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The phenomenon of the global city-state in world politics

Maksim I. Kolykhalov

Siberian Institute of Management — Branch of the Russian Presidential Academy of National
Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), *Novosibirsk, Russian Federation*

maxim_kolykhalov@mail.ru

Abstract. Singapore is the only city-state in the world that has successfully formed the infrastructure and prerequisites for active involvement in global transnational flows, which allows it to be interpreted as a global city-state, which determines the relevance of this study. The purpose of the research is to study the phenomenon of a global city-state through the prism of its political structure, the specifics of the political regime and public administration processes. The materials of the study were the current works of Russian and foreign researchers in the field of public administration, political science, and urban studies. The research methods used were general scientific approaches, as well as research concepts corresponding to the object and purpose of the study — a specific historical method, a systems approach, the concepts of neoliberalism, transregionalism, global city, and political leadership. The study identified the specifics of the political regime and state structure of Singapore, the characteristic features of the formation and development of a fully urbanized territory, and also examined the issues of the genesis of this territorial entity. It was revealed that the formation of Singapore as a city-state was determined by the specifics of colonial and post-colonial processes of the SEA macro-region of the world, a fully urbanized territory allows for its comprehensive development, based on a single state concept, implementing “smart city” technologies, and the political regime is characterized by features of authoritarianism, has a paternalistic nature. In the sphere of state structure of the global city-state of Singapore, significant specifics were revealed in the form of the formation of a power conglomerate of national and municipal levels of power.

Keywords: Singapore, decolonization, metropolis, political regime, state structure

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Феномен глобального города-государства в мировой политике

М.И. Колыхалов  

Сибирский институт управления — филиал Российской академии народного хозяйства
и государственной службы при Президенте РФ, Новосибирск, Россия
 maxim_kolykhalov@mail.ru

Аннотация. Сингапур единственный из мировых городов-государств, которому удалось успешно сформировать инфраструктуру и предпосылки активного вовлечения в глобальные транснациональные потоки, это и позволяет трактовать его в качестве глобального города-государства, что обуславливает актуальность данного исследования. Цель исследования — изучение феномена глобального города-государства через призму политического устройства, специфики политического режима и процессов государственного управления. Материалами исследования явились труды российских и зарубежных исследователей в сфере государственного управления, политологии, урбанистики. В качестве методов исследования использовались общенаучные подходы, а также исследовательские концепции, соответствующие объекту и цели исследования: конкретно-исторический метод; системный подход; концепции неолиберализма, трансрегионализма, глобального города, политического лидерства. Выявлены специфика политического режима и государственного устройства Сингапура, характерные черты формирования и развития полностью урбанизированной территории, исследованы вопросы генезиса данного территориального образования. Выявлено, что формирование Сингапура в качестве города-государства обусловила специфика колониальных и постколониальных процессов макрорегиона Юго-восточной Азии, полностью урбанизированная территория позволяет развивать ее комплексно, на основании единой государственной концепции, реализуя технологии «умного города», а политический режим характеризуется чертами авторитаризма, имеет патерналистский характер. В сфере государственного устройства глобального города-государства Сингапур выявлена существенная специфика — формирование властного конгломерата национального и муниципального уровней власти.

Ключевые слова: Сингапур, деколонизация, мегаполис, политический режим, государственное устройство

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Introduction

A global city is a predominantly economic phenomenon that occurs when global economic networks that concentrate in a megalopolis gain a certain degree of autonomy from political networks and the traditional administrative hierarchy of “municipality — subnational region — national state”. In a city-state, such autonomy is generally impossible, based on the specifics of the state structure, the nature of international activities and the formation of urban/national policies, as in traditional global cities. Accordingly, the phenomenon of the global city-

state initially contains a certain contradiction associated with the need to link the extraterritorial global processes inherent in global cities with the processes of public administration, coordination and control inherent in the city-state. Nevertheless, in modern world politics, this phenomenon has been realized based on the specific conditions of historical development, the features of the state structure and political regime, and involvement in global flows.

Thus, the study of the phenomenon of the global city — state in world politics and transnational global networks is an urgent research task, based on its unique status and opportunities in the processes of international exchange, the involvement of flows in the global space, significant specifics of the formation and implementation of urban policy, as well as the lack of comprehensive Russian political science research on scientific issues in this field of research.

Accordingly, the **aim of this study** is to explore the phenomenon of a global city-state in the field of political structure, the specifics of international political activity, the formation and implementation of urban policy, as well as issues of its genesis.

Materials and methods

The research materials are current works of Russian and foreign researchers in the field of political science, public administration, urban studies, and sociology. The study of the phenomenon of the city-state, the participation of cities in the processes of world politics are presented in the works of V.S. Martyanov [1], M.M. Lebedeva, V.M. Sergeev [2], Pang Yeng Fong explores the processes of formation and development of the global city state [3], the analysis of the cities of Singapore and Hong Kong as state entities actively involved The contribution to global transnational flows is given in the works of K. Olds, G. Yeng [4], Y.M. Yeng, J. Lee and G. Key [5], the specifics of the state structure of city-states are studied and interpreted in the works of such researchers as K. Wong, K.M. Hesse, T.J. Sigler [6], R. Morris [7].

This article uses the approaches of neoliberalism and transregionalism, which consider subnational territorial entities as actors of international political activity, the concept of a global city, which examines the formation and development of this category of cities based on involvement in global networks of multinational companies, the concept of political leadership, as well as general scientific methods determined by the object of research — a specific historical method, a systematic the approach, methods of analysis and synthesis.

Results

First, let's explore the genesis of Singapore as a city-state. The processes of decolonization of the British colonies began after World War II. There were a number of objective reasons for this, related to the depletion of the resources of the metropolitan states, the intensification of national liberation

movements and the formation of national elites, and global trends towards dismantling the institution of colonial dependence. However, not all colonies have undergone decolonization, so far 14 territories of strategic geopolitical or military importance are associated “British Overseas Territories” [8. P. 157–159].

Nevertheless, Singapore, which became an important trading port during the period of colonization, and then a significant military fortification, strategically located between China and India on one of the most important shipping channels in the world, the Strait of Malacca, was decolonized after World War II [9. P. 1412–1414]. Of course, it was the Second World War that triggered the processes of decolonization in the world, and it had a transformative effect on all colonial regimes. As M. Collins notes, as a result of the war, the imperial forces weakened, which incurred significant debts during the fighting. The growing nationalist powers, especially in Asia, were able to seize the initiative, state control was undermined, and the influence of Communist China began to increase significantly [10. P. 4].

In 1963, Singapore was the last of the states of the Malay Peninsula to withdraw from the direct control of Britain and become part of the Federation of Malaya. According to the Singapore authorities, this was supposed to allow the country to gain access to Malaysian markets and solve the problem of providing drinking water to the population. Malaysia also saw benefits from the incorporation of an important logistics and trade center with great development prospects into the state [11. P. 215].

However, realizing the growing social tensions between ethnic Chinese and Malays, as well as the emergence of sympathies for socialist ideas among the Malaysian authorities, in 1965 Lee Kuan Yew decided to withdraw Singapore from the Malaysian Federation. This decision was implemented without conflict, as Malaysia was also dissatisfied with Singapore’s membership in the Federation, believing that this led to an imbalance in the ethnic composition of the population, an increase in ethnic and religious tensions [10].

It was on the basis of these factors and processes that Singapore and the Malaysian authorities agreed to secede from the Federation, which allowed Singapore to become a unique administrative-territorial entity in the world — a city-state. On the other hand, these prerequisites did not exist in other similar colonial territories of the world, which either were not decolonized, such as Gibraltar, Ceuta, Melilla, or were later transferred to the appropriate jurisdiction of a larger state, such as Hong Kong or Macau [12. P. 89].

The processes of purposeful formation of a global city-state are of interest. The global city-state is a phenomenon in the global political and socio-economic system that combines both the capabilities and specifics of a city-state related to the compactness of the territory, its urbanization, the ability to concentrate national resources for the implementation of urban development policies, and the need to solve the problem of forming the infrastructure of a global city: the development of institutions of international activity, the open nature of the economy positioning

as a macro-regional (global) leader in a particular area of international activity — this determines the specificity and purposeful nature of these processes.

According to a number of researchers, not all city-states have the ability to initiate and successfully complete the processes of forming the structure of a global city, that is, to move into the state of a global city-state. Much depends on the existing political, economic, socio-organizational processes, and the ability of key actors (government institutions, national elites, multinational companies, and national businesses) to take the necessary targeted actions to implement appropriate strategies. Another aspect of this problem is that both the leading and developing global cities in a nation-state are managed at all levels of government in a relatively more complex, less coordinated and less strategic manner than the global city-state. As noted by K. Olds and G. Yeung, “there are no intra-national regions or cities competing for material goods in a global city-state; tangible and intangible resources are concentrated on achieving a single goal. The policy of building a global city-nation, as a rule, focuses on solving the difficulties and implementing the strengths of the available options for the development of this policy, rather than on which domestic territorial unit deserves attention and resources” [4. P. 512–513].

As a result of the purposeful implementation of the policy of forming the infrastructure of a global city and ensuring involvement in global transnational flows, the global city-state has achieved the status of a global financial center and the world’s second largest center of offshore business, the Alpha (“brightest”) status has been awarded Singapore by the GaWC research team already in its first study in 1998. In all subsequent and relevant studies, Singapore is also among the top leading global cities in the world¹.

In the sphere of the state structure of the global city-state, a number of key features should be highlighted. Singapore has a special unitary system of government, characterized by the fact that the three traditional levels of government — a municipality, a subnational region, and a national state — represent one powerful conglomerate. The mayor of the city and the city council are missing. The ruling People’s Action Party (HDP) abolished the city council back in 1959, before independence, and the mayor’s role in the power structure disappeared. However, local government as an institution has been preserved and is represented by five public development councils (namely Central Singapore, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest), which were established on a territorial basis and are not directly elected bodies. The City Hall housed government offices, and it was used for government and international events². Local issues, infrastructure development and maintenance,

¹ *Globalization and World Cities Research Network*. URL: <https://gawc.lboro.ac.uk/gawc-worlds/the-world-according-to-gawc/world-cities-2024/> (accessed: 25.12.2024).

² *The official website of the Government of Singapore*. URL: <https://www.gov.sg/features> (accessed: 25.12.2024).

urban planning, organization of municipal services, and provision of municipal services are handled by the Ministry of National Development within the Government of Singapore³.

Also, from the point of view of comparison with global cities, it can be stated that a global city-state has the political potential and legitimacy to mobilize and use strategic resources to achieve national/local goals that are absent in global cities that are not state entities. This is due to the fact that the power structures of the city-state have a national scale and can make decisions in all areas and directions, including “creation and management of financial markets”, “management of territorial borders”, or the formation of offshore jurisdictions for foreign capital and business [4. P. 510]. In Singapore, for example, immigration policy and borders can be tightly regulated to facilitate the restructuring of the labor market, a potential that does not exist in any other city in the world [13. P. 1025–1026].

Researchers interpret Singapore’s model of political structure as paternalistic with features of authoritarianism. Thus, the “HDP” approach to Singapore’s governance is described by K.P. Tan as “soft authoritarian and managerial pragmatism” [14], E. Yue as “illiberal and pragmatic” [15], and A. Ong interprets it as “paternalistic” [16]. According to K.P. According to Tang, a soft authoritarian regime refers to an economically open and globally oriented model that is more open than the hard authoritarianism often associated with autocratic regimes (for example, Chinese), but which maintains a more controlling and archaic structure than liberal democracy [14. P. 8–9].

Thus, Singapore’s model of political structure can be interpreted as paternalistic with features of authoritarianism. The authoritarian nature of Singapore’s political structure is due to both historical factors, when the leading political force and national leader Lee Kuan Yew entered the political arena back in the colonial era, and later these political actors stood at the origins of the processes of decolonization and the formation of independent Singapore, as well as the paternalistic nature of Singaporean society, which adopted these authoritarian tendencies of national governance, thereby Moreover, the socio-economic achievements of this regime are very impressive even on a global scale. At the same time, the global city-state has a number of specific features of political structure and governance. The structure of the model of the state apparatus is one-level, the sphere of municipal services and local issues are an element of public administration, respectively, there is no need to correlate urban and national policies, which is quite relevant for other global cities of the world. The processes of public administration and the implementation of urban planning policies are rarely complicated by procedures for the broad involvement of citizens, which is again typical for global cities. Singapore strictly controls the use of urban space, and comprehensive projects for the development of socio-economic infrastructure and the infrastructure of a global city are being implemented under the auspices of the state.

³ *The official website of the Government of Singapore.* URL: <https://www.sgdi.gov.sg/ministries/mnd> (accessed: 25.12.2024).

Conclusion

Summarizing the results of the conducted research, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions based on the set research goal. The genesis of the global city-state of Singapore has a unique nature in the practice of global political processes. Its decolonization was conditioned by the global processes of decolonization in the world, the regional specifics of Southeast Asia, in which not a single colony remained, the position of the emerging political elite to achieve a balance of interests with Great Britain in sensitive geopolitical areas, and the history of independence was determined by the correlation of two factors — the policy of the leading political force and national leader to gain independence and Malaysia's policy to preserve the privileges of the indigenous Malay population and the undesirability of changing the ethnic composition when Singapore is in the federation, as well as a whole range of political, socio-economic and civilizational differences. The processes of forming the infrastructure of a global city in Singapore were purposeful, under the auspices of the state, which made it possible to use the advantages of Singapore as the largest seaport in the world, as a global center for finance, tourism and offshore business, to form the most open economy in the world and become one of the leaders in the ranking of global cities according to reputable research teams and rating agencies. Singapore's model of political structure is very specific, one-level, characterized by a paternalistic nature and authoritarian tendencies.

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Information about the author:

Maksim I. Kolykhalov — Candidate of Political Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration and Sectoral Policies, Siberian Institute of Management — Branch of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), 6 Nizhegorodskaya st., Novosibirsk, 630102, Russian Federation (ORCID: 0000-0002-3137-1889) (SPIN-код: 2099-7828) (e-mail: maxim_kolykhalov@mail.ru).