

# Singapore – the way to a global city



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PREFACE Anyone who had a chance to witness a Singapore of the 1950s-the British's colonial port and a prosperous Singapore nowadays has to admire the rise of Singaporean as well as the wise leadership of the government.

There is no doubt that the city-state of Singapore represents a remarkable success story that has placed the country among the developed nations.

After its independence in the mid-1960s, Singapore had no more than a deep port. There are no fresh water, no hinterland; all nation's area just limits in 700 square kilometer. The question made in everyone's mind was how Singapore could survive with such obstacles after the British's withdrawal rather than how Singapore could develop to become one of the top-class economies. In contrast of everyone's thought, Singapore has swiftly moved ahead of all neighbouring countries in almost all fields, turning itself into Asia's second-richest country in term of per capita income.

How has Singapore done to attain such remarkable achievements? What will Singapore have to do to cope with emerging giants such as China, India? It is the content of this essay: SINGAPORE -THE WAY TO THE GLOBAL CITY. In this essay, it is inevitable to have some mistakes. Therefore, I hope you will excuse them and contribute to make the essay better. I/. Singapore's history and periods of development: The modern Singaopore's history began in 1819 when Englishman Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles established a British port on the island and Singapore proved to be a prized settlement.

By 1820, it was earning revenue, and three years later, its trade surpassed that of Penang. Singapore, together with Malacca and Penang, the two British settlements in the Malay Peninsula, became the Straits Settlements in

1826, under the control of British India. With the advent of the steamship in the mid-1860s and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Singapore became a major port of call for ships plying between Europe and East Asia. This led to the prosperity of Singapore until Japanese occupation, starting on February 1942 and lasting for three years and a half. The British forces returned in September 1945. At that time the people, especially the merchant class, clamored for a say in the government.

Hence, Singapore's first election was held on 20 March 1948. Upon the basis of a new constitution that gave Singapore a greater measure of self-government, the 1955 election was the first lively political contest in Singapore's history. Self-government was attained in 1959 when Singapore's first general election was held and Lee Kuan Yew became Singapore's first Prime Minister. In 1963, Singapore was formally merged with Malaysia for the purpose of benefiting the economy by creating a common free market, eliminating trade tariffs, and solving unemployment woes and Singapore's security would also be safeguarded within the much larger Malaysia. However, the merger proved to be short-lived. Singapore was separated from the rest of Malaysia on 9 August 1965, and became a sovereign, democratic and independent nation.

Thereafter, Singapore commenced the struggle to survive, prosper on its own and create a sense of national identity and consciousness among a disparate population of immigrants. Singapore entered the 1970s as a politically stable state with a high rate of economic growth. On 28 November 1990, a new chapter opened in Singapore's modern history Goh Chok Tong became the second Prime Minister of Singapore after the resignation of Lee

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Kuan Yew. In 2004, Lee Hsien Loong, the eldest son of Lee Kuan Yew, became the third Prime Minister of Singapore and has been giving innovative policies to make Singapore become a global city. II/. Singapore's achievements: When Singapore gained independence in 1965, its leaders cried rather than cheered.

The idea that a small island city-state of two million people with no hinterland could survive in what was then a difficult and troubled region seemed manifestly absurd. Nevertheless, by its own effort, Singapore has been from the Third World to the First. 1/. Economy: Singapore's economy has grown by more than 7 percent annum since 1965, leading to a per-capita income of US\$29, 610, ranking the ninth in the world.

It now has the most efficient port, airport, airline and civil service in the world. Along with Hong Kong, South Korea, and Taiwan, Singapore is one of the Four Asian Tigers. The economy depends heavily on exports refining imported goods, especially in manufacturing. Manufacturing industry which is well-diversified into electronics, petroleum refining, chemicals, mechanical engineering and biomedical sciences constituted 26 percent of Singapore's GDP in 2005.

It also has the third largest oil refining. In 2006, Singapore produced about 10 percent of the world's foundry wafer output. Singapore now is the world's fourth largest foreign exchange trading centre after London, New York city and Tokyo. Its total trade is three times the size of its GNP. 2/.

Society: In the process of developing economy, Singapore has also concentrated on the conservation of environment in order to become the

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cleanest country in the world. Singapore has been well-known to have the best living conditions, expressing on some fields: - Health: Singapore has one of the best healthcare systems in the world with the assistance of Medisave, Medishield, Medifund. That explains the fact that the population has become healthier each year. Infant mortality rates have fallen from 26.3 per 1000 live births in 1965 to 3.

2 per 1000 today. Life expectancy is also rising. - Education: Singapore has the highest literacy rate in the world. Education is neither totally free nor compulsory, but today 90 percent of the population will complete at least 10 years of education; 20 percent will complete university; 40 percent will complete polytechnic training, and 30 percent will complete vocational training.

- Housing: Shelter is also plentiful. 90 percent of the population lives in high-rise public housing that occupies only one-sixth of the island. The average dwelling space per family is above the global average. Virtually all Singaporeans live in homes they own because of a compulsory savings program, the Central Provident Fund (CPF).

Multi-racial harmony: Singapore includes Chinese, Malays, Indians. Despite difficulties from the variety of ethnic groups and religions, Singapore has been successful with the policies of multi-racial harmony. Therefore, Singapore has been developing stably with four official languages (Mandarin, Malay, Tamil and English). III. Lee Kuan Yew's contribution to Singapore's success: Singapore nowadays has totally changed its look from the image of a country with poverty and corruption of 1950s. In contrast to today's

prosperity, during the 1950s, Singapore was merely one of the many colonial ports of the British Empire, with fewer than 1.

million people. In 1959, Singapore's GDP per capita was only \$400. How could this small island develop into a splendid city and a flourishing country from a poor village-like port 50 years ago? There are many factors contributing to Singapore's success, in which Lee Kuan Yew (Prime Minister from 1959-1990) played a crucial role. In the limit of this essay, I just would like to emphasize the role of Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore's development. The success of Singapore is mostly due to the talented leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, who is the architect of many sound policies in many fields helping raise the Singapore's economy.

When elected to become the Prime Minister in 1959, Lee Kuan Yew gained the autonomy for Singapore from the British in all state matters except in defence and foreign affairs. Singapore even is more resource-poor than Japan. It has almost no natural resources aside from its deep-water port. Only 4% of the total area is arable land.

In order to gain the control of defence and foreign policy and benefit the economy, Lee Kuan Yew forced to merge Singapore into Malaya, which with the mergence of Sabah and Sarawak became Malaysia in 1963. However, just two years later, in 1965, Lee Kuan Yew had to proclaim the seperation of Singapore from Malaysia and began to lead an independent Singapore with numerous difficulties ahead. Lee Kuan Yew had three main concerns - national security, the economy, and social issues - during his post-independence administration. 1/.

National security: Recognizing the vulnerability of Singapore from outside threats, he quickly sought international recognition of Singapore's independence as Singapore gained admission to the United Nations on 21 September 1965. He also declared a policy of neutrality and non-alignment, following Switzerland's model. At the same time, he assigned Goh Keng Swee with the task of building the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and requested help from other countries for advice, training and facilities. Singapore later co-founded the Association of Southeast Asian Nations on 8 August 1967 and was admitted into the Non-Aligned Movement in 1970.

2/. Economic issues: Having almost no natural resources except for the deep port, Lee Kuan Yew supposed that Singapore had no choice but joining the international trade and commerce. He believed that creating and sustain a free and open economy is an efficient way for Singapore to develop. In the 1960s, Singapore was still very poor with high unemployment rate, especially after the British's withdrawal.

He tried to attract foreign investment as much as possible, encouraged the growth of private enterprises and avoided any subsidy. The government has adopted an open-door policy and welcomes foreign investment as well as foreign expertise. Singapore's free-enterprise spirit extends to its relations with foreign investors. An open business environment has evolved in Singapore, evidenced by the size of the country's external trade which is in fact about three times that of the domestic GDP. A free trade policy ensures that there are minimal restrictions on the import and export of goods.

Therefore, almost all commodities, and consumer and industrial items enter and leave the country free from duty charges. Singapore provides international businesses with a total operating capability in a conducive business and free trade environment. In order for policies to be implemented effectively, apparatus of government is very important. None better than him, he was aware that Singapore was only able to grow when it has a pure, dedicated and talented government.

Lee Kuan Yew built and ran a totally corruption-free regime by setting an example of exemplary virtues himself. Civil servants are chosen from top of the most excellent students of universities. In first days after independence, Singapore was still very poor. How could the corruption which was soaked into the government since the British colonial time be crossed out? Lee Kuan Yew then, in one hand, inspired civil servants the strong work ethic; in the other hand, he built a strict and close framework of legislation.

After the economy overcame some obstacles in the first stage, Singapore's civil servants were paid handsome salaries so that they remained free from temptations. Lee Kuan Yew made it clear to them that his administration would have zero tolerance for sleaze of any kind. It was not unusual for a foreign entrepreneur wanting to set up a manufacturing facility to get all the approvals from a single officer. In 2001, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, Lee's successors, decided to raise the salary budget for overnment employees from \$28 million to \$34 million, while Singapore's public service is regularly rated as one of the most efficient and competent in the world. How did he justify this increase? " Judge my government by its results, the quality of political leadership is all important, that is fair to make this increase, given <https://assignbuster.com/singapore-the-way-to-a-global-city/>



the ministers' huge responsibilities and impact on people's lives", he said.

The country's sound government policies have enabled Singapore to rank as Asia's most stable country.

The Singapore government encourages businesses to thrive by keeping red-tape to a minimum. It also has a reputation for being responsive to changes and is willing to adapt quickly to new and unforeseen circumstances by altering its outlook and modifying its policies. The government encourages private sector initiative. Government agencies with regulatory functions have close rapport with the private sector; major policies affecting the business community are often adopted only after consultation with major trade and business bodies.

To a small, no natural resources island like Singapore, human resource is the most valuable. Since the first days, Lee Kuan Yew has put education as one of the most important national strategies. Its main objective was to ensure that every child had a place in school. Lee realized early on that English is the future of international commerce, which is what Singapore is all about and students lacking English command are hard to find a good job. Thus, English, with three other languages have become official languages in Singapore.

Since then, English has been forced to use in teaching and learning. Top students with exceptional bilingual (Chinese and English) abilities from the national primary school leaving examinations were given options to study in specialized secondary schools to develop these capabilities further. On the whole, the education system is based on the economy's needs. In the

1960s, Singapore's infrastructure was weak and deficient. Lee used military infrastructure for the civil purpose.

Simultaneously, to develop the unique advantage of Singapore, Lee tried to attract foreign investment to improve the infrastructure. Singapore nowadays has become the busiest port in the world and become the international trade connection due to its worldwide sea and air links, modern port and airport facilities, sophisticated telecommunications network, and comprehensive land transport system. /. Social issues: Singapore is a very small island but there are three ethnic groups on it. Therefore, one of the main concerns of Lee Kuan Yew is that how to harmonize these ethnic groups in order for them to direct toward the common benefit of the country. The first thing Lee did was making Mandarin, Malay, Tamil, along with English to become official languages, despite the fact that almost 80% Singaporeans are ethnic Chinese, only about 14% Singaporeans are Malays and 7% are Indians.

Lee introduced the teaching of three languages, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, in English schools. To balance this, he introduced the teaching of English in Chinese, Malay and Tamil schools. Lee Kuan Yew stated publicly that all four major languages in Singapore were official and equal. Thus the Chinese language and culture did not dominate the landscape of Singaporeans' social life despite the overwhelming proportion of the Chinese in the total population. Without any natural sources of water like freshwater rivers and lakes, the primary domestic source of water in Singapore is rainfall, collected in reservoirs or water catchment areas.

The country also imports a large amount of water from Malaysia, which means that Singapore depends on Malaysia's water supply. In order to stabilize Malaysia's water supply, Lee Kuan Yew gave a request for Malaysia's guarantee of water supply to Singapore as part of the 1965 Agreement of Separation, which was later deposited in the United Nations. Singapore also relied on the fact that the Straits of Malacca had been international waters for centuries. If any of these were breached, Singapore could go to the UN Security Council.

In addition, the authorities also launched a unique process of producing 'ultra-clean' water called NEWater. The lack of good public housing, poor sanitation, and high unemployment led to social problems from crime to health issues. The Housing Development Board (HDB) set up before independence continued to be largely successful and huge building projects were given to provide affordable public housing. Within a decade, the majority of the population had been housed in these apartments. The Central Provident Fund (CPF) Housing Scheme, introduced in 1968, allows residents to use their compulsory savings account to purchase HDB flats and gradually increases home ownership in Singapore. The story on the environment front is also worth studying.

Determining the economic growth as a national strategy, simultaneously, Lee Kuan Yew also stressed on the necessity of a green nature in the way to substantial development. With careful land planning, only 49 percent of the island is used for residential, commercial and industrial purposes. Hence, half the island consists of forest reserves, water catchment areas, marshes and other non-built-up areas. It is a green island, even though the World Bank

classifies the population as “ one hundred percent urbanized”. Singapore nowadays, which is the cleanest city in the world, really becomes the paradise of rest and treatment. IV/.

Vision to the future: With the unique advantage of strategic location, stable government, competitive workforce, forward-looking economic policies and a pro-business environment, Singapore is not only a convenient link between East and West, but also offers easy access to Asia Pacific’s dynamic market of over 2. 8 billion people. With its rich multicultural heritage, Singapore combines a truly cosmopolitan ambience with classic Asian hospitality. Clean and green surroundings, a low crime rate, affordable housing, and outstanding visitor attractions are just some of the factors that make working and living in Singapore a pleasure. For such those, Singapore deserves to become a global city.

In the last period of development, Singapore has been successful in learning from other countries’ experience. However, with the status of one of the top-class economies, from now there is no more experience lesson for Singapore to learn. It will have to find out its own way and be ready to accept failure if any. In a recent research of author Mansour Javidan on the Harvard business magazine about future-oriented culture, Singapore has the strongest future-oriented culture, the following are Switzerland, Holland and Malaysia. Since the 1990s, Singapore has given programs to prepare for meeting challenges and opportunities in the 21st century, such as: Public service 21, Industry 21, Human resource 21, the Scheme 21 for building global city- the best house, the plan of developing national technology and science... In the 1990s and this 21st century, we are witnessing the rise of China and India in many

fields: economy, military affairs, technology..., which has negatively affected Singapore's position as a leading attracter of foreign investments and a prominent Asian manufacturer and exporter.

With their varied natural resources, low labour costs, varying business opportunities and tempting incentives, the two Asian giants have left little for Singapore to do. Realizing this reality, Singapore has been developing a new role for itself in the current millennium. This includes acting as a bridge between China and India on the one hand, and as a bridge between two these countries and other countries in the West and Southeast Asia on the other. Lee Kuan Yew, who strongly supports such a role, had urged Singaporean firms as early as the 1970s to strongly establish themselves in China, so they could successfully compete with other foreign investors and control maximum business opportunities. In line with its new role, Singapore decided to develop manufacturing in favour of higher-value added activities.

It emphasized the need to shift to a knowledge-based economy where fine education and training and specific services needed in China, India, and other emerging powers would be available. The government's strategy in recent years to attract more foreign students and trainees and to have institutions that can train them in certain specialized areas for careers in government and first-class private companies must be viewed in this regard. For such orientation and preparation for future, it can be sure that this city-state, based on strong rule of law, Western economic and managerial practices, effective corruption-free administration and top-class infrastructure, can meet the challenge and present the world with another success story with the global city status. CONCLUSION The success story of <https://assignbuster.com/singapore-the-way-to-a-global-city/>

Singapore has been so well-known that many countries in the Third World have considered Singapore as a model to strive. Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore had remarkable achievements in all aspects: economy, social life, national identity, education, science and technology... The face of Singapore has totally changed compared with that in 1950s.

The policy that has brought success for Singapore are: Sustain a free and open economy, avoid any subsidy, set up uncorruption administration, elcome foreign investment. Due to sound policies of government, Singapore has used very well its unique advantage to develop it to the busiest port in the world and Singapore has become the gateway to Asia. Besides, the key to Singapore's economic success has come from the free trade. Free trade has given Singapore many business opportunities and made Singapore become the strategic link between the West and the East. In order to meet forwarding challenges in a more and more competitive world, Singapore has proposed many forward-looking missions, in which has attached special importance to training future human resource. Being a vibrant, dynamic city state with one of the highest standards of living in the world, a key regional trading center and the world's busiest port, Singapore deserves to be a global city.

It is also sure that successors will keep Lee Kuan Yew's principles, which have being made Singapore an uncorrupt and meritocracy based society, to maintain Singapore as a global city.