

Leadership  
and  
Authority



A SYMPOSIUM

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# SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE SYMPOSIUM

*Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, Prime Minister of Singapore*

I can think of a no more fascinating subject for scholarly analysis and discussion than patterns of authority and leadership in traditional and modern societies. I am privileged to declare this symposium open.

Since 1945, over fifty new nations have emerged and the patterns of authority and leadership that they present must be a rewarding subject of study. Surely there must be some universal truths and principles which can emerge from a systematic comparison of the forms of authority and leadership and their relative efficacy as intelligent and tolerant forms of government.

As one who is actively engaged in this quest for benign authority and yet effective leadership, immersed in the day-to-day task of resolving specific problems in the given situation obtaining in Singapore and Malaysia, I have often wondered which of these problems are universal and whether solutions have not been found in other similar situations elsewhere which I could profitably amend for use in Singapore.

Most of the nations that have emerged since 1945 have never before existed in history with those exact geographic boundaries and demographic content. A few like India or Burma re-emerged, but not altogether in the form they were before colonialism engulfed them. Pakistan is new; so is Indonesia; so is Malaysia. Whether these countries will endure as coherent nations providing the political framework for economic and industrial development to raise standards of life to levels comparable to those prevailing in Europe and America depends in large measure upon the quality of the leadership.

Basically, the problems presented to all these new nations are the same. In the period of European colonial rule, there was centralized institutional authority. The Viceroy or the Governor holds his power by virtue of external authority, and is, in fact, the agent of external authority. The people he governs consists not of followers, but of subjects. In this colonial type society some forms of traditional leadership of maharajahs, sultans and chieftains were sustained as useful adjuncts to the authority of the