

status at the end of the book and then dismissed without adequate consideration, if not ignored completely. This is compounded by the fact that Lau has not been able to tell anything like the whole story because neither Singapore nor Malaysia has a Thirty-Year Rule; neither does the PAP or UMNO. As a result the story is somewhat askew. We read extensive accounts of diplomats' opinions, impressions, and direct interventions in events, but there is no Cabinet-level and little party documentation from the two protagonists—and what there is has been provided with pinpoint selectivity to support a political agenda.

The book has an excellent index and bibliography, and very detailed endnotes. It also boasts a nice collection of historical photos that give a hint of the human stories behind the bald politics. These features make it suitable for the undergraduate and casual reader as well as a valuable resource for the serious scholar.

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MICHAEL D. BARR. *Lee Kuan Yew: the Beliefs Behind the Man*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Monograph Series no. 85, 2000. £40.00, hardcover.

Lee Kuan Yew belongs with Nehru, Sukarno, Ho Chi Minh, Mao and Deng Xiaoping to the most remarkable and influential Asian statesmen of the twentieth century. Most of them, including Lee, are so fervently admired by their compatriots that it verges on a cult. Their beliefs and actions will continue to be debated for many years to come. Lee distinguishes himself from the others by the smallness of his state, the greatness of his economic achievements, his ability to combine culturalist rhetoric with extreme pragmatism in foreign affairs, and the fact that he remains alive and powerful. Michael D. Barr has done an excellent job of examining the basic patterns and gradual changes in Lee's political and cultural beliefs from his school days in the Raffles Institution during the late 1930s to his current position as Senior Minister of Singapore, respected statesman and advisor to a number of governments. Barr's book is written in clear, analytical language. It is free of academic jargon and may be read as a critical companion to Lee's own two-volume memoirs (Times Editions and HarperCollins, 1998 and 2000).

Barr's study is thematically, rather than chronologically, structured. After an introduction to Lee as the "father" of the Singaporean nation, four chapters examine specific aspects of his beliefs: progressivism, elitism, geneticism, and cultural evolutionism. The final chapters try to grasp the "essential" Lee and to reach a normative judgment. Lee's two essential traits are progressivism and elitism. His progressivism was inspired by the western guru of his youth, Arnold Toynbee. Lee learned from *A Study of History* that a sense of crisis was needed to provide the will to achieve, but would go further than Toynbee in explaining the relative success of nations in racial terms. Lee considers talent to be innate rather than acquired, and the "talent pool" available to those who select each national elite to be larger among some races than others. As a political practitioner Lee has always ruthlessly looked for talent, and cast aside anyone who did not live up to his expectations. His power of persuasion has allowed him to establish highly effective and

loyal teams of leaders, operating in his shadow. The role of Lee's collaborators is not examined in Barr's study, but is the subject of another important recent book, which seeks to de-emphasise the role of Lee himself and draw attention to 15 of his partners (Lam Peng Er and Kevin Tan (eds), *Lee's Lieutenants*, Allen & Unwin, 1999).

In Barr's view, Lee was never much of a leftist. Even during the time he collaborated with the communists, his progressivism contained little in the way of welfarism, socialism or anti-colonialism. He basically admired the communists for their effectiveness as organisers, and would later turn similar skills against them. Lee is above all an elitist bent on progress, and the governmental system he created is best described, says Barr, by David Brown's term "inclusionary corporatism".

The quality of Barr's analysis is enhanced by his mixed feelings about his subject. Barr started out as an admirer of Lee's anti-communism and strong, effective government, but developed a growing distaste for Lee's authoritarianism, elitism, cultural insensitivity and racial views. Throughout the book Barr is engaged in weighing laudable, acceptable and repugnant aspects of Lee's beliefs. The reader is invited to participate in an unprejudiced and exploratory normative journey, flavoured by an unease that sometimes verges on repugnance. Much more is to be learnt from studies inspired by ambivalent emotions than from hagiographies or diatribes. Barr has made a highly significant contribution to a rapidly growing literature about Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore.

The present reviewer has found no major weakness in the book. My only critical comment is that the author's concentration on a narrow examination of Lee's beliefs, as revealed in speeches, interviews and writings, prevents the text from establishing connections between changes in Lee's thinking and shifts in Singapore's international environment. Barr does not, for instance, take up the impact on Lee's thinking of the British decline and the increasing US regional dominance during the 1960s. Lee's view of America is never in focus. The book includes an analysis of Lee's switch from multicultural social engineering in the 1950s-60s to Chinese cultural supremacism in the 1990s, and Barr finds the first indications of this transformation in 1978. However, he does not relate this to Deng Xiaoping's ascendancy in China, the shift of US recognition from the ROC to the PRC, and the business opportunities created by the reopening of the Chinese market. Barr points out Lee's pragmatism and his instrumental attitude to culture. Yet the book only rarely relates the transformation of beliefs to new pragmatic concerns caused by external events. Readers who want the larger picture may like to consult the late Michael Leifer's recent book *Singapore's Foreign Policy* (Routledge, 2000).

One of Barr's more intriguing findings is Lee's innate pessimism. Human progress, according to Lee's basic beliefs, is inevitable, but the success of his tiny and vulnerable Singapore is a most unlikely occurrence, due only to good government and the willpower of a people facing continuous crisis. Singapore resembles Israel, Lee once said. Others will bypass Singapore as soon as Singaporeans relax and stop seeing themselves as engaged in a struggle for survival. If Barr is right, then the old Lee probably expects that after him comes the Deluge.

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