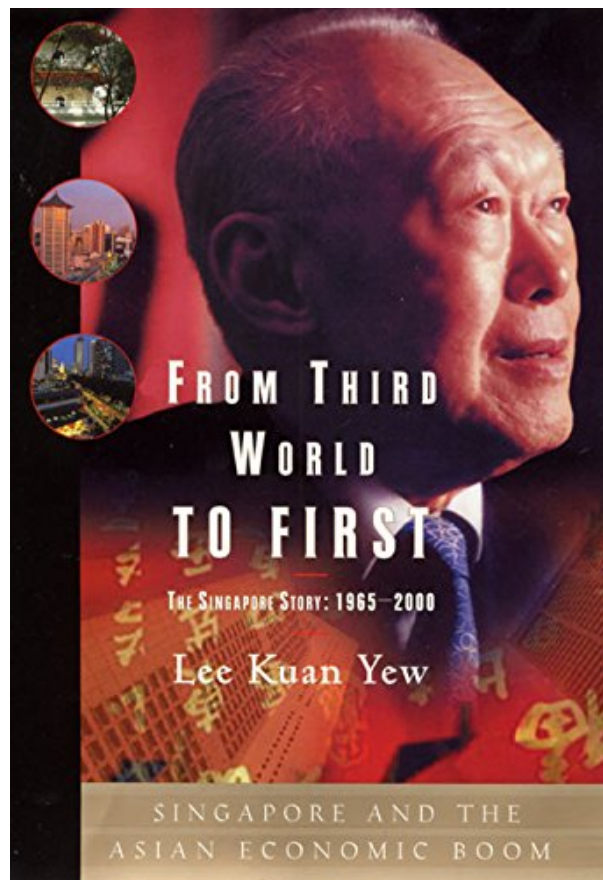
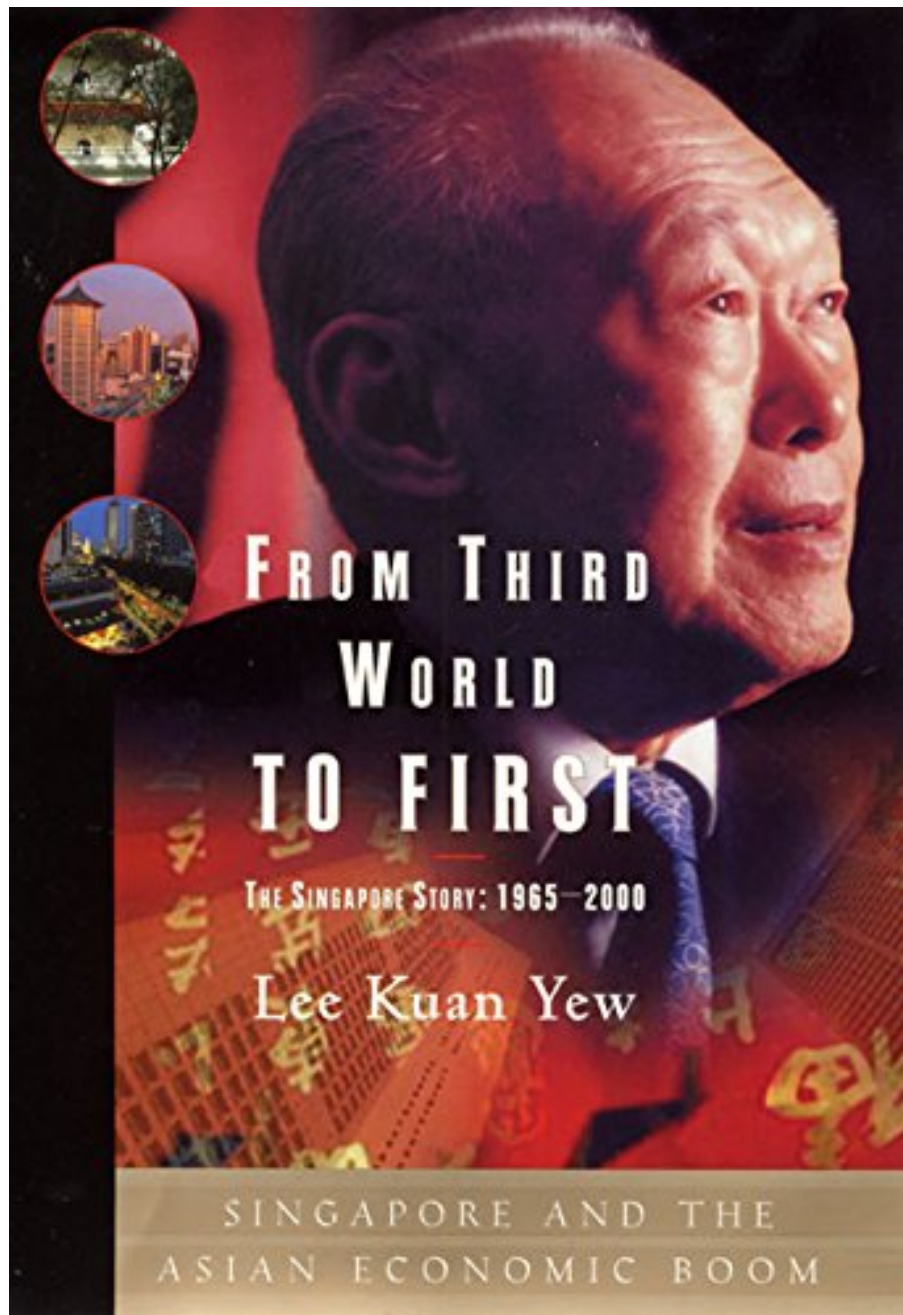


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Amazon.com Review

In this memoir, the man most responsible for Singapore's astonishing transformation from colonial backwater to economic powerhouse describes how he did it over the last four decades. It's a dramatic story, and Lee Kuan Yew has much to brag about. To take a single example: Singapore had a per-capita GDP of just \$400 when he became prime minister in 1959. When he left office in 1990, it was \$12,200 and rising. (At the time of this book's writing, it was \$22,000.) Much of this was accomplished through a unique mix of economic freedom and social control. Lee encouraged entrepreneurship, but also cracked down on liberties that most people in the West take for granted--chewing gum, for instance. It's banned in Singapore because of "the problems caused by spent chewing gum inserted into keyholes and mailboxes and on elevator buttons." If American politicians were to propose such a thing, they'd undoubtedly be run out of office. Lee, however, defends this and similar moves, such as strong antismoking laws and antispitting campaigns: "We would have been a grosser, ruder, cruder society had we not made these efforts to persuade people to change their ways.... It has made Singapore a more pleasant place to live in. If this is a 'nanny state,' I am proud to have fostered one."

Lee also describes one of his most controversial proposals: tax breaks and schooling incentives to encourage educated men and women to marry each other and have children. "Our best women were not reproducing themselves because men who were their educational equals did not want to marry them.... This lopsided marriage and procreation pattern could not be allowed to remain unmentioned and unchecked," writes Lee. Most of the book, however, is a chronicle of how Lee helped create so much material prosperity. Anticommunism is a strong theme throughout, and Lee comments broadly on international politics. He is cautiously friendly toward the United States, chastising it for a "dogmatic and evangelical" foreign policy that scolds other countries for human-rights violations, except when they interfere with American interests, "as in the oil-rich Arabian peninsula." Even so, he writes, "the United States is still the most benign of all the great powers.... [and] all noncommunist countries in East Asia prefer America to be the dominant weight in the power balance of the region." *From Third World to First* is not the most gripping book imaginable, but it is a vital document about a fascinating place in a time of profound transition. --John J. Miller

From Booklist

Yew is not an endearing figure. He is arrogant, self-righteous, and seems unduly sensitive to criticism by

"outsiders" of Singapore's record on human rights. Despite occasional efforts to hide his less-than-pleasant characteristics, they often burst through in his long and often fascinating account of the dramatic transformation of this island nation into a stable and prosperous society. As prime minister for more than three decades, Yew certainly merits credit for Singapore's emergence, and there is much to be learned from his version of his stewardship. This is a detailed and sometimes difficult read, particularly if one lacks a strong grounding in macroeconomics. Still, his description of the difficulties of nation building in a multiethnic society has great value; his efforts to mesh Western concepts of free enterprise with Third World traditions of a "guided economy" may not have universal applicability, but they deserve close scrutiny. This is an essential contribution in efforts to understand why some societies seem so successful in becoming important players in the global economy. Jay Freeman

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Review

"Lee Kuan Yew is one of the brightest, ablest men I have ever met. This book is a must read for people interested in a true Asian success story. From this book, we also learn a lot about the thinking of one of this century's truly visionary statesmen." -- George Bush "In office, I read and analysed every speech of [Lee's]. He had a way of penetrating the fog of propaganda and expressing with unique clarity the issues of our time and the way to tackle them. He was never wrong." -- Margaret Thatcher "Lee Kuan Yew deserves recognition? Under his leadership, Singapore... equipped schools with one computer for every two students, and connected every home to a broadband network. On top of all that, he's a great storyteller." -- Scott McNealy, Chief Executive Officer of Sun Microsystems Inc. "There are two equalizers in life: the Internet and education. Lee Kuan Yew is a world leader who understands this and is using the power of the Internet to position Singapore for survival and success in the Internet economy...His engaging memoirs discuss his efforts to reshape Singapore, integrating information technology into the country's businesses, government and homes." -- John Chambers, President & CEO, Cisco Systems "Whenever I met Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, I was deeply impressed by his intellect, his vision and the depth of his understanding on history and society. No matter where you stand on the political spectrum, you will see in this book how a political leader of insight has led a tiny country to a prosperous modern society amid the tidal waves of world politics. And you will also find his ingenious views on Asia and the world to be a source of deep inspiration." -- Kim Dae-jung, President of the Republic of Korea "Lee Kuan Yew is one of the seminal figures of Asia, and this book does justice to his extraordinary accomplishments. Describing the motivations and concepts that have animated his conduct and explaining specific actions, he will undoubtedly raise many controversies. But whether one agrees or not, one will learn a great deal." -- Dr. Henry A. Kissinger "Mr. Lee Kuan Yew has gathered around himself the most brilliant minds, transforming the most exacting standards into a system of government. Under his leadership, the primacy of the general interest, the cult of education, work and saving, the capacity to foresee the needs of the city have enabled Singapore to take what I call 'shortcuts to progress.'" -- Jacques Chirac "This is a personal history of a man who, almost single-handedly, built a great nation from a small island? this is the first textbook in the world on how to build a nation." -- Kiichi Miyazawa "Lee Kuan Yew's vision, astute political judgement and strategy turned Singapore from a trading post into the successful thriving nation that it is today, respected by others. For those interested in politics and economic development, his memoirs should be required reading." -- Tun Daim Zainuddin "Lee Kuan Yew is a statesman who created a successful nation. He has known everybody. He has achieved impossible things and his memoirs tell the truth." -- William Rees-Mogg "The title of this book, From Third World to First, expresses an aspiration of all developing countries but so far, alas, an achievement of very few. Singapore is one of those few. This account of its first years of independence written by its founding father, Lee Kuan Yew, will therefore be of great interest to people of other developing countries and to all those who are interested in their fate. It is also told with great clarity, in a refreshingly direct style. I found it a gripping read." -- Kofi A. Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations "More than 40 years ago, Lee Kuan Yew transformed what was a poor, decrepit colony into a shining, rich and modern metropolis -- all the

time surrounded by hostile powers. With his brilliant, incisive intellect, he is one of the world's most outspoken and respected statesmen. This book is a 'must read' for any student of modern Asia." -- Rupert Murdoch, Chairman & Chief Executive, NewsCorporation "A man of vision and calibre, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew can be credited for laying much of the foundation behind Singapore's present day success story. As one of Asia's most prominent leaders, he has also done much to help promote closer economic ties between the countries of Southeast Asia as a whole. His latest memoir, well articulated and highly interesting, provides a thought provoking insight and a new interpretation of the region's history and politics." -- His Excellency Mr. Chuan Leekpai, Prime Minister of Thailand "Lee's narrative is refreshingly free of the self-congratulatory tone of so many political memoirs...Useful reading for those with an informed interest in geopolitics." -- "Kirkus Reviews" "Lee's role as a thinker, political philosopher, pragmatist and social observer emerges...strongly...this book (offers) ample, vivid and often startling accounts of Lee's numerous dealings with other world leaders. It is a veritable portrait gallery of statesmen, rogues, nationalists, and political ingenues." -- "Far Eastern Economic Review" "Filled with precious insights into Lee Kuan Yew's thinking...after digesting this tour de force, whether they agree with him or not, readers will recognize in Lee a true Asian legend." -- "Asiaweek" "The heroic story of forging a thriving nation out of a piece of rock at the end of the hostile Malay peninsula...it's a story to warm a lot of the cockles of the heart of a ... democrat."- "The Washington Times" "Blunt at times to the point of undiplomatic rudeness, Lee..remains.."part Confucius, part Calvin.."..(his) scoldings made his country, his region, and thus the world a better place."- "Boston Globe" "These are rich memoirs, the legacy of an extraordinary man, and in many ways, this book is like Lee himself: smart, thoughtful, blunt and provocative."- "The New York Times Book Review" "Fascinating...even Mr Lee's critics must concede his courage and vision."- "Wall Street Journal" "(A) fascinating account of the dramatic transformation of this island nation into a stable and prosperous society...an essential contribution (to understanding) why some societies seem so successful in becoming important players in the global economy."- "Booklist" "Fascinating...Lee is perhaps the greatest Asian strategic thinker of the modern world...(his) powerful memoir reveals a great deal."- "Business Week" "Blessed with a powerful mind, driving energy and a strong personality (Lee Kuan Yew) made the Singapore story one of success, and established himself as one of the world's great pundits...a political memoir that is written with a trenchant, lucid style and a flair for the exciting tale."- "The Economist"

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Few gave tiny Singapore much chance of survival when it was granted independence in 1965. How is it, then, that today the former British colonial trading post is a thriving Asian metropolis with not only the world's number one airline, best airport, and busiest port of trade, but also the world's fourth-highest per capita real income?

The story of that transformation is told here by Singapore's charismatic, controversial founding father, Lee Kuan Yew. Rising from a legacy of divisive colonialism, the devastation of the Second World War, and general poverty and disorder following the withdrawal of foreign forces, Singapore now is hailed as a city of the future. This miraculous history is dramatically recounted by the man who not only lived through it all but who fearlessly forged ahead and brought about most of these changes.

Delving deep into his own meticulous notes, as well as previously unpublished government papers and official records, Lee details the extraordinary efforts it took for an island city-state in Southeast Asia to survive at that time.

Lee explains how he and his cabinet colleagues finished off the communist threat to the fledgling state's security and began the arduous process of nation building: forging basic infrastructural roads through a land that still consisted primarily of swamps, creating an army from a hitherto racially and ideologically divided population, stamping out the last vestiges of colonial-era corruption, providing mass public housing, and establishing a national airline and airport.

In this illuminating account, Lee writes frankly about his trenchant approach to political opponents and his often unorthodox views on human rights, democracy, and inherited intelligence, aiming always "to be correct, not politically correct." Nothing in Singapore escaped his watchful eye: whether choosing shrubs for the greening of the country, restoring the romance of the historic Raffles Hotel, or openly, unabashedly persuading young men to marry women as well educated as themselves. Today's safe, tidy Singapore bears Lee's unmistakable stamp, for which he is unapologetic: "If this is a nanny state, I am proud to have fostered one."

Though Lee's domestic canvas in Singapore was small, his vigor and talent assured him a larger place in world affairs. With inimitable style, he brings history to life with cogent analyses of some of the greatest strategic issues of recent times and reveals how, over the years, he navigated the shifting tides of relations among America, China, and Taiwan, acting as confidant, sounding board, and messenger for them. He also includes candid, sometimes acerbic pen portraits of his political peers, including the indomitable Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, the poetry-spouting Jiang Zemin, and ideologues George Bush and Deng Xiaoping.

Lee also lifts the veil on his family life and writes tenderly of his wife and stalwart partner, Kwa Geok Choo, and of their pride in their three children — particularly the eldest son, Hsien Loong, who is now Singapore's deputy prime minister.

For more than three decades, Lee Kuan Yew has been praised and vilified in equal measure, and he has established himself as a force impossible to ignore in Asian and international politics. *From Third World to First* offers readers a compelling glimpse into this visionary's heart, soul, and mind.

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GREAT!

By Joseph D. Seckelman

In spite of loud criticism from Western journalists in particular and Liberal minded Americans in general, Lee Kuan Yew, the former Prime Minister and "father" of Singapore, has done a phenomenal job of bringing several races, language and religious groups into a coherent thriving successful and rich country. My congratulations to Mr. Yew (I guess that would be his last name? Lee Kuan Yew)! He started with a hodge podge of nothing in 1965 and within 35 years had one of the richest and successful countries on earth!

Mr. Yew's great strength is his ability to appreciate and know the nuances of cultures of Singapore and how to respond to the positive as well as the negative parts of each. We in America would do well to take advice from him about relations and the aspirations of our various ethnic and racial groups.

The most outstanding of Mr. Yew's accomplishments is how he and his cadre of competent ministers have blended Western (in particular British) commercial laws with Confucian tenants to form a multi-cultural rich society that puts the rule of law as an absolute. Mr. Yew, who is of Chinese decent, readily admits the shortcomings and strengths of Chinese culture. In particular, he refers to corruption, nepotism, among others as negative aspects, somehow though he has managed to create a society that comes down very hard on the corrupt, making a level playing field for all in the Singaporean society. He has provided home ownership for the citizens of Singapore, solid medical and retirement benefits as well as educational opportunities for all of its citizens.

Having done some business in Japan and having many Asian including Chinese clients, I am struck by Mr. Yew's ability to adhere to the Rule of Law in Singapore rather than the rule by individual which is very prevalent in many Asian (Chinese in particular) societies. Mr. Yew's assessment is right on regarding the Australians and the Japanese.

The book is interesting reading, most of the spelling is British way of spelling so for some who are

accustomed to the American spelling it is discomfoting to read some words "mispelled." If you want to know a success story when multiple races, languages, religions, cultral and ethnic differences are present look to Singapore. It has done it all and in a short time. I don't know how he did it, but the world is a better place for it. We could all learn a lesson or two from Mr. Yew!

Joe Seckelman

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

history

By takori

it was a little pricey because it is hardbound ... but they did not have it in paperback yet.

4 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Not as good as the first volume

By A Customer

I do not agree entirely with Gopalan Nair. I am not a fervant supporter of Harry Lee and indeed I voted against his party when I lived in Singapore and will continue to do so. But after I had left Singapore to live in Hong Kong 12 years ago, gradually I came closer to Lee's view of the world, especially when I travelled extensively and frequently in China many years ago and also when I lived in Indonesia between 96 to 97. I think that many Singaporeans are like me - it's a love-hate relationship with the old man, who was prime minister even before I was born!

I am a bit disappointed with the second book which I think is not as good as the first. Not that it is bad; it is still first rate but I have expected more from Lee. Since a fairly young age, I have read many books about Lee and a lot of his speeches. While his first book reveals quite many things about him that I did not know before, the second book is a let down in this regard. Indeed, before I read it I was excited about how Lee would explain or explain away the Tan Wah Piow, Francis Seow and Tang Liang Hong affairs. But no, Lee is a statesman now and Tan, Seow and Tang were just minor characters not worth dwelling on - maybe Lee thought.

The second book, however, will give foreigners a good grasp of Lee's view of life and why Singapore is governed the way it is. I also cannot agree more with Lee on the impact of sending Singaporeans to mainland China, as my own China dream was shattered when I was there. Lee, however, was trying too hard in his book to please the present Chinese communists, who, I think, in the words of Chris Patten, are a bunch of wankers - still.

I think Gopalan may be related to former President Devan Nair. If Lee is really that evil, it is not for Devan Nair, Toh Chin Chye or Ong Pang Boon to turn around to point their fingers - they were together with Lee in the same boat for too long. And I also remember vividly nearly 13 years ago a question that an MP from Lee's party posed to me - after a lengthy discussion about the merits or demerits of his party's rule in Singapore following my rejection to help him in constituency work - How do you argue with success?

I hope Harry Lee will write the third volume.

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Amazon.com Review

In this memoir, the man most responsible for Singapore's astonishing transformation from colonial backwater to economic powerhouse describes how he did it over the last four decades. It's a dramatic story, and Lee Kuan Yew has much to brag about. To take a single example: Singapore had a per-capita GDP of just \$400 when he became prime minister in 1959. When he left office in 1990, it was \$12,200 and rising. (At the time of this book's writing, it was \$22,000.) Much of this was accomplished through a unique mix of economic freedom and social control. Lee encouraged entrepreneurship, but also cracked down on liberties that most people in the West take for granted--chewing gum, for instance. It's banned in Singapore because of "the problems caused by spent chewing gum inserted into keyholes and mailboxes and on elevator buttons." If American politicians were to propose such a thing, they'd undoubtedly be run out of office. Lee, however, defends this and similar moves, such as strong antismoking laws and antisputting campaigns: "We would have been a grosser, ruder, cruder society had we not made these efforts to persuade people to change their ways.... It has made Singapore a more pleasant place to live in. If this is a 'nanny state,' I am proud to have fostered one."

Lee also describes one of his most controversial proposals: tax breaks and schooling incentives to encourage educated men and women to marry each other and have children. "Our best women were not reproducing themselves because men who were their educational equals did not want to marry them.... This lopsided marriage and procreation pattern could not be allowed to remain unmentioned and unchecked," writes Lee. Most of the book, however, is a chronicle of how Lee helped create so much material prosperity. Anticommunism is a strong theme throughout, and Lee comments broadly on international politics. He is cautiously friendly toward the United States, chastising it for a "dogmatic and evangelical" foreign policy that scolds other countries for human-rights violations, except when they interfere with American interests, "as in the oil-rich Arabian peninsula." Even so, he writes, "the United States is still the most benign of all the great powers.... [and] all noncommunist countries in East Asia prefer America to be the dominant weight in the power balance of the region." From Third World to First is not the most gripping book imaginable, but it is a vital document about a fascinating place in a time of profound transition. --John J. Miller

From Booklist

Yew is not an endearing figure. He is arrogant, self-righteous, and seems unduly sensitive to criticism by "outsiders" of Singapore's record on human rights. Despite occasional efforts to hide his less-than-pleasant characteristics, they often burst through in his long and often fascinating account of the dramatic

transformation of this island nation into a stable and prosperous society. As prime minister for more than three decades, Yew certainly merits credit for Singapore's emergence, and there is much to be learned from his version of his stewardship. This is a detailed and sometimes difficult read, particularly if one lacks a strong grounding in macroeconomics. Still, his description of the difficulties of nation building in a multiethnic society has great value; his efforts to mesh Western concepts of free enterprise with Third World traditions of a "guided economy" may not have universal applicability, but they deserve close scrutiny. This is an essential contribution in efforts to understand why some societies seem so successful in becoming important players in the global economy. Jay Freeman

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Review

"Lee Kuan Yew is one of the brightest, ablest men I have ever met. This book is a must read for people interested in a true Asian success story. From this book, we also learn a lot about the thinking of one of this century's truly visionary statesmen." -- George Bush "In office, I read and analysed every speech of [Lee's]. He had a way of penetrating the fog of propaganda and expressing with unique clarity the issues of our time and the way to tackle them. He was never wrong." -- Margaret Thatcher "Lee Kuan Yew deserves recognition? Under his leadership, Singapore... equipped schools with one computer for every two students, and connected every home to a broadband network. On top of all that, he's a great storyteller." -- Scott McNealy, Chief Executive Officer of Sun Microsystems Inc. "There are two equalizers in life: the Internet and education. Lee Kuan Yew is a world leader who understands this and is using the power of the Internet to position Singapore for survival and success in the Internet economy...His engaging memoirs discuss his efforts to reshape Singapore, integrating information technology into the country's businesses, government and homes." -- John Chambers, President & CEO, Cisco Systems "Whenever I met Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, I was deeply impressed by his intellect, his vision and the depth of his understanding on history and society. No matter where you stand on the political spectrum, you will see in this book how a political leader of insight has led a tiny country to a prosperous modern society amid the tidal waves of world politics. And you will also find his ingenious views on Asia and the world to be a source of deep inspiration." -- Kim Dae-jung, President of the Republic of Korea "Lee Kuan Yew is one of the seminal figures of Asia, and this book does justice to his extraordinary accomplishments. Describing the motivations and concepts that have animated his conduct and explaining specific actions, he will undoubtedly raise many controversies. But whether one agrees or not, one will learn a great deal." -- Dr. Henry A. Kissinger "Mr. Lee Kuan Yew has gathered around himself the most brilliant minds, transforming the most exacting standards into a system of government. Under his leadership, the primacy of the general interest, the cult of education, work and saving, the capacity to foresee the needs of the city have enabled Singapore to take what I call 'shortcuts to progress.'" -- Jacques Chirac "This is a personal history of a man who, almost single-handedly, built a great nation from a small island? this is the first textbook in the world on how to build a nation." -- Kiichi Miyazawa "Lee Kuan Yew's vision, astute political judgement and strategy turned Singapore from a trading post into the successful thriving nation that it is today, respected by others. For those interested in politics and economic development, his memoirs should be required reading." -- Tun Daim Zainuddin "Lee Kuan Yew is a statesman who created a successful nation. He has known everybody. He has achieved impossible things and his memoirs tell the truth." -- William Rees-Mogg "The title of this book, From Third World to First, expresses an aspiration of all developing countries but so far, alas, an achievement of very few. Singapore is one of those few. This account of its first years of independence written by its founding father, Lee Kuan Yew, will therefore be of great interest to people of other developing countries and to all those who are interested in their fate. It is also told with great clarity, in a refreshingly direct style. I found it a gripping read." -- Kofi A. Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations "More than 40 years ago, Lee Kuan Yew transformed what was a poor, decrepit colony into a shining, rich and modern metropolis -- all the time surrounded by hostile powers. With his brilliant, incisive intellect, he is one of the world's most outspoken and respected statesmen. This book is a 'must read' for any student of modern Asia." -- Rupert

Murdoch, Chairman & Chief Executive, NewsCorporation "A man of vision and calibre, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew can be credited for laying much of the foundation behind Singapore's present day success story. As one of Asia's most prominent leaders, he has also done much to help promote closer economic ties between the countries of Southeast Asia as a whole. His latest memoir, well articulated and highly interesting, provides a thought provoking insight and a new interpretation of the region's history and politics." -- His Excellency Mr. Chuan Leekpai, Prime Minister of Thailand "Lee's narrative is refreshingly free of the self-congratulatory tone of so many political memoirs...Useful reading for those with an informed interest in geopolitics." -- "Kirkus Reviews "Lee's role as a thinker, political philosopher, pragmatist and social observer emerges...strongly...this book (offers) ample, vivid and often startling accounts of Lee's numerous dealings with other world leaders. It is a veritable portrait gallery of statesmen, rogues, nationalists, and political ingenues." -- "Far Eastern Economic Review "Filled with precious insights into Lee Kuan Yew's thinking...after digesting this tour de force, whether they agree with him or not, readers will recognize in Lee a true Asian legend." -- "Asiaweek" "The heroic story of forging a thriving nation out of a piece of rock at the end of the hostile Malay peninsula...it's a story to warm a lot of the cockles of the heart of a ... democrat."- "The Washington Times" "Blunt at times to the point of undiplomatic rudeness, Lee..remains.."part Confucius, part Calvin."..(his) scoldings made his country, his region, and thus the world a better place."- "Boston Globe" "These are rich memoirs, the legacy of an extraordinary man, and in many ways, this book is like Lee himself: smart, thoughtful, blunt and provocative."- "The New York Times Book Review" "Fascinating...even Mr Lee's critics must concede his courage and vision."- "Wall Street Journal" "(A) fascinating account of the dramatic transformation of this island nation into a stable and prosperous society...an essential contribution (to understanding) why some societies seem so successful in becoming important players in the global economy."- "Booklist" "Fascinating...Lee is perhaps the greatest Asian strategic thinker of the modern world...(his) powerful memoir reveals a great deal."- "Business Week" "Blessed with a powerful mind, driving energy and a strong personality (Lee Kuan Yew) made the Singapore story one of success, and established himself as one of the world's great pundits...a political memoir that is written with a trenchant, lucid style and a flair for the exciting tale."- "The Economist

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