Rethinking and redefining the “Singapore Model” : what does China really want to learn from Singapore?

Guo, Yipeng

2019

Guo, Y. (2019). Rethinking and redefining the “Singapore Model” : what does China really want to learn from Singapore? Master's thesis, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

<https://hdl.handle.net/10356/81434>

<https://doi.org/10.32657/10220/48122>

Rethinking and Redefining the “Singapore Model”: What Does China Really Want to Learn from Singapore?

GUO YIPENG

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science (Asian Studies) of
the Nanyang Technological University

**S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
AY2018/19**

Acknowledgments

I have finished this dissertation with many regrets. I could do better.

I have already got a master degree with distinction in Hong Kong and planned to pursue an academic life. Due to the lack of confidence, I chose to get one more master degree and more time to prepare for the Ph.D. application. However, two years later, my passion was gone. This dissertation would be my last academic work in my life before I turn myself into a less fancy world.

Anyway, it is still a product of my wisdom, my pride and my precious. I shall be grateful for that, once in my life, I have accomplished something like this.

I express great respect and gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Li Mingjiang. Without his patient guidance and precious advice, I would never be able to achieve a modicum of academic effort. His kindness and unparalleled insights into contemporary China studies are always encouraging me to explore my research further.

My family shall share my joy and achievement. In the first eighteen years of my life, I was staying with my grandparents. Being decent and kind, they raised and educated me, making me possible to be what I am today. My father, my stepmother and my younger brother have brought me a complete family that invariably passes love and the considerable tuition fees to me regardless of the distance. My love would always be with you all!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	2
Table of Contents	3
Summary	5
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
1.1 The Emergence of Singapore Fever and the Definition of the Singapore Model	
1.2 Research Question Description and Article Outline	
1.3 China's Learning of the Singapore Model	
Chapter 2: The Theoretical Explanations of China's Challenges.....	21
2.1 The Third Wave of Democratization in East Asia	
2.2 Is China a Developmental State?	
2.3 Developmental State and Preconditions for Democratization	
2.4 Modernization Trap and the Demise of Developmental States	
Chapter 3: Why Does China Need to Learn Singapore	30
3.1 Fragile One-party Rule of the CCP	
3.2 Lessons China Could Learn From the Singapore Model	
3.2.1 <i>Anti-corruption and Good Governance</i>	
3.2.2 <i>Moral Leadership</i>	
3.2.3 <i>Rule of Law</i>	
3.2.4 <i>Professionalization of the CCP</i>	
3.2.5 <i>Ideology and the Asian Values</i>	
Chapter 4: Between Illusion and Reality: the Feasibility of the Singapore Model.	49
4.1 The Similarity is Emphasized	
4.2 Illusion: The Mismodelling Singapore Model	
4.3 Superficial Similarity and Fundamental Differences	
4.3.1 <i>British Legacy, not Confucianism</i>	
4.3.2 <i>The Recruitment Method</i>	
4.3.3 <i>Rule of Law, Independence of the Judiciary and Separation of Powers</i>	
4.3.4 <i>Election</i>	

4.3.5 *Soft Authoritarianism*

4.3.6 *Asian Values*

Chapter 5: The Problems in Prevailing Definitions of the Singapore Model: What Does China Really Want to Learn from Singapore? 65

5.1 An Unusual Form of “Political Learning”?

5.2 “Four Confidences” and Selective Political Learning

5.3 Similarities and Fundamental Differences: Redefining the Singapore Model Based on China and the CCP’s Perspectives

5.4 What is Wrong with the Prevailing Definition of the Singapore Model

5.4.1 *The Role of Rule of Law*

5.4.2 *The Role of the Independent Anti-corruption Agency*

5.4.3 *The Role of Confucianism*

Chapter 6: Conclusion..... 75

6.1 Findings

6.2 Rethink and Redefine the Singapore Model

Bibliography 88

SUMMARY

China can be seen as a “learning state” and the CCP can be also seen as a “learning party” that constantly adapts to the new situation and learns external experience frequently.

In the past three decades, tens of thousands of officials from various levels of government in China have been sent to Singapore for short-term training or a master's degree program, showing the great interest of China in the Singapore model.

Scholars have also reached a consensus on this, that is, by studying Singapore's experience to better cope with the challenges brought by modernization to the one-party rule of the CCP is the fundamental dynamic of China's obsession on Singapore model. Prevailing views on the Singapore model think it should include the learning of the political institution and the legal system in addition to the specific measures and experience that could teach China how to achieve good governance. However, as a country with great ambitions and emphasis on “four confidences”, China will hardly trust and accept a national model that is actively exported by a small country that maintains close ally relations with the United States.

This article originates from a conflict between theory and fact: the prevailing

definition of the Singapore model is soft authoritarianism plus good governance, while it is highly unlikely that China would learn the political system of Singapore. This article addresses to explore the causes of China's learning in the Singapore model and to rethink the definition of the Singapore model. This article mainly focuses on the questions that what are the key factors that make Singapore successful? What experiences can China learn? What experience will apply to China?

In order to answer the research question, I shall review the definitions of the Singapore model, identify China's challenges and goals of learning the Singapore model and assess the lessons that China really wants to learn from Singapore. Based on existing theoretical literature, I redefine the Singapore model as a pragmatism-driven social development path that focuses on practical governance experience gradually and selectively applied by China and could improve the ability to provide good governance without resorting to the Western liberal democratic institutions.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Emergence of Singapore Fever and the Definition of the Singapore Model

Since Deng Xiaoping visited Singapore in 1978, China has always maintained a keen interest in Singapore's experience. Although "Singapore Fever" was once used to describe China's strong interest in Singapore, the academic community has long lacked a definition of what China is interested in Singapore until the term "Singapore model" appeared in the 1990s. This term has been used and discussed in many different contexts and therefore has different meanings, but the combination of authoritarianism and advanced economic development is one of the most common definitions (Thompson and Ortmann, 2014: 17). Denny Roy has made a major contribution that defines, the key feature of Singapore model, soft authoritarianism that “combines a market-oriented economic system with ‘a kind of

paternalistic authoritarianism that persuades rather than coerces””, which sees China and Singapore in a rhetorical alliance on development and (soft) authoritarianism (Roy, 1994: 231). Through soft authoritarianism, an authoritarian regime could maintain its rule meanwhile liberating its economy.

However, Roy's definition is still vague. He only proposed that the rise of soft authoritarian rhetoric could be seen as a reaction to the wave of democratization that the United States is trying to promote. China and Singapore became the rhetorical alliance of soft authoritarianism with both cultural and realpolitik foundations (Roy, 1994: 238-239).

However, Roy failed to point out the specific aspects that China could cooperate with Singapore and what lessons China could learn from Singapore. Soek-Fang Sim latter highlighted the characteristic of the Singapore model is combining the stubborn and stable authoritarian rule with the undeniable economic and social development (Sim, 2006: 151).

However, Sim's perception of the Singapore model only points out the reason why that China is interested in Singapore, but does not point out what kind of lessons China can learn from Singapore, because his definition of the Singapore model is only focused at the most superficial result, instead of explaining with in-depth analysis of the institutional reasons

behind this. It is meaningless to admire how great the Singapore model is without deeply analyzing the reason why and illustrating what measures could be taken to achieve it.

Stephan Ortmann and Mark R. Thompson proposed a more explicit definition of the Singapore model and pointed out that what does China want to learn from Singapore. According to Ortmann and Thompson, the Singapore model is "the combination of good governance and authoritarian rule" (Ortamann and Thompson, 2016: 39). In 2018, they have made some modifications to their definition, but has kept the same core idea – Singapore model is “resilient authoritarianism despite advanced development with good governance and political stability (Ortamann and Thompson, 2018: 1015). According to this definition, the main difference between the two one-party dominant authoritarian countries, China and Singapore, is good governance. Moreover, the key lesson that China wants to learn from Singapore is how to combine the CCP's authoritarian rule with " ‘good governance’ (‘meritocratic’ one-party rule)" (Ortamann and Thompson, 2016: 40). The People’s Action Party (PAP), as an efficient, incorrupt and vital ruling party, has established a merit-based civil service system in Singapore to guarantee and provide good governance, making Singapore the only country achieved advanced economic industrialization in the region

without experiencing substantial political liberalization (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 39-40). What makes China obsessed is that Singapore can give lessons to China about how to establish a meritocratic one-party rule that could withstand and settle the severe challenges brought by the "modernization trap", appease the democratic demands of the emerging middle class, and to resist the wave of democratization that has swept through other East Asian developmental states.

Regarding the specific meaning of good governance, Ortmann and Thompson, through the study of Chinese academic articles, pointed out that the Chinese understanding of good governance mainly focuses on three aspects - fighting corruption, increasing professionalization, and improving responsiveness. The core purpose of their research finds an alternative to stabilize and strength the CCP's one-party rule (Ortmann and Thompson, 2014: 435). Therefore, while the primary goal of the CCP is to maintain its authoritarian rule rather than achieve good governance through democratization that would end the CCP's monopoly on power, Singapore could still provide a vital lesson for the CCP to maintain its power through authoritarian tinkering to enhance the administrative capacity of the government to offer good governance for Chinese people and thus to gain genuine popular

support from them (Tsang, 2014).

It is worth noting that Ortmann and Thompson believe that the Singapore model's impact on China shows two critical features that make the Singapore model particularly unique and crucial. Firstly, the Singapore model demonstrates that learning by nondemocratic states is not necessarily a short-term "modular" phenomenon that is a collective reactive but can be a long-term, highly institutionalized process of learning, introduction, and digestion (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 40). For over three decades, China has maintained the "Singapore Fever" and has sent officials and scholars to learn from Singapore and combine China's reality to adjust and revise its reform agenda. The second point is even more important because Ortmann and Thompson believe that the Singapore model has challenged the previous paradigm of "political learning." The Singaporean leaders carefully codified Singapore's national model and passed these secrets to Chinese officials who came to study through a variety of courses. This is the opposite of "political learning" in general cognition: "Instead of a major power using its clout to diffuse its regime form, a small and relatively insignificant country is teaching its governance approach to the 'pupils' (government officials) of a significant power through carefully designed courses, official and unofficial publications,

direct government advice, and an industrial park set up in China" (Ortamann and Thompson, 2016: 40). In this way, Singapore can more actively use its model as a "counter hegemonic" alternative to the consensus of political liberalization and democracy and establish a rhetorical alliance relationship with China to counter the impact of the wave of democratization (Roy, 1994: 238-239).

Chinese scholar, Cai Dingjian's perception of the Singapore model is similar to Ortman and Thompson's. In 2005, after four months of research at the Institute of East Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, Cai Dingjian published an article in the *China Youth Daily*, which presented his unusual view of the Singapore model. Cai Dingjian believes that Singapore's success lies not primarily in its authoritarianism, but in its sincerity to serve the people. It would be a great misunderstanding of Singapore's experience for Chinese people and the CCP if they only talk about the authoritarian rule of the PAP and the law of severe punishment while ignoring its good governance that consists of the goal to serve the people, democratic foundation of people's support and votes, the merit-based civil servants, and high-level rule of law (Cai, 2017). However, Cai's conclusion is somehow problematic in the eyes of the CCP, because he has seen the Singapore model as

a country running a democratic system but governed by authoritarian rule. Therefore, the democratic foundation of the PAP has given the legitimacy to the PAP's authoritarian rule, and China also needs to learn to introduce more democratic factors into its rule system, which is very unusual and unacceptable for the CCP's headliners.

Although the CCP and other Chinese analysts have acknowledged that Singapore is a democracy and tried to shy away from this point in practice, they still admire Singapore's clean and efficient governance, rule of law, social order, moral education, higher education and high level of technological development, and have keen interest in the way that the PAP has achieved them all. Here, the Singapore model is more like the PAP model. The CCP is not interested in the country of Singapore or some achievements of this country but wants to learn from the ruling party of the country, the PAP. The CCP is particularly interested in how the PAP manage to keep low-key presence meanwhile maintain the total control of the country. The CCP International Department has observed that the PAP is not seen, but is everywhere, and concluded that it is the PAP has "well-developed social network, which controls constituencies effectively by extending its tentacles deeply into society through branches of government and party-controlled social groups" (Shambaugh, 2008: 92-93). In

more details, Li Wen, an analyst from the Chinese Academy of Social Science, has defined the Singapore model or the PAP model as the successor to the create the "administrative state" (xingzheng guojia 行政国家), the merger of the government and party (dangzheng heyi 党政合一), and to tolerate some Western culture as a “necessary evil” (biyao de e 必要的恶) while not tolerating pornography, criticism of the government, defamation of leaders, or political subversion (Shambaugh, 2008: 93). Here, Li has reflected a rather tough authoritarian view, which is completely contrary to Cai's esteem for the role of democracy. What Li wants to learn from Singapore is how to strengthen the ruling party's overall control over society further and how to balance the intention between accepting the Western culture and controlling public opinions, instead of fostering a democratic foundation to “serve the people” to win people’s support and thus to maintain the rule.

1.2 Research Question Description and Article Outline

From the review of the definition of the Singapore model, it can be seen that there is no consensus of what is the Singapore model. The different definitions of the Singapore

model are based on different perceptions of what lessons do China, and the CCP need to learn from Singapore and the PAP. Among the many scholars who have studied the definition of the Singapore model and its possible impact on China, Thompson and Ortmann have more influence in academic research in this field: over the years, they have published more than a dozen articles on the Singapore model in various influential academic journals, and in April 2019 held an academic conference organized by the Southeast Asia Research Centre (SEARC) and the City University of Hong Kong on the theme of *The “Singapore Model” and Its Influence on China* at the City University of Hong Kong. Their definition of the Singapore model is a combination of soft authoritarianism and good governance. They think that the Singapore model is not suitable for China. They argued that although the Singapore model is a crucial paradigm that a small country could export its national model to big power because China's learning in the Singapore model is selective, its perception of the Singapore model would only lead to misconceptions. They believe that China exaggerates the similarities between the two countries and ignores the fundamental differences between them. Thus Singapore model could not and would not be learned and applied by the CCP in China's governance. However, China' has been maintaining its “Singapore fever” for decades and

continuing to send officials to Singapore for systematic learning. Especially, since Xi Jinping took power in the 18th CCP Congress in 2012, the attention on the modeling of Singapore has reached a climax (Liu and Wang, 2012: 3). If China misunderstands the Singapore model and the Singapore model cannot be applied in China, why does China maintain its interest in Singapore for a long time and continuously send officials to systematic study? China, the largest country in Asia with the population of more than one billion people under an authoritarian rule of the communist party, why want to learn from Singapore, a city-state with a democratic system and maintains a close ally with the United States? To answer these questions, this article will rethink the Singapore model and try to redefine the Singapore model. This article will revisit the history of China's modelling on the Singapore model and the relevant literature on the Singapore model, and identify the motivations behind the CCP's continuous interest in Singapore based on three key factors: the background of Singapore's fever in China, China's objective of learning Singapore's experience, and the lessons China really desires to learn from the Singapore model (that is, by what means to achieve the objective). Based on this analysis, this article will redefine the Singapore model and conclude that the Singapore model is the experience of Singapore that China actively selects. The most

attractive part of the Singapore model is its operational government management experience and its application in China, not the attraction of ideologies such as authoritarianism and one-party dominance, which is mainly different with the usual interpretation of China's learning on Singapore model that the primary consideration for China to learn from Singapore is only political (Horesh and Lim, 2016).

1.3 China's Learning of the Singapore Model

China's fascination with Singapore's political system as a role model had begun after the bloody suppression of the student movement in Beijing in 1989 (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 41). The student movement made the CCP wary that the development of economy and emancipation of the thoughts brought about by the reform and opening up might threaten the CCP's authoritarian rule. China, like other East Asian countries that followed the developmental states model, may face a "modernization trap" (Morley, 1999). Many Western observers also predict that the modernization of economy will inevitably lead to democratization in China (Rowen, 1996 and 2007; Pei, 2007; Liu and Chen, 2012; Pei,

2016; Ortmann and Thompson, 2018). Faced with the risk that the CCP may lose its rule over China in the wave of democratization, Chinese reformers have to find an alternative model that will continue to liberate the economy while maintaining authoritarian rule (Shambaugh, 2008). Singapore model and the PAP's experience not only show the CCP how to maintain its rule but also give "the promise of better rule in the process as a fully modernized one-party state which effectively governs the country" (Ortmann and Thompson, 2014: 439). After Deng Xiaoping visited Singapore in 1978, hundreds of high-level delegations also visited Singapore. In his 1992 Southern Tour, Deng Xiaoping pointed out that China should learn from Singapore's experience of excising strict management and eventually surpass it (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 41; Liu and Wang, 2018: 1-2). Since the formal establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Singapore in 1990, China has sent about 22,000 officials to Singapore to study the Singapore model and study its implications for Chinese reforms. (Khoo, 2011). Local higher education institutions in Singapore, such as Nanyang Technological University (NTU), National University of Singapore, and the Civil Service College, have actively participated in the knowledge transfer of Singapore experience in order to meet the needs of China, and created a series of customized education programs

for the CCP's cadres, covering subjects ranging from economic development, public administration, housing and grassroots politics to urban planning and anti-corruption, including the "Mayors' Class", a program of the NTU, for Mid-level Cadres from China (Liu and Wang, 2018: 2).

In the past three decades, tens of thousands of officials from various levels of government in China have sent to Singapore for short-term training or a master's degree program, showing the great interest of China and the CCP in the so-called "Singapore model." According to Nanyang Technological University's unique dataset, there are over 1,350 middle-level cadres from China having graduated from the "Mayors' Class" in Singapore from 1995 to 2016 (Liu and Wang, 2018: 1). Not only at the official level of China and the CCP that arranges the study visits of Chinese officials, but also the Chinese academic community has also developed a keen interest in the Singapore experience and the Singapore model. According to Liu and Wang's study of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Chinese scholars' more focused search on the Singapore model has produced 200 academic publications with an overall rising trend of publications on the Singapore model over the past 24 years, marking a widespread interest in the Singapore model (Liu and Wang,

2018: 6). Moreover, since 1990, there are at least 110 articles devoted to reasons for the success of Singapore's ruling party having been published in China (Ortmann and Thompson, 2014: 436). China's emphasis on Singapore is also reflected in the fact that research related to Singapore is more likely to get the funds than research on any other country (Leong, 2008a and 2008b; Peh, 2019).

Chapter Two

The Theoretical Explanations of China's Challenges

2.1 The Third Wave of Democratization in East Asia

In the third wave of democratization, East Asian countries and regions that have experienced rapid economic development have started democratization. This process is very much in line with the classic presupposition of the modernization theory about the arrival of democratization, that is, economic development will bring about corresponding changes in social structure and ideology, and these changes will promote the emergence and stability of democratic institutions. The modernization theory of democratization focuses on the relationship between socio-economic development and democracy and tests the relationship between the two through large-scale cross-country statistical analysis and quantitative analysis. The basic conclusion is that there is a general positive correlation between economic development and democracy. Democracy and democratization are more likely to occur in countries with higher levels of economic development (Lipset, 1959). In 1950, there

were 72 authoritarian states in 90 poor countries, and 17 democracies in 20 middle- and high-income countries (Przeworski, 2009). According to the modernization theory, a developed market economy and a strong middle class are prerequisites for democratic transformation. Steady and rapid economic growth has brought about an expansion of the middle class. The middle class, which is generally high in education and income levels, has a lower tolerance for injustice and lack of freedom in society and is, therefore, more challenging to accept dictatorship or authoritarianism and generally aspire to democracy and freedom. The middle class also has stronger mobilization abilities because of its higher level of knowledge and income and has greater capacities in promoting the democratization movements.

Since the 1980s, several East Asian authoritarian countries and regions that have created "East Asian Miracles" in the economic field have begun democratization. By 2004, four East Asian countries and regions such as Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Indonesia had completed the democratization transformation. According to the three democratization models of Huntington, the democratization of East Asia has adopted different models (Huntington, 1991). For the CCP, no matter what kind of democratization, it

means ending the one-party authoritarian rule of it. After the Tiananmen incident in 1989, the reformist elite headed by Zhao Ziyang in the CCP has been cleaned up. The CCP's ruling elites with hardliners as its core cannot play a decisive role in the process of ending the authoritarian regime and promoting democracy under the authoritarian system. Therefore, the wave of democratization in East Asia has put many pressures on the CCP, because China is also taking the path of the developmental state.

2.2 Is China a Developmental State?

However, the theory of developmental state emphasizes the effective intervention of the state to guide the development of the economy, and scholars are arguing for whether this model applies to China. Supporters such as Seung-Wook Baek believe that China's development path has the typical characteristics of the early East Asian model, including state control finance, government direct support for state-owned enterprises, import substitution industrialization of heavy industry, high dependence on export markets, and high domestic saving rate, so the developmental state theory can be applied to China (Baek, 2005:

485). Opponents such as Kellee S. Tsai argue that China's political and economic reforms violate theoretical assumptions and expectations, especially since the government does not systematically allocate funds to the most productive economic sectors, making them dependent on informal source of financing, which is not in line with the theoretical spirit of developmental state, therefore the theory cannot adequately explain China's economic development (Tsai, 2004: 1).

John Knight believes that the intention of developmental state can be expanded. As long as a country regards economic development as the highest policy priority and adopts appropriate institutional arrangements and incentive structures to achieve this goal, it can be considered as a developmental state and does not necessarily require full compliance with the common practices of other East Asian economies. He also determined that China's development experience is in line with the definition of the developmental state, because like other developmental states, China gives economic growth the highest policy priority and adopts institutional arrangements and incentive structures that can be used to make this goal (Knight, 2014: 1335). Thus, although some scholars have argued that China is not on the list of developmental states because of its distinctiveness or so-called Chinese exceptionalism,

China at least mostly follows the model of developmental state (Chen & Keng, 2017: 210).

2.3 Developmental State and Preconditions for Democratization

The concept of the developmental state comes from Chalmers Johnson's research on Japan's post-war economic development experience (Chen & Keng, 2017: 210). Although academia has not reached a consensus on the definition of the developmental state, countries that follow the model of developmental state has several recognized characteristics (Knight, 2014: 1335). The concept of developmental state originated from Chalmers Johnson's 1982 classic work *MITI and the Japanese Miracle*, explaining the rapid growth of the Japanese economy from the perspective of the country's successful promotion of industrial policies and fostering strategic industries, with particular attention to the role of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in this process. At the time of the Cold War under the status of a bipolar world, Johnson's book pointed out that the model of development could not have rigidly adhered to a certain one. The successful development of the Japanese economy is the third model that is different from the development model of the United States

and the Soviet Union. It is also called the “plan-rational” model. In this model, the state actively guides economic development and implements the “plan” of industrial policies. On the other hand, it intervenes in the economy in a way that respects the laws of the market and does not involve the ideological struggles, reflecting “rational” characteristics (Johnson, 1982: 18-19).

According to Richard Doner's research, the emergence of a developmental state is a way for political leaders to seek under the pressure of a minimal political environment. If a regime does not resolve institutional threats and enhance the performance of the regime, it will not be able to consolidate its power and maintain its legitimacy. The fundamental solution to the threats is to improve the development level of the economy to ensure its performance legitimacy (Doner, Ritchie and Slater, 2005). Thus, the primary goal of the country is to promote the all-round development of the economy, resulting in promoting a form of the developmental states.

After Japan, the Asian "Four Little Dragons" have embarked on a path similar to Japan. In the four little dragons, economic development and social construction all took place before democratization. The four little dragons first established an authoritarian regime and

then achieved rapid economic development. When society has accumulated a certain amount of wealth, the government will engage in social system construction. The construction of social institutions and the existence and expansion of the middle class have created preconditions for peaceful political openness and democratization. On the one hand, the middle class began to have the requirements of political participation after its living standard reached a certain stage. It is the driving force of democratization. On the other hand, the existence of the social system and the middle class guarantees the peaceful nature of the democratization process. That is, people can participate in the political process rationally.

2.4 Modernization Trap and the Demise of Developmental States

More importantly, apart from a few, the developmental states that pursue the authoritarian system have begun democratization in politics and have established democratic systems of free elections and multi-party competition. This global trend has fundamentally shaken the foundations of a developmental state. While developmental states have achieved rapid economic growth, they have also exerted a subtle effect in the social and political

sphere. Economic development has promoted the urbanization, reduced the illiteracy rate, and fostered a robust middle class. The system of economy and market created by economic growth is increasingly difficult to be controlled by the state. Independent power centers generate and grow in large numbers and establish private control over capital, technology, and communications. These factors have played a positive role in the democratization of the country. Once democratization is initiated, the power of social groups rises rapidly, and the country's autonomy and control capabilities begin to disintegrate and subside gradually. The ability to implement policies is threatened and cannot be appropriately implemented.

As Manuel Castells has pointed out, the success of the state machine of the East Asian developmental state ultimately led to its demise and the annihilation of its regimes. The society fostered by them has become an industrialized modern and democratic society (Castells, 1992: 66). Faced with tremendous pressure from the domestic or international community, most developmental states in East Asia that belong to the authoritarian system, such as South Korea, Taiwan, have disintegrated or transformed in the face of the third wave of democratization and the modernization trap that modernization theory predicted. Therefore, Singapore has prominent significance in the debates over when, whether, and how countries

should democratize and in China's attempt to avoid modernization trap, because Singapore "is the only country in the region to achieve advanced economic industrialization without undergoing substantial political liberalization", and Singapore has confounded the modernization theory and been figured as an exception for those who believe that economic development and the establishment of a strong state committed to the rule of law could avoid any risk of democratization (Verweji and Pelizzzo, 2009: 18; Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 41).

Chapter Three

Why Does China Need to Learn Singapore

3.1 Fragile One-party Rule of the CCP

Some Western scholars, including David Shambaugh and Susan Shirk, have predicted the future of the CCP and China under the rule of the CCP is very negative and pessimistic (Su, Zhao and He, 2013). Shambaugh has asserted that the CCP is already in a persistent trajectory of recession because it has been failing to contain corruption and to provide good governance (Shambaugh, 2016). Shirk has claimed in her book *China: Fragile Superpower* that after the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989, the deep-seated factors that caused social unrest were not solved but were concealed and have accumulated for a long time (Shirk, 2008). However, the CCP has not only failed to fundamentally lift these time bombs that threaten the stability of the country, but also lacks the means to release the people's depression and anger against the authoritarian regime for a long time. Although

China has made tremendous achievements in the past four decades after the reform and opening up, it still cannot be the basis of the performance legitimacy that the CCP expects. On the contrary, it may make the CCP's authoritarian rule more fragile. It is the reason why that large-scale protests and democratic movements took place in 1989 when the economy was relatively developed, and the political atmosphere was relatively loose. All the achievements of the past forty years will be easily removed in the face of the wave of democratization like a castle made of sand.

It is also the main reason why that the CCP leader Wang Qishan recommended Tocqueville's *The Old Regime and the Revolution* in 2012 to Chinese officials and scholars. Tocqueville's primary question about the outbreak of the French Revolution was why the revolution broke out during the reign of Louis XVI, which was relatively open-minded in politics and rising in the economy. Chinese scholar Zhu Xueqin pointed out, in the discussion of the book's thought that Wang Qishan has raised, that the revolution did not happen when the oppression was tight, but when the reform was about to gradually relax the oppression (Zhu, 2013). The overseas edition of the *People's Daily* subsequently pointed out in 2013 that the current situation of China's complex social background and intensified social

conflicts has some similarities with the time of before the French Revolution (Zhang, 2013).

The current modernization challenges that China is facing are similar to the French Revolution that reveals the fact that the most dangerous moment for an autocratic/authoritarian is usually the moment to start reform.

3.2 Lessons China Could Learn From the Singapore Model

3.2.1 Anti-corruption and Good Governance

The further deterioration of corruption and the long-term lack of good governance are two significant sources of the frustration and disappointment of the Chinese people. The two key objectives of combating corruption and providing good governance are complementary. The problem of corruption among governments at all levels is the most concerned issue of the CCP, because it not only restricts the smooth promotion and successful implementation of the policy but also causes the embarrassing situation that

"political orders do not come out of Zhongnanhai" (政令不出中南海) and increases the sense of arbitrariness of government decision-making (Thompson and Ortmann, 2014: 10). The ineffective implementation of policies and the arbitrariness of decision-making will make Xi Jinping's endeavor to provide good governance and to achieve his set of political goals, the so-called "Four Comprehensives," to develop a "moderately prosperous society" through economic reform and the rule of law eventually in vain. However, in the process of learning the Singapore model of meritocratic authoritarianism to achieve good governance, corruption will be contained, and people's dissatisfaction will be effectively reduced. On the other hand, if the CCP cannot fight corruption and achieve good governance, then the CCP will gradually lose its legitimacy.

Therefore, the significance of the Singapore model lies in its success in eliminating corruption and achieving good governance. These two aspects have become a top priority for the CCP to learn, because, as pointed out by the *People's Daily*, the current Chinese reform is racing against the revolution (Zhang, 2013). It has become the consensus of the CCP to achieve the least costly modernization through reform. The question is how to promote reform and how the system should be changed. The Singapore model can bring important

inspirations to China in anti-corruption and good governance.

3.2.2 Moral Leadership

In terms of anti-corruption, Wei Xiangqian believes that an essential lesson that Singapore can teach China is the need to establish an ideological and moral defense against corruption. Leaders must always pay attention to their own ethical behavior and become role models following the principle of Confucianism "people as the foundation" (Wei, 2009). Wei's core thought is similar to Cai's argument that the CCP should learn from the PAP how to "serve the people," which all lead to the actions that are in the interest of the people. Lee Kuan Yew and senior officials of the Singapore ruling party PAP used to wear white uniforms as a symbol of their insistence on integrity and intolerance of corruption. Ethical models and moral roles made by leaders will make the government mentally clean and give people a sense of trust in their officials and government. Of course, relying solely on the inner moral law of officials is far from enough. Singapore also adopts a series of comprehensive measures on the system level to further strengthen moral defense.

The Singapore government adopts a policy of high salary and honesty. Thus the salaries, welfare and social status of officials are generally high. Former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew also believed and stated in Parliament in March 1985 that it would lead senior civil servants to choose to take bribes if they were underpaid. Inner moral defense, generous wages, and strict supervision will ensure that officials remain loyal to the Singaporean people because moral defenses and wages can effectively reduce their greed. Meanwhile, strict supervision and high crime costs will further timidize them. It is also the anti-corruption effect that Wang Qishan has always emphasized and pursued – to build a system that ensures officials dare not, can not and will not be corrupt. China is now steadily increasing the salaries and welfares of officials and expects to ensure their integrity by offering high salaries. However, although Confucianism emphasizes "people as the foundation," Confucian values do not agree to link righteousness and benefits. The Confucian view of righteousness and benefits encourages the righteousness of the people and encourages the sacrifice of personal interests and self-restricted desires for the sake of the public good.

In essence, Singapore's moral leadership, on the surface, respects Confucianism,

but the actual core is Western management thinking. Under the circumstance that China's domestic nationalism has gradually grown and Neo-Confucianism has risen, the CCP, which once regarded Confucianism as a feudal residue, began to emphasize the role of Confucianism in moral leadership and regard it as the key to achieving good governance. Another benefit of ethical leadership is that it can provide an alternative to the approach of checks-and-balances of the democratic system to fight corruption and achieve good governance. It provides a great excuse for the CCP to avoid democratization, which is more readily accepted by the Chinese people under the packaging of traditional Confucian culture.

3.2.3 Rule of Law

Nonetheless, it does not mean that authoritarian states do not need to emphasize the rule of law and establish a sound anti-corruption mechanism. In addition to requiring civil servants to ensure their integrity, the rule of law and anti-corruption mechanisms are another vital components of the fight against corruption. “Ability to shift norms from acceptance of corruption, to draft new laws that create rules prohibiting, and implementing credible

enforcement bodies is a daunting task that requires a high degree of political commitment on the part of the leadership and its constituents” (Heilbrunn, 2004: 15). The Bureau of Corruption Investigations (CPIB) has been given considerable power. As an independent institution, CPIB has been separated from the police force. CPIB has the rights to access documents and witnesses, freezes assets, protects whistleblowers, monitors income and assets, proposes administrative and legislative reforms, respond to complaints and conducts investigations. "A crucial aspect of the rule of law in Singapore is the fact that even high ranking officials are liable to be investigated" (Peng, 2006). For example, in 1986, Lee Kuan Yew's close friend Teh Cheang Wan was publicly investigated by the Singaporean government, because he was suspected of corruption. His outcome was to take full responsibility and commit suicide, thus shocking the entire society of Singapore (Thompson and Ortmann, 2014: 10).

After becoming the leader of the CCP, Xi Jinping also vigorously launched a great anti-corruption campaign and promoted the establishment of anti-corruption and inspection mechanisms in China. The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP has been given great power and a lot of resources. In January 2015, Xi Jinping said that the

anti-corruption struggle situation is still severe and complicated, and the anti-corruption struggle has not yet achieved an overwhelming victory. At this time, anti-corruption was only carried out for one year. In January 2016, Xi Jinping announced that the overwhelming advantage of the anti-corruption campaign is taking shape. After nearly another year of anti-corruption, by the end of the year, Xi Jinping stated that the overwhelming advantage of the anti-corruption campaign had taken shape. Zhou Yongkang, a former member of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), was arrested and thus broke the unspoken rule regarding “PSC criminal immunity” (刑不上常委) since the end of the Cultural Revolution.

According to the work report of the 18th Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, during the five years from 2012 to 2017, the CCP investigated and dealt with the corruption problems of 440 party members and cadres and other middle-level cadres at the provincial level, of more than 8,900 bureaucrat-level cadres, and 63,000 county-level cadres. Since 2014, a total of 3,453 corrupt fugitives with a total of 9.51 billion *yuan* have been captured back from more than 90 countries and regions (Zhu, 2018). At the end of 2018, therefore, Xi Jinping declared an overwhelming victory in the anti-corruption struggle. In 2018, China established the National Supervisory Commission (NSC), the highest

supervisory institution of the People's Republic of China, by amending the constitution and passing the Supervision Law of the People's Republic of China. As an essential step in the establishment of the anti-corruption mechanism and institution and the reform of the national supervisory system, the constitutional amendment established the constitutional status of the supervisory committee as a state institution.

The establishment of a new state institution at the constitutional level has a vast and far-reaching impact on China's political system, political power, and political relations. The real power of the NSC is therefore much higher than that of CPIB in Singapore. With the advancement of anti-corruption work, the power and influence of the Central Discipline Inspection Commission of the CCP (CCDI) have been continuously strengthened, but it is still not enough to form adequate supervision, because the CCDI is only the CCP's disciplinary inspection agency. As the most crucial anti-corruption supervision agency in China before, the CCDI is just a department of the CCP. Although this department has a wide range of powers, it only has jurisdiction over 89 million party members. Xi Jinping's new National Supervisory Commission is a state-level agency responsible for supervising all government-funded enterprises and institutions. The government's enterprises and institutions

have as many as 62 million employees, many of whom are not party members.

In terms of mechanism and law, the CCP's internal party inspection organs are not comprehensive enough at the level of state administration, and they lack legal system support. As a result, the existing administrative inspection coverage is too narrow, and the anti-corruption power is too scattered. The new supervisory committee will take over the functions of the party's supervisory body, but it will also expand the scope of the investigation. The work of the party's supervisory body is limited to party members, but the supervisory committee will have the power to investigate anyone in government and state-owned enterprises, including millions of government employees who are not party members.

3.2.4 Professionalization of the CCP

Another critical aspect of providing good governance is to promote the professionalization of the ruling party and establish a merit-based civil service system. The CCP has more than 90 million party members. Apart from a few members of the democratic

parties to serve as "flower vases," almost every official of all levels of governments in China is a member of the CCP. The CCP uses a unique parallel system to achieve its total control of the large power system. Therefore, the prerequisite for achieving good governance and building a merit-based government is to promote the professionalization of the party. The merit-based civil servant system is one of the crucial origins for the legitimating ideologies of the PAP's regime and essential factor that promoting the party-state more professional. In Singapore, a strict selection mechanism is the critical element to ensure that only the best qualified and most intelligent people could enter the government and become a part of ruling elites.

In theory, this mechanism for the continuous introduction of qualified talents into the system is quite open, although the dissidents have long criticized the Singapore government as Lee & Lee enterprise. The Singapore government aims to incorporate the most qualified and highly professional talent into the civil service system to enhance its professionalism and enhance its ability to provide good governance. Of course, the PAP's selection mechanism and employment philosophy are not only applied to the governance of this country but also used in the management of the party. Ensuring good governance,

strengthening ties with society and combating corruption are the three main goals of this selection mechanism.

As the reform enters the deep-water area and the requirements for improving national governance are increased, the CCP has also increasingly emphasized the need to select people with professional talents to enter the party's hierarchy. As a peasant party and a revolutionary party for a long time, the CCP's actual process of professionalization began with the introduction of the important theory of the "Three Represents." Former CCP General Secretary and former Chinese President Jiang Zemin claimed that the CCP would "always represents the development requirements of China's advanced social productive forces, always represents the direction of China's advanced culture, and always represents the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people." (People's Daily, 2006). Through his theory, Jiang Zemin has brought more and more experts, intellectuals and successful businessmen into the CCP system. In addition to strengthening the organizational foundation of the CCP, it has also significantly changed the CCP's temperament.

Since the CCP is a political party established on the base of the alliance of workers and peasants and China implements the people's democratic dictatorship, these people have

long been in a state of marginalization, and even for an extended period, they are not counted as "people." During a series of political movements (anti-rightist campaign, Cultural Revolution) after the founding of the People's Republic of China, they were severely attacked and persecuted. In the past, the preference for workers and peasants made the party members of the CCP composed of workers and peasants. Faced with the continuous reforms and the people's desire for good governance, these people lack the necessary qualifications and expertise to run and manage the government professionally. In addition to the selection of highly educated talents to enter party organizations and governments, the CCP often force officials to return to college to continue their studies and obtain higher degrees if they are already in the system. The CCP also sent officials to Singapore to directly study the experience about how to professionally manage the government.

3.2.5 Ideology and the Asian Values

The Cultural Revolution initiated by Mao Zedong caused China to fall into unprecedented ideological fanaticism and chaos, causing huge losses. Deng Xiaoping

implemented reform and opening up, promoted political and economic reforms, and saved China from the brink of self-destruction. Economic reforms have achieved great success in both rural and urban areas. Extreme public ownership and planned economy have been abolished, and enormous productivity and economic potential have been liberated. At the same time, political reform is also the loosening of ideological control, and the Chinese people's thoughts have been greatly liberated. As the modernization theory predicts, economic development has led more and more Chinese people who had liberated their thoughts to accept Western values and ideas and gradually demand freedom, human rights and democracy from the ruling party. The profound disaster brought by Maoism to China made it difficult for the CCP to call on the ideology to confront the ideals of liberal democracy when faced with the Chinese who had just left the Cultural Revolution.

The calls for democracy reached its climax in 1989. After the death of Hu Yaobang, the former general secretary of the CCP, despite the CCP's efforts to limit official commemoration activities, people spontaneously came to Tiananmen Square to mourn the beloved leader who was forced to resign because of his sympathy and tolerance for the Chinese democratic movements. Eventually, the tragedy occurred on June 4th of that year.

The CCP had hoped to incite nationalism to against Western values, but this is a dangerous game. In a gradually globalized world, China has been rid of isolation. China is actively embracing the world. It not only exports a large number of products to all parts of the world but also sends a large number of young people to study and acquire advanced technology abroad. However, those who return to China bring back not only technology but also some things that the CCP fears, liberalism. Therefore, the CCP needs to find a new way to control the thinking of its people.

A potential value or ideology that could replace the fading communist ideology and Maoist ideals is the "Asian values" proposed by Lee Kuan Yew and the Confucianism behind it. If the CCP can make its people believe that Asian culture and liberal democracy are not compatible at all as the PAP had done, the CCP could find a new ideological weapon against Western liberal and democratic thoughts for its regime. Like most Singaporeans in the multi-ethnic environment meanwhile in the Confucian cultural circle, Chinese people are deeply influenced by Confucianism and admire the spirit of collectivism and self-sacrifice. They believe that Westerners value individualism, and are often greedy and selfish. The approach of democracy based on individualism may not be suitable for Asian countries. "The

Singaporean government's decision to enact the so-called 'Shared Values' (the official version of Lee Kuan Yew's 'Asian Value') in law in 1991 is seen as a milestone in the island state's development.

These values are primarily based on a neo-traditionalist interpretation of Confucianism and thus emphasize the group over the individual, reinforce the understanding of the family as the vital building block of society, incorporate a paternalist understanding of individual rights, and promote the idea of consensus instead of conflict as well as racial and religious harmony" (Thompson and Ortmann, 2014: 9). The CCP has long suppressed confucianism because the CCP used to regard Confucianism as the junk of feudalism. As the great leader who led the Chinese people to overthrow the "Three Big Mountains" (imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism), Mao Zedong systematically suppressed the spread of Confucianism and pushed such behavior to the apex during the Cultural Revolution. However, after observing Singapore's experience, the leaders of the CCP (once militantly anti-Confucian) discovered that it is possible to regain the legitimacy of ideology relying on the help of Confucianism, thus changing the attitude towards Confucianism and having begun experimenting with traditional culture as a possible form of

ideological cover to gain legitimacy to its authoritarian rule (Thompson, 2001: 163). The CCP hopes to promote the legitimacy of its rule by promoting Confucianism that emphasizes moral leadership rather than political competition is critical to manage a country. In 1994, the International Confucius Association established by the Chinese government had elected Lee Kuan Yew as its honorary chairman, which is seen as a significant signal that the conservative Chinese ideologues have noticed the value of the Singapore model in ideological construction and prepared to learn from Singapore actively.

Compared to in multi-ethnic Singapore only the more encompassing “Asian values” can safely be emphasized, Confucianism can be more easily invoked in China due to its relative cultural homogeneity in China (Thompson, 2001: 163). The CCP hopes to consolidate the legitimacy of its rule by persuading the Chinese people to accept Confucianism that emphasizes moral leadership rather than political competition to govern the country. Scholars use the term "Neo-Confucianism" to present the regimen-supportive interpretation of Confucianism that underpins the PAP's success according to these sympathetic mainland observers and could become new ideological foundations for the CCP's continued one-party rule in China (Ortmann and Thompson, 2014: 447).

Neo-Confucianism has combined left-wing ideas of equality, traditional collectivism, and nationalism together (Misra, 2003).

The point that the CCP has been trying to emphasize to the Chinese people is the uniqueness of China. Moreover, the CCP loves to create a series of terms to describe China that end with "Chinese characteristics" to justify the current situation in China. By striving to establish a "Beijing Consensus," China is looking for an alternative to the "Washington Consensus" to counter the wave of democratization. Even the "Chinese Dream" put forward by Xi Jinping has strong Chinese characteristics and conforms to the traditional Confucian ideas. In contrast to the American dream of emphasizing personal success, the Chinese dream has the dream of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the dream of achieving common prosperity, and the dream of building a strong army. The current series of political recessions in the Western world have filled the CCP with confidence, and many Chinese believe in the correctness of the socialist road with Chinese characteristics under the CCP's leadership.

Chapter Four

Between Illusion and Reality: the Feasibility of the Singapore Model

4.1 The Similarity is Emphasized

Of course, there are many discussions about whether the Singapore model is feasible for China. In general, the reason why the Singapore model can be applied to China is mainly that the two countries are highly similar to some extent, although the two countries have considerable gaps in terms of physical size, population, and history. The first reason is that the main population of both countries is predominantly ethnic Chinese. There is an assumption that they must share a common background of culture and values due to the cultural uniqueness of Confucianism. Thus, in CCP's eyes, the political system of this small city-state is a more suitable alternative form of the regime to China. Although Lee Kuan

Yew's Asian values have basically gone bankrupt in Singapore, it still has the potential to become a source of ideology for the CCP against Western values, because Chinese scholars have made the conclusion that Singapore is the most culturally similar country in the world to China (Ortmann and Thompson, 2014: 440). Chinese scholar Jiang Jianli writes in his book *What We Can Learn from Singapore (Xinjiapo You Shenme Haoxue De 新加坡有什么好学的)* that no country in the world besides Singapore is closer to China, because, except for China, there is only one country in the world, that is Singapore, has a majority of ethnic Chinese (apparently, Chinese scholars would never count Taiwan as an independent country) (Jiang, 2006: p. II).

It is natural to get to the conclusion that Lee Kuan Yew's notion that the authoritarian Asian values inborn and embedded in Confucianism is prominently convincing in many Chinese scholars' views (Li, 1997). Secondly, Singapore, like China, is also facing the pressure of democratization. Singapore's experience of providing good governance and strengthening capacity of the state can help the CCP better maintain its one-party rule. As the only developmental state in East Asia that has achieved advanced economic industrialization without substantial political liberalization, Singapore's experience in responding to challenges

of modernization and democratization can provide customize guidance for China. Therefore, "the impact of the 'Singapore model' on China shows that learning by nondemocratic states is not necessarily a short-term 'modular' phenomenon that is mainly reactive in character but can be long-term and highly institutionalized" (Thompson and Ortmann, 2016: 40).

4.2 Illusion: The Mismodelling Singapore Model

However, according to Thompson and Ortmann, the Singapore model is just not suitable for China, although "Singapore exemplifies what China strives for resilient authoritarianism despite advanced development with good governance and political stability (Thompson and Ortmann, 2018: 1014). They argue that because China's learning on the experience of the Singapore model is selective, the mis-modelling Singapore model will only lead to misconceptions. They believe that China has chosen three major aspects of the Singapore model to learn. The first is the Asian values discourse that is seen as an ideological defense that can provide ideological support for authoritarian regimes. The second is the elections running every five years that can provide and inspire legitimacy for the rule of the

PAP. The third is, also China's top priority to learn from Singapore, the experience of anti-corruption and the importance of committed leadership.

Nonetheless, Thompson and Ortmann argue China's attempt would eventually be proved to be in vain, because the Singapore model in China's perception is actually a mis-modelling Singapore model, and the misconceptions would lead to "policies are more reminiscent of the 'Prussian path' to modernity and great-power status than of any political model in the contemporary world" (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 46). They criticize that the CCP overestimated the influence of top-down conservative culturalism and underestimated the difficulty of propagating Confucianism while the official orthodoxy of China is still communism. They also point out that the elections are not beneficial to any CCP's effort to enhance its legitimacy. The PAP's rule and its legitimacy are based on democratic elections and people's support. The five-year election has always made the PAP full of a sense of crisis and urged it never to forget the needs of its people, which is also the internal permanent force for the PAP to seriously serve the people (Cai, 2017). Finally, Thompson and Ortmann express their chief concern towards China's misconceptions of the Singapore model: China underestimates or even ignores the crucial role played by the rule of

law, a key British colonial legacy in Singapore “very different from China’s post-totalitarian trajectory” (Thompson and Ortmann, 2018:1014).

4.3 Superficial Similarity and Fundamental Differences

4.3.1 British Legacy, not Confucianism

Thompson and Ortmann further explain that although China has been keeping its Singapore fever for decades, many Chinese observers still misinterpret the lessons that the city-state could really offer to China because they emphasize too much on the superficial similarities between China and Singapore. They emphasize that the population of Singapore is prominently ethnic Chinese and the feature of Leninist party that the PAP has while ignoring many institutional and structural differences that root in the legacies of British colonial rule (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 42-43). Thompson and Ortmann believe that Singapore's success mainly depends on the legacies of British colonial rule, not

Confucianism. In order to highlight the importance of its success in Singapore, the PAP has made an ideal version history of Singapore in accordance with its favor and formed a so-called Singapore consensus, which overestimates the extent of the PAP's actual accomplishments and downplays the role of British colonialism (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 43). Singapore has been shaped as an economically backward third world country until the PAP becomes the ruling party. The crown colony had been one of the most economically developed territories among the British Empire colonies. The PAP is only further guiding Singapore forward along the track that was previously paved by the British, rather than fundamentally reshaping Singapore (Low, Vadaketh and Lim, 2014).

4.3.2 The Recruitment Method

Another misconception is that although the PAP has an intense mass party color, it is very elite and closed. Although the competition within the PAP is fierce and meritocratic, the leaders of the ruling party will only choose to promote those from elites that are similar to themselves in accordance with colonial traditions. These elites have the following

characteristics: male, ethnic Chinese, from the upper class and well-connected families, graduating from a small circle of elite schools. Due to the limited population and land area, this recruitment method can efficiently find enough elite talents to enter the government, but actually let "the rest of Singaporeans are excluded by definition [from elite circles] from the very beginning" (Tjin, 2014). The PAP's approach to managing Singapore is more like managing a company, efficient and direct. However, China is more complicated and vast. The huge size of the civil servants and the traditions of the CCP as a revolutionary party make it infeasible and impossible for the ruling party to recruit talents from only a small circle of elites. Therefore, the reference significance of Singapore's merit-based civil servant system to China needs further discussion.

4.3.3 Rule of Law, Independence of the Judiciary and Separation of Powers

Although restrictions on civil rights make Singapore still an illiterate regime, Singapore's political system also inherits many institutionally embedded libertarian characteristics from British colonial rule. Singapore insists on ensuring good governance by

guaranteeing the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary. There are many institutional liberals in Singapore who can violate the will of the ruling party in order to defend the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, and supervise the government through legal checks (Rajah, 2012; Hang, 2011). However, compared with Singapore that has a constitutional regime rooted in British-style institutions at its core, China is an illiberal post-totalitarian regime in which the CCP serves as the main anchor of the system (Thompson and Ortmann, 2018: 1015). The CCP has its version of rule by law and is very disgusted with the concepts of judicial independence and constitutionalism.

In 2017, Chief Justice Zhou Qiang emphasized that law is only an instrument of the party (Cai, 2017). In 2018, Xi Jinping stressed that the party's leadership over completely ruling the country by law should be strengthened, China must follow its own path of the rule of law and must not copy other countries' models and practices, and can never take the path of Western constitutionalism, the separation of powers, and the independence of the judiciary (Xinhua News Agency, 2019). Thus, there is a fundamentally different institutional "DNA" between China and Singapore that makes the meaningful learning impossible, although, to some extent, this misunderstanding is partially due to Singapore officials' efforts to idealize

the PAP's role in the success of Singapore and to de-emphasize the colonial legacy in official accounts of the country's history and institutional order (Thompson and Ortmann, 2018: 1016).

Xi Jinping's attitude of treating separation of powers and competitive elections as "Western Ideas" and his determination to suppress them have made it challenging to promote the anti-corruption campaign by strengthening the rule of law and strengthen accountability and release people's anger through the establishment of the electoral system like Singapore. Singapore has a clear and transparent legal process and an independent anti-corruption agency, CPIB, to ensure the integrity of the government. However, Chinese officials oppose the idea of judicial independence that plays a central role in clear and transparent legal processes, and only emphasizes the rule by law in their original cognition. The Chinese government's approach is only to re-weave the past authoritarian practice into the law, which would fail to ensure the transparency and justice of the anti-corruption legal process and would prevent observers from distinguishing whether this is a real anti-corruption campaign or a power struggle in the name of anti-corruption (Nathan, 2015).

4.3.4 Elections

Of course, Thompson and Ortmann also point out that the Singapore model is a combination of soft authoritarianism and good governance. The key to soft authoritarianism is Singapore's electoral system. Although the PAP also does not hesitate to use judicial means to muzzle the opposition party and is falling far short of the principles of liberal democracy that emphasize liberal participation (civil rights) and electoral contestation, in any case, Singapore still has a multi-party system in form, a soft authoritarian regime and authoritarianism that is much more competitive than China's (Pei, 2015). The place where the PAP is fundamentally different from the CCP is that it is not a political party based on the working class, but an elite party. It is also a parliamentary party, not a revolutionary party. However, Cai Dingjian argues that there are crucial similarities between the PAP and the CCP lay the foundation for political learning.

Cai argues, the PAP, like the CCP, considers "to serve the people" as its goal. Thus, the CCP could refer to the way that the PAP gets its legitimacy through building electoral system. Cai points out in 2005 that the PAP seizes power through multi-party elections, and

must win parliamentary elections come up every five years to maintain the power, although the PAP does not hesitate to use judicial means to muzzle the opposition party. Singapore has a multi-party system in form. It is precisely the fundamental reason why that the PAP has long been in power and has been recognized by people and the international community for its legitimacy. Although the party structure of the PAP is Leninist party style, it has always maintained the inner-party democracy and tolerated the open thinking and different points of view within the party. Therefore, Cai's final analysis' result is that the rule of the PAP is based on the people's support, which is exactly what has given the legitimacy to the PAP's authoritarian rule. Based on these explanations and analysis, Cai believes that Singapore's success lies not primarily in its authoritarianism. Based on the analysis of the similarities between the CCP and the PAP, Cai further points out what can the CCP learn from the PAP. Subsequently, Cai came to his main conclusion that the PAP's legitimacy is based on the democratic electoral system and the people's support, so that it could keep an authoritative rule and an invincible position (Cai, 2017).

4.3.5 Soft Authoritarianism

By holding elections, the PAP can strengthen accountability and release people's dissatisfaction, because elections could force the ruling party to defend their policies and respond to voters' demands. With the growth of the opposition forces, this trend became more apparent after the 1980s, and after the 2011 polls forced the PAP to adjust its policies to cope with the challenges to its dominance. However, under the rule of Xi Jinping, the voice control of the Chinese people has become increasingly tight. Xi Jinping has constantly been strengthening his leadership by centralizing power and even extended his ruling period by modifying the constitution and canceling the term limits of the president of the People's Republic of China. He served as the group leader of the most influential "Leading Small Groups," the party organs that are responsible for significant decision-making, to strengthen his overall control of the entire party and state machine (Huang, 2014).

Although Singapore's elites have also managed the city-state efficiently through centralizing power, it is clear that this approach is almost impossible to govern a far more complex and huge China effectively. The economic shocks and decelerations, China's

rudeness in dealing with territories and foreign policy in recent years have all reflected the shortcomings of Xi Jinping's centralization of power. As pointed out by the *Wall Street Journal*, decisions made by Xi Jinping have become more aggressive and unpredictable and may lead to unprecedented policy shocks (Andrew Browne, 2015). In Thompson and Ortmann's view, one of the keys of Singapore's soft authoritarianism is about the balance between coercion and cooptation. However, Xi Jinping tightened control over civil society activists, networks and public opinion, and strengthened censorship, even when his rule did not face the direct challenges of these voices. A series of crackdowns including “the arrest of women’s rights activists, human-rights lawyers, and bloggers” have been more usual in China.

The PAP is more dependent on legalist methods to prevent the spread of objections and foster a culture of self-censorship rather than resorting to direct repression. Unlike China, which has invested heavily in building a network firewall, blocking large-scale overseas websites, social networks (such as Google, Facebook) and cracking down on private VPNs, Singapore’s approach toward Internet censorship is more relaxed, which is blocking only a few websites (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 44). Following the lessons of Singapore model

would lead to a softer authoritarian rule; however, by contrast, China under Xi Jinping's rule is turning away from those experiences.

4.3.6 Asian Values

Another noteworthy fact is that even in Singapore, where Lee Kuan Yew raised Asian values, it is far from forming an ideological consensus. Not only has it not formed a consensus on ideology, Asian values but also had been less and less promoted by Singaporean government officially since 1997, because the Asian financial crisis has largely undermined the international prestige of Asian values and embarrassed Academics, conservative politicians, and businesspeople in the West who had sympathized with Asian values (Thompson, 2001: 154-155). As Thompson argues, “the discourse contrasting the defects of ‘Western’ individualism and democracy with the virtues of ‘Asian’ communitarianism and good governance, which blossomed during East and Southeast Asia’s economic boom, has withered since the financial bust of 1997–98” (Thompson, 2001: 154). China's considerations of the value of Asian values in the Singapore model are mainly due to

the influence of its factors on the ideological struggle for the Chinese soul. It is the result of this struggle that will ultimately clarify the long-term significance of Asian values in the particular cultural region of East Asia because compared to the small city-state, Singapore, the influence of Asian values on the vast China is more representative of its significance (Thompson, 2001: 163).

However, after the return of Hong Kong, the Chinese government's attempt to use the discourses of Asian culture's uniqueness to defend authoritarianism had failed. Hong Kong, the once politically sleepy city-state, was continually politicized by the Tiananmen Square massacre and the democratic reforms of the late colonial era. After a large number of pro-democracy elites have emigrated overseas (mainly to Canada and the United Kingdom) due to fears of possible bleak prospects after the handover, the vigilance and hostility of Hong Kong society against authoritarianism and the Communist government have not been alleviated by the CCP attempt to promote Asian values. With the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the first Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Tung Chee-Hwa, and his pro-Beijing allies tried to use Asian values to curb democratic thoughts. However, one year later, their attempt was bankrupt in the 1998 legislative

elections due to the lost in the battle for the small percentage of seats open to electoral competition. In order to gain more democratic rights, especially universal suffrage, 1.2 million Hong Kong people, one-sixth of its population also launched the largest civil disobedience movement in Hong Kong history, the umbrella movement, in 2014 (Apple Daily, 2014). However, conservative Chinese theorists still regard Singapore as a model for defending authoritarianism by reviving Confucianism.

Chapter Five

The Problems in Prevailing Definitions of the Singapore Model: What Does China Really Want to Learn from Singapore?

5.1 An Unusual Form of “Political Learning”?

In sum, Thompson and Ortmann believe that the reasons why the Singapore model could not play a role in China are all based on their definition and understanding of the Singapore model. Nonetheless, their definition of the Singapore model is based on their perception of the current external form of Singapore's model, namely soft authoritarianism plus good governance. Thus, they even came up with a rather ridiculous conclusion that Singapore model is an unusual form of “political learning” that instead of a major power using its clout to diffuse its regime form, a small and relatively insignificant country is teaching its governance approach to a major power (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 40). They believe that it is the leadership of Singapore has actively and cautiously codified their

national model and taught China how to avoid modernization trap and maintain its one-party authoritarian rule through achieving good governance. Their certain conclusions seem to add a new footnote to the significance of the Singapore model, which is an educational initiative that they are rather proud. After all, the significance of a small country's initiative to export its national model is not only reflected in its real influence to the major power, but also in its possibility to become a new paradigm of political learning.

5.2 “Four Confidences” and Selective Political Learning

However, for the CCP under Xi Jinping, who regards confidence doctrine as a signature political philosophy, it is impossible to accept a national model that is actively codified and promoted by other countries, regardless of the size or the significance of the country. In 2016, Xi Jinping put forward the "four confidences" of the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics when celebrating the 95th anniversary of the founding of the CCP, that is, “confidence in the path, confidence in the theory, confidence in the system and confidence in the culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics”. Among them, confidence in the path

refers to the belief that the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the only way to realize socialist modernization and the only way to create a better life for Chinese people.

Confidence in the system refers to the belief that the socialist system with Chinese characteristics is an advanced system with distinct institutional advantages and strong self-improvement ability, and the fundamental institutional guarantee for the development and progress of contemporary China. (Feng, 2016).

In the context of such a clear political discourse, Singapore's path and the system can only be selectively studied and adopted in the form of self-improvement of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, based on the CCP's perception of the situation and related needs. Therefore, the Singapore model that needs to be discussed and studied can only be the national model of Singapore defined by China and selected by China, rather than the so-called Singapore model that focuses on reflecting the current path of Singapore, either the Singapore model that the Singapore government has actively summarized and promoted. Thompson and Ortmann criticize that China's learning on the experience of the Singapore model is selective, leading to the mis-modelling Singapore model. It is precisely where they made mistakes - the Singapore model was inherently selective. Moreover, the initiative to

select has always been in the hands of the CCP. Taking China's political and social realities into consideration, the CCP has been selecting the experience of Singapore's national model that is conducive to achieving its goals. It is precisely the Singapore model that is realistic and worthy of discussion.

5.3 Similarities and Fundamental Differences: Redefining the Singapore Model Based on China and the CCP's Perspectives

Thompson and Ortmann argue that China has exaggerated the similarities between the two countries and ignored the fundamental differences between them. However, China has not ignored or underestimated the difference between the two countries. The similarities between the two countries are the reason why China maintains a long-standing “fever” in Singapore. The difference between the two countries is the reason why China selectively studies the experience of Singapore. It again shows the conclusion they made that China is not learning the Singapore model or that the Singapore model will not apply to China because the two countries are fundamentally different and China cannot completely follow the current

path of Singapore is somewhat unreasonable.

Therefore, it is highly necessary to rethink about the Singapore model and redefine it based on China and the CCP's perspectives. In order to accurately redefine the Singapore model and correct the previous misunderstandings, it is necessary to clarify three key factors: firstly, the background of China's Singapore fever is the risks brought by the modernization traps in China's path of developmental state under the rule of the CCP. Secondly, the purpose of learning Singapore's experience is to maintain the CCP's one-party authoritarian rule. Thirdly, the means to achieve this goal are to learn the Singapore model to improve the CCP's capacity to provide good governance, fight corruption and upgrade the level of professionalization of the party.

After clarifying these three key factors, it is the electoral system that was first excluded from the Singapore model that China will learn. Although Singapore is not a democracy, it has a relatively competitive electoral system that can effectively ensure that the government responds to the demands of the people and raises accountability. It is also the cornerstone of Singapore's soft authoritarianism. Thompson and Ortmann define the Singapore model as a combination of soft authoritarianism and good governance, but

considering that the CCP's one-party authoritarian rule is fundamentally incompatible with any substantive electoral system, their definition once again shows a misunderstanding of the background and purpose of China's learning on Singapore model. Although the CCP "identified elections in Singapore as an important mechanism for gaining legitimation and acquiring popular feedback," apparently, the electoral system is not the only source that the CCP could gain legitimacy (Thompson and Ortmann, 2018: 1027). Inspired by the Confucian tradition of meritocracy, the CCP intends to win performance legitimacy.

5.4 What is Wrong with the Prevailing Definition of the Singapore Model

5.4.1 The Role of Rule of Law

Thompson and Ortmann have repeatedly stressed that because Singapore's good rule of law is a British colonial legacy and contains elements of strong opposition from the CCP, such as separation of powers and judicial independence, the rule of law in the Singapore model could not and would not be learned and applied by the CCP in China's governance.

However, as long as reviewing Singapore's history, it can be clearly understood that when the PAP faces challenges from political opponents, the rule of law conflicts with the goal of maintaining one-party rule of the PAP, and the country needs cohesion to ensure social stability and economic development, the British colonial legacy will not be unconditionally observed and maintained by the Singaporean government. In the face of different situations, the PAP's attitude towards the rule of law is also flexible and pragmatic. As early as 1963, Lee Kuan Yew attacked his political opponents by launching the Operation Cold Store. Political enemies were thrown into prison without trial and disappeared silently from the public eye. This is a flagrant violation of the rule of law because it not only seriously violates the justice of the judicial process but also brings about the human rights issue of political prisoners.

Until 1987, opponents were still arrested under the Internal Security Act, which allows for detention without trial (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 44). The PAP still launched “both draconian laws regarding personal behavior and the crackdown on political opposition in 1987” (Thompson, 2001: 157). After being aware of this fact, it is not surprising to understand the reason why Jothie Rajah has pointed out that the rule of law in

Singapore conceals strict controls on civil and political rights (Rajah, 2012). Chinese observers are also fascinated by the PAP's version of the rule of law that includes the manipulation of election procedures, control of media and public opinion, and even the use of judicial means to suppress the opposition parties (Cai, 2017). On the one hand, the CCP opposes the ideas such as separation of powers, independence of the judiciary and institutionalism. On the other hand, it continually emphasizes that it is necessary to promote comprehensive the law-based governance of the country (依法治国), the law-based exercise of state power (依法执政), the law-based administration of government (依法行政), the governance of the country on the basis of its constitution (依宪治国) and basically establish a holistic approach to strengthening the rule of law in the country, in its government, and in society in 2035 (Xinhua News Agency, 2019).

5.4.2 The Role of the Independent Anti-corruption Agency

Chinese scholars have long recognized the value of Western institutions and look forward to combining the advantages of the East and West systems by learning Singapore:

“the institutional supervision, strict legislation, and the rule of law characteristic of most Western countries and the authoritarian efficiency and stability as well as the obedience to higher ranked people attributed to Confucianism” (Ortmann and Thompson, 2014: 440). In the anti-corruption experience, the Singapore model provides, in addition to strengthening the rule of law, the experience of how to fight corruption through the establishment of an independent anti-corruption institution. On this basis, China has gone further and revised the Constitution directly. The NSC, which is established at the same level as the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, is higher in power and political status than the independent anti-corruption agency CPIB in Singapore. From the promulgation of the particular legislation, supervision law, and the establishment of an independent supervision institution, it can be seen that the CCP is insisting on promoting the rule of law on anti-corruption issues and has primarily been benefited from the Singapore model.

5.4.3 The Role of Confucianism

Thompson and Ortmann point out that the CCP is likely to underestimate the

difficulty of propagating Confucianism while the official orthodoxy of China is still communism. However, they completely underestimated the CCP's pragmatic background. The CCP often shows impressive flexibility in the face of reality, which is one of the fundamental reasons why it can win the rule of China. After the short-term defeat of the early revolution, the CCP transferred the leading target group from the workers to the peasants and was not bound by the orthodox dogma of communism. When private ownership is conducive to reform, opening up, and economic development, the CCP has decisively revised the constitution and the party constitution, and incorporated private ownership and market economy into the theories of socialism with Chinese characteristics and socialist market economy. The CCP does not need to rehabilitate Confucianism fully. The vitality and appeal of Confucianism are not as strong as some people think. After all, Confucianism is still too elite and profound for most ordinary people to understand. Emphasis on Confucianism, Asian values, and moral leadership is mainly to highlight the uniqueness of China and Chinese culture, in order to shape different identity from Western individualism and to promote more obedient collectivist identity.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

China can be seen as a "learning state," and the CCP can also be seen as a "learning party" that constantly adapts to the new situation and learns external experience frequently. In the past three decades, tens of thousands of officials from various levels of government in China have been sent to Singapore for short-term training or a master's degree program, showing the great interest of China in the Singapore model (Liu and Wang, 2018; Yang and Ortmann, 2018). Although China's state-capitalism faces many challenges, including the polarization between rich and poor and rampant corruption, it is difficult to find an alternative model that can successfully achieve economic modernization under one-party politics like Singapore (Yang and Ortmann, 2018: 946).

Whether it is from Singapore fever's maintenance time or real actions taken by the Chinese government and the CCP, China's obsession with the Singapore model is very obvious. The answer to the question of why China wants to learn Singapore is obvious. Scholars have also reached a consensus on this, that is, by studying Singapore's experience to

better cope with the challenges brought by modernization to the one-party rule of the CCP is the fundamental dynamic of China's obsession on Singapore model. The divergent and at the same time the most critical issue lies in the definition of the Singapore model. In other words, scholars have different views on the content of the Singapore model: What are the key factors that make Singapore successful? What experiences can China learn? What experience will apply to China? Behind these questions are an analysis of what constitutes "success" and what effect China wants to achieve and the means by which it can be reached.

6.1 Findings

The scholars represented by Thompson and Ortmann believe that China's learning of the Singapore model should include the study of the political institution and the legal system in addition to the specific measures and experience that could teach China how to achieve good governance. In the previous section, it has been pointed out to be incorrect that Thompson and Ortmann believe that the Singapore model is a national model that the Singapore government has actively and carefully designed and represents a paradigm of

transnational knowledge transfer from a relatively insignificant country to a major power in the non-Western world. Although Singapore has a keen interest to actively promote "its model of economic growth with political stability as a 'counterhegemonic' alternative to the supposed liberal-democratic consensus", its main purpose is to emphasize the uniqueness of Singapore in combination with Asian values in order to counter democratic claims of its people and maintain political stability within the country, rather than to create a consensus to replace Western democracy (Ortmann and Thompson, 2016: 40).

Singapore has neither the corresponding strength nor the corresponding intention to create a "third road." There are also many discussions about the "China model" and the "Beijing Consensus" in China today, but China's national strength is still insufficient to support its ambitions. The Singapore model is not likely to be a paradigm of a relatively insignificant country to export its national model to a major power, because as a country with great ambitions and emphasis on "four confidences", China will hardly trust and accept a national model that is actively exported by a small country that maintains close ally relations with the United States. Thus, Singapore model is not a national model that the Singapore government has actively and carefully designed and represents a paradigm of transnational

knowledge transfer from a relatively insignificant country to a major power in the non-Western world.

On the contrary, this article attempts to point out that the Singapore model is a series of experiences that are actively selected by China and are in line with China's national conditions based on China's understanding of Singapore's advantages and China's needs and positions. The Singapore model is neither designed and proposed by Singapore nor can it adequately reflect the full picture of how Singapore manages to achieve today's success. In other words, the Singapore model is “proactive response from the supply side (Singapore)” to meet China’s need and does not mean that China can become the same country as Singapore as long as it learns this model (Liu and Wang, 2018: 2).

Therefore, it can be said that the Singapore model is based on China's mismodelling of Singapore, if China has a huge misunderstanding of Singapore. Singapore model is not a static outcome but a dynamic process. Prevailing views believe that learning the Singapore model is to immediately move closer to current Singapore while ignoring the fact that the Singaporean government has gone against the current practice for a long time in the past in order to achieve what it is like today. China began to have its fever in the Singapore model

more than 30 years ago. Many of the experiences that China has been learning are the legacy of Lee Kuan Yew's strongman political era. CCP's study of the Singapore model is not intended to turn China into a country similar to Singapore. The purpose of studying the Singapore model is to win the ruling legitimacy and maintain the one-party rule of the CCP by providing good governance. It is not a transformation of the national model. Singapore's current political system is not an ideal model for the CCP as the ruling party. In the face of a country as complex as China and having fierce strategic competition with the United States, it is impossible to determine whether such a political system can maintain China's stability. This point once again emphasizes that not only cannot China learn Singapore comprehensively but also even soft authoritarianism and related political systems are impossible for the CCP to learn.

6.2 Rethink and Redefine the Singapore Model

Of course, another vital issue has emerged here: is the Singapore model still the Singapore model when it does not reflect the full picture of Singapore's successful experience

and elements, or even misread the Singapore experience? Is it a kind of illusion that pinpoints China's countless fantasies? The answers to these questions can only be found in the reality of China's continuous dispatch of officials to Singapore. The fact that these officials are genuinely interested in the perception of the Singapore model and what experience in Singapore will be a fundamental basis for rethinking and redefining this article. The perception of these officials on the existence of the Singapore model and the experience of Singapore's success that they are really interested at would be the essential foundation of this paper for rethinking and redefining the Singapore model. The Singapore model that learned by China does not make China embark on the national path of Singapore and eventually become what Singapore is like today. China's method of learning Singapore is not to replicate Singapore's national model, but to select some elements of Singapore's experience to focus on. These elements selected and learned by China are the contents of the Singapore model we should discuss and the base to redefine the Singapore model.

Therefore, to rethink and redefine the Singapore model, we must first confirm what lessons China really wants to learn from Singapore. Previous definitions of the Singapore model were based on the research of relevant scholars, but their unofficial identity limited

their ability to reflect the necessary information for defining the Singapore model accurately.

Because Chinese government does not publish any formal documents of learning plans for the Singapore model, a more accurate understanding of the lessons that China is really interested in can only be understood from the views of officials sent by the Chinese government. Compared with scholars outside the government system, officials as key stakeholders in the process have two significant factors that make them the key to understanding the Singapore model: "(They) are in the forefront of policy implementation on a daily basis, and they have first-hand experience not only of China but also the outside world through intensive study in and about Singapore" (Liu and Wang, 2018: 19). The Chinese government sends officials to learn from the experience and expects these officials to bring back the experience of Singapore to China and implement it in the future. Officials have two identities at the same time. They are both learners of experience and implementers of future policies. Their views on the Singapore model will determine the lessons China will learn from Singapore and how China will implement future policies based on the lessons they learned.

However, due to the limitations or lack of relevant information and data, we could

not adequately grasp the Chinese officials' perception of the Singapore model until two scholars from NTU published their latest research in 2018, *China and the "Singapore Model": Perspectives from Mid-level Cadres and Implications for Transnational Knowledge Transfer*. In their paper, they claim that the existing research ignores the views of these local Chinese middle-level officials who have been trained in Singapore on the "Singapore model" and its feasibility in China. Their paper attempts to fill this gap by utilizing the unique NTU "Mayor Class" graduate database (1995–2016) and follow-up questionnaires and interviews. They find that for these middle-level officials, the most attractive of the "Singapore model" is the operational government management experience and its application in China, rather than the ideological appeal. Their discovery challenges the usual interpretation of the phenomenon of learning Singapore in China, that is, the main consideration for China to learn from Singapore is for political and ideological reasons.

Liu and Wang's research first confirm that Chinese officials admit that the lessons they learn are the contents of the Singapore model. According to Liu and Wang's survey on graduates of NTU "Mayors' Class," 96.3% respondents agree that Singapore's governance reflects the existence of a "Singapore model (Liu and Wang, 2018: 12). Then, they list 12

core elements of the Singapore model (one-party dominance, authoritarianism, periodical democratic election, meritocracy, clean and efficient government, rule of law, grassroots social management, racial and religious harmony, economic success, the Temasek model, public housing, and Central Provident Fund (CPF)) and ask respondents to select the ones they perceived to be most attractive and most crucial (Liu and Wang, 2018: 12-12). Through their choice, we will get first-hand information about what lessons China really wants to learn from Singapore, and redefine the Singapore model accordingly. Liu and Wang have divided the 12 elements into four major dimensions including polity/ideology, governance, economics, and social services.

According to the survey, three elements of polity/ideology dimension, “one-party dominance,” “authoritarianism,” and “periodical democratic election” only respectively get 28.6, 45, and 31.7 percent of votes to be considered as the key components of the Singapore model (Liu and Wang, 2018: 13). This finding coincides with the conclusion that fundamental differences between the system and the national conditions and the “four confidence” factors make China unlikely to learn Singapore’s political system featured with soft authoritarianism and periodical democratic elections. Although China’s motivation for

learning Singapore model is to maintain the CCP's one-party and authoritarian rule, China is not going to achieve its goals through following the political and ideological path of Singapore and the PAP. The officials are predominantly interested in the lessons of practical governance and social services rather than polity/ideology. Chinese officials have the highest support rate for the "governance" dimension, reaching 75.4%. Specific to each element is 88.9% ("meritocracy"), 87.3%("clean and efficient governance") and 81%("rule of law") (Liu and Wang, 2018: 12). The economics and social services also get a very high level of support. This finding illustrates that China's focus on learning the Singapore model is pragmatism-oriented rather than ideology-driven (Liu and Wang, 2018: 19). This finding proves that the Chinese government has improved its ability to provide good governance by learning Singapore's specific governance experience. With a better ability to provide good governance, the CCP could bring a better life for all the Chinese and thus maintain its performance legitimacy.

What needs to be emphasized again is that the Singapore model is a series of experiences that China has actively chosen to learn. The definition of the Singapore model must thus be consistent with the learning content of China in reality. Although China's study

of the Singapore model aims to maintain the CCP's one-party and authoritarian rule, China's learning focus is not on how Singapore and the PAP construct their own country's authoritarian system. Therefore, the Singapore model is not a national model that combines soft authoritarianism with good governance and is actively exported by a relatively insignificant country to a major power. This paper agrees with the argument that the Singapore's success contains three key factors: 1) a strong state under the long-standing one-party dominance that could facilitate efficient governance; 2) dynamic economic development strategies; and 3) effective policy implementation (Liu and Wang, 2018: 5). Since 1978, China has maintained rapid and stable economic growth under the long-term one-party and authoritarian rule of the CCP. China does not need to learn from Singapore on how to build a strong state and how to formulate economic policies that can sustain long-term dynamic growth. Due to fundamental institutional differences and the gap between country sizes, the transferability of Singapore's experience in polity/ideology and economics is not high. What China really cares about is the dimension of governance and social services that can help China provide good governance. The value of the Singapore model lies in showing China how to ensure the strong state's ability to provide good governance without resorting to

the Western liberal democracy's check and balance and accountability. Therefore, this paper redefines the Singapore model as a pragmatism-driven social development path that focuses on practical governance experience gradually and selectively applied by China and could improve the ability to provide good governance without resorting to the Western liberal democratic institutions.

For a long time, China has been a country that is good at learning the experience of successes and outstanding cultural achievements of other countries. Singapore is an important and special one in many Chinese learning countries. However, China is at the same time at both ends of the knowledge transfer spectrum. China not only learns outstanding cultural achievements and successful experiences from foreign countries but also actively promotes China's own successful experiences to the rest of the world. China is sharing China's experience with the world through debates such as the "Beijing Consensus" and the "China Model." The fast-growing economy and increasing international influence of China have led many developing countries to send their officials to China for training. Every year, a large number of international students, especially African students, come to China for education and training (Tugendhat and Alemu, 2016). The experience of the Singapore model is being

integrated into the Chinese model through continuous learning, adsorptions, and applications.

China continues to strengthen its promotion of the Chinese model while maintaining long-term learning of the Singapore model. This unique development model of learning plus output is actively exported by China. Is this model an immature attempt or a new model with the mature function of self-improvement? How much influence would the Singapore model have on the world outside China through this model? These issues require further attention from the academic community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Apple Daily (2014). 中大民調推算 120 萬人 曾參與佔領運動 逾半市民指政府應就政改具體讓步 . [online] Apple Daily 蘋果日報 . Available at: <https://hk.news.appledaily.com/local/daily/article/20141219/18974592> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Baek, S. (2005). Does China follow “the East Asian development model”? *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 35(4), pp.485-498.

Browne, A. (2015). *The Whiplash of Xi Jinping's Top-Down Style*. [online] WSJ. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-whiplash-of-xis-top-down-style-1435031502> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Cai, D. (2017). Singapore: What We Have Overlooked and Misinterpreted. In: C. Yang, Y. Yu and G. Wang, ed., *Lee Kuan Yew Through the Eyes of Chinese Scholars*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., pp.3-26.

Castells, M. (1992). Four Asian Tigers with a Dragon Head: a Comparative Analysis of the State, Economy, and Society in the Asian Pacific Rim. In: R. Appelbaum and J. Henderson, ed., *States and Development in the Asian Pacific Rim*. Newbury Park, AC: Sage, p.66.

Chen, W. and Keng, S. (2017). The Chinese developmental state in transition: in light of the East Asian experiences. *Journal of Chinese Governance*, 2(2), pp.209-222.

Doner, R., Ritchie, B. and Slater, D. (2005). Systemic Vulnerability and the Origins of Developmental States: Northeast and Southeast Asia in Comparative Perspective. *International Organization*, 59(02).

Feng, P. (2016). *From "Three Confidences" to "Four Confidences"* (从 “三个自信” 到 “四

个自信”。 [online] Theory.people.com.cn. Available at: <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0707/c49150-28532466.html> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Hang, T. (2011). *Legal Consensus: Supreme Executive, Supreme Jurisprudence, Suppliant Profession of Singapore*. Hong Kong: Centre for Comparative and Public Law.

Heilbrunn, J. R. (2004). *Anti-Corruption Commissions Panacea Or Real Medicine to Fight Corruption?* [online] Available From: <http://siteresourcesworldbank.org/WBI/Resources/wbi37234Heilbrunn.pdf> [Accessed 17 January 2017].

Horesh, N. and Lim, K. (2016). China: an East Asian alternative to neoliberalism?. *The Pacific Review*, 30(4), pp.425-442.

Huang, C. (2014). *How leading small groups help Xi Jinping and other party leaders exert power*. [online] South China Morning Post. Available at: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1409118/how-leading-small-groups-help-xi-jinping-and-other-party-leaders-exert> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Huntington, S. (1991). Democracy's Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2), pp.12-34.

Jiang, J. (2006). *What we can learn from Singapore [新加坡有什么好学]*, Beijing: Sinoculture Press.

Johnson, C. (1982). *MITI and the Japanese miracle*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Khoo, L. (2011). *Win-win ties*, [online] The Business Times, 11 January. Available at: <http://www.businesschina.org.sg/en.php/resources/news/242> [Accessed 1 Apr. 2019].

Knight, J. (2014). China as a Developmental State. *The World Economy*, 37(10), pp.1335-1347.

Leong, W. (2008a). *The Dragon eyes the Lion City*. [online] Asiaone.com. Available at: <https://www.asiaone.com/News/Education/Story/A1Story20081111-99894.html> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Leong, W. (2008b). *First China centre for S'pore studies*. [online] Asiaone.com. Available at: <https://www.asiaone.com/News/Education/Story/A1Story20081101-97720.html> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Li, L. (1997). Discussing Singapore's People's Action Party's transformation from democratic socialism to nationalism [论新加坡人民行动党对民主社会主义的民族主义改造]. *Contemporary World and Socialism*, 4, pp. 40–4.

Lipset, S. (1990). The Centrality of Political Culture. *Journal of Democracy*, 1(4), pp.80-83.

Liu, H. and Wang, T. (2018). China and the “Singapore Model”: Perspectives from Mid-level Cadres and Implications for Transnational Knowledge Transfer. *The China Quarterly*, 236, pp.988-1011.

Liu, Y. and Chen, D. (2012). Why China Will Democratize. *The Washington Quarterly*, 35(1), pp.41-63.

Low, D., Vadaketh, S. and Lim, L. (2014). *Hard Choices: Challenging the Singapore Consensus*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.

Marco Verweij and Riccardo Pelizzo (2009). Singapore: Does Authoritarianism Pay?. *Journal of Democracy*, 20(2), pp.18-32.

Misra, K. (2003). Neo-left and neo-right in post-Tiananmen China. *Asian Survey*, 43(5), pp.717-744.

Morley, J. ed. (1999). *Driven by Growth: Political Change in the Asia-Pacific*. 2nd ed., Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Nathan, A. J. (2015). China's Challenge. *Journal of Democracy*, 26(1), pp.156-170.

Ortmann, S. and Thompson, M. (2014). China's obsession with Singapore: learning authoritarian modernity. *The Pacific Review*, 27(3), pp.433-455.

Ortmann, S. and Thompson, M. (2016). China and the “Singapore Model”. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), pp.39-48.

Peh, S. (2019). *S'pore fever' rages on in China*. [online] Transitioning.org. Available at: <http://www.transitioning.org/2009/06/24/spore-fever-rages-on-in-china-st-24-june/> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Pei, M. (2007). How will China democratize. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(3), pp.53–57.

Pei, M. (2015). *The Real Singapore Model*. [online] Project Syndicate. Available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-misappropriates-singapore-model-by-minxin-pei-2015-03?barrier=accesspaylog> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Peng, W. (2006). ‘Xinjiapo yu Zhongguo de Gongwuyuan Zhidu Jianshe Bijiao’ [A comparison of the formation of civil service system in Singapore and China], *Tribune of Social Sciences*, 10. pp.50–53

People's Daily (2006). *All for the people, all depend on the people* (一切为了人民, 一切依靠人民). [online] Theory.people.com.cn. Available at: <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/57260/70370/4871954.html> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Przeworski, A. (2009). *Democracy and development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rajah, J. (2012). *Authoritarian Rule of Law: Legislation, Discourse and Legitimacy in Singapore*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rowen, H. S. (1996). The short march: China's road to democracy. *National Interest*, 45(Fall), pp.61–70.

Rowen, H. S. (2007). When will the Chinese people be free?. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(3), pp.38–52.

Roy, D. (1994). Singapore, China, and the "Soft Authoritarian" Challenge. *Asian Survey*, 34(3), pp.231-242.

Shambaugh, D. (2008). *China's Communist Party*. Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press.

Shambough, D. (2016). Contemplating China's Future. *The Washington Quarterly*. Vol39:3. 121-130.

Shirk, S. (2008). *China: Fragile Superpower*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sim, S. (2006). Hegemonic authoritarianism and singapore: Economics, ideology and the asian economic crisis. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 36(2), pp.143-159.

Su, Z., Zhao, H. and He, J. (2013). Authoritarianism and Contestation. *Journal of Democracy*, 24(1), pp.26-40.

Thompson, Mark R. (2001). Whatever Happened to "Asian Values"?. *Journal of Democracy*. Vol.12: 4. pp. 154-165.

Thompson, M. and Ortmann, S. (2018). Mis-modelling Singapore: China's Challenges in Learning from the City-state. *The China Quarterly*, 236, pp.1014-1032.

Tjin, T. (2014). *Living with Myths: Silent Spaces of History*. [online] YouTube. Available at: <http://youtu.be/31b8WeqasQs> [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Tsai, K. (2004). Off balance: The unintended consequences of fiscal federalism in China. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 9(2), pp.1-26.

Tsang, S. (2014). China after Deng Xiaoping: the search for a non-Democratic development model. In: H. Hsiao, ed., *Democracy or Alternative Political Systems in Asia: after the*

Strongmen. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, pp.78–96

Tugendhat, H. and Alemu, D. (2016). Chinese Agricultural Training Courses for African Officials: Between Power and Partnerships. *World Development*, 81, pp.71-81.

Wei, X. (2009). ‘Cong Xinjiapo Jingyan Tan Zhongguo Lianzheng Jianshe’ [Using Singapore’s experience to discuss clean government in China], *Dai Qing Social Sciences* 154(5): 146–148.

Xinhua News Agency (2019). *Reinforcing Party's Leadership on Comprehensively Implementing the Rule of Law* (加强党对全面依法治国的领导). [online] Xinhuanet.com. Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-02/15/c_1124120391.htm [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Yang, K. and Ortmann, S. (2018). From Sweden to Singapore: The Relevance of Foreign Models for China's Rise. *The China Quarterly*, 236, pp.946-967.

Zhang, G. (2013). *Why Does Wang Qishan Recommend The Old Regime and the Revolution* (王岐山为何推荐《旧制度与大革命》). [online] Paper.people.com.cn. Available at: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2013-01/18/content_1187807.htm [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Zhu, J. (2018). *Anti-corruption Campaign Got Overwhelming Victory* (反腐败斗争取得压倒性胜利). [online] Gov.cn. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2018-12/13/content_5348598.htm [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].

Zhu, X. (2013). *Zhu Xueqin Interprets French Revolution* (朱学勤解读法国大革命). [online] News.ifeng.com. Available at: http://news.ifeng.com/history/Zhuanjialunshi/zhuxueqin/detail_2013_05/03/24910735_2.shtml [Accessed 24 Apr. 2019].