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Social Cohesion in Postcolonial Singapore

Effects of Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Authoritarianism

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Social Cohesion in Postcolonial Singapore: Effects of Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Authoritarianism

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Abstract. The paper presents an examination of the predictors of social cohesion in Singapore based on an analysis of the impact of anti-immigrant attitudes and authoritarianism on the nation's state-led social togetherness. The binary logistic regression models find that hostility to immigration and trust in state institutions reduces social cohesion, while authoritarian attitudes promote it. The results of the analysis indicate that state support measures for social cohesion in a postcolonial society appear ambivalent. It is striking that the predictors of social cohesion developed predominantly in Western contexts show no or a different kind of influence in Singapore than in Western societies. Consequently, multicultural Singaporean society obviously also reacts to cohesion policies with a stronger differentiation into separate groups. These policies should therefore focus even more strongly than before on societal cohesion.

Keywords. authoritarianism, patriotism, Singapore, social cohesion, state policies

»Multinational societies can break up, in large part because of a lack of (perceived) recognition of the equal worth of one group by another« (Taylor 1994, 64).

Social cohesion in the multicultural city-state of Singapore, based on trust, the will to support each other, a sense of local identification, and respect for ethnic and social differences (Laurence 2011), has increasingly been the focus of social science research in recent years (Huat and Kian-Woon 2001; Rahman 2009; Chua et al. 2016; Ho and Chua 2018; Lane et al. 2020; Tan and Teng 2020). Since the 1960s, promoting social cohesion has served the long-term objective of integrating the multicultural urban society into the nation of Singapore (Tan and Teng 2020).

Referring to Furnivall (1948), Goh (2019) considers that the fundamental problem of port cities in Southeast Asia is their ability to implement social cohesion policies due to the underlying tension arising from currently housing multicultural societies given their history as colonial constructs with great internal pressure and power imbalances. Singapore is a special case for Southeast Asian port cities. First, Singapore is a city-state and thus the national and urban scales coincide. Second, as early as 1960 the state institution of the Peoples Association (PA) took over the task of establishing social cohesion in the city-state (Tan and Teng 2020), which was still suffering from the residues of the colonial hierarchical social order (Goh 2008; Dirksmeier 2020). Singapore is characterised by the fact that the descendants of the original

minority of Chinese traders (Bonacich 1973) now form the ethnic majority with a share of about 74% of the population. This ethnic shift towards a »CIMO multiculturalism« (Ortiga 2015, 950) (Chinese, Indian, Malay, Other) during the colonial era was accompanied by ethnic unrest in the wake of state independence in 1964, particularly between Malay and Chinese, that was pacified by local, multi-ethnic goodwill committees (Tan and Teng 2020). These local initiatives were subsequently transformed and institutionalised into Citizens' Consultative Committees (Tan and Teng 2020). The successful reaffirmation of social cohesion via institutions has become an important aspect of Singapore's state myth (Tan and Teng 2020). Social cohesion is, therefore, considered a key condition to maintain peaceful coexistence in Singaporean society, as for example evidenced by the successful interplay between government institutions and civil society in overcoming the SARS pandemic in 2003 (Sackmann 2020; Tan and Teng 2020).

The state-led ideal of cohesion in Singapore is coming under pressure from two sides. First, the state ideology of an artificial and state-directed nationalism customised to economic prosperity is opposed by a »bottom-up« nationalism that focuses less globally than locally and combines social cohesion with a shared historical heritage and common aspects of culture (Lim 2015). This »popular nationalism« (Lim 2015, 143) is essentially similar to patriotism, but has an additional exclusive component that sees liberal immigration policies as a threat to national identity. In addition, social positions are unequally distributed among

CIMO groups; Malay men, for example, have significantly less contact with high-ranking positions than all other ethnic groups (Chua et al. 2016). Malays are also confronted with stronger negative associations in relation to religious affiliation, which increased especially in the wake of Singapore's support for the USA's Iraq policy as the only non-Muslim country in the region (Rahman 2009). Second, the not yet completed integration process of social cohesion is threatened by significant anti-immigrant attitudes in the city-state, which have recently become the subject of extensive research (Gomes 2014; Liu 2014; Chong 2015; Ramsay and Pang 2017; Ang 2018; Yang 2018; Ye and Yeoh 2018; Goh 2019; Dirksmeier 2020). These hostile attitudes are directed against two very different groups: temporary migrant workers, mostly from South Asia, and high-skilled migrants from the People's Republic of China. Anti-immigrant sentiments are seen as a threat to fragile social cohesion in the city-state, which is illustrated, among other things, by the decreased index value for social cohesion of the comparative Bertelsmann study between 2008 and 2015 for Singapore (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2018). These two signs of social dis-cohesion become apparent for example in the »Little India Riots«, violent clashes between migrant workers and the police in 2013 (Kaur et al. 2016; Goh 2019), and the annual »Curry Day« (Montsion and Tan 2016) since 2011, where Singaporeans cook traditional dishes together. Exclusive patriotism as »popular nationalism« (Lim 2015, 143) and anti-immigrant sentiments have, thus, recently become more than evident in the context of the economically structured migration regime underpinned by a hierarchical and elastic conception of Singaporean citizenship (Ong 2006).

My aim in this paper¹ is to analyse social cohesion in Singapore's plural society in terms of the determinants of its endangerment that can be derived from the literature, in order to obtain assessments of the strength of the influence of these aspects and to support the development of possible policy responses. To be precise, I explore the influence of Goh's (2019) disruption thesis in relation to immigration and the conflict between attachment to place and to the macro-entity of the nation as presented in the cohesion literature (Forrest and Kearns 2001) to determine »the particularities of locally specific development« (Ren 2018, 503) in Singapore. Social cohesion is confronted with the tension of, on the one hand, emerging locally in weak ties and social capital relations in the neighbourhood (Forrest and Kearns 2001; Ho and Chua 2018) as a form of collective efficacy (Ohmer 2016), while on the other hand strengthening attachment to the nation (Tan and Teng 2020). Hostility towards immigrants is thus to be interpreted as an inward closure of Singaporean society that refers to the national scale, but subsequently leads to local conflicts that massively impair the very space for the emergence of social cohesion in the neighbourhood. This can be seen as a possible operationalisation of Goh's disruption thesis (2019); there are already empirical indications of group-based and threat-based determinants of anti-immigrant sentiment in

Singapore (Chong 2015; Bork-Hüffer and Yeoh 2017; Yang 2018; Dirksmeier 2020).

The data basis is the Asian Barometer Survey Wave 4, whose field phase was between October and December 2014 (Asian Barometer 2017). Data collection was based at the National University of Singapore and used stratified two-stage cluster sampling. The Asian Barometer Wave 4 includes a civic action scale that serves as the dependent variable for the analysis of social cohesion. The paper is structured as follows. In a first step, the concept of social cohesion is presented in its specificity for Singapore. The threats to social cohesion arising through popular nationalism and anti-immigrant attitudes are outlined and research hypotheses are derived. The following section presents the data and the analysis strategy. The fourth section presents the main results. The paper concludes with an in-depth discussion of the empirical findings and further recommendations.

1 State-led Social Cohesion in Singapore and its Impediments

Social cohesion as the »glue that keeps modern society together« (Portes and Vickstrom 2011, 476) defies a comprehensive definition due to its conceptual complexity. Chan et al. (2006) see social cohesion essentially as a quality of interaction between members of society that can best be described in terms of attitudes and norms, trust, feelings of belonging, and participation as an expression of collective efficacy in terms of active intervention (Fonseca et al. 2019). In contrast to work on social cohesion in rural areas, where the focus is more on forms of interaction such as gossip (Scott and Hogg 2015, 176), urban cohesion research is increasingly turning to the place of residence (Forrest and Kearns 2001). The relationship and interconnectedness of people's identity with their place of residence is moving to the centre of the debate (Miciukiewicz et al. 2012; Novy et al. 2012). The neighbourhood is on the one hand an important place for the emergence of social relationships and, on the other hand, as a concept refers to the building structure and social organisation in this area (Small and Adler 2019). The attitudes of the neighbours towards each other is an important factor (Mann 1954) for social cohesion in the neighbourhood. Yet, recent research shows that neighbourhood social relations are becoming less important for certain well-educated and highly mobile urbanites, but still remain significant for local cohesion, especially for deprived and elderly residents (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020).

Singapore is characterised by a normative colonial ethnic order, which has been seen as an obstacle to social cohesion since independence. The CIMO division, derived from the British census (Anderson 2016), is only seemingly disjunctive and masks the fluidity of ethnic boundaries in Singapore's plural society (Hirschman 1987, 555). Nevertheless, every Singaporean is officially a »hyphenated citizen« (Huat 2003, 60), i.e. Singaporean and Chinese, Indian, Malay or other. The result is a normative »bifurcated multiculturalism« (Goh 2011, 111) that is clearly different from more liberal versions. This multiculturalism is nonetheless the basis of social cohesion as the persistence of the coexistence of these value-diverse individuals (Schiefer and van der Noll 2017). Social cohesion in Singapore is initially based on the mutual expectation of adherence to a disciplined

¹An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual conference of the Research Institute Social Cohesion (RISC). I would like to thank Angelina Göb and Yann Rees for giving me the opportunity to present my ideas there. I was given the opportunity to present a further version at the Department of Political Science at the University of Frankfurt/Main. I am extremely thankful to Nicole Deitelhoff, Cord Schmelzle and all participants of the event for their kind invitation and the challenging and stimulating discussion. I thank Johannes Crückeberg and an anonymous referee for their helpful comments on a rough draft of this piece. Last but not least, I thank Taylan Yildiz for his support.

civility with which one encounters others, for example, as a neighbour, buyer, seller, student, or patient (Ye 2017). In Singapore, trust in neighbours is seen as an essential catalyst for translating social cohesion into cohesive action (Tan and Teng 2020). The resulting cohesive neighbourly communities are considered resilient to social failures (Malone-Lee 2020). In Singapore, the ideology of social cohesion expressed therein is closely linked to living in neighbourhoods that are predominantly provided by the state as public housing (Leong et al. 2020). Neighbourhood actions such as art events are then meant to create cohesion (Trivic 2020) and subsequently connectedness and well-being as a »kampong spirit«, i.e. village cohesion (Lane et al. 2020).

The focus on the neighbourhood as a seedbed for the implementation of social cohesion since independence is emerging as a problem in the context of the current migration regime in Singapore. As the city-state's population grows, public housing is becoming a more scarce and contested resource. The state is responding with increased housing construction, but due to space constraints, it is creating smaller dwellings to meet the demand for housing (Ortiga 2015). The implementation strategy for social cohesion since independence in Singapore will come under pressure if the necessary condition of sufficient and needs-based housing provision cannot be fundamentally guaranteed. This is tantamount to a dismantling of the state's power to shape policy, which, as Habermas points out, can endanger cohesion and threaten state legitimacy (Habermas 2013). The clear hostility to immigration since the 2010 elections at the latest is one aspect of this problem. The Singaporean government is actively promoting social cohesion by widening networks and deepening ties between ethnic groups (Rahman 2009).

1.1 The Dis-cohesive Poison of Anti-immigrant Sentiment in Singapore

Singapore's emphasis on promoting social cohesion inevitably entails the inverse problem of exclusion, as Novy et al. (2012, 1879) point out. »Strong ties within a community can be accompanied by discrimination and exclusion of those who do not naturally belong to that community.« Empirical evidence shows that prejudice has a moderating effect on social cohesion. Thus, perceived threat is responsible for lower social cohesion in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, not ethnic diversity itself (Laurence et al. 2019). For Singapore, this means that factors external to society, such as the financial crisis of 2008/09 with the subsequent economic recession and the accompanying increase in perceived threat of immigrants (Bork-Hüffer and Yeoh 2017), also have a negative impact on social cohesion. In particular, migrant workers become the target of resentment because they are politically relevant but socially isolated (Glaeser 2005) in the city-state. The perceived threat of immigration is an important driver of anti-immigrant attitudes in Singapore (Dirksmeier 2020) and thus also a risk to fragile social cohesion in Singapore's ethnically diverse neighbourhoods.

The two main groups of immigrants in Singapore, migrant workers and high-skilled migrants, can be differentiated in terms of the reasons for existing prejudice and perceived threats (Ramsay and Pang 2017). This differentiation does not correspond to Hainmueller and Hiscox's (2010) empirical findings for the US, who found prejudices and threat scenarios were common towards low-skilled immigrants,

but much less so towards highly skilled ones (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010). The doctrine here is that low-skilled immigrants mean more competition for broader strata of the population, which in turn leads to lower wages and greater perceived threat (Borjas 2003). In Singapore, on the other hand, hostility towards immigrants is grouped around various social issues such as the labour market, housing, cultural identity but also spatial density (Yang et al. 2017). The motives behind anti-immigrant attitudes are divided into, on the one hand, motives of envy and the suspicion of favouring foreign talents compared to Singaporeans (Yeoh and Lin 2013). On the other hand, low-skilled migrant workers are seen as placeless and unattached (Goh 2019). They are considered a »social nuisance« (Ong 2006, 203) by the public and blamed for the high density of people in public space and public infrastructure.

Two explanations can essentially be found for anti-immigrant attitudes in Singapore. First, the cultural explanation emphasises the perpetuation of foreign norms and values in relation to immigrants among Singaporeans. Immigrants are therefore not credited with being able to internalise the values and standards of the cosmopolitan global city (Chong 2015). Second, the economic explanation locates the reason for hostile attitudes in the increasing competition for resources, such as good jobs or housing, that accompanies immigration (Chong 2015; Dirksmeier 2020). In particular, public housing, as a central starting point of state-led social cohesion, becomes the object of great competition and concomitant expansion at the expense of downsizing (Ortiga 2015). Thus, resentment works directly at the nexus of the implementation of social cohesion in Singapore.

1.2 Impacts of Patriotism and Authoritarianism on Social Cohesion in Singapore

A second important aspect of state-led social cohesion in Singapore is a positive identification with the nation state (Tan and Teng 2020). This patriotism is specifically pronounced in Singapore. Patriotism generally refers to a self-reflective, critical (Wagner et al. 2010), and self-sufficient attitude towards one's own nation (de Figueiredo, Jr. and Elkins 2003). This attitude is usually not accompanied by exclusionary attitudes (Jeong 2013), but is more pronounced than internationalist (Orwell 1957) or cosmopolitan attitudes. In Singapore, patriotism recurs to a form of national identity as an effort to secure wealth and economic prosperity. The social and ethnic ties in the city-state serve this common goal (Kluver and Weber 2003). The existing patriotism can therefore be described as cosmopolitan and at the same time socially, nationally and person-oriented (Chua and Sim 2016). A critical attitude towards the state is thus not contrary to patriotism (Chua and Sim 2017). Patriotism is associated with loyalty among citizens rather than loyalty to the state (Chua and Sim 2015). Empirically, globalisation leads to a weakening of patriotism in Singapore, as the attachment of citizens and newcomers to the state gives way to a pragmatic attitude towards the provision of public goods. At the same time, this is associated with a weakening of social cohesion (Kluver and Weber 2003), which, since it is state-directed, is indirectly dependent on the strength of this bond (Tan and Teng 2020). Singapore is, therefore, caught in an ongoing process of establishing a viable form of patriotism. On the one hand, the retarding

influences of globalisation, especially immigration, on patriotism must be considered (Kluver and Weber 2003). On the other hand, conflict arises between the patriotic macro-cohesion to be established and social cohesion that arises locally in the neighbourhood and demands its own logical loyalties (Forrest and Kearns 2001). The uniform public housing complexes play the role of a *generator of cohesion*, which at the same time promotes and strengthens the bond to the nation (Ho and Chua 2018).

Political science posits that the nation state's options for combining economic prosperity with social cohesion have shrunk due to globalisation. This is reflected in the return of the interventionist state (della Porta et al. 2021). In Singapore, this process manifests itself as a »soft authoritarianism« (Nasir and Turner 2013), which is expressed primarily as the primacy of economic growth over social and political rights (Nasir and Turner 2013). At the individual level, this is reflected, for example, in associations with the national flag. In Singapore, it is above all obedience and conformity as elements of a »benevolent authoritarianism« (Becker et al. 2017, 347). Ibrahim interprets this everyday affinity with the authoritarian as a redefinition of patriotism in response to the rapid social change evoked by neoliberal economics (Ibrahim 2018). This benevolent or soft variety of authoritarianism in Singapore is nevertheless a threat to local social cohesion because, as Adorno et al. point out, any form of authoritarianism has an anti-democratic and anti-communitarian potential and makes the individual particularly vulnerable to manipulation by outside forces (Adorno et al. 1950).

1.3 Research Hypotheses

Previous work on social cohesion in Singapore shows that it is predominantly generated in local neighbourhoods and social interactions. Further research suggests that anti-immigrant attitudes have a dis-cohesive effect when moderated by threat scenarios (Laurence et al. 2019). In contrast, patriotism as a positive communitarian attitude towards the state is an important aspect of promoting social cohesion in Singapore (Tan and Teng 2020). Moreover, this correlation is coming under pressure due to globalisation processes and manifests a local variety of authoritarianism that seems to have an inhibiting effect on cohesion (Nasir and Turner 2013; Ibrahim 2018). The following hypotheses will therefore be tested.

- ▶ **Hypothesis 1.** Anti-immigrant attitudes have a negative impact on social cohesion in Singapore.
- ▶ **Hypothesis 2.** Patriotism, understood as a critical-positive identification with the state, promotes social cohesion in Singapore.
- ▶ **Hypothesis 3.** Authoritarianism weakens social cohesion in Singapore because of its anti-communitarian character.

2 Methods

The statistical analysis is based on the 4th wave of the Asian Barometer Survey carried out in 2014 (QNA Research Lab 2017). The Asian Barometer² is the only major population

²Data used in this paper were collected by the Asian Barometer Project (2014–2016), which was directed by Hu Fu Center for East Asia Democratic Studies, National Taiwan University (www.asianbarometer.org). The author emphasises that Asian Barometer has only provided the data, all analysis

survey in Singapore to integrate a scale to measure social cohesion. The sample includes a total of 1039 interviews of eligible Singaporeans aged 21 and above (Koh et al. 2019). The survey was conducted by means of face-to-face interviews in a stratified random sampling design using housing area data. The sample has an error margin of 3% (95% CI) (QNA Research Lab 2017; Koh et al. 2019). There were 45 interviewers and five supervisors working on data collection in Singapore (QNA Research Lab 2017). The intra-interviewer correlation in terms of gender for the original social cohesion scale is 0.05, which is at the upper end within the normal range for interviewer effects reported by Beulens and Loosveldt (2016) for international survey studies. For this reason, the interviewer attributes are included as control variables in the overall model.

The dependent variable is a dummy representing parts of the Likert scale for civic action implemented in Asian Barometer (QNA Research Lab 2017). The questions for the scale are introduced with the sentence »Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have never, once, or more than once done any of these things during the past three years«. The statement »Used force or violence for a political cause« is not asked in Singapore, the question »Thinking of whether you voted or not ever since you became eligible for voting, how would you describe yourself – have you voted in every election, voted in most elections, voted in some elections or hardly ever voted?« correlates only weakly with the other three questions and obviously represents a dimension other than cohesion. Thus, the statements »Got together with others to try to resolve local problems«, »Got together with others to raise an issue or sign a petition«, and »Attended a demonstration or protest march« are subsumed as one scale. The three questions used were first recoded so that higher numbers mean higher engagement. The questions essentially target the action level aspect of collective efficacy as »soft« forms of civil disobedience. The questions, thus, represent a strong measure of social cohesion (Sampson et al. 2002; van der Meer and Tolsma 2014) as they aim less at the perception of collective efficacy (Sampson et al. 1997) than at individual actions. High values reflect a high level of engagement. The category »can't choose« became the middle category. Since the sum score does not follow an evaluable distribution, a recoding into a dummy variable is done using the median separation. The median is six, values from zero to six are coded as 0 (no cohesion), values from 7 to 15 are coded as 1 (cohesion).

The independent variables to test the research hypotheses are derived from the current research literature on social cohesion. The dummies »ethnic Chinese« and »ethnic Indian« take into account the general importance of ethnic diversity for social cohesion (van der Meer and Tolsma 2014). They also refer to the clear ethnic segregation of society in Singapore (Goh 2011), which suggests differences between ethnic groups in terms of cohesion (Rahman 2009). Social capital is an important determinant of social cohesion (Portes and Vickstrom 2011; Lang and Novy 2014) and is unequally distributed across ethnic groups in Singapore (Chua et al. 2016). The variable social capital subsumes two questions on support from outside one's own household. The variables are recoded in a way that high values mean high social capital. Advocating redistribution (Brady and Finnigan 2014) as a proxy for cohe-

and interpretation are solely the opinion of the author.

sion is a dummy that expresses strong approval of social redistribution. Trust in institutions is an important covariate of cohesion (Chan et al. 2006; Schiefer and van der Noll 2017). The item includes both partial and impartial institutions (Rothstein and Stolle 2008). The ten underlying items are recoded. High values express high trust and »can't choose« is coded as the middle category. A confirmatory factor analysis showed no convincing evidence for the division into two scales for partial and impartial institutions ($RMSEA = 0.1515$; $BentlerCFI = 0.9059$) as recommended for instance for the European Social Survey (Kulin and Johansson Seva 2021). The resulting variable »Trust in Institutions« is the sum of the respective items ($alpha = 0.90$). Neighbourhoods are considered as »arena(s) for the development and maintenance of weak ties« (Forrest and Kearns 2001, 2133) and thus as important in social cohesion research (Enßle et al. 2020). The »latent neighbourliness« (Mann 1954, 164) as a potentiality is crucial here, where in the Singaporean context it can also be decisive for cohesion that the latent neighbour just refrains from actions (Ho and Chuan 2018). The role of neighbours is operationalised as the dummy »Trust in Neighbours«, where 1 summarises the categories »A great deal of trust« and »Quite a lot of trust«. Anti-immigrant attitudes are operationalised as a dummy, with the statement »The government should not allow any more immigrants« coded as anti-immigrant. Patriotism is a factor score derived from the two items »A citizen should always remain loyal only to his country, no matter how imperfect it is or what wrong it has done« and »How proud are you to be a citizen of the country ...? Are you?«. Moreover, studies show a significant level of authoritarian attitudes in Singapore (Tan 2012; Ibrahim 2018). For this reason, the variable »Advocating Authoritarian State« is included in the analysis as the sum score of the four items ($alpha = 0.86$) »We should get rid of parliament and elections and have a strong leader decide things«, »Only one political party should be allowed to stand for election and hold office«, »The army (military) should come in to govern the country«, and »We should get rid of elections and parliaments and have experts make decisions on behalf of the people«.

Second, socio-demographic controls are included. The selection of control variables is based on recent survey-based work on social cohesion that includes sex and age (Mouratidis and Poortinga 2020). For Singapore, also education and CIMO classification is controlled (Ho and Chuan 2018). In addition to sex, age, and years in educational institutions, both unemployment and location in Singapore are also included alongside interviewer characteristics (Beulens and Loosveldt 2016). Unemployment is rare in Singapore and could thus have a negative impact on cohesion. Furthermore, there are signs of social segregation according to centre/periphery with concentrations of lower socioeconomic status at the margins (Leong et al. 2020). The relative location of the respondent's residence in Singapore's urban space is therefore also included. Both unemployment and location are dummies (0/1), representing yes/no and centre/periphery.

The analysis is based on binary logistic regression. The regression estimates the likelihood of showing social cohesion (location of the sum score of the cohesion scale above the median of six recoded as one) dependent on the covariates included in the models. Significance levels ($*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$) are chosen such that the con-

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	min	max	mean	SE	N
Sex (1=male)	0	1	0.51	0.02	982
age	21	86	41.04	0.44	982
Years of education	0	25	12.29	0.13	982
Location in Singapore (1=periphery)	0	1	0.69	0.02	982
Unemployed (1=yes)	0	1	0.04	0.01	980
Interviewer's sex (1=female)	0	1	0.28	0.01	982
Interviewer's age	15	65	22.33	0.19	982
Ethnic Chinese	0	1	0.80	0.01	982
Ethnic Indian	0	1	0.06	0.01	982
Social capital	2	10	5.00	0.06	966
Advocating redistribution (1=advocating)	0	1	0.26	0.01	955
Trust in institutions	10	50	36.61	0.26	933
Trust in neighbours	0	1	0.57	0.02	971
Anti-immigrant attitude	0	1	0.13	0.01	870
Advocating authoritarian state	4	20	8.13	0.13	903
Patriotism	-3.82	2.25	-0.05	0.03	889

Source: Asian Barometer (2017)

fidence interval of the odds ratios does not contain one. Missing values of all variables included in the models were supplemented by multiple imputation by chained equation (MICE). The absolute number of missing values varies between 2 (min) and 139 (max). Twenty imputations were estimated using all variables in the model. Additionally, items that are subsumed as scales were also incorporated as indicators. Missing values in the sample are substituted by acceptable values calculated on the basis of their extrapolative distributions. Results presented in the regression models are pooled across the twenty imputations (Acocck 2005, 1019–1020; Baltes-Götz 2013; Coffe and Bolzendahl 2011).

3 Outcomes

The distribution of the dependent variable shows that 22.5 per cent of people in Singapore fall into the group with six points or more on the social cohesion scale and can thus be considered as »cohesive«. The distribution of the independent variables in the original data is shown in Table 1. With 80 per cent, the majority of respondents have a Chinese background: a slightly higher proportion than in the Singaporean population (74.3% in 2021). At 69 per cent, the majority tend to live in Singapore's more peripheral neighbourhoods, with 57 per cent trusting their neighbours. Unemployment plays a rather minor role at 4 per cent. Redistribution is rather less popular at 26 per cent. Anti-immigrant attitudes are shown by 13 percent of the respondents.

As Chua et al. (2016) note, social capital as an important covariate of social cohesion is unequally distributed across CIMO groups in Singapore. The mean comparison of social capital for the dependent variable shows no significant difference. Trust in institutions, on the other hand, shows a significant difference ($t = -2.72$; $p < 0.01$). Cohesion means less trust in institutions. The same applies to patriotism ($t = -2.59$; $p < 0.01$), while with regard to authoritarian attitudes, the cohesive category of the dependent variable has significantly higher values ($t = 2.91$; $p < 0.01$). Thus, social cohesion goes hand in hand with a certain form of distancing from the state and aims at a form of self-initiated action.

The analysis of the covariates of social cohesion is realised by the estimation of four models to assess the structural composition of this attitude in Singapore. Model 1 controls for explanatory indicators as well as ethnic groups. Model 2 is estimated with three additional social attitudes/ethnic Chinese interactions variables. Model 3 tests the same inter-

Table 2: Results

	Model (1)			Model (2)			Model (3)			Model (4)							
	b (SE)	95% CI for odds ratios		b (SE)	95% CI for odds ratios		b (SE)	95% CI for odds ratios		b (SE)	95% CI for odds ratios						
		Lower	Exp(b) Upper		Lower	Exp(b) Upper		Lower	Exp(b) Upper		Lower	Exp(b) Upper					
Social capital/patriotism/anti-immigrant attitude																	
Ethnic Chinese	-0.15(0.25)	0.53	0.86	1.41	1.18(1.12)	0.38	3.26	29.02	-0.15(0.25)	0.53	0.86	1.41	-0.17(0.25)	0.51	0.84	1.39	
Ethnic Indian	0.49(0.38)	0.78	1.64	3.44	0.47(0.39)	0.74	1.60	3.46	-1.08(2.14)	0.01	0.34	22.69	-1.33(0.91)	0.05	0.26	1.56	
Social capital	0.09*(0.04)	1.01	1.09	1.19	0.06(0.09)	0.89	1.07	1.27	0.09*(0.04)	1.01	1.10	1.20	0.09*(0.04)	1.00	1.09	1.19	
Adv. redistribution	0.28(0.19)	0.91	1.33	1.94	0.28(0.20)	0.90	1.33	1.95	0.25(0.20)	0.87	1.28	1.89	0.23(0.20)	0.85	1.26	1.88	
Trust in institutions	-0.04***(0.01)	0.94	0.96	0.99	-0.02(0.01)	0.94	0.98	1.03	-0.04***(0.01)	0.94	0.96	0.99	-0.04***(0.01)	0.94	0.96	0.99	
Trust in neighbours	-0.03(0.18)	0.69	0.97	1.37	-0.03(0.18)	0.69	0.97	1.36	-0.05(0.18)	0.67	0.95	1.35	-0.12(0.18)	0.62	0.89	1.27	
Anti-immigrant attitude	-1.12***(0.31)	0.18	0.33	0.60	-1.15***(0.31)	0.17	0.32	0.58	-1.11***(0.31)	0.18	0.33	0.61	-1.08***(0.31)	0.18	0.34	0.62	
Adv. authoritarian state	0.08***(0.02)	1.04	1.09	1.13	0.14***(0.05)	1.05	1.15	1.26	0.07***(0.02)	1.02	1.07	1.12	0.07***(0.02)	1.02	1.07	1.12	
Patriotism	-0.13(0.10)	0.72	0.88	1.07	-0.13(0.10)	0.72	0.88	1.07	-0.12(0.10)	0.73	0.89	1.08	-0.13(0.10)	0.71	0.88	1.08	
Interactions																	
<i>Ethnic Chinese</i>																	
Social capital					0.04(0.10)	0.85	1.04	1.26									
Trust in institutions					-0.03(0.03)	0.93	0.98	1.03									
Adv. authoritarian state					-0.07(0.05)	0.84	0.93	1.02									
<i>Ethnic Indian</i>																	
Social capital									-0.07(0.18)	0.66	0.94	1.34					
Trust in institutions									0.01(0.05)	0.92	1.01	1.10					
Adv. authoritarian state									0.21*(0.10)	1.01	1.23	1.49	0.22*(0.10)	1.03	1.24	1.50	
Controls																	
Sex (1 = male)														0.19(0.17)	0.86	1.21	1.69
Age														0.01(0.01)	1.00	1.01	1.02
Years of education														0.03(0.02)	0.99	1.03	1.08
Location (1 = periphery)														0.36(0.19)	0.99	1.43	2.06
Unemployed (1 = yes)														-0.04(0.41)	0.43	0.96	2.14
Interviewer's sex (1 = fem.)														-0.47***(0.20)	0.42	0.62	0.92
Interviewer's age														-0.04(0.02)	0.93	0.97	1.00
Constant	-0.92(0.53)				-1.97(1.03)				-0.73(0.54)					-0.90(0.80)			
Nagelkerke's R ²	0.123				0.130				0.142					0.181			
Cohen's f ²	0.14				0.15				0.17					0.22			
χ ² (degrees of freedom)	56.91***(9)				60.45***(12)				66.04***(12)					85.02***(17)			

Source: Asian Barometer (2017); n = 982; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

actions for the Indian group. Model 4 retains the significant interactions and adds individual controls as well as additional interviewer characteristics as this is suggested by the intra-interviewer correlation (Beullens and Loosveldt 2016) (See Table 2).

Model 1 reveals that anti-immigrant attitudes have a high negative impact on social cohesion, reducing its likelihood by a factor of three (*oddsratio* = 0.33). Trust in institutions has a very moderate negative impact of a factor of 1.04 or 4% (*oddsratio* = 0.96), whereas social capital and authoritarianism show a weak positive influence by a factor of 1.09 or 9%. Advocating an authoritarian state slightly increases social cohesion by 15% (*oddsratio* = 1.15), while social capital loses its significance when interactions of Chinese ethnicity and social capital, trust, and authoritarianism are added. Of the three interactions themselves, none is significant, which means that social cohesion is not moderated by membership of the Chinese ethnic group. Model 3 shows a significant interaction for authoritarianism and Indian ethnicity. This suggests that, particularly among Singaporeans of Indian ethnicity, social cohesion is moderated by authoritarian ideas. In contrast to Model 2, social capital is again significant and, therefore, shows a positive, albeit weak, effect by a factor of 1.1.

Of the four models in the analysis, Model 4 is most meaningful with regard to explained variance (Nagelkerke, 1991). The rejection of immigrants (*oddsratio* = 0.34) is by far the strongest predictor for social cohesion, which means that people who do not condone a further influx of migrants to Singapore show thrice the risk (factor of 2.94) of not committing to cohesion. This strong influence is in line with the expectation formulated in the literature on the relationship between cohesion and xenophobia (Novy et al. 2012; Laurence et al. 2019). Singapore is no exception. The low influence of the control variables is also striking. Gender, age, education, location of residence, and unemployment do not have a significant effect on social cohesion. Only a female interviewer leads to a 1.61-fold or 61% increase in the probability of not expressing a cohesive attitude.

Overall, the models show the importance of attitudes and norms for social cohesion (Fonseca et al. 2019). The con-

sistent significance of authoritarianism points to the disciplined civility shown by Ye (2017), which seems to aim less at consensus than at obedience in Singapore. Contrary to previous work by Tan and Teng (2020), trust in neighbours shows no significant impact on cohesion. The models do not find the relationship between trusting residential environments and social cohesion postulated by Tan and Teng (2020). Rather, the models reveal the cohesion-destroying effect of hostility to immigration and an attitude that the state should concern itself with the issue (Goh 2019). Trust in institutions, thus, leads to lower levels of social cohesion in terms of individual willingness to invest in living together.

4 Discussion

The three research hypotheses are only partially confirmed for the Singaporean situation. Hypothesis one is confirmed, as anti-immigrant attitudes have the clearest negative influence on social cohesion. The binary logistic regression models further show that authoritarianism weakens cohesion in Singapore, as predicted in hypothesis three, albeit to a much lesser extent than anti-immigrant attitudes. Hypothesis two attributes a cohesion-enhancing effect to patriotism that is not found in the models. The patriotism item shows no influence on social cohesion in Singapore.

Empirical studies were able to show early on that the number of inhabitants in the community correlates negatively with social engagement (Oliver 2000). As a city-state, Singapore sees itself challenged to promote social cohesion in the city through local measures (Tan and Teng 2020), especially in the context of constant immigration. The large impact of hostility towards immigration on cohesion revealed by the regression analysis suggests deeper problems that cannot be attributed to the relationship between population size and participation alone. Singapore is characterised by significant geographic clustering of ethnic groups in the public housing sector, with poorer households more likely to find themselves on the outskirts of the city, which runs counter to the government's desired ethnic mix (Leong 2020). This differentiation of the resident population, which is unwanted

by the state, poses a potential threat to the social cohesion of society if fear of foreigners increases in the less mixed neighbourhoods. This also threatens the ideology of social cohesion that is closely associated with the desired distribution of residents. Immigration hostility is, thus, one aspect of the lack of everyday practices that would produce cohesion. This becomes particularly clear during seemingly common festivities such as carnival parades (Goh 2011).

Rahman sees a culturalistic perspective as essential to ensuring social cohesion (Rahman 2009). For the various ethnic groups, the rejection of immigration can, thus, be a means of establishing internal cohesion (Murphy 1957). However, ethnic heterogeneity is not an obstacle to generating social cohesion within the groups themselves (van der Meer and Tolsma 2014). Ethnic solidarity is initially little more than the formulation of common goals within the group (Nielsen 1985). Anti-immigrant attitudes stand in the way of the emergence of social cohesion from these existing ethnic solidarities in Singapore. The results of the regression models suggest that outward demarcation is preferred to cohesion here. This lack of cohesion can then become dangerous for a society that relies on emergent effects of commonality in its knowledge-based economy (Dirksmeier 2020).

The low significance of social capital outside the respondent's household in the regression models – social capital increases the probability of cohesion by only 9% – can be attributed to the heterogeneous distribution of this resource in the population (Chua et al. 2016). The sample size is not sufficient to map this complex distribution and, thus, determine in which social groups in Singapore social capital does have a stronger influence on cohesion. The insignificance of patriotism in the regression models points in the same direction. As Huat and Kian-Woon (2001) note, feelings of attachment to the nation play less and less of a role in a global postcolonial society. Rather, the ultimately colonial CIMO-ethnicisation represents an obstacle to cohesion for contemporary society in Singapore that does not exist in this way in other postcolonial societies, for example in South America. Globalisation creates new possibilities for identification and cohesion beyond the state. Postcoloniality also manifests itself in the »hyphenated citizen« (Huat 2003, 60) and further reinforces the »nationalist fallacy« (Bonikowski 2016, 442) as belief in the identification of people with only one state, which is de facto decreasing more and more in the globalised world characterised by migration. Singapore's state cohesion policy recalls the close ties between the citizen and the state. The analysis suggests that postcolonial patriotic attachment is so free-floating here that it no longer influences social cohesion. Combined with the destructive influence of anti-immigrant attitudes, this points to the need to modify the traditional support measures of a caring state (Tan and Teng 2020). Patriotism as a sense of belonging can no longer be used as a vehicle to establish social cohesion in Singapore.

Authoritarianism's positive influence on social cohesion revealed in the regression models aims at inward cohesion or the only slightly integrating character of social cohesion in Singapore. Fetzer and Millan (2015) see state authoritarianism in Singapore as a push factor for migration from Singapore to Australia, for example. This can be interpreted as the undesirable reverse side of cohesion-promoting that typifies Singapore sediments in attitudes and ideologies in the authoritarianism. The »soft authoritarianism« (Nasir

and Turner 2013) city-state since »authoritarianism is about the affirmation and stabilization of its underlying principles tied to institutions and values« (Stichweh and Ahlers 2020, 232). Pow illustrates this with the naturalisation of the ideology of privilege, which interprets social closure as a just reward for special achievements (Pow 2011). The regression analysis shows that authoritarianism not only involves »diffuse governing processes« (Ibrahim 2018, 219), but also becomes effective as an attitude. Social cohesion influenced in this way is then an exclusionary cohesion, aimed at the cohesion of one's own group in one's own district, which does not lead to integration into a common idea of *Singaporeanness*. But, as the lack of influence of patriotism also indicates, it leads to a particularisation of society, which is sometimes in danger of becoming »compartmentalization« (Smiley 2010, 330). This is shown both by the lack of interaction between ethnic groups at joint national festivities (Goh 2011) and by exclusionary practices such as Curry Day (Montsion and Tan 2016).

5 Conclusion

Reviewing the covariates of social cohesion in postcolonial Singapore, state support schemes provide an ambivalent influence that seems to distinguish Singapore from other nations of the world.

In social science cohesion research, particular emphasis is placed on the importance of people's sense of place for the development of social cohesion (Miciukiewicz et al. 2012). The results of the analysis for Singapore, on the other hand, point much more in the direction of particularism in urban studies (Ren 2018; Simone 2020), since the determinants of cohesion that are mostly tested in Western contexts do not have an influence, or have a different influence than assumed. In contrast, the reversal of the effect, i.e. the question of what effect the group has on cohesion (Friedkin 2004), is relevant in Singapore, as shown, for example, by the influence of authoritarianism moderated by Indian ethnicity. The paper clearly shows the existing reverse side of the political and institutional promotion of social cohesion in the city-state, which rather reinforces the perpetuation of divisions between groups. As a result, policies should aim much more at *societal cohesion* rather than group cohesion to avoid divisions that counteract policy objectives in Singapore.

The fostering of social cohesion seems especially double-edged in immigrant destination cities like Singapore with a huge immigrant population. The rejection of these new citizens is, thus, the reverse side of the cohesive efforts of postcolonial societies that needs deeper analysis in the near future since immigrant prejudice and authoritarian attitudes have the power to profoundly neutralise the actual goals of cohesion policy. This is of particular importance for Singapore, as the globally oriented multiculturalism practised here is under particular environmental pressure from neighbouring national societies that have highly ethnically homogenised self-images.

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