Lee Kuan Yew: One Man’s View of the World

“Lee Kuan Yew’s unique talents built a nation and helped secure an era of peace and prosperity in Asia. For decades it has been my good fortune to know him as a strategic thinker, a partner in international security, and a friend. Now, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, he has distilled his thinking on international affairs for a broader audience. With fresh and candid analyses of subjects ranging across the globe, One Man’s View of the World demonstrates the acute insights that fellow leaders have sought from Lee Kuan Yew for half a century.”


“Lee Kuan Yew once again gives us clarity of thought, eloquence of expression, the depth of important ideas, and common sense. A must-read book!”

— George P. Shultz, US Secretary of State, 1982–1989

“Insightful, well thought, penetrating and visionary. Lee Kuan Yew’s assessment and analysis of these countries and the future of Singapore is truly par excellence and could only come from one of the finest statesmen of this region and our time. It will be a much referenced book for those who need to understand where we are and where we will be.”


Margaret Thatcher read all his speeches while she was in office and declared he was never wrong. Richard Nixon called him “a world statesman of the first rank”.

Born in 1923, Singapore’s former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew has spent a lifetime being intimately involved in international affairs. He has met every major Chinese leader from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping and hobnobbed with American presidents from Lyndon Johnson to Barack Obama.

In this book, Lee draws on that wealth of experience and depth of insight to offer his views on today’s world and what it might look like in 20 years. This is no dry geopolitical treatise. Nor is it a thematic account of the twists and turns in global affairs. Instead, in this broad-sweep narrative that takes in America, China, Asia and Europe, he parses their society, probes the psyche of the people and draws his conclusions about their chances for survival and just where they might land in the hierarchy of tomorrow’s balance of power. What makes a society tick? What do its people really believe? Can it adapt?

In spare, unflinching prose that eschews political correctness, he describes a China that remains obsessed with control from the centre on its way to an unstoppable rise; an America that will have to share its pre-eminence despite its never-say-die dynamism; and a Europe that struggles with the challenges of keeping its union intact. His candid and often startling views – on why Japan is closed to foreigners, why the Arab Spring won’t bring one man, one vote to the Middle East, and why preventing global warming is not going to be as fruitful as preparing for it – make this a fresh and gripping read. Lee completes the book by looking into the future of Singapore – his enduring concern – and by offering the reader a glimpse into his personal life and his view of death. The book is interspersed with a Q&A section in each chapter, gleaned from conversations he had with journalists from The Straits Times.

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The Author: Lee Kuan Yew was born in 1923 when Singapore was part of the British Empire and came to adulthood when the Japanese invaded and named the island Syonan-to. After the Second World War, he went on to Cambridge University where he got a double-starred First in law. He became Singapore’s first prime minister in 1959, when Singapore was self-governing, and led the country to full independence in 1965. He is credited with leading Singapore from the Third World to the First, turning a trading outpost into a global metropolis known for its efficient and non-corrupt system of governance. After stepping down as prime minister in 1990, he stayed on in the Cabinet as senior minister and minister mentor until 2011. Lee is widely admired as an international statesman, and his views on China, America and Asia are well-respected and sought after by global leaders. He sits on the International Advisory Committee of Total S.A. and the International Council of JP Morgan Chase. He is also senior advisor to the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation.