

**LEE KUAN YEW'S LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM DEVELOPING SINGAPORE**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Singapore is likely the only country in the world that became independent against its own will. At the time of its inception very few believed it would survive as an independent state. Today Singapore is one of the most developed countries with a thriving economy, a first-class educational system, an enviable healthcare system, and one of the highest levels of life. This impressive progress was achieved under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew – a legendary first Prime Minister of this country, who kept his post for thirty one years and considered a founding father of this young nation. Among other his achievements and likely the most important one was his success in nation building in Singapore by melting three very different ethnic groups with different cultures, religions, and history into one nation. In the first sections, the paper provides a brief outline of Lee's political life and his main accomplishments. The primary attention is paid to the analysis of the main principles and policies Lee used and developed as a leader of Singapore. The paper concludes that Lee's pragmatism and continuous learning from other nations' experiences in addition to his outstanding personal traits were the most important reasons for his remarkable achievements.*

**Keywords:** Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore, leadership, nation building.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister of Singapore, considered to be a founding father of his country and one of the most outstanding political leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was the author of the amazing transformation of this small country in South-East Asia, managing during the life of one generation to move a new-born multi-ethnic nation facing extraordinary challenges into the elite club of the world's most successful and prosperous countries.

Singapore under Lee's leadership advanced virtually in all areas from education to economy, from social development to science and technology, from tourism to healthcare. Still, the most amazing achievement of Lee Kuan Yew was the formation of a new nation from different ethnic groups which had originally very little in common, which were in a fight for political and economic dominance, and which were openly hostile to each other.

What makes studying Lee Kuan Yew's legacy important are both his exceptional achievements and his unique political style. Lee did not follow strictly any political economy models or theories but very pragmatically tried to find new ways, some of which were very unconventional, to advance his country. Another reason to research and analyze Lee's views deals with his highly controversial approach to handling some social and political problems, including the clearly authoritarian nature of his leadership and his long-term domination in Singapore's politics.

This paper briefly outlines Lee Kuan Yew's biography and concentrates on key achievements of him and his country. The paper analyzes the main peculiarities of Lee's political style which makes him so different from other political leaders of his time, including some debatable aspects of his policies and social views.