digging out problems in the administration for the purposes of enacting reform and improvement when it deemed these necessary. Indeed, the public is appreciative of the efforts of CA and CCAC since their criticism against other government departments echoes the concerns of many Macao people. The performance of the CA and CCAC reinforces the public moral stance toward the MSAR government, with the latter holding the mechanisms for self-criticism and self-improvement. The results is an avoidance of any other approaches toward accountability except administrative accountability. Thereby, the MSAR government could socialize the general public to be tolerant, if not outright accepting of, administrative accountability with answerability, but without responsibility.
Nevertheless, the MSAR has been established since December 1999. Inexperience as justification for malpractice is losing its ability to convince the Macao public to hold the officials as the administration to a relatively low moral standard. Indeed, there is increasing public discontent against the administration’s performance, and the mass has been gradually mobilizing against the MSAR. If the government continues to perform outside of the expectations of the Macao public and accountability without responsibility persists, the government-mass gap will be widened in the long run and probably bring about social mobilization that may cause social and political instability.

**Conclusion**

Generally, accountability is defined as answerability and responsibility and the expectation that public officials will have to answer for and explain their behaviors and decisions as well as be sanctioned for wrongdoing. However, accountability is not always a linear practice in this conception but is often exercised as a result of the interplay between government and the people. Indeed, as the case of Macao shows, accountability can exist in the form of answerability without responsibility since Macao’s non-democratic political system and weak civil society block democratic and social accountability. The MSAR government, meanwhile, can successfully maneuver the moral accountability approach to shape public moral and ethical standards toward government officials. It projects an image that the government can self-improve through its administrative arms by identifying internal malpractice and recommending improvements. To date, the inexperience of officials has been the justification for wrongdoing. The Macao experience demonstrates that the meaning of accountability is a product of an ideological struggle between the government and the people, as Rodan and Hughes argued. The extent to which officials are answerable and responsible is the result of a political game in which the government and the people compete to shape the moral and ethical standards of officials.

**References**


