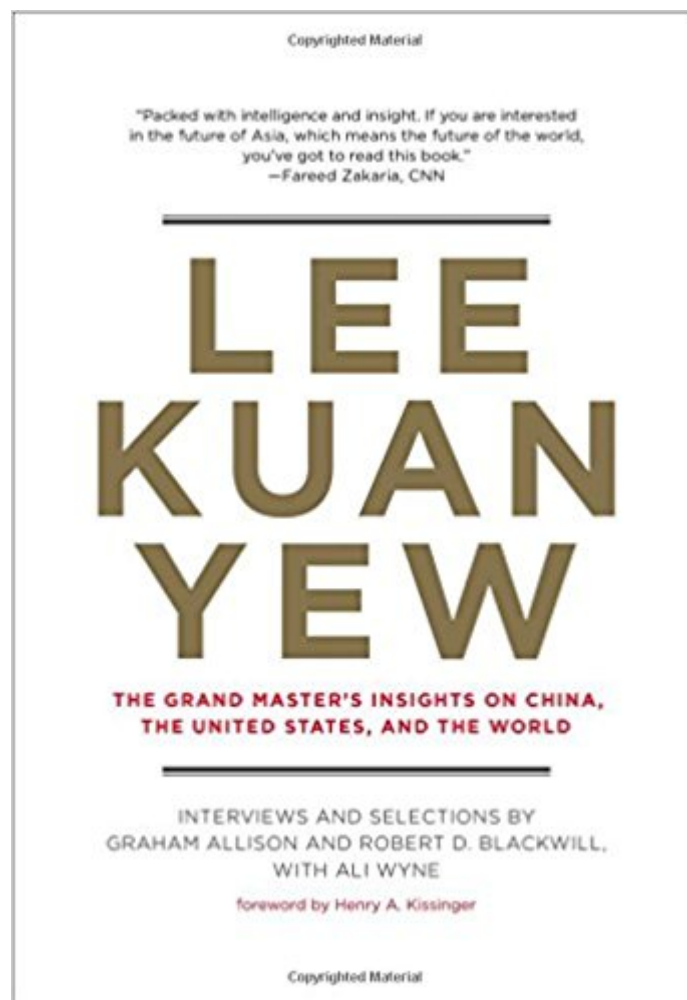


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# Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights On China, The United States, And The World (Belfer Center Studies In International Security)



## 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 little book belongs on the reading list of every world leader -- including the one who takes the oath of office on January 20, 2013.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This short book [is] packed with intelligence and insight. If you are interested in the future of Asia, which means the future of the world, you've got to read this book. (Fareed Zakaria CNN, "Book of the Week") Lee's powerful intellect is captured in a new book, *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World*. It's a collection of interviews with him by Harvard University professor Graham Allison, Council on Foreign Relations senior fellow Robert Blackwill and Harvard's Belfer Center researcher Ali Wyne, while also drawing on other selected and cited writings by and about Lee. Now 89, officially retired and somewhat frail, Lee has mellowed with age -- not unlike his creation Singapore, governed today with a lighter touch even as its citizens grow more vocal. Yet, as the book, and the adaptation here of the China chapter, reveal, Lee is as sharp, direct and prescient as ever. Though the volume was completed before China's current territorial tensions with its neighbors, it helps expose, and explain, Beijing's hardball mind-set. (TIME Magazine) Graham Allison and Bob Blackwill have important questions to ask about China, America and the extraordinary impact of the relationship of those two countries on the rest of the world. For answers, they turned to Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first premier and one of the world's most formidable geopolitical thinkers and strategists. The result is a fascinating book called *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World*. (Ian Bremmer Reuters) *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* forms a kind of last testament of the ailing, 89-year-old Mr. Lee. It is based on interviews with Mr. Lee by the authors -- Graham Allison, a professor of government at Harvard's Kennedy School, and Robert Blackwill, a former U.S. diplomat -- to which the authors add a distillation of Mr. Lee's speeches, writings and interviews with others over many years. (Karen Elliott House Wall Street Journal) *Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World* is an anthology of interviews and speeches Lee has given over the last four decades -- readers will find themselves entertained and challenged by Lee Kuan Yew's lucidity, powerful arguments and acerbic tongue. (Anchalee Kongrut Economic Observer) Lee is a force of nature. Up close and personal, he can blow you away with one overpowering dismissive glare. Has there ever been anyone like him?... [The book] will reinforce the consensus view that Asia bred something special in Lee. (Tom Plate South China Morning Post) Lee excels in pithy evaluations of regional and national strengths and weaknesses. At his best, the man is a cross between Confucius and Machiavelli. (Aram Bakshian Jr Washington Times) The authors, a team of eminent strategy thinkers, took the opportunity of recording [Lee Kuan Yew's] views on the world, and the way it's likely to take shape over the next quarter century. The result is this concise, but important book, that looks at the futures of China, the US and India, as well as important contemporary issues, from globalisation and

democracy to Islamic extremism -- all delivered in Lee's characteristically incisive, and occasionally politically incorrect manner. (Anvar Alikhan Outlook)I found myself engrossed this week by the calm, incisive wisdom of one of the few living statesmen in the world who can actually be called visionary. The wisdom is in a book, " Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States and the World," a gathering of Mr. Lee's interviews, speeches and writings. He is now 89, a great friend of America, and his comments on the U.S. are pertinent to many of the debates in which we're enmeshed. (Peggy Noonan Wall Street Journal)The contribution of Lee Kuan Yew: The Grand Master's Insights on China, the United States, and the World to the debate about Asia's future is unique...[It] sets down the thoughts of an 89-year-old veteran of 20th century history with much to say about the future. The book is densely packed with Lee's characteristically blunt assessments of issues, countries and people. The text has been deftly assembled and extensively footnoted. (Stephen Minas LSE Review of Books)[A]fter reading a good 20 pages, readers will be mesmerised by Lee's lucidity and entertained by his acerbic tongue. After all, he is a good critic because he is not wholly shaped by ideology, nor does he try to be politically correct....The final chapter, 'How Lee Kuan Yew Thinks', reveals the human side of this formidable man and is a must-read....this book is a good read not only for students of politics, but also for readers interested in strategic thinking. Right-wing activists and liberal thinkers alike should read this book because gifted authoritarian figures such as Lee are increasingly rare. (Bangkok Post)A perceptive and concise read, detailing the wisdom of a man who has been at the political forefront for close to 50 years.... the book's question-and-answer format [is] an ideal one -- [Lee's] responses were mostly short, sweet and most importantly, smart.... [This book will] educate and enlighten by condensing the man's vast intellect into accessible nuggets of information. [It] shows, again, why he is still one of the world's most lucid thinkers. (Prestige Magazine)The new book of interviews with Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore, by Graham Allison, Robert Blackwill, and Ali Wyne is fantastic. (Noah Feldman Boston Globe)[ Lee Kuan Yew] may be the single best available volume for those who want a quick grasp of Lee's thinking on foreign affairs and geopolitics....in compiling such a rich collection of statements on such a wide range of global issues, Allison and Blackwill have done both scholars and general readers a service by providing a manageable, one-stop shop on Lee's thinking. (David Plott Global Asia)Relations between Asian powers and the United States are constantly shifting, so insights into how to navigate the resulting diplomatic challenges are at a premium. Singapore's longtime prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, is uniquely placed to offer such insights. In this book, he bluntly describes how he sees major players like China and the United States interacting in the coming years and sheds light on the intentions of each, with the purpose of

informing experts and leadership in both capitals. (Foreign Service Journal)

Graham Allison is Douglas Dillon Professor of Government and Director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School. Robert D. Blackwill is Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. Ali Wyne is an associate of the Belfer Center.

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 "a 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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