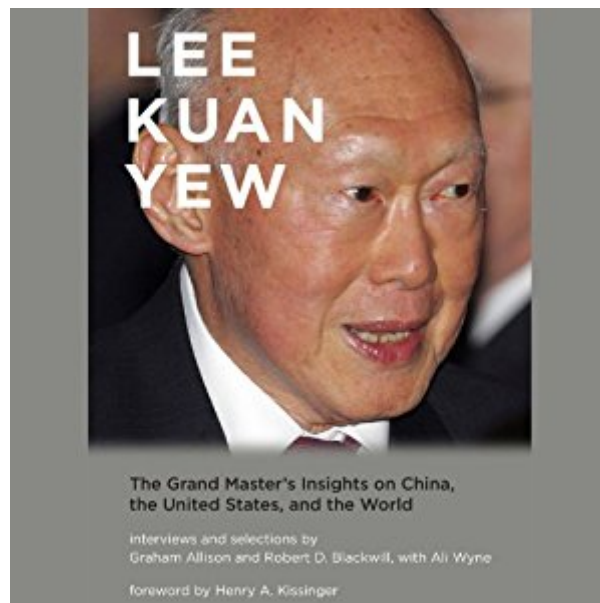




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Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights On China, United States, And The World



Synopsis

When Lee Kuan Yew speaks, presidents, prime ministers, diplomats, and CEOs listen. Lee, the founding father of modern Singapore and its prime minister from 1959 to 1990, has honed his wisdom during more than fifty years on the world stage. Almost single-handedly responsible for transforming Singapore into a Western-style economic success, he offers a unique perspective on the geopolitics of East and West. American presidents from Richard Nixon to Barack Obama have welcomed him to the White House; British prime ministers from Margaret Thatcher to Tony Blair have recognized his wisdom; and business leaders from Rupert Murdoch to Rex Tillerson, CEO of Exxon Mobil, have praised his accomplishments. This book gathers key insights from interviews, speeches, and Lee's voluminous published writings and presents them in an engaging question and answer format. Lee offers his assessment of China's future, asserting, among other things, that "China will want to share this century as co-equals with the U.S." He affirms the United States' position as the world's sole superpower but expresses dismay at the vagaries of its political system. He offers strategic advice for dealing with China and goes on to discuss India's future, Islamic terrorism, economic growth, geopolitics and globalization, and democracy. Lee does not pull his punches, offering his unvarnished opinions on multiculturalism, the welfare state, education, and the free market. This audiobook belongs on the reading list of every world leader - including the one who took the oath of office on January 20, 2013.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lee Kuan Yew (1923-2015) was a remarkable and brilliant man. Lee was prime minister of Singapore from 1959 to 1990. He lived through both the Japanese occupation in the 1940s and British colonial rule. He transformed Singapore from a third world city-state into a major world city. Today, its six million citizens have incomes higher than those of Americans and Lee's son is the current prime minister. In 2013, Harvard professors Graham Allison and Robert Blackwill assembled a compilation of Lee's statements on China, the United States, U.S.-China relations, India, Islam and globalization. This short book is the result. The book provides a fascinating insight how the world works and the calculations made by small countries like Singapore. Leaders like Lee must work out which way the wind is blowing and adjust accordingly. Lee communicates in a clear and logical manner. His observations are honest and sometimes controversial. Lee was ethnically Chinese, like most Singaporeans, and the authors believe he had a good understanding of China. Lee was careful to mix his criticism of the U.S. and China with flattery. Lee sees the 21st century as a contest for supremacy in the Pacific between the U.S. and China. He is complimentary about Deng Xiaoping and Xi Jinping and appears to have had many discussions with them. He claims that "it is China's intention to become the greatest power in the world" and to be accepted as China, not as an honorary member of the West." He believed that China was not interested in a war with the U.S. or India in the short term. It wants to continue to grow and needs access to American technology, universities and markets. A war now would interrupt that progress. China was biding its time: "I believe the Chinese leadership has learned that if you compete with America in armaments, you will lose. You will bankrupt yourself. So, keep your head down, and smile for 40 or 50 years." Lee was not sure that an industrialized and strong China will be as benign to Southeast Asia as the U.S. has been since 1945. China has always wanted foreigners to show respect and obey its instructions. China's attitude to the region may also have changed since Xi became president in 2013. China has been building islands in the South China Sea and recently there have been problems on the border with India. North Korea is a client state of China and if Lee is correct, Xi is probably pulling Kim's strings. The authors present a rosy picture of the future that may already be out of date. In 2011, Lee warned that there is a danger that China could miscalculate and become more pushy and aggressive and that would not be in its long term interests. Lee believes that third world countries need strong, wise leaders. He is skeptical about the benefits of democracy for developing nations, Lee argues that it is more important to have a meritocratic society, like Singapore. Lee challenges the prevailing view that Western-style democracy is inevitable. He believes that China is not going to become a liberal democracy: "If it did, it would collapse." His view is that America's success had nothing to do with its

system of government, it had more to do with good fortune. That seems a bit harsh. He believes that most colonies failed post-independence because their leaders were incompetent or corrupt. He argues that most people just want a higher standard of living, and law and order. Lee was accused of authoritarianism while running Singapore. Lee is critical of the American political system, he does not believe it produces good leaders or people who challenge the electorate. He doubts that presidential contests "in packaging and advertising" can produce leaders in the mold of Churchill, a Roosevelt, or a de Gaulle. Lee was a fan of Nixon, who he viewed as a "pragmatic strategist." Nixon, he believes would have built an effective coalition to counter China. He thought Jimmy Carter was the worst president he had come across. He also questioned the competence of George W. Bush's advisers. Unlike the neocons he did not view democracy as a panacea. Lee believed the U.S. had been far too focused on the Middle East and it had taken its eye off the ball in Asia. Not that long ago Lee said that "America will remain the sole superpower for at least two to three more decades. He believed that the U.S. was going through a bumpy patch with the financial crises and high debt levels. He argued that America will not be reduced to second-rate status. Historically, the U.S. has demonstrated a great capacity for renewal and revival. He believed that Americans will return to the path that made it great. However, in a 2011 interview, he began to question the commitment of the U.S. to South East Asia and was worried what that might lead to. The stability and prosperity of the region has depended on U.S. protection since 1945. Without the U.S., China will become the regional hegemon. Lee has said that "multiculturalism will destroy America." The key question is: "do you make the Hispanics Anglo-Saxons in culture or do they make you more Latin American in culture?" The population of Singapore is 74% Chinese, but Lee made English the main language. He was very keen on integrating its various ethnicities and creating a shared culture. Lee has doubts about India's progress. About 9% of Singapore's population is Indian. He believes India is too big to ignore, but its GDP will never get above 60-70% of China's. He claims "India is not a real country. Instead, it is 32 separate nations that happen to be arrayed along the British rail line." He argues that India, has "wasted decades in state planning and controls that have bogged it down in bureaucracy and corruption." He tried to convince India to move away from its infatuation with Soviet style planning and open-up the country to foreign companies and market competition. He got nowhere with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi when he pointed out what was wrong with India. Lee believes, the: "caste system has been the enemy of meritocracy." He argues that the country produces lots of very talented people, who do well wherever they go, but they tend to do better outside India. He views Islam as a problem, because, unlike members of other religions, Muslims

don't integrate well. About 14% of the population of Singapore is Muslim. He believes that America's failure to win its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has encouraged the Islamists and damaged its global credibility. He also believes that Saudi Arabia's role in financing the export of its extreme version of Islam has exacerbated the problems. He is worried that if Iran builds a nuclear weapon, the Saudis will buy one from Pakistan, and a bomb will go off in the Middle East. Living through the brutal Japanese occupation of Singapore gave him a Hobbesian worldview: "human beings are inherently vicious and have to be restrained from their viciousness." Singapore has a low tolerance of crime, and for a while had the highest rate of executions per capita in the world. Lee is a fascinating man and having finished the book I felt depressed. The authors believe that Lee saw the U.S. and China peacefully co-existing for the next 50 years, but that is starting to seem unlikely. The West may still be ahead economically and militarily, but it may not be calling the shots for very much longer. The West has dominated the world for the last 500 years but Lee predicts that eventually Asia will take over.

The relationship between the United States and China will be one of the most important factors shaping the globe over the next 100 years. For the curious reader, the most useful perspective on that relationship may come not from within either country, but from the viewpoint of a highly interested third party. "Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World" offers just such a perspective, from the collected comments of the man known as the "founding father of Singapore". Lee's perspective is balanced between his own formative experience of Chinese culture and his open admiration for many of the best qualities of American civilization. He argues for sustained, patient American engagement in the Pacific -- as well as for a dose of deference to China's self-determination, even if that means it never becomes a true liberal democracy. Lee's own use of power marshalled substantial force of will to turn a tiny city-state into a global commercial center in a single generation -- but not without his own violations of human rights. Lee's tolerance for less-than-perfect liberalism and his prescience for seeing the big geopolitical future are well-summed-up in this quotation from the book: "So long as you run this one-person, one-vote, the easiest of appeals that can be made to the ground are the simple, emotional ones, not economic development and progress and all these other things they do not understand, but simple things: Pride in race, in language, in religion, in culture." The rise of isolationist, nationalist politicians in Western countries in the mid-2010s seems to affirm what Lee saw coming. It is well worth heeding what he saw for China and America together in the years ahead.

Fascinating collection of interviews that provide a roadmap for successful governance. Singapore's founder is rightly credited with taking a poor country with no resources into the world's most prosperous and well educated nation in less than 30 years. Singapore is the singular economic miracle of the 20th Century - #1 in per capita GNP, #1 in education. This quick read is rich with insight in areas of world opportunity and conflict, including radical Islamism. It should be required reading for all the American Presidential contenders and pretenders. In the forward, Kissinger claims that he learned more from Yew than from another world leader. I picked up the book because friends from Singapore wept for days when Yew passed. I had to know more about this great man.

Great read. Highly recommended for those leaders in the developing world. Lee Kuan Yew tells it like it is. I was in Singapore in early '60s when he was struggling to keep the city/state from going under. It must have been tough when he was booted out of Federation of Malaysia. The country was poor. Have returned in the 90s. Amazing what he and his government did to the country. Yes, it may not be completely democratic but Singapore is a mirror to what small countries can do with great leader, well paid civil servants and without corruption. Also, his views of China and the U.S. as well as the world is something to seriously ponder.

Having spent a fair amount of time in Singapore doing business, I approached this book with much respect for Lee Kuan Yew and what he achieved there. I'm not sure he would refer to himself as a "grand Master", but as a man on a journey with a country. Lee's straightforward approach based on a global understanding, an understanding of power, and a practical sensibility is reflected in this book discussing his impressions of China and the U.S.

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