Unobvious and Hidden Parallels in Eurasian Legal and Cultural Space: Can Singaporean Experience Be Used in Russia?

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ABSTRACT

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Once Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Founding father of the modern State of Singapore, offered the Singapore’s political experience to Vladimir Putin during their meeting. He was not heard and Putin claimed that Russia must have its own way in Eurasia, dissimilar with the Singapore’s one. Almost twenty years have passed since those times. Russian political elites did not opt to learn anything from the Singapore’s socio-political experience. Now Russia faces the situation to be disregarded as a Eurasian power and thrown at the border of new Eurasian communication routes withal. An analysis of possibilities to use Singapore’s rich legal and cultural achievements in the modern socio-political Russian realities, is proposed in the paper.

Key words: Eurasia, cultural transmission, Singapore, Russia, legal adoption
РЕЗЮМЕ
Мейфэнъ Нъ, Флора Ванъ Цзя Ли, Константинъ Шаровъ.
Неочевидныя и скрытыя параллели въ евразійскомъ право-вомъ и культурномъ пространствѣ:
Можно ли использовать сингапурскій опытъ въ Россіи? Однажды Ли Кванъ Ю, отецъ-основатель современного государства Сингапуръ, во время встрѣчи съ Владиміромъ Путинымъ предложилъ президенту Россіи перенять политическій опытъ Сингапура. Къ сожалѣнію, его не услышали, и Путинъ заявилъ, что Россія должна имѣть свой собственный путь въ Евразіи, отличный отъ сингапурскаго. Съ тѣхъ поръ прошло почти двадцать лѣтъ. Россійскія политическія элиты ничему не научились на соціально-политическомъ опыте Сингапура. Теперь же Россія рискуетъ быть пропори-рованной въ качестве въ евразійской державы и оставленной въ сторонѣ отъ новыхъ евразійскихъ путей сообщенія и инфра-структурныхъ маршрутовъ. Въ статьѣ предлагается анализъ возможности использования богатыхъ правовыхъ и культур-ныхъ достижений Сингапура въ контекстѣ современныхъ общ-ственно-политическихъ россійскихъ реалій.
Ключевыя слова: Евразія, культурный переносъ, Синга-пуръ, Россія, правовыя заимствованія

INTRODUCTION

SINCE THE 1990s, Russia has been in a state of permanent reforms: from very insignificant, such as the housing reform, to the global ones like Constitution amendment; from geographically local ones affecting the position of the individual entities, to the reforms affecting the lives of all Russian people such as changing the retirement age. All these reforms have authoritarian character to a more or less extent since authorititarianism is common to Russian social policy. In this regard, Russia has always been looking for certain benchmarks that could provide some statistics of the results of the reforms and help to define novel necessary reform vectors. Reform process in Western countries may serve an example for Russian reality to a certain limited extent that should not be overestimated; the reason for this consists in the fact that most of these countries have democratic political systems dissimilar with the Russian administrative model and are...
characterised by liberal approach. That is why, in addition to the common models for reforming Russia (USA, British Commonwealth, EU states), Russian government must not disregard different reforming models in states with authoritarian form of governance that may be closer to the Russian reality and better perceivable both by domestic politicians and Russian citizens.

We are not talking just about copying someone else’s experience in a situation of domestic realities; the experience of some states and their administrative systems could be an invaluable lesson for us. A long time is gone when the reforms characteristic of neoliberal societies in the European countries and United States were perceived as the only true solutions for the “developing” world. In fact, as Wolfgang Sassin points out, this development turns out to be “de-development” very often (Sassin 2020a; 2020b; 2021). The nineties showed that the administrative model of Western countries may not be copied uncritically or shifted mechanically to the Russian realities. At that time the Russian political thought turned to wider horizons; the countries that were not that interesting to the Russian situation in the late eighties – early nineties, started to come into view of the reformers in 2000s. The Eurasian countries became closely studied in the context of economic, political and legal reforms. In the mid-2010s, BRICS countries and the states closely connected with them politically, historically, ethnically, economically or legally, became of essential interest for Russia. One of the most promising examples of reforms for Russia in a heuristic context may be Singapore.

Both the Russian academic thought (e.g., Pakhomova 2007, chapter I), and the journalism (e.g., Ukhov 2015) advanced the idea repeatedly that Singapore was unlikely to be a model for Russia; that the countries in question are too different, starting from their territory and ending with the mentality of the population. In the article, we propose a novel understanding the situation that would give a possibility to compare Russia and Singapore according to a number of key factors in order to answer the question about a potential (or, on the contrary, fundamental impossibility) of duplicating the Singapore political experience in Russia.

The main purpose of the paper is to analyse the state systems formation and current status quo in Russia and Singapore and to compare these state systems through the prism of political, historical, sociological, and legal factors essential for national meta-narratives of the countries.

The main methodology applied is comparative political analysis.
Fig. 1. Singapore is the only large business centre situated directly at the equator, where skyscrapers are surrounded by dense jungle.
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WHY CAN SINGAPORE’S POLITICAL EXPERIENCE BE INTERESTING TO RUSSIA?

IT IS HARDLY A COINCIDENCE that Singapore became interesting for politicians and political researchers as a possible promising model for reforming Russia. Singapore is one of the most important examples of “semi-Western–semi-Eastern” modernisation; it is the state that has reached extremely impressive results in about merely fifty years (Tan 2007). For Russia, the example of Singapore can be essential, since the critical current situation in the economy, financial sector and high-tech industry in Russia resembles to a certain extent a very tough period in the development of Singapore in the late 1960s, when the young state separated from Malaysia and found itself in a very difficult political and economic situation.

The British left the Malay Peninsula in 1963, and Singapore became part of Malaysia. After a very short time, in 1965, as a result of rather tumultuous events, it gained full independence (Singapore History). The situation was much worse than the Russian situation now. The young state faced the threat of extinction. The start of the newest independence history of Singapore was extremely difficult. Hostile neighbours (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam), lack of energy resources, shortage of drinking water, complete instability of the new national currency, housing crisis did not do Singapore’s development easier (Turnbull 2009).

None of the world’s leading powers expected that Singapore could have bright future (Brief History of Singapore, Singapore Growth and Economy). However, fifty years later this city became a capital of Southeast Asia in a metaphorical sense and one of the most prominent examples of rapid public development in Eurasia.

In the following chapters, we will discuss a number of political and social factors that influenced the development of the two Eurasian countries in question. We will conduct a comparative analysis of Russia and Singapore based on a number of key development factors. At the end of the article, following our comparative analysis, we will be able to understand prospects, opportunities and limits of applicability of the Singapore authoritarian political scenario to modern Russia. In this case, we plan not to dwell merely on external statistical, sociological, demographic and economic indicators that are normally taken into consideration in such kind of academic articles. There is no lack of such research works and it is hardly necessary just to sail in the wake of the academic discourse of that sort.

Naturally, comparing the dynamics of GDP growth or changes in the exchange rates of national currencies, the comparison of labour markets and earning yields of the population are important and necessary to understand the correlation of development of Russia and Singapore. However, we suggest to try to look deeper into historical, political and social fundamental concepts and development strategies of the countries, which form the mentality of the Russian and Singapore population.

In order to understand how the experience of one country can be potentially applied
to another country, we believe it is not enough just to compare their external indicators. It is necessary to understand how these countries are fundamentally comparable; how synchronous the processes were in a historical perspective; how equally the representatives of the national identities, citizens of these countries think, live and aspire to their ideals, and how close the ideals themselves are. In our study, we use analysis of both the statistical data and the development of socio-political theories, including reliance on the Eurasian doctrine and political views of the founding father of Singapore state, Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

Fig. 2. Life continues 24 hours a day in Singapore.
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NATIONAL AND ETHNIC MODERNISATION IN EURASIAN SPACE

In modern Russia, there are more than 190 nationalities, about 80% of which are Russian people (National composition of Russia in 2017; Sharov 2018). In Singapore, at first sight, the situation is different: the national composition includes a much smaller number of ethnic groups: Chinese (74%), Malays (13%), Indians (9%) and others (mainly Europeans and Americans)² (Singapore Population 2018), which may indicate a something different from the simple management of national consciousness.

First, Russia and Singapore are already similar, as their titular nationalities (Russians and Han Chinese) make approximately the same percentage (about 4/5 of the population).

Second, let us not forget that the concept of Singaporean nationality is
1) a reflection of whether a particular person has a Singapore passport,
2) implementation of “Singapore idea”, i.e. a national archetype.

For many Singapore residents and citizens, especially expats, their ethnicity (community of blood) still plays a much more important role than having a similar citizenship (community of soil), i.e. there is a situation, which Lee Kuan Yew planned to change radically and which will definitely change over time (Koh 2009, 308f). Nevertheless, in Singapore the ethnic origin of an individual – whether Chinese, European, Indian or Malay – is still important in planning strategies for his/her education, career development, choice of residence in the city-state (Chih 2002), despite the fact that there has been a serious progress in the implementation of the national programme for absolutely equal opportunities of the representatives of all nationalities since the 1990s.

In Russia, the situation is similar in many aspects. For the majority of the Russian population, there is a strong mental concept of “Russianness” and the concept of “being a citizen of Russia” is much more ephemeral³ (Parkhomenko 2012). But Lee Kuan Yew believed that the brotherhood of Singaporeans should be based not on ethnicity and not just on holding a common passport, but voluntary integration in a single national space:

The most difficult problem is to create a situation where a small number (ethnic, linguistic or religious) will no longer mean low importance, where the possession of equal rights for equal citizens will be perceived as something self-evident for the society. Moreover, the dominant groups themselves will begin to feel equal in the rights of numerically insignificant groups there (Lee 2014, 72).

Third, it is worth mentioning one more feature that unites Russia and Singapore, when we talk about national identity. In some cases the policy of the national management of Singapore uses achievements and developments of the national administration of China both historically (since most Singaporeans are ethnic Chinese), and non-historically (administrative assistance to Singapore from the PRC in the days of Deng Xiaoping) (Ho

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2 So-called CMIO national system.
3 In English, there is an ambiguity of using the word “Russian”. It is understood as 1) an ethnicity, or ethnic origin of a person (to have Russian roots, to be of the Russian origin); and 2) as a national identity (to have the citizenship of Russia, to be a holder of Russian passport).
2003). With regard to the ethno-national regulation in Russia and China, here we have very much common ground and similar vectors of development. Some national groups of China have developed separately from each other for many millennia, often engaging in political clashes and economic confrontation with each other. Therefore, the boundaries of modern China cannot be explained in their completeness by purely ethno-cultural unity. They rather demonstrate the will of Chinese Emperors and General secretaries (Sharov 2005).

Fourth, it is significant that in modern times, there is a policy of achieving the ethno-national mutual respect and tolerance. The public manifestation of disrespect or discrimination of non-titular (and titular) nationalities involves legal responsibility both in Russia and in Singapore. According to Paragraph 2 of article 29 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, the propaganda or agitation inciting social, racial, national or religious hatred and enmity are not allowed. So, in Russia, the propaganda of social, racial, national, religious or linguistic supremacy is prohibited⁴. Further, according to Article 282 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (as amended by Federal Law No. 162-FZ dd. 08.12.2003)⁵, the incitement of hatred or enmity, as well as humiliation of human dignity are defined as actions directed at inciting hatred or enmity, and humiliation of dignity of a person or group of people on grounds of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, attitude to religion, and likewise affiliation to any social group, committed publicly or through mass media (Responsibility for inciting ethnic hatred). In Singapore, there are specific laws against incitement to sedition; terrorism / political violence; and the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. They regulate in general the coexistence of different ethnic groups and require tolerant attitude to each other⁶.

Both Russia and Singapore are seriously concerned not just about the internal national stability and absence of separatism and extremism (which is typical today for most countries, including USA and EU countries), but especially about the presence and cultivation of national respect and the formation of a metaphorical “big family” tolerant in the sense of civil society, which would be characterised by a high level of national consciousness and interethnic unity. Even if this goal is difficult to achieve both in Russia and in Singapore, the steps taken have already led to a number of successes. Already in 2001, Mr Lee noted that

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⁴ Konstitutsiia Rossiiiskoi Federatsii (Konst. RF) (Constitution), art. 29 (Russ.).
⁵ Ugolovniy Kodeks Rossiiiskoi Federatsii (UK RF) (Criminal Code) art. 282 (Russ.); Federal’nyi Zakon RF (Federal Law of the Russian Federation), Sobranie Zakonodatel’stva Rossiiiskoi Federatsii (SZ RF) (Russian Federation Collection of Legislation) 2003, No. 162-FZ.
⁶ Singapore Penal Code, Chap. 224, 2008 rev. ed.; Sect. 298A; Singapore Sedition Act; Singapore Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, Criminal Law of Singapore.
Currently none Prime Minister of Singapore, whether he be a Chinese, Malay or Indian, may follow his national line, because he must serve a multinational country. Besides, the politics built on a racial basis will inevitably tear our society apart, and different parties will seek benefits for their countrymen (Lee 2014, 75).

The four features of national composition of the two countries reveal more similarities than differences. The history of Russia (Soviet and post-Soviet), and of Singapore in the twentieth century gave plenty of reasons to make intellectual elites be negative to the nationalism, wherever it can manifest itself, from literature to politics.

However, the revival of ethno-national problems in the twenty-first century in the form of global terrorism and fundamentalism shows that a simple rejection of this phenomenon is not possible neither for Singapore, the smallest state in the Eurasian space by territory, nor for Russia, the largest Eurasian state. We are not talking about a simple transition from the condemnation of nationalism to its criminal prosecution, but rather about an understanding of its discourse, identification of the characteristics of thinking, logical constructions and propaganda of its followers and ideologists, such as leaders of different levels of extremist organisations Al-Qaeda, IS, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, whose activities are legally forbidden in Russia and Singapore. The exclusion of nationalism to the “collective unconscious” is too dangerous.

Therefore, a tolerant and balanced national response to the challenges of global terrorism will become adequate both in Russia and in Singapore only if national identities in the two states are considered by law in all their political, historical, psychological and cultural manifestations.
Fig. 3. Raffles place accommodates the largest financial corporations of Southeast Asia.
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IN RUSSIA, there is the well-known and historically predetermined Russian idea. Do not we have a similar situation in Singapore? Is not there a "Singaporean idea" which would also be built on the basis of opposing Singapore to the rest of the world as an example for imitation, a model or a standard? Let us turn directly to the socio-political thoughts of Lee Kwan Yew, who was a founder and permanent leader of Singapore for over forty years. How did the founding father of the city-state see the mission, the idea and the purpose of the existence of Singapore?

The Singaporean idea, like the Russian one, is revolving primarily around a thought of uniqueness of the Singapore nation as a meaningful community of people who joined it deliberately to make it an example for imitation. Thus, Mr Lee insists:

We have created Singapore literally out of nothing. Starting with 150 people in a poor fishing village, we built one of the largest cities in the world two degrees from the equator. In such proximity to the equator there was only one more civilization (rightfully bearing this name), Maya on the Yucatan Peninsula. Nowhere else in the world human beings were able to overcome the soporific influence of the equatorial climate. Go around the equator or two degrees to the North of it and you will see that all people sleep in the afternoon after a hearty lunch. The only way! Otherwise, they risk to die from an heat stroke. And only in Singapore, it does not happen. Because there are wonderful, truly great causes... and great goals (Lee 2014, 7).

Further, Mr Lee professes that the Singaporean idea has a recipe for perfection: “‘Perfection’ is a word that includes a recipe for the survival of Singapore in the world” (Lee 2014, 8).

Opposing Singapore to the rest of the world, mainly to the Western world, is a permanent leitmotif very much resembling the Russian idea. “We are not British,” argues Lee Kuan Yew, “We cannot be British. Remember this” (Lee 2014, 8). From the beginning of the modern history of independent Singapore in 1965, the main theorist of the Singapore development rejected the Western development model (Lee 2016, 35-42), appealing to create Singapore’s own path based on completely different values and philosophical principles that would eventually make Singapore a most attractive place on the planet for people’s making business and living.
Fig. 4. According to Lee Kuan Yew, to sustain working atmosphere in hot climate between palms is one of Singapore’s major achievements.
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The Russian idea includes a concept of national spirit ("narodnost" in Russian) as one of its important components. Here we are talking not so much about the official ideology of Nicholas I era “orthodoxy – autocracy – national spirit” introduced by count Sergey S. Uvarov7 (Uvarov 2016)8, but about a broader understanding of the national spirit as a unity spirit (“sobornost” in Russian). The philosophical ideas of such an understanding, were laid down by famous Slavophile thinkers A. S. Khomyakov9 (Khomyakov 2016), I. V. Kireevsky (Kireevsky 1984), and K. S. Aksakov (Aksakov, Aksakov 1981).

7 Honourable Mr Uvarov was the Secretary for People Education during the reign of Emperor Nicholas I of Russia.
8 Initially Count Uvarov introduced his maxim in French (Donskich 2020).
9 It was Mr Khomyakov who introduced the term “unity spirit” ("sobornost” in Russian) as an essential integrity and unity of the Orthodox Church in comparison with Western spirit of individualisation.
The conceptual similarity between the ideas of national spirit and unity spirit in the Russian idea is, for example, studied by A. N. Lazareva (2003). Mr Lee developed his own theory of the “team nation” very similar to the “Russian idea”, according to which the national community is supported mainly by a unified team spirit, a common spiritual impulse and aspirations, and not administrative regulations and repressive strategies for national management of the state. The main strategy of national building should be based on the cultivation of this “team spirit.” To that end, he writes the following:

We can develop in people a team spirit, a sense of solidarity, so that everyone is ready to give the nation all the best for reaching new heights. And in return, the team (nation) will take care of all of us honestly and fairly. The art of management is the art of team building (Lee 2014, 8).

However, Mr Lee recognised that the Singaporean nation is a nation built from a kaleidoscope of ethnic groups and languages, not existing primordially and not claiming it. For him it was more important to have a viable national structure created from scratch and assembled from purposeful people striving “to fight” and united by a strong collective feeling of brotherly shoulder, rather than the initially amorphous ethnic community, where the national spirit and unity are close to falling asleep and extinction (Lee 2017).

He reflects on it in such a way:

Our first problem is the desire to become a nation. We need become it. We are all so different because our forefathers came here in the hope of earning money and gave birth to us here. But if we remain a bunch of individuals without a common will, only concerned about our personal interests, we shall not survive (Lee 2014, 14).

The comparison of purposefulness and relaxation of the national feeling becomes clear from Mr Lee’s comparison of Singaporeans and residents of Oceania:

Imagine that we towed Singapore somewhere in the heart of Oceania. And two million active and energetic Singaporeans became relaxed residents of Oceania, dancing to exhaustion with flowers in their hair. And where was a lively marine and air traffic and motivated workers – an inexhaustible source of new ideas – there is a desolate shore now, from which the islanders are looking at a merchant ship on the horizon that dropped in to them accidentally. Then we would not dare dreaming about what we have... But we are not in Oceania, and we are not islanders. We do not hang flowers on our ears – neither for decoration, nor for our own whims, as Western hippies do (Lee 2014, 14-15).

Thus, the “Russian idea” has a lot in common with the “Singaporean idea.” Here a reasonable question may arise. Perhaps, programmes and ideologies of national building in other states are also similar to the national meta-narratives of Russia and Singapore? Perhaps, the Messianic aspirations of the USA are similar to them; and perhaps we may
not draw such parallels just between the Russians and Singaporeans? After all, do not the United States also believe that the Americans are called upon to bring a democratic system and a certain world order to all mankind?

Fig. 5. Singaporean streets’ cleanness is unique in Eurasia. It is supported by incessant cleaners work as well as enormous money penalties for throwing litter.
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THE COMPARISON OF RUSSIAN, SINGAPOREAN AND AMERICAN NATIONAL META-NARRATIVES

We think the national ideal projects in Russia and Singapore differ significantly from the “American dream” that may be understood as the “American idea,” which is better explained in Table 1 (also: Sharov 2018). A careful study of Table 1 shows that the situation is not so clear and simple. In some paragraphs, the Russian idea is closer to the American dream, the foundations of which were laid in the US Declaration of Independence. On the other hand, a number of features of national meta-narratives bring together Singapore and America. However, the Russian and Singapore ideas are indeed very close in terms of basic and key components of the national ideas (Table 1 presents similar characteristics of Russia and Singapore in bold; Russia and USA in italics; Singapore and USA in underline).

Table 1. Some components of national meta-narratives.

| Feature of the national idea               | Russia                                      | Singapore                                   | USA                                           |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Relation between individual and collective | Primacy of collective over individual       | Primacy of collective over individual       | Main value of the nation is an individual     |
| Ideal political regime (de facto regime)  | Authoritarian                               | Authoritarian                               | Democratic                                    |
| Place and role of different nationalities | There is a titular nationality and integration of non-titular nationalities in the unified national dream | There is a titular nationality and integration of non-titular nationalities in the unified national dream | A melting pot of different nations that make up the united nation of Americans |
| Messianic motives                          | Messiahship is very strong                 | Messiahship is expressed implicitly. The nation objective is not to bring light and Messiahship is very strong |
| **Focusing on the values** | **Prosperity of the country. Unity in the mind of most national representatives the concepts of nation, state and country** | **The welfare of the nation as an indivisible set of personalities, as a unified team** | **Welfare of citizens as individuals** |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| **Perfect ideological system in the framework of the national idea** | **Conservatism, traditionalism** | **Liberalism with high piety to the tradition** | **Liberalism enshrined in the "Declaration of Independence". Currently neoliberalism** |
| **Nature of the inclusion of individuals in the national idea** | **Community, “unity spirit”** | **Team, “team spirit”, “family spirit”, “five relationships” of Confucianism** | **Voluntary inclusion of citizens in national construction** |
| **Religiosity of citizens in the historical past** | **Almost 100%** | **High percentage of religious citizens** | **The religious never prevailed over secular** |
| **Religiosity of citizens in modern times** | **Strong secularisation; many citizens have a hostile attitude to any institutional forms of religion** | **High percentage of religious citizens** | **Extremely strong secularisation** |
| **Leader's role in the national dream** | **The ideal is a “Father the Tsar”, whether he is a monarch, secretary general of the communist party or president. The leader's identity is similar to the delification and transformation into a cult. The change of** | **The role of the leader is huge. The leader is the face of the nation, defender of rights and a symbolic father of citizens. The personality of the leader plays a very important role. To ensure that the change of leader** | **The leader’s role is incommensurably lower than the role of a well-functioning political system. The personality of the president is, in fact, unimportant. The leader’s change does not solve anything,** |
A distinctive feature of the Russian national idea is the unity spirit, Singaporean idea “five relations” of Confucius. Let us recall that, according to the teachings of Confucianism, the social order is provided by the refusal of the primacy of individual well-being for the sake of the prosperity of the society, which is understood as a big family. These five relations 五伦 (Wu Lun), projecting the private life on the public life, are as follows:

1) a father should treat his sons kindly, and sons should treat their father with filial piety;

2) an elder brother should treat a younger brother with kindness, and a younger brother
should treat an elder brother with respect;

3) a husband should treat his wife fairly, and a wife should treat her husband helpfully;

4) a friend should treat his/her friend with trust and honesty; finally

5) a leader should treat his/her subjects benevolently, and subjects should treat a leader with fidelity (Five Confucian constants, web resource).

Within both the Russian concept of unity spirit and the five relations of Confucianism, it is natural that the interests of the state and society are above the interests of an individual and even an aggregate of individuals. That brings Russia and Singapore together in the sense that the two Eurasian countries are farther from individualism than the Western world.

Fig. 6. Colonial architecture is abutting upon the modern one.
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The situation with the language structure and attitude toward languages can be considered at two fundamentally different levels:

1) level of state policy, and
2) level of perception by the majority of citizens of the country.

Due to the fact that Singapore was originally built as an externally open state attracting workers from many countries, its linguistic structure was formed as a social environment absolutely tolerant to any languages and dialects. At the same time, initially four languages were accepted as state ones: English, Standard Chinese\(^10\) (with simplified writing), Malay (with Latin writing) and Tamil. Such number of official languages is unique itself in the world (Lewis 2009); it is intended to emphasise that in Singapore multilingualism is encouraged. Of course, not all languages in Singapore have the same status. All four languages are, of course, official according to the Constitution, but English is more official than others. It is extremely interesting that despite the fact that the titular nationality of Singapore is Chinese (about 76% of the population), most of them speak English as their first language, and Chinese is acquired as a second language (Lee 2013). Even the founding father of Singapore admitted that, since his first language was English, his Mandarin Chinese throughout his life could not be compared with the Mandarin Chinese language spoken by native Chinese (Lee 2014, 11, 68).

Why does English have a more preferable status in Singapore now in comparison with the other languages? Probably, because English is not native for most ethnic groups in Singapore (except for a small percentage of English-speaking Europeans). This allows it to be a certain *lingua franca*, a neutral language of communication, which would not violate the rights of members of any ethnic group and thus would not be presented by anyone as the language of suppression of rights of other ethnic groups and would not give any *a priori* advantages.

In addition, English is undoubtedly the simplest language of the Singapore official languages in terms of grammar, syntax and spelling, which could not but contribute to the success of its recognition as the language of business communication and the legal language in Singapore, as well as worldwide, even in the countries where it does not have such a privileged status.

In Singapore learning a second language is extremely encouraged, and even more encouraged is studying the third and successive languages (Dixon 2005). The fact is that since *de facto* English is the dominant language in Singapore, many Chinese, Indians and to a lesser extent, Malays have begun to use only English for everyday communication, even at home!

\(^{10}\) I.e. Mandarin Chinese.
There is an alarming situation Mr Lee warned about, and which the Singapore authorities try to correct now with special incentives for bilinguals and multilinguals: English begins to displace native languages of Singapore citizens (Tan 2012).

In the same way, English in modern times forces other official languages of Singapore out from the academic thought. Just let us look at the lists of academic scientific journals published in Singapore and included in international databases, such as, for example, SpringerLink, Scopus, Web of Science, Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory, DOAJ, Mendeley, Index Copernicus, PubMed, etc., and we will see that in 99.9% of journals we cannot publish an article in Chinese, Malay or Tamil, just in English (the situation of the end of 2020)!

We think three factors may give the reason for this.

First, it is the global impact of world’s globalisation with the desire of most nations to integrate into the global system of communication carried out in English.

Second, the Singapore linguistic situation with English dominance may be explained by the expansionist property of modern English to displace almost all other languages from the sphere of scientific communication due to the fact that modern English has become easier than almost any world language in orthography, syntax and grammar. As John Swayles metaphorically noted in his famous article “English as Tyrannosaurus Rex”, a sensation in its time, English like the ancient Tyrannosaurus Rex, devours all other national languages in scientific communication (Swales 1997). This is the aggressive, expansionist policy of some transnational publishing houses that prefer to publish scientific research only in English. If you want to be published and read, you should write in English, even though for a number of ideas related to the specificity of different cultures and languages, it is simply impossible to convey them in an adequate form in English.

Third, the reason for current English dominance in Singapore, lies in the current specifics of Singapore, where, unfortunately, now few people want to learn Malay quite complex in terms of grammar; Tamil even much more complex in terms of vocabulary, syntax and writing; or extremely complex Chinese, no matter whether it is Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese or one of the Hokkien dialects.

We believe that in Singapore this current linguistic status quo should be revised in favour of a more flexible use of different languages in scientific, popular scientific and journalist discourse, as Mr Lee urged. For example, a situation would be definitely positive where a scientific or popular science journal may publish works in any of Singapore’s official languages, with the mandatory addition of an extended abstract, title, keywords, bibliography, and possibly conclusions in English, so that those people in the global scientific community who do not speak, say, Chinese, can create a clear picture of the published article.

This would be highly desirable in order to promote cultural diversification and linguistic tolerance, which are the very foundations of Singapore’s existence as an independent, successfully developing state. Lee Kwan Yew stressed the utter importance of preserving
the multilingual semantic field in Singapore:

If you read and think in English and understand only English, then you worsen your situation beforehand because you will not know what is happening in most of Singapore. If you believe the newspapers Straits Times and New Nation are all you can read about Singapore, then you live in a world of your own dreams and illusions (Lee 2014, 68).

The fact that English can eventually become not just lingua franca for communication in completely different spheres of life in Singapore, but a real Tyrannosaurus Rex relegating the other three languages to a subordinate status in academic communication and business, Mr Lee warned back in 1967, immediately after Singapore’s proclaiming its independence:

Go to English schools and learn English. But do not forget that you are not English. English is the language we learn and use. But we must preserve the part of ourselves that connects us with our history, with our culture, with our civilisation we came from. And this part of our past will help us to collectively create a decent future for the nation born of the most ancient cultures and civilisations (Lee 2014, 68).

In the post-Soviet space there are two vectors of the use of English and national languages in the academic environment. The first is the complete rejection of national languages since any scientific publication is accepted exclusively in English. This approach is now typical for Ukraine, Georgia, Turkmenistan and the Baltic States. The second approach is an opportunity for authors to publish in both Russian and English, as well as in the main national languages. This trend is typical for Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and other countries of the Central Asian region.

There is an obvious link between the linguistic policy of academic journals / publishers
and the foreign policy of these states. The first group of states of the former USSR seeks to integrate into the Western American-oriented world speaking primarily English, and break all kinds of cultural and linguistic ties with Russia, while the second group of states professes a more balanced Eurasian policy of cultural integration of tradition and modernisation. The usual practice of academic printing in Russian or English is complemented by the growing multilingual policy of many journals published in these countries. For example, Russian journals included in the international citation indices, such as Journal of the Siberian Federal University, Bulletin of Russian University of the Peoples’ Friendship, Sociological Review, Ab Imperio, along with English and Russian publish works in the main European languages but never in Chinese. Moscow art and humanities journals Slovēne = Словѣне. International Journal of Slavic Studies and Novosibirsk journal ΣΧΟΛΗ (both included in databases Scopus and Web of Science) are positively unique, because that their authors may publish the works in any of the Slavic or West-European languages (Slovēne) or any language of the world at all (ΣΧΟΛΗ), including dead languages (Latin, Aramaic, Old Greek), if they provide the main results in Russian and English. We believe the adaptation of such Russian policy in the scientific publishing sphere to the Singapore conditions could be interesting and useful for supporting the policy of multiculturalism, tolerance and multilingualism in Singapore.

The situation of English dominance in Singapore is typical for the scopes of scientific, humanitarian, technical, medicine, business, cultural, political, administrative communications, for the upper strata of society, while the majority of the population with secondary or lower special education (complete or incomplete) may not experience the expansion of the English language at all and continues to successfully maintain the linguistic identity within ethnic communities (Yang 2014). Most likely, this results from the potentially high openness to cross-cultural communication of the upper strata and not so high of the lower strata of Singapore society, which in turn leads to high and low social mobility.

The same situation now exists in some regions of Russia, especially in the Caucasus, where the ethnic urban population begins to speak only Russian, and the children of such parents are often unable to say even one meaningful phrase in their native language (Ossetian, Armenian, Daghestani, Ingush, Kabardian, etc.) (150 languages and politics).

In modern Russia, the linguistic situation is rather complex. Russian is the official language, but in Russia the total number of languages is more than 150, although most of them are spoken by less than 10,000 people (Languages of the nations of Russia, web resource). In the republics (de jure) as well as a number of autonomous districts and autonomous regions (de facto), bilingualism promotion policies are used (see, e.g., Putinova 2008), and in three entities, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and Yakutia, even local laws have been adopted that prescribe to the Russian citizens studying in the territory of these entities, regardless of their ethnic origin, to learn the second local language along with Russian (see, e.g., Garipov 2012).

Civil activists in Russia are taking a lot of administrative and information steps to prevent the extinction of uncommon languages and dialects of Russia (Citizen Media and
Less Common Languages). Singapore is taking very similar measures to promote multilingualism and learning of non-official languages along with the official ones (Tan 2014); it really brings together Russian and Singaporean experience in the field of language, communication and culture. The philosophy of development of the city-state, developed by Mr Lee, implies a rejection of a monolingual self-isolation of the representatives of the young Singaporean nation, rejection of a one-sided view of the world. Mr Lee argues:

> It is silly when many of those who went to the Chinese school forget Mandarin or forget almost certainly Hokkien.11 I’m terribly angry with the reports, where our citizens, who studied at the Chinese school, stumble on every word, when switching to the Mandarin dialect. This is an huge loss for them and for the society. If people spoke Mandarin at enterprises and shops, we could become a better, more cohesive, cultured and educated nation (Lee 2014, 69).

In Singapore, however, it is encouraged to learn Mandarin Chinese, while using Hokkien dialects (also known as Min Nan) is not encouraged (Lee 2016), despite the fact that almost all business was conducted in Hokkien until the late 1980s, and Hokkien prevailed in communication among the Chinese part of the population and between the Chinese and Malays (Singapore – Language). The policy of the government of Singapore is easy to explain: the widespread use of Beijing Chinese is one of the mechanisms for liaison with the ancient Chinese culture and reproduction of that culture among the citizens of Singapore, and not only the citizens of the Chinese ethnic origin.

If the ethnic group uses one language, it is traditionally considered a normal situation (Breuilly 2012, 150-151). However, in Russia and Singapore they are trying to change that inflexible and outdated rule. Both here and there, more active government actions are needed to involve the general public in language education programmes that would be subsidised by the state to some extent, and also to practice bilingual education more widely in most parts of the territory of Russia, where the indigenous population lives alongside the Russian population.

However, the state programmes for the maintenance of local languages should not be utopian; which was extremely characteristic for the early 1990s, when centrifugal tendencies in the entities of Russia were so strong that in many places local laws were adopted on complete exclusion of Russian from education and everyday use, and communication of

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11 Hokkien is a collective name of Chinese dialects spoken in the enclave Chinese diasporas, including Singapore.
local authorities with Moscow were envisaged only in local languages through interpreters (Alpatov 2005).

Obviously, this is an extreme utopianism, which, naturally, was not implemented, and the Russian language remains undoubtedly a *lingua franca* in the territory of Russia. However, we have to admit that in some former republics of the Soviet Union the role of the Russian language has suffered greatly (e.g. the Baltic States), and in some places has almost disappeared, and the adult population does not speak Russian at all (e.g., in Turkmenistan). While there is an absolutely obvious symbasis of supersession of Russian and opposition of a country’s political course to the Moscow official policy.

In Russia, there have already been successes in preserving local languages and strengthening the policy of bilingualism (Urmanchieva 2010). However, the level of consciousness of the majority of Russian citizens regarding the need and usefulness of learning foreign languages is still extremely low. According to the sociological surveys, only about 10% of the Russians know the English alphabet and can pronounce at least a few of the simplest meaningful phrases in English, while no more than 0.05% of the Russians have achieved the C1 level (above the score of 180 on the Cambridge scale) according to the European classification (fluency in language), and 99.9% of them live represent urban population (Russia became the 39th...).

I think there are two main reasons for this: applied so far ineffective methods and tactics of teaching English in Russian schools and the deliberate unwillingness of many Russians to learn foreign languages.

The interesting conversation, which the authors of the article had with a security guard of one of prestigious business centres in Moscow at the beginning of this year, shows the prevailing ultraconservative stereotypes of the mentality of many Russians. On the assumption of the authors that any Russian should be able to speak English at least to communicate his or her thoughts to representatives of other nationalities, he said that for this purpose the Russians have another language, the Kalashnikov machine-gun which can get any point and idea across foreigners very well. Alas, it seems that while this guard is not alone in his convictions. It may be alarmingly confirmed by at least a cursory linguistic analysis of the blogs’ and social networks’ comments: the acquisition of language skills in a foreign language (especially English12) for many Russians with not high level of education, is still a sign of rejection both of their “Russianness”, and basic principles of the Russian idea, a symbol of the loss of their national and ethnic identity.

The linguistic experience of Singapore in the development and maintenance of the attitude of its citizens to other languages could greatly help Russia in this disturbing situation where we are finding ourselves now. In Singapore, we see a real linguistic tolerance. For example, many Singapore road signs and signposts are duplicated in Japanese, which can be quite surprising to an unprepared traveller. The point is that Japan

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12 Because English is regarded by a lot of not-so-well-educated Russians as a linguistic marker of Russia’s worst and most dangerous potential enemies, UK and US.
participated in the reconstruction of Singapore after the Second World War and was one of the first large state investors in the Singapore economy. Despite the fact that Japan was the enemy during the war, Singapore has not removed these road signs in Japanese thus far.

The philosophical and psychological correlate of a benevolent attitude to foreign languages is well described by Lee Kuan Yew:

> In my opinion, monolingual people are often chauvinists or bigots. It is not surprising, because they look at the world with one eye. They do not have a binocular vision and cannot see the depth of the surrounding world with all the richness of human experience and knowledge present in the beautiful words of the living, elegant and flexible foreign languages. They are not able to understand other civilisations expressing themselves in other languages“ (Lee 2014, 69).

We think this phrase could be applied with success to Russia as well as some other Eurasian communities.

**TRADITIONS OF AUTHORITARIANISM AND EURASIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT**

The historical and archetypal adherence to authoritarian governmental traditions are, perhaps, the peculiarities of political cultures of Russia and Singapore, which bring our countries together to a great extent. In order to see the obvious similarities, we should differentiate the ancient political traditions and the political facades stated in the Constitutions, laws and broadcasted by the mass media.

Both Russia and Singapore are democratic states *de jure*. However, in our national ideas that reflect sustainable national ideals, standards, administrative systems, it is autocracy that represents a form of government socially approved and supported by the majority of the population. Thus, D. A. Ezhov writes about the authoritarian ideal in the political component of national self-consciousness of the Russians: “The intrinsic logic of the Russian political project involves the replacement of alternating cycles with predominantly undemocratic content that are examples of relatively rigid and relatively soft authoritarianism. The priority in the development of Russia towards autocracy is due to the prerequisites laid down in our distant past” (Ezhov 2014, 39). However, this researcher then emphasises that this situation is not quite right, and probably completely wrong. He
says that in the Russian history of political preferences, the cult of the leader and fatalism, as well as the belief in the supernatural power of the ruler acting in the image of a king whose legitimacy is charismatic, have always flourished (Ezhov 2014, p. 41). It is impossible not to agree with the fact that the head of state should have large political, social and psychological charisma to maintain the legitimation of the authoritarian political system, whether in Russia or other state.

The lack of political charisma or weak will of the supreme ruler in politics can be fatal for the whole system, become a “pseudocharisma” of the leader that will not only be detrimental to the ruler himself, but also destructive towards the state and the existing form of government. It happened in Russia with Emperor Nicholas II in 1905 and 1917 when the Emperor showed himself a weak political leader unable to lead the country and to unite diverse political forces together around him, which resulted in three revolutions (one in 1905 and two in 1917), which ultimately led to the destruction of the Russian monarchy.

Dimitry Ezhov believes that the mythologisation of the ruler’s personality plays a major role in maintaining confidence in the authoritarian form of government in the state (Ezhov 2014, 41), though, from our own point of view, the culture of public administration that has developed over many hundreds of years plays a much greater role here. In Russia, Singapore and China, the political traditions of public administration assume an authoritarian form of government in more rigid or softer forms, but not a democratic system like ancient Greek democracy. The idea of the legitimacy of authoritarianism of the Chinese culture and political traditions historically passed to the Singapore national idea.

Thus, the evolution from unconditional belief in democratic values to the recognition of an authoritarian governance model as more effective for Singapore, is distinctly traced in the political thought of Lee Kuan Yew. In 1955, long before Singapore independence, he wrote about democracy as some almost religious ideal:

> If you believe in democracy, your faith must be unconditional. If you believe that people should be free, give them freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of publications”, “we... blame the Communists that they “document” people. They drive citizens into the framework of imposed boundaries and rules. But we, liberal democrats, believe in liberal values. We respect freedom and the right of everyone to be himself or herself (Lee 2014, 37).
In 1962, just before Singapore’s independence, Mr Lee was already more cautious and less romantic: “Of course, there are people who should be protected from their own
excessive credulity” (Lee 2014, 37). But in the 1980s, the tone of political statements of the leader of the people of Singapore was changing clearly in the direction of recognition of a certain relevance and legitimacy of autocracy:

In young countries, democracy will work and bring the expected benefits only with an honest and effective government. But voters should be intelligent enough to vote for such a government. Remember: elected rulers are only as good as those who elected them (Lee 2014, 38).

Finally, in the late 1990s and 2000s the concept of recognising an authoritarian form of political government as the best administrative model for Singapore was fully developed in political philosophy of Lee Kuan Yew. He wrote then that the democratic system was not a universal recipe for happiness for all humanity at all, and direct and free elections are not the best first step towards the development of the young state. “Is the democratic system universal?” asks Mr. Lee and then he gives the answer himself.

After the Second World War, when the largest colonial empires broke up in the 1940-1960s, the governments of Britain and France “gave” the newly independent former colonies Constitutions copied from their own ideas about the future of mankind. Thus, there were about 40 constitutions “tailored” by the UK and 25 by France. By the end of the twentieth century, the results were ambiguous. In spite of this, Mr Lee complaints that the West repeats its simplistic credo in unison with America: “Democracy is a universal recipe for happiness of all nations,” which means that everyone who wants progress, development and transformation of their state into an industrial state, must build democracy (Lee 2014, 38). The final opinion of the Singapore founding father is disappointing for the prospects of democracy for the Singapore citizens: “Unlike the American political observers, I do not believe that democracy leads definitely to the development. I believe that the country is in greater need for discipline than for democracy” (Lee 2014, 39).

However, we should not underestimate the negative aspects of the development of society under authoritarian rule, the main of which include political passivity and amorphousness, or we can even say political laziness of ordinary citizens, believing that everything will be done by the government. This is a permanent populations’ belief in the good Father the Tsar in Russia and the Son of Heaven in China.

It is no coincidence that the Chinese majority in Singapore is least politically active. Mr

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13 Although, of course, we should not forget that in the UK there is no Constitution at all.
Lee admitted himself that the Chinese are not accustomed to solve political problems because of the millennial tradition of supporting the authoritarian power of emperors and their magistrates. He insisted that in our time most Chinese in Singapore are politically inactive, as it is unusual for the Chinese Confucian culture, in which a specially trained official should solve people’s problems. It is enough for Singaporean Chinese to have a competent manager who could manage skillfully their lives, solve their problems and provide them all they need. Therefore, the majority of Singapore’s population still prefers not to vote openly. This is very different from the Indian part of the Singapore society, which culture includes regular debates and open discussions (Lee 2014, 74).

It is obvious that Russia and Singapore are very similar in the historical recognition of the primacy of autocratic forms of government in the mass political consciousness and national ideas, as well as in a lack of confidence and cool attitude toward democratic forms.

However, in modern times there are almost omnipresent fierce criticism of authoritarianism in Western pro-American and pro-European press and the postulation of democracy as a means against all diseases of modern society – the prediction of Mr Lee is being embodied in the reality now. In mass media, culture and political statements of many West-oriented political leaders, as well as in the academic environment, there is a kind of one-sided interpretation of the historically developed varieties of autocracy in the countries of Asia and the former Soviet Union. For example, T. M. Penskaya believes that no nation, culture, or civilization was originally predisposed to authoritarian rule (Penskaya 2011, 237). Together with V. V. Pensky, she asserts that there is every reason to doubt that authoritarianism has historically been the right choice of Russia; these researchers also state that the mobilisation type of the state machine and subordination of the interests of an individual and society to the interests of the state, turned out to be ultimately bad historic choices for Russia and the Russian people. They continue that the “service” nature of the state and relations between it and society was once necessary and played a positive role, but later it also contributed largely to the preservation of the backward, archaic forms of social and political life. This also led to the fact that every time when Russia tried to make a breakthrough in an attempt to overtake the West, it could not launch the engine of internal self-development of society and state, and the consequences of modernisation breakthrough always had a finite character (Pensky, Penskaya 2014, 14). For these researchers autocracy is a kind of wrong political and historical surrogate, deus ex machina, which can be at once distinguished in the very title of their article.

Similarly, S. S. Komkova believes that the current authoritarian political systems of Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan demonstrate a wrong trend of public administration in the Central Asian region, generating a clan of political elites, lack of political pluralism, a low degree of rotation of political personnel, closed nature of political power and nepotism in the deployment of high offices in these states (Komkova 2018, 90). Dimitry Ezhov, taking cue from Merkel and Croissant (Merkel, Croissant 2002) considers authoritarianism in Russia as a “defective
democracy,” which, however, has a chance to become a real democracy (Ezhov 2014, 40).

**SOCIAL POLICY OF RELIGIOUS MANAGEMENT**

Despite the fact that the majority of the population of Russia speaks of themselves as Orthodox Christians (according to the sociological polls of the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center ("VTsIOM"), Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences and American Research Centre Pew, about 68-75% of Russian people profess Orthodoxy14 (Church and Youth are a problematic field; Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe), Russia has always been extremely tolerant to other religions since imperial times, and, naturally, we are not talking about the period of persecution of religious believers in the Soviet times.

The extremely diverse ethnic and cultural composition of Russia, presence of representatives of more than 190 nationalities among the Russian citizens naturally create a complex confessional pattern that must be taken into account by the authorities for achieving a stable social development. When the states of Central Asia (Bukhara Emirate, the Kokand and Khiva Khanates) became parts of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, the Russian authorities in the region were in a situation of urgent need to develop an effective administrative policy under the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population (both ordinary citizens and elites) with very scanty Orthodox military and political elites (Genis 2003; Khanykov 2012).

Apart from Orthodoxy that was the official religion in the times of the Russian Empire and plays a special role in the history and culture of Russia, the main world religions such as Islam, Judaism, Buddhism are preached in our country, which still demonstrates the Eurasian heritage. Other Christian denominations, Hindus and “traditional” pagans are also present. Religious life in Russia is ruled by a special Federal Law that gives everybody a right to profess any religious belief he / she would like or be an atheist15. However, Orthodox Christianity is not only the largest religion in number but it also plays a unifying role in religious composition in Russia; it is an historical, philosophical, cultural and spiritual basis for a considerable part of Russian society.

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14 The question of how much people are sincere and what they mean by saying they are “Orthodox Christians,” is really delicate and clearly beyond the scope of this article. But it may be reasonable to give an alternative opinion that only churched people regularly participating in the sacraments of the Orthodox Church can be considered as true Orthodox people. In such a case, this percentage will decrease to about 1.5-2% of Russian people.

15 Federal’nyi Zakon RF “O svobode sovesti I o religioznykh ob’edineniyakh” (Federal Law of the Russian Federation “About freedom of conscience and about religious communities”), Sobranie Zakonodatel’stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii (SZ RF) (Russian Federation Collection of Legislation) 1997, No. 125-FZ.
Despite the fact that representatives of any religions in Russia live in all cities with a population of over 100,000 people, historically there were compact areas with an increased density of people professing a particular religion. So, the percentage of Muslims is highest in the North Caucasus republics, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Crimea; Jews in the Jewish Autonomous region; Buddhists in Tuva, Kalmykia, Buryatia; Lutherans in Volga Region; Hindu in Altay Republic and Altay Region; traditional heathen believers in Siberia and Far East. A similar situation exists in Singapore: there are areas densely populated by representatives of a particular religion (Goh 2009), which, obviously, unites the goals of the governments of Russia and Singapore in the religious administration scope. The main of these goals can be considered as the target to achieve the peaceful co-existence of people professing different religions in the complete absence of religious fanaticism and fundamentalism (Tamney 1988).

We have to state with regret that this aim is still very difficult to implement completely both in Russia and in Singapore. In Russia over the past 20 years, a lot of extremist groups have appeared, especially those attracting young people radicalised in religion to their ranks, newbie religious fanatics. Those young people become an excellent material for cultivation in Russia fundamentalism and religiously motivated terrorism, and it is not only about the notorious Al-Qaeda or ISIS (both legally prohibited in Russia), but also about less known and small, but no less potentially dangerous local organisations. It is curious that, except in very rare cases, there are actually very few people among the followers of those radical groups and illegal organisations who take a serious part in the life of their religious communities, whether Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Jewish. In Singapore, the problem is quite the same: religious, ethnic and political extremism are closely interwoven; and fundamentally minded shadow religious “guru” and “teachers” often turn out to be not preachers of eternal religious values, but leaders of terrorist groups. In this case, it appears in Russia and Singapore that extremism and incitement of religious hatred are basically carried out by low-believing or completely unbelieving people, and often newly converts (An, Mahzam 2017). There is a very rare situation when an official representative of a particular religion or a priest openly expresses ideas and slogans, inciting religious hostility and provoking believers to commit wrongdoing both in Russia and in Singapore. The recent sad case of the priest Daniil Sysoev, who openly made fun of the tenets and values of Islam, and, most importantly, strongly influenced his Orthodox congregation, is an exception to the rule.
It is interesting that within Eurasian political philosophy, Orthodox Christianity is opposed to Western Catholicism, but not at all opposed to the majority of Asian religions. Such integration of extremely diverse religions under the unifying banner of Orthodoxy is one of the basic principles of Eurasian movement. The main ideologists of Eurasian thought Savitsky, Troubetskoï and Gumilyov asserted the organic proximity of all Eastern pagan, Buddhist, and Muslim world to the Orthodox spirit, even their potential Orthodox likeness. Eurasia was conceived by them as a cultural and historical region, gravitating to Orthodoxy as its religious centre and capable of free development to generate specific forms of religious unity. The spiritual identity of Eurasia is thus determined by the Eurasians as “symphonic personal individualisation of the Orthodox Church and culture” or, to put it in other words, like a symphony of national Orthodox churches (or religions tending to Orthodoxy) and cultures of the Eurasian peoples under the leadership of the most mature and developed spiritual tradition of Russian Orthodox Christianity (Bulychev n.d.; Eurasianism 1926, 28).
Here again it is interesting to turn to the history of the Eurasian world. Although the later rulers of the Mongol Uluses and states genetically related to them were mostly Muslims (for example, Khan of the Golden Horde Uzbek, Timur, Babur and the great Mughals), the early rulers and Toluids, including the Emperors of Chinese Yuan dynasty, were tolerant pagans who adhered to traditional Siberian beliefs, but allowed their subjects to confess any religion (Chen 2014, 332f).

It is noteworthy that Chagatai Khan, the second son of Genghis Khan, the chief lawyer and expert of Yasa\textsuperscript{16} in the early Mongolian Empire, Güyük Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, Güyük Khan’s powerful assistant Chinkai, and Sartak Khan, the son of famous Batu, all of them adopted Christianity (Nestorianism or Orthodoxy) and were baptised (Bartold 1964, 315-319).

Naturally, this religious tolerance in Russia has absolutely nothing in common with ecumenism, religious syncretism, and mechanical mixing the religions of Eurasia, placed in one closed bottle to obtain a strange cocktail of utmost indifference and indulgence. In addition, it seems that Kublai Khan himself did not put such meaning into his policy of religious tolerance.

As deacon Andrei Kuraev argues,

\begin{quote}
The commitment of the modern mass man to the myth that all religions are equal and that therefore it is the time for everyone to unite does not demonstrate a breadth of human thinking. The one who reproduces this myth, only shows his lack of courage and determination to say “no”; he shows the indecision to make a clear choice cutting something off (Kuraev n.d.).
\end{quote}

Within the Eurasian approach, we cannot say that, for example, Orthodoxy and Hinduism profess the same values and call to pray to the same God. They are different. In the Eurasian programme, Orthodox Christianity is understood as a solid basis for the elimination of religious fanaticism and fundamentalism, the basis of peaceful and fruitful coexistence of Asian religions and, of course, the spiritual guide of Eurasian civilization. In the 16th-19th centuries, during the territorial expansion of the Russian Kingdom, and later the Russian Empire, mankind witnessed a practical implementation of the Eurasian religious

\textsuperscript{16} The ancient anthology of laws and legal prescriptions of the Mongols.
program. Then almost all religious movements in Asia (Orthodoxy, Monophysitism, Old Belief Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, traditional pagan beliefs of Siberian peoples and Chinese cult of Heaven) were brought into a harmonious system implemented by the royal and imperial administration. Orthodoxy became a guiding vector of spiritual development of not only the Russians, but a large amount of nationalities, including the Russian Chinese, Koreans, Mongols, Siberian ethnic groups. People who wanted to become Christians could be baptised in Orthodoxy; but who wanted to keep their beliefs could profess any religion without the slightest violation of their rights.

Russian Tsar Ioann IV Vasilyevich Grozny (John the Terrible), who during the capture of Kazan\textsuperscript{17} did not execute any person because of religion, is in this sense an administrative successor of Kublai Khan. Kublai was able to support religious tolerance on the territory of 1/5 of the whole Earth in those days, when in Europe the Inquisition flourished, the Catholic genocide of the Jews continued, and the Crusades placed a terrible bloody line between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East. Tsar Ioann Vasilyevich created Russia as a Eurasian power, constructing a vector of geographical and cultural distribution of the Russians to Asia and overcoming a strategy of development of Russia as just one of the European countries. Having defeated and attached the fragments of the former Golden Horde, the Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberian Khanates, Tsar Ioann took over the Eurasian initiative from the Mongols in the 16th century, and thus Russia became the sole successor and heir of the Golden Horde, the Northwestern part of the Mongol Empire. In addition, it was from the time of Grozny that Russia became a multi-religious country, when very large Muslim, Buddhist and heathen communities were included in the number of Russian citizens.

As Yuri Bulychev writes, without denying the large distance of Islam and Buddhism from Orthodoxy, in the Eurasian political philosophy, the Asian cultural, religious and geopolitical element is potentially represented as an organic component of Russia-Eurasia, and not just as a natural ally of Russia in the strategies of opposing Europe or the United States (Bulychev n.d.). The struggle against European cultural imperialism and colonialism, from the Eurasian point of view, is not just an anti-colonial struggle of Asian peoples against the colonialism of the West. It has a higher meaning, being the protection of the spiritual fullness of humanity understood as the cultural and historical Garden of God. Therefore, Orthodox Russia cannot be indifferent to the fate of non-Christian Asia. Russia is an organic part of Asia, and Asia is part of Russia (Russia’s Asian territory is 77%, and European only 23%). According to Eurasian political philosophy, Western spiritual elements are included in the fabric of Russian culture mainly as pathogenic, destructive, individualistic principles. However Eastern elements strengthen, stabilise Russian identity; and as it is understood in Eurasian thought, Orthodoxy will eventually become the spiritual basis on which Asian nations will be able to build a successful dialogue of cultures and policies,

\textsuperscript{17} The capital of Volga Tatar Khanate at the time.
find strategies for the prosperity of a single Eurasian region from Moscow to Singapore, while preserving national and cultural identity and specificity.

Fig. 9. Singapore’s diverse flora is strictly protected by the state.
© Authors

Both Russia and Singapore should make great efforts to maintain religious tolerance, stability and sincere mutual respect of representatives of different religious groups. In the new world there is too much hatred and cruelty; and it will be simply absurd if the people of faith accede to these trends of the global society development. We shall not in the least believe that eliminating religious differences means an automatic achievement of religious stability. As the historical experience has shown, religious ecumenism, noncritical conformity, syncretism, and thoughtless acceptance are amorphous
paths to nowhere. All dreams of creating a universal religion that would put an end to religious conflicts, dreams like those that were a pain in the neck for the German philosopher Friedrich Schelling, remain romantic utopias in the best case, and become a convenient platform for the most evil forces in the world in the worst case. A religious conformist, indifferent person or convinced atheist agnostic are no more tolerant or more generous to religious believers than believers can be to each other. Lee Kuan Yew, who always used to be sceptical about Islam (see, e.g., Lee 2011, Chapter 59), however, noticed that

Despite all the differences between the religions, our government is more sympathetic to a believer than to someone who believes in nothing. I would rather benefit a Muslim than a convinced atheist. It is because of the spread of atheism that the West is now experiencing such hard times (Lee 2014, 76).

**CONCLUSION**

WE ANALYSED a number of legal, political, ethno-social, philosophical and historical factors that shaped the political landscapes, traditions, mentality and way of life of citizens of Russia and Singapore. Now we can try to answer the question posed at the beginning of the article: how well could Singapore’s political experience be transcribed to Russia and how heuristically valuable would it be to Russian citizens?

Once, a Chinese poet of Qing dynasty called Singapore “the gem of five seas and two oceans,” and Lee Kuan Yew who formulated the essential political philosophy of the city-state development, was not afraid to call the basic development strategy of Singapore as “how to make a flowering garden of a heap of garbage.” Now Singapore standing on the equator is the economic, financial, and cultural capital of South-East Asia. The country faced a civilisational challenge and started to win it successfully. The British left their legacy as a shabby corner of Malaysia, suitable only for the production of rubber and fishing. Now, half a century later, the Singaporeans in a single national impulse turned this village into a metropolitan shining with lights, where the life does not stop even at night. Business roads are coming hither from China, Japan, Oceania, Australia and New Zealand, from the Middle and Far East, from the Old and New Worlds connect. Local Singaporean banks already compete successfully with the American ones, and here the standard of living has become one of the highest in the Eurasian space.
Fig. 10. Singapore’s redundant infrastructure connects the state with Malaysia in such a way that no traffic jams are ever possible, even during the rush hours.
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This notwithstanding, Singapore is not a paradise on Earth, and it requires titanic efforts for maintaining order, stability and civilisation in it. With the weakening of government and social control, the possible satiety of the Singaporeans, the state will be threatened by a real danger of being thrown into the turmoil of nationalism, interethnic and interreligious hostility, being involved in interstate frictions and conflicts typical of Southeast Asia. In order not to fall back in its development and not return to the situation of the 1950s, when Singapore was a provincial Malay city, Singaporeans need understand clearly their political and social ideals, remain faithful to the principles of their national idea, remember their roots and difficult history of the way from the third world to the first one.

Both Russian ancient history (the centralised state power of Kievskaya Rus has existed in Russia since the ninth century, and Srivijaya Empire since the seventh century), and the similarity of mentality of Russian and Chinese people, unite Russia and Singapore. Both are the heirs of the global Eurasian idea and ideological successors of the nations of the
Great Steppe. As a result of the analysis carried out in our research, we are coming to the conclusion that it makes sense to speak rather about the positive prospects for mutual exchange of political experience between Russia and Singapore, and not only the borrowing of the Singaporean experience by the Russian public administration. As the experience shows, artificial copying and non-creative borrowing of others’ achievements without an awareness of the ways and strategies of bringing them to national peculiarities are a bad and hopeless idea. Table 2 demonstrates a summary of some tactical and strategic points of contact between Russia and Singapore in the potential exchange of our political experience.

In the global world intertwined with a web of wired and wireless communications, where information spreads at the speed of light, and satellite communication gives people an opportunity to speak with each other in real time even when they are at the different geographic poles, the only recipe for the survival of a country without the loss of independence is steady following its cultural path, supported by a careful attitude towards its long-standing traditions.

Table 2. Points of contact for the mutual exchange of political experience between Russia and Singapore.

| Factor | Similarity / dissimilarity of the situation in Russia and Singapore for this factor at the moment | Prospects for the exchange of political experience in the presence of practical success. The direction of the arrow indicates the preferential transfer of experience, S - Singapore, R - Russia |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National ideas, archetypes of national consciousness | Similar | R → S; S → R |
| Multilingual language situation | Similar | R → S; S → R |
| Openness of national mentality for studying foreign languages including English | Different | S → R |
| Harmonious ratio English / national tongues in academic publishing, business, cultural communication | Different | R → S |
| Cultural traditions: in Russia unity spirit (соборность), in Singapore five relationships of Confucianism (Wu Lun) | Similar | R → S; S → R |
| Topic                                                                 | Comparison       | S → R
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Modern attitude to cultural traditions                             | Different       |
| Historical memory, Eurasian heritage                              | Similar         | R → S; S → R
| Perception of globalisation and Westernisation                     | Similar         | R → S; S → R
| National composition, number of ethnic groups                      | Very different  |
| Ethno-national management, ethno-national problems and challenges  | Similar         |
| Civil and criminal liability for inciting ethnic and interreligious hatred| Similar    | R → S; S → R
| Strategy and tactics of legal, social and political combating religious fundamentalism, extremism and terrorism | Similar       |
| Population                                                          | Very different  |
| Territory                                                           | Very different  |
| Perception of authoritarianism in mass political consciousness      | Similar         | R → S; S → R
| Religious tolerance fixed in law                                   | Similar         | R → S; S → R
| Involvement of the country in the political life                    | Different       |
| Systematic strategy for fighting corruption                         | Very different  |
| Ability to social cohesion for solving acute social problems        | Different       |
| Ability to sacrifice momentary individual benefits for the sake of prosperity of the country | Different |
| Speed of social mobilisation                                        | Different       |
Both Russia and Singapore have all the prerequisites for resilient development in Eurasian legal and cultural space. But happiness is not given simply for free, it must be earned by the daily chore, desire to achieve this prosperity, and persistent wish to create the country we want to have. The temptations of globalisation and globalism are too attractive for short-term political bureaucrats in modern Russia.

Singapore has shown the world that there are no insurmountable obstacles in the way of building national happiness, but the Singaporeans should not give up and relax, only getting satisfaction from the successes achieved so far.

Russia knows recipes for its own sustainable and resilient development in Eurasia and can draw some parallels with Singapore which has shown such great success. The desire to fight against political and social corruption, nepotism, clan structure, to refuse any forms of bribery and paternalism, to work for the benefit of the common case and not for the benefit of one’s own pocket, even after suffering temporary personal inconveniences… If this becomes the Russian political slogan, Russia can return its Eurasian dominance, such as it once had in Imperial times.

Once Mr Lee Kuan Yew offered the Singapore’s political experience to Vladimir Putin during their meeting. He was not heard and Putin claimed that Russia must have its own way in Eurasia, dissimilar with the Singapore’s one. Almost twenty years have passed since those times. Russian political elites did not opt to learn anything from the Singapore’s socio-political experience. Now Russia faces the situation to be disregarded as a Eurasian power and thrown at the border of new Eurasian communication routes withal.

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

NG, MEIFENG, WONG, FLORA JIA LI, YEUNG, CHAN, AND KONSTANTIN S. SHAROV. UNOBSERVABLE AND HIDDEN PARALLELS IN EURASIAN LEGAL AND CULTURAL SPACE: CAN SINGAPOREAN EXPERIENCE BE USED IN RUSSIA?

THREE RECENT DECADE THAT PASSED SINCE THE DEMISE OF THE SOVIET UNION, showed that the administrative model of Western countries may not be copied uncritically or shifted mechanically to
the Russian realities. At that time the Russian political thought turned to wider horizons; the countries that were not that interesting to the Russian situation in the late eighties – early nineties, started to come into view of the reformers in 2000s. The Eurasian countries became closely studied in the context of economic, political and legal reforms. In the mid-2010s, BRICS countries and the states closely connected with them politically, historically, ethnically, economically or legally, became of essential interest for Russia. One of the most promising examples of reforms for Russia in a heuristic context may be Singapore.

Despite the difference in their legal system types, Russia and Singapore exhibit quite similar current legislation and legal traditions in ethno-national, linguistic and religious areas along with the likeness of social policy in these fields. That allows one to use the Singapore’s rich socio-political experience for solving modern Russia’s problems. On the basis of a comparative legal, political and socio-political analysis of this phenomenon, we try to find different Singaporean socio-political achievements that can be potentially applied to Russia.

A special focus is made on the ways in which authoritarian forms of governance in Russia and Singapore and autocratic traditions in politics shaped legal traditions and current law of the two countries in ethno-national, linguistic and religious fields. An historical background of forming authoritarian state models and law traditions in Russia in Singapore from the thirteenth century, is also taken into account. A suggestion is put forward that the legal Eurasian parallelism in the areas studied may be well explained by the mutual Eurasian legacy Russia and Singapore received in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries when they both were parts of one unified Mongol Empire. The role of Kublai Khan’s (the founder of Chinese imperial dynasty Yuan) revised edition of Mongolian Yasa of 1281 as the direct legal predecessor of the upper level of Russian and Singaporean modern law in the four areas studied, is emphasised. It is demonstrated that a prospect legal and political experience exchange of Russia and Singapore in ethno-national, linguistic and religious areas, can be facilitated by the symbiosis of legal and socio-philosophic traditions fixed in national meta-narratives (national ideas) of our countries.

It is hardly a coincidence that, during last years, Singapore became interesting for politicians and political researchers as a possible promising model for reforming Russia. Singapore is one of the most important examples of “semi-Western–semi-Eastern” modernisation; it is the state that has reached extremely impressive results in about merely fifty years. For Russia, the example of Singapore can be essential, since the critical current situation in the economy, financial sector and high-tech industry in Russia resembles a very tough period in the development of Singapore in the late 1960s to a certain extent, when the young state separated from Malaysia and found itself in a very difficult political and economic situation.

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