

SINGAPORE'S MIRACLE: AN UNCONVENTIONAL STORY

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ABSTRACT

Singapore is one of the most impressive success stories of nations' development in the 20th century. During the life of one generation, the country with a small chance for independent survival has transformed itself into the world leader almost in all aspects of socio-economic development. Among others, the list of Singapore's main achievements includes an innovative approach in advancing the educational system, development of its national healthcare and housing systems, and likely the most important the country's success in nation-building in a multiracial, multilanguage, multicultural society. What makes Singapore's experience even more interesting and important to study is that many reforms implemented in this country were unique, and some elements of the country's political development can be considered out of line with democratic practices and even authoritarian. Altogether, Singapore's story and the role and political philosophy of this country's founding father Lee Kuan Yew represent a huge interest for specialists in comparative economics and for policymakers.

Keywords: *Singapore, economic reforms, education reforms, nation building, Lee Kuan Yew*

1. INTRODUCTION

Singapore is a small state, located in South East Asia. There are about 5.7 million people living in Singapore, 61% of whom are citizens of this state. With a total area of 280 sq. miles, it has the second largest population density in the world and the whole country represents just one big city with suburbs, located on an island. With its modest size, Singapore is famous for managing one of the most striking transformations in the 20th century. Today Singapore is one of the richest countries in the world with a reputation of being a benchmark in almost all socio-economic categories (Mahbubani, 2017). Considered one of the "Asian Tigers", its level of achievements looks outstanding even in comparison with the other most successful Asian countries.

There are several reasons that make Singapore's experience unique and thus important to research. First, this country had very challenging starting conditions that initially put into doubt whether it could even exist as an independent state. Second, the country has managed to succeed in almost all areas from economics to education, from healthcare to infrastructure, from science to global politics. Third, Singapore has executed very original and rather controversial social policies that still cause both high praise and criticism. That makes the study of Singapore's exceptional makeover experience highly valuable for both developing and even developed countries.

In this paper, we discuss the main factors that contributed to the successful transformation of the Republic of Singapore into the marvel of the modern world. We emphasize the role of education and science in advancing Singapore's society, the importance of developing a diversified economy with a global perspective, the role of an effective infrastructure and a favorable business climate. The paper outlines the main peculiarities of political development in Singapore and the exceptional role of its "founding father" Lee Kuan Yew, who defined the successful course of his country for more than 30