



INSTITUTE FOR
SOCIETAL LEADERSHIP

SOCIETAL INFLUENCE, LEADERSHIP AND IMPACT:

Defining Traits of Twenty Pioneer Southeast Asian
Leaders

SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY
Administration Building, 81 Victoria Street, Singapore 188065

Tel + (65) 6828 0100 Fax + (65) 6828 0441 Website isl.smu.edu.sg

COUNTRY INSIGHTS LABS



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Asian Leaders

**SOCIETAL LEADERSHIP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:
WORKING PAPER**

Lim Lai Cheng

Abstract

This study focuses on twenty Southeast Asian leaders who have been key players during critical transitions in the social, economic and political development of their country. In asking each of the societal leaders questions concerning their motivation, the cause they were championing and the factors that have led to their success as leaders, the study attempts to draw out common traits they possess and investigates whether the traits that make people effective societal leaders differ across socio-cultural and historical contexts. A grounded theory approach is used in the analysis of the attributes and traits that emerge from the transcripts of the videotaped interviews. A holistic model is used to capture the causal conditions, varying influences, strategies, consequences as well as the contexts that led to strong societal leadership.

About Institute for Societal Leadership

The Institute for Societal Leadership (ISL) was established by Singapore Management University (SMU) in 2014. ISL aims to tangibly improve the lives of Southeast Asia's citizens by acting as a focal point for cross-sector collaboration between current leaders from government, business, civil society, academia and the media. The Institute also conducts research concerning social issues in Southeast Asia and designs its own suite of leadership training programmes, each of which seeks to foster the development of a new generation of Asian leaders dedicated to serving society.

About the editor

Lim Lai Cheng is the Academic Director of the Institute for Societal Leadership and a Fellow of the School of Social Sciences in SMU. She holds a BA (Hons) and MA from Cambridge University (UK), a MEd from the Nanyang Technological University (Singapore) in Language Education and a doctorate in Education from University of London.

Email: lclim@smu.edu.sg

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Introduction

Leadership is a key aspect of human capital development and a differentiator in the global competition for economies looking to the future. While individual leaders matter, leadership practices matter just as much because good leadership turns individual abilities into organisational capabilities.

Many definitions of leadership exist. Most people would agree that leadership involves the process of influencing others to get something done. Leadership ultimately involves human interaction and behaviour. Therefore, an important step in understanding leadership in different countries is to focus on the drivers of human behaviour.

One stream of research on leadership asserts that many aspects of leader behaviour are universally or near-universally accepted and deemed effective. Leaders face common problems across the world, such as how to organize, motivate and influence others to accomplish organisational goals. Many value charismatic, value-based and transformative leadership and believe that is the most effective way to achieve strong outcomes. The second stream of work, the cultural congruency view, asserts that cultural forces affect the kind of leader behaviour that is generally accepted, enacted and effective within a society¹. Accordingly, behaviour that is consistent with collective values will be more acceptable and effective than behaviour that contradicts collective values.

In light of this divergence in opinion, there is an expressed need for in-depth and rigorous study of the concept, process and outcome of leadership in different societies not simply to better understand how things are done in varying settings, but also to fine-tune existing theories and incorporate cultural variations as moderators or parameters of those theories. There has also been a call to uncover new relationships by including a much broader range of variables often not

considered in contemporary theories, such as the importance of religion, language, ethnic background, history and political system on leadership behaviour². It is for this reason that this study of pioneer Southeast Asian leaders was mounted.

Additionally, research has pointed to different leadership behaviours and effects in Asia compared to those in the West due to cultural differences. Until recently, limited studies have been available on Asian leadership.

The key questions this study hopes to address are as follows:

- What were the contextual factors that shaped Southeast Asian leaders in the pioneering era?
- What were the leadership practices that distinguished these Southeast Asian leaders?
- Are there common traits among them?
- Do the traits that make people effective societal leaders differ across socio-cultural and historical contexts?

¹ Arvey, R., Dhanaraj, C., Javidan, M., & Zhang, Z-X. (2015). Are there unique leadership models in Asia? Exploring uncharted territory. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 26, 1 - 6

² Liden, R. C. (2012) Leadership research in Asia: A brief assessment and suggestions for the future. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 29

Context

Whether Southeast Asia is in essence a subset of Asia or a region with its own identity is debatable. Recent scholarship on Southeast Asia³ has increasingly acknowledged the importance of studying Southeast Asia from a regional perspective. The rapid economic growth and prospect of the Southeast Asian region, freshly termed a “darling for foreign investors”⁴ have made studies in leadership in this part of the world a new and important focus.

As they stand today, the eleven Southeast Asian countries, namely Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam have little in common with each other. The unifying themes that make Southeast Asia a “region” are few and far between. Pre-colonisation times, the boundaries of Southeast Asia were not even defined. Thomas Suarez in a book, *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia: The Epic Story of Seafarers, Adventurers, and Cartographers Who First Mapped the Regions between China and India* recounted how Southeast Asia was, quite literally, put on the map, both in cartographic terms and as a literary and imaginative concept⁵.

Southeast Asia was already a thriving region during the period when Marco Polo skirted the region on his way to Europe from China in 1295. Unknown to the Europeans, a civilisation had already been flourishing in Cambodia based around Angkor, extending through much of what is now Thailand from the 9th to 15th centuries. This ancient civilisation was able to construct an irrigation system so sophisticated that they could ensure three rice harvests a year to feed more than one million people. During the 9th to 13th centuries, a splendid metropolis had already sprung up in Bagan or what is now Myanmar, and the temple mountain of Bayon was said to rival the magnificence of Angkor

when it was first built. In the north of Thailand, the Thai people too had established Chiang Mai, the principal city state of the Kingdom of Lan Na which lasted from the 13th to 18th centuries. The great maritime trading empire of Srivijaya also wielded unprecedented influence between the 7th and 13th centuries, largely in what is now Indonesia. The kingdom originated in Palembang on the island of Sumatra and soon controlled the Straits of Malacca. The empire had trade relations not only with the states in the Malay Archipelago but also with China and India.

Geographical differences mark the region with the proliferation of mainland and maritime or archipelago segments, mountain chains as well as depressions such as the Mekong Valley. Different religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and Confucianism are practised in each country. Ethno-linguistic and socio-cultural diversity prevails as with fundamentally conflicting political systems such as constitutional monarchies, democratic republics and socialist states.

One thing that the nations of Southeast Asia (except for Thailand) can be said to share, is a history of domination by foreign powers (either by the Spanish, French or British), and dark periods such as the second World War which coincided very much with the Japanese Occupation as well as the subsequent struggle for nationhood. Vietnam was the first to gain independence from colonial domination in 1945. The Philippines followed in 1946, Burma in 1948, Indonesia in 1949, Cambodia in 1953, Laos in 1954 and Malaysia in 1957. Singapore attained self-government in 1959 and independence in 1965.

Many of the leaders interviewed in this study lived through this period, and are in their seventies and eighties now. They have survived the Second World

³ Scholars taking this view include Hans-Dieter Evers, Amitav Acharya and Don Emmerson (see Reference)

⁴ Canada, H. (2014). Conflicts aside, investors look to Southeast Asia. Private Equity Beat, *Asia Wall Street Journal*, 14 May 2014.

⁵ Suarez, T. (1999) *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia: The Epic Story of Seafarers, Adventurers, and Cartographers Who First Mapped the Regions Between China and India*. Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd

War and the Japanese Occupation. Many were directly involved in the fight for their country's independence and ascent as a nation. The cultural beliefs and values their society hold dear have deeply influenced their worldview. The historical forces that have swept through their nation have also shaped their leadership practices.

The interviewees can be classified under four broad categories:

- Top civil servants or government officials, namely Mr Joseph Conceicao, Mr Herman Hochstadt, Dato Alimin Wahab, Mr Michael Wong Pakshong Mr Ramon Navaratnam and Mr Nguyen Khac Huynh;
- Politicians including Cabinet Ministers, Presidents and Prime Ministers, namely PM Chuan Leekpai, President Fidel Ramos, President SR Nathan, Deputy PM Somsavat Lengsavad; Dr Emil Salim, Dr Arifin Siregar and Mr Dominic Puthucheary;
- Social activists, namely Mdm Chea Vannath, Mdm Pung Chhiv Kek, Mr Goenawan Mohamad and Mr Ko Ko Gyi
- Business tycoons, namely Mr Ciputra, Mr Mochtar Riady and Mdm Kartini Muljadi.

Out of the twenty, one is from Brunei, two from Cambodia, six from Indonesia, one from Lao PDR, two from Malaysia, one from Myanmar, one from the Philippines, four from Singapore, one from Thailand and one from Vietnam. Their profiles are provided in the Annex.

Defining Traits of Pioneer Southeast Asian Leaders

Method

Over a period of nine months, video interviews averaging 60 to 90 minutes each were conducted with twenty senior leaders across Southeast Asia. The interviewees were selected from among the most well regarded and respected of leaders that the Institute for Societal Leadership had access to. Interviewers were selected for each subject based on their prior knowledge of the interviewee and background research was done before each recording. The profiles and transcripts from each interview were imported into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software. Coding was done on the leadership traits or practices that surfaced during the interviews whenever leadership situations or references were made. These were then organised into categories or clusters of traits.

Clusters of Traits

From the analysis of the twenty interviews, the clusters of traits that our interviewees exemplified or have identified as behavioural traits they admire in leaders of their time, in order of frequency, are as follows:

- single-mindedness and drive (101 mentions across 20 interviews)
- being adept at strategy (120 mentions across 20 interviews)
- being values-driven and principled (66 mentions out of 20 interviews)
- having a humble disposition (70 mentions out of 19 interviews)

Single-minded and Driven

Single-mindedness and drive, as a construct, encompasses the most prominent traits that define many of the Southeast Asian leaders, politicians, social activists, business leaders and government officials alike. In many of their narratives, what came through strongly were their *ability to inspire and lead a movement, a strong sense of purpose, determination to*

succeed and belief in their cause, persistence and fortitude, daringness to take risks, courage and willingness to sacrifice for their cause including the *tenacity to hang on to one's beliefs, vision and values in spite of challenging circumstances.*

Ko Ko Gyi was an activist during the 1988 anti-government protests and the demonetization of the kyat. He marched the streets to protest against high fuel prices in Myanmar. Admitting his fear of being incarcerated, he underscored how the cause superseded personal concerns, not just for him but for his comrades:

At the very beginning we were afraid to spend our lives in prison. This is very natural. But if we cannot move forward who else will save our country? That's why we encouraged our friends and each other to go on.

Imprisoned multiple times over a period of 17 years, he described how he coped physically and mentally:

(I was) sometimes so very lonely (when) I remember my past experiences during my student life. Of my friends, of my family... but all the time I tried to remind myself to never surrender, to try to survive physically and mentally. I always tried to exercise every day before taking my bath, or always tried to meditate in the prison. At that time we had no chance to hold any piece of paper. This was a severe punishment. But I wanted to learn eagerly more and more. So that's why I secretly tried to take articles from The Times or Newsweek... always hiding from one place to another.

Another social activist, Goenawan Mohamad who has had his pro-democracy magazine, *Tempo* banned by the Indonesian government more than once recounted his campaign against the control of press freedom and cultural expression:

A minister of the government, Suharto's, asked me, "why did you refuse to compromise?" And I said, because of my self-respect. And he was shocked. And maybe that was my motivation. I didn't really think about it, before. But there was a time also when Prabowo and his family offered to bail out *Tempo* with the condition that they would control *Tempo* and we refused.

His persistence enabled him to revive *Tempo* again after the fall of Suharto and he went on to found Lontar, a non-profit organisation to promote the translation and publication of Indonesian literary works with writers such as Sapardi Djoko Damono, Umar Kayam, and Subagio Sastrowardoyo. Goenawan Mohamad established the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), an association of independent journalists in Indonesia that promotes press freedom in 1994 and the Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information (ISAI), which produced alternative media intended to circumvent censorship in 1995.

Exercising his social activism from the civil service sector, Cabinet Minister Ramon Navaratnam, after serving more than three decades in the Malaysian government service in key positions expounded the need for equity in society:

If we did not use pressure to have an inequitable society, for example, to evade or avoid tax, how do you expect to help the poor? And if the poor do not feel included, no inclusive development, especially in our country and ASEAN as a whole, we will not be a progressive region. We will deteriorate as many countries have. We have resources in abundance. Somehow or rather, we must point out weak or dishonest leadership.

When asked what his motivation was in fighting battles that have been stacked against him, having been the target of some threats, his response was a feisty one:

I have always been critical in my heart that people don't speak up. I am a Christian. Speak up, speak out, tell the truth. As long as I am not dishonest, abrasive, not rude, why can't I say what I want to say if it is of general public interest. I can't criticize other people for not speaking up when I don't speak up. Firstly I am a civil servant. I want to be civil. Number two, you tell me to do it, what are you doing? Everybody in Malaysia, Singapore, ASEAN, must play a role. You cannot be pointing a finger at others but not yourself. So that is my motivation. Be true to yourself. Practise what you preach. You want others to learn from your example for what it's worth, live up to your

example or your expectation of others and your society.

Former Deputy Prime Minister of Lao PDR, Somsavat Lengsavad, recounted how he and his comrades dropped everything to join the fight for national independence under the command of the much revered first president of Lao PDR, Kaysone Phomvihane. He described his decision to join the fight as a natural one:

Given the situation at that time, I, together with eight colleagues left our families, (and) school, to join the revolution. When I left for the North, I was very lucky to become secretary to the commander of the northern part. I helped the commander lay out the fighting plan for the political stronghold. I helped him mobilise the people to have a sense of patriotism and to set up guerrilla tactics, among the villagers. I think we must remain firm and must sacrifice everything for the people and nation. During the struggle, I had self belief that I wouldn't die because I fought for a just cause, for the nation and people.

This doggedness and sense of self-belief was also echoed in Nguyen Khac Huynh's narrative of how the Viet Cong triumphed over the American forces during the Vietnam War:

We had a characteristic in Vietnamese army, in the fight with the French and later with the Americans. When we were fighting, we all knew that we would win. Definitely would win, albeit all the hardships. At the time we couldn't know it would take 10 years or 15 years. We didn't think about that. We just knew for sure that it would take a long time. A long fight, but definitely a victorious fight.

Lamenting the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge, but not betraying the slightest animosity, Chea Vannath exhibited an equally strong and admirable resolve. The advice of the former Director of the Centre for Social Development that organises public debates on the Khmer Rouge tribunals, corruption and social justice was one of persistence:

Never give up. It takes time. It's a very slow process to change mindset. We were in a war-torn society. People did not trust anybody. No trust - like in any war-torn society. I understood that very much - the perseverance, the commitment. For me, the success is the challenge - the commitment, the result, I don't care about the result. It's the process that counts. I don't set the results.

Persistence and fortitude were hallmarks too, of the

three very successful Indonesian business tycoons, Mochtar Riady, Ciputra and Mdm Kartini Muljadi. Ciputra left his hometown of Manado to go to Java to complete high school:

When I finished my school, I have only one motorcycle. But I have an idea of entrepreneurship. I (went to) see Soemarno, the Governor of Jakarta - What kind of money do I own? I said, "Look, we look to another businessman who would have... who would have money." But actually, they also have small money. But I wrote to the bank. I have Soemarno, the Governor behind me, the businessman is my partner. So they trust me, they give me money.

Few people, including Mochtar Riady's own father, thought that entrepreneurship was the way to the future. Mochtar Riady persisted, nonetheless:

So my father, he did not believe that I'm be able to be the banker because we are not rich men, we are living in the village and he doesn't think that I have such a capability to be the banker. But I convinced them in the banking business is not selling money but it is selling trust as long as I have the trust, I'm be able to be the banker.

Born in an era where Indonesian women were not to just stay at home, Kartini Muljadi, who rose to be a top judge and businesswoman in Jakarta recalled her teenage years, of how she insisted on learning martial arts and then joining the student army which was set up to fight the Japanese occupation of their land:

The student army, they were groupings of students, (who would) try whatever we can, (to take) action against the Japanese at that time. No arms. Everybody made his or own weapons from bamboo which we sharpened at the end. But for myself and my brothers, early on, my father has in fact engaged a ballet teacher for me, I did not like that because it hurt my toes, so I asked to join my brother in martial arts.

Former Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, in his interview, referred to the fortitude and political will needed in seeing his policies through:

When we first adopted the milk policy, people said: Drink Chuan's milk. Children studying in kindergarten and students in Grade 1-4 got to drink milk every day. This was important, in my opinion, although many people told me the policy wouldn't benefit me politically because those children couldn't vote. So I said to them: those children would grow to be very important for Thailand in the future and their

physique, as well as brain must be good and better than ours. The Budget Bureau then gave us some money to provide those children with milk for free, resulting in a considerable change to the country's human resource development.

In the Philippines, Fidel Ramos took the plunge in 1986 when, as Chief of Constabulary and Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces responsible for enforcing martial law under President Marcos, (who happened to be his second cousin), he led the People Power Revolution. As military leader of the new revolution, he explained why his conscience prompted him towards the decisive step to rebel and take the lead:

The constitution called for our enforcing the legal laws of the country. But when we perceived that some of the commands coming from above were no longer legal based on the constitution or our system of laws, but already personal in nature, that's when I think the greater part of us in the Armed Forces rebelled. And it had to be me to gather them, mobilise them and inspire them to join the ranks of the rebels.

As to whether going against the political grain was a decision he made at the spur of a moment, he asserted that it happened over a period of time.

It developed over, say (a) period of three or four years. And the favourable circumstances to break away happened when Mr Marcos declared to the world that in order to remove the complaints against my administration, which was a martial law administration by that time, on its 14th year, he said, "we will have a snap election" in February 1986.

Adept at Strategy

Apart from having the vision and exhibiting courage of conviction and a daringness to take risks, the leaders interviewed exercised a high level of strategic thinking. The term "adept at strategy" is used to refer to their *practical mindset* and *ability to see things in perspective*, especially with *historical sensitivity* and *an appreciation of the long view*. Being adept at strategy in these broad contexts also means being *able to grasp cultural nuances* and knowing *how best to communicate with people to draw them to support a cause*.

Former Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai summed it up very succinctly when he said that it is "crucial for a state leader to study the country's history across various issues and gain a thorough understanding of the country's background." With reference to the continual

skirmishes in the Deep South, he compared his government's management of the ethnic tensions when he was in power, with the mishandling during Thaksin's time, which has caused the tensions to exacerbate:

The leader should be thoughtful and realise that any national security policy isn't a tool for experiment. We can almost say that the issue in southern Thailand dated back to the Ayutthaya era. It has improved gradually. During the time of absolute monarchy, the kings had a particular policy to govern the South, for example, the six-clause administrative policy under King Rama VI, which is still up-to-date. It shows the king in the past knew the country's history as well as how to govern that particular area in Thailand. Not until Thailand adopted a democratic system and elections did the issue in the Deep South get mishandled. The government didn't really understand the situation and as a result adopted a new approach not subject to good governance. They took an extrajudicial approach by killing people. That is partially why the 2007 Constitution included a change to the 1997 charter in Section 3, Paragraph 2, where it states that all the civil servants - legislative, judicial and administrative - as well as those in other organisations must perform their duty with respect to good governance.

To him, "the situation was mishandled in 2001 when the government carried out extra-judicial killings and dissolved various organisations that made up an effective part of state mechanisms, mistaking the problem for other border issues that don't need special organisations to solve". This was "a great mistake" that has resulted in a group of Muslims forming the network known as the Runda Kumpulan Kechil (RKK). Clashes between the RKK and the authorities have since then led to more than 6,000 casualties.

As a keen strategist, Chuan Leekpai was successful in positioning Thailand as a trusted and contributing member for peace in the region. One example he cited, of the role Thailand played in reinforcing ASEAN unity and easing regional tensions involved joint military exercise between Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the United States:

There are certain issues that I can't share as they involved national security of some countries. However, what happened later were in our favour and that's because we trusted each other and were straight-forward. We were able to ease regional tensions and promote coordination by dealing with the matters straightforwardly and paying attention to our neighbouring countries. Malaysia, for example, has military observers in the Cobra Gold

exercise. Originally there were Singaporean military observers but not Malaysians. I was the one who proposed that Malaysia should be included as well. We carried out the exercise and Singapore sent its observers. At that time, the two countries were not on good terms with each other. It didn't look great for us to carry out the exercise with Singapore and the US, but not Malaysia. More importantly, I thought (about) how we could engage and cooperate with other ASEAN nations as well. Eventually, I told then Army commander-in-chief General Mongkol to invite Malaysia. I then proceeded to talk to Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir in person, and I asked if he was interested in joining us in the exercise. If you do, send your military observers. So that's how Malaysia has military observers in the Cobra Gold exercise.

According to him, many decisions that he made were not only based on Thailand's benefits but were taken in consideration of other nations and worked to "create trust". This ultimately worked out well for Thailand because when there is a problem, the countries will see Thailand as their ally.

Fidel Ramos, in handling the crisis of the Muslim separatists in Mindanao, exhibited the same sensitivity and awareness of cultural history. In his interview, he shared how seeing to the practical needs of the Muslims rebels in the south and understanding their aversion to "selling their arms" enabled him to win over their trust and confidence:

A very important aspect of that was the bringing in of firearms in the possession of Muslim rebels, New People's Army communist insurgents and the rebel soldiers. And we felt, I felt, because we had been doing this, even before I was Chief of Staff and the Secretary of Defense, we must give a financial aspect to the programme which would help these rebellious soldiers of various colours pursue a livelihood of dignity and of course, a little adequacy. Their three meals a day, the education of their children, and the dignified place in the community, and so we established what we call "Balik Baril" or "return firearm programme." We knew it was dishonourable for Muslims to sell their firearms, the same with our rebel soldiers and the communist insurgents. So we devised a programme where an assault rifle, say an AK47 or an M16 could be used as the collateral for a loan from the Philippine National Bank. We gave a loan value to this very sophisticated firearm - automatic, foreign-made. At that time, 20,000 pesos or roughly 850 dollars because the exchange rate was 26 pesos to one US Dollar.

Fidel Ramos testified to the fact that the government collected thousands of very good automatic firearms over a period of four years and as far as he knew, none of the integrated insurgents or rebels after they joined the Armed Forces and the Police ever shot a fellow soldier or killed a Christian officer or went amok killing Christians because they were Muslims.

A sense of history and respect for where a culture has been came through very strongly for Somsavat Lengsavat as well. His approach to rallying the Lao Patriotic Front members to the cause was to "sensitise" people to the political struggle for liberation and independence by reminding them of their history:

I informed the people the reason why Laos has abundant natural resources and why the people remained poor despite of that. I told them the history of Laos since King Fa Ngum, since he created the Lan Xang kingdom until the new generation, the period of King Sourigna Vongsa and King Anuvong. I told them of the cause that impeded national development - because of foreign aggression. I told them there is no way out of poverty except if we waged a struggle together.

The person he admires most is the first President of Lao PDR Kaysone Phomvihane. This was because the latter had "far-sighted vision" and was always alert:

He was able to get acquainted with the circumstances and history of the nation. He also knew about what happened around the world. He told me if you don't know national history, you wouldn't be able to formulate policy and you wouldn't know for whom.

Holding a long view of things and being able to put things in perspective has differentiated some of these senior Southeast Asian leaders and enabled them to exude the wisdom that comes from deep reflection and experiences. Cheah Vannath explained what made her choose the path of a peace activist rather than a crusader for justice for the victims of the Khmer Rouge:

I feel that if we could, avoid war - because in war, we cannot claim loser or winner - all are losers, the whole Cambodia, not just that generation but the generation to come was traumatised by their parents' experience. We still have lots of mental illness until now - the wounds and memories are still fresh up till now. How did we fall into that trap? That's why it pushed me to spend on what I feel to be a peace activist - activist not in the sense of ideology but based on the law of nature.

When asked about her experience and escape from the Khmer Rouge, she talked about how she was at the brink of death due to starvation and disease:

I almost died - what people called agony - the last stage before death. I did not feel pain - I accepted that. I put my palm against my chest and prayed for the mercy of Buddha. I accept that law of nature - of life and death. I did not protest or agonise or anything. It's just instinct, no pain, nothing.

It was only when the Khmer Rouge came to arrest her husband that she decided they had no choice but to escape and join her sister-in-law at a refugee camp in Thailand. What motivated her to return after a successful career in the United States where she finally ended up, was a sense of destiny and desire to contribute to the future of her home country:

I feel that in the US, I was an asset to the society but without me, US don't lose anything but if I come to Cambodia, what I do can affect change for the country. Cambodia needs human resource to rebuild.

When asked to comment on how bringing the Khmer Rouge to the discussion table was seen by many as not the right thing to do, she reiterated that "the trial is not the answer":

The answer is the reconciliation. If we want to build a better future and build the past, the Khmer Rouge themselves have to be part of the process. To discuss peace without them will be nothing. That's why I ask them to join in the public forum with people from all walks of life. What they want and how they feel about the reconciliation. I did it with no resentment at all. I feel it was just what I need to do, no joy, no sorrow. From some people's point of view, some people accuse me of stirring things up. There is no reason behind (my action), I just did it for the sake of the country.

Strategy took on a different and more aggressive form in the case of the Viet Cong fighting the Americans during the Vietnam War. Nguyen Khac Huynh, in explaining the triumph of Ho Chih Minh's army over the Americans, underscored the fact that they knew for certain that the American people would help (them) in the fight against the American army.

Vietnam's war with America has two fronts. One front is in Vietnam, the other is within America. Ho Chi Minh said that, and we followed that lesson, and we contributed in promoting the anti-war movement of the American people.

In the Vietnamese delegation, we divided ourselves into two groups - one would directly participate in the negotiation and research on the strategies; the other would receive international guests. With journalists from Sweden, France, America, Britain, all coming, we needed to receive them each time we contributed to promoting the anti-war movement. So the anti-war movement in America and in the world grew stronger and stronger, increasing the pressure on the American government. The pressure also came from Vietnam, from the frontline and from the negotiation table.

He also explained why strategically, Vietnam's fight against the United States had to be long-drawn:

If Vietnam had followed a "short-term war" policy, fighting to win battles, we could have lost to the US. Hence, we had to make it a "long-term war", so that the American troops would get tired and the American people would start protesting, hence making the enemy weaker.

To the former militant turned diplomat, a leader must have three attributes: a grasp of the situation, proper policies and methods to implement the policies:

So the first one is to analyse, to grasp the situation. Analyse what is going to happen next. The leader must be able to see what is going to happen. What possibilities, and among the possibilities, what is the worst-case scenario. All of that needs analysis. A leader that doesn't know how to calculate for possibilities is a bad leader. A good leader knows how to calculate and analyse which possibilities are likely to happen. And when it happens, how to react.

Strategies also featured prominently in the pioneering work of many of the government leaders interviewed.

Even as a doctoral student in Berkeley, Emil Salim, who was later to become Cabinet Minister in the Indonesian government understood that the "main theme" for the future of Indonesia is to put their economic house in order first before they venture into the other fields:

Put the house in order means put the household of the government in order and the household of the government is the budget... have a real budget. Because at that time we don't have a budget. And then money supply, real goods supply, inflation and so on, its these elementary things, which basically moved to the direction, you must control the budget, you

must have a balanced budget, and so on, and then to foreign trade.

As Minister for the Environment he was more focused on resource development rather than exploitation. Upon realising that his own colleagues such as the Minister for Forestry were working against him, he worked on growing friends from the NGOs, and among the intellectuals, to preserve the peatlands instead of transforming these into palm oil plantations to create more export earnings.

I have to explain that peatland has a function - to contain the CO₂. And CO₂ is nuisance to the quality of life. But it's vague, it's abstract when you talk about CO₂, while people know that palm oil can make money. But then, second problem is in the long run, peatland through the exploitation of palm oil degrades the land. So at the end of the road, the land will be spoiled, totally spoiled, and even palm oil cannot grow any more because of this reduction of water that goes down. Then you have barren land, so you create wasteland, but not now, but after 25, 30 years.

Although he himself held a long-term perspective of the future of the country, he conceded that "talking about 30 years to people who live today is talking about something that is difficult to understand" as "it is long term, it is sustainable, it is not giving you direct money".

Herman Hochstadt, a long-time permanent secretary with the Singapore government spoke of how he learnt a vital lesson from Singapore's founding father, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. He told of how he would follow Prime Minister Lee as he engages his constituencies to rally the crowd to his cause for the merger with Malaysia:

And I had to follow him around all the constituencies, 51 constituencies, every one he used to give a talk. We had to organise platform stages and he would stop and give a talk and all that. And the ground level, I felt that it wasn't really all in favor (of merger) because many were still worked up against Malaysia. Various problems, resettlement problems. But I could see though, when we went down to places like Potong Pasir, he'd stand there. Stand there and give a talk, and when he started, you could feel the antagonism in the air. By the time he finishes, he's such a good persuader that the people clapped and even the old women would come and kneel in front of him. It came to the way of persuading, you can move the ground the way you want to, but he did that all because this is for the benefit of the people in the long run. Now you may not accept, you think it is bad

thing, but in the long run this is for your benefit, but you know, you can still turn the tide around.

Business tycoon Mochtar Riady had clear strategies in mind when he approached Liem Sioe Leong to be his partner to set up Bank Central Asia, which was to become the largest private bank in Indonesia. As Liem had very close ties with President Suharto, he advised the former against mixing business with politics:

I just persuade him (Liem) not to receive money from the government's side particular is the *yayasan*... is a foundation, government foundation fund. I prefer to pull the money from the small people so just like sand. This is my philosophy. So I like to have a business from the businesses at large but not depend on very few people they have money that's including the government fund management something like that. So keep distance from the government-run business, government-owned entity.

During the 1991 economic crisis, he received four pieces of land as collateral when companies that owed money to the bank did not have the finances to pay back. His approach was to develop each piece of land after studying the location and potential:

So after having the study and then I make the decision, I make this land as middle-class up, I call it high-end society residential real estate. These are high-end. So what make a high-end to middle class and the low end is now depend on three factors, number one is education. You have to have a good school here otherwise the rich people didn't want to come. So particularly at that time here Indonesia, we don't have a good school so, so many people, rich people they send their children to go to Singapore. So I build up this SPA International School and hire more than 130 American teachers to come over here and then I build a very modern building, school building so it became the best school in Asia at the time. So this attract the people to move here because of their children's education. And secondly because here is far away from city so we have to have a hospital and we combined with the Gleneagles Singapore to set up the Siloam Hospital. And that means we provide very good hospital for the citizens here. And then also we have to have good shopping mall. So these are the three major supporting facilities.

His strategic vision for his business conglomerate and Indonesia is to be able to engage China as he predicts

that China will soon hit a plateau in its infrastructural growth:

So, under such a situation or circumstance, the only way is for China to move out their industry capacity to the neighboring country so one of their potential buyer or candidate is Indonesia. The only country (that) can help China to overcome their over capacity is Indonesia. So that means in the next 20 years, Indonesia will be the country that will build up many infrastructure and economy. That is my vision.

Values-driven and Principled

Values are key factors that contribute towards the Southeast Asian leaders' credibility and effectiveness. Almost all of the interviewees highlighted the need to *guard integrity* and *maintain a strong work ethic*. Only then can they inspire trust in their supporters and stakeholders. Some also raised the value of *admitting mistakes readily* so that they can remain true to their values and instill trust in their followers. Many stood up for justice and have a strong sense of national pride, constantly putting *service to others before self*. The social injustice that they had personally experienced in their early years tended to be the impetus for their strong social commitment and drive to succeed.

Former Indonesian Cabinet Minister Emil Salim recalled the awakening he received when he realised that he was treated very differently from his childhood friends because they were white and he was brown:

I could not enter the clubhouse. I could not drink together (with them). So then I realised, there's something different between me and the white people. So I asked my father, what is wrong, why am I not allowed to enter the clubhouse. He said, because we are not Indonesians. You are nobody, you don't have a country, you don't have a nation. You're nobody. You're an inlander, it's called. Son of the land but (you do) not own the land. But then my father told me - your colour must be brown, but your brain power is not. So show in class, that in spite of the colour of your skin, that you are smarter than the others. That pushed me very hard to become a kind of a champion in the class. So every time if there's a chance to show your ability, for instance, there's a kind of an opportunity to win a reward.

Dominic Puthucheary, Malaysian Member of Parliament who was founder Vice-President of Barisan Socialis and later on, Vice President of Gerakan experienced firsthand, the cruelty of the Japanese. He personally witnessed how his own father was arrested by the

Japanese, then taken to the Kempetai and sentenced to death there. The experience caused him, very early on in life, to be concerned not just with independence but the alleviation of poverty and the need for an Asian revolution. He and his brother were very influenced by Subhas Chandra Bose's campaign for Indian liberation. James joined the Burma Front and then the anti-colonial movement in Malaysia. He joined the Army of the Youth.

Dominic Puthuchery maintained objectivity and a high standard of professionalism in his career and that had earned him trust among the political elite in Malaysia. He recounted the role he played in explaining the constitutional monarchy in an incident that involved Dr Mahathir who was Prime Minister at that time. Dr Mahathir was under tremendous pressure and unfairly criticised for his comments on the conduct of certain members of the royal family. Dominic Puthuchery's opinion was that Dr Mahathir needed support and the best support he could give him, as a lawyer, was to present the facts correctly and objectively:

I was invited to Dr M's house for a dinner hosting the visiting Thai PM. There were very important civil servants from all sectors there. The discussion was about the impending constitutional changes that M was proposing. All the top civil servants were against him. I realized how misconceived their views were and how urgent it was for me to put things down in writing so that the PM would have an understanding of the constitution the way I see it. So I went back and started writing. My Gerakan party held the same views that the civil servants had and they were so pro-royalty. I then contacted the PM's Special Assistant and I gave the copy to him for the PM. I received a note that I should speak after the PM spoke and after Lim Kit Siang spoke, I spoke - rule of law, role of monarchy, democracy. It was very well received.

Objectivity and impartiality were also rules that Goenawan Mohamad played by, when he founded *Tempo*.

We wanted to have a different kind of journalism. You know the language, the Indonesian language, which is very important for us, during Suharto's time - there were a lot of slogans, acronyms, repeated slogans, acronyms and clichés. So we wanted to liberate the language actually. We wanted to have more lively, free expression. And it also implies that we want to have more ways of expressing ourselves. So *Tempo* in a way, is trying to liberate Indonesian journalism from these clichés, freedom in language, also from the temptation of fixed ideas. That's why our

way of telling stories are different. And we modelled ourselves after *Time* magazine, *Newsweek*, and also in France, *L'Express* and *Der Spiegel* in Germany. That's the ideology. It was not political in a sense, but it was also political in other senses. Political in the sense of wanting to liberate things for public liberty.

A strong sense of social responsibility and the need for leaders to play a part to build their community was something ingrained in all the interviewees. A few, for instance, had given up their career in the private sector when approached to return home to serve their people.

Arifin Siregar, former Minister for Transport and Governor of the Bank of Indonesia, was pursuing his career with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) officer when he was recalled to serve in the Indonesian government:

I was asked by the group of Widjojo to come home because they said that they needed my services... to devote my services to the Indonesian government. And at that time, I must say I liked my job with the IMF. The assignment there was very challenging and very interesting but then I agreed to go back to Indonesia at the end of 1971. And there I worked together with the group which later on was known as Widjojo's group or some people called it Berkeley's group, Berkeley Mafia. I became then, at that time, the Deputy Governor, Central Bank.

Having completed a stint as CEO of Petroleum Brunei and Chairman of Royal Brunei Airways, Dato Alimin Wahab currently runs the biggest non-profit organisation in Brunei, Pusat Ehsan, which serves children with mixed disabilities. Brunei's former Permanent Secretary for Education and Defence holds tight to a basic philosophy:

Great leaders give themselves to the community. We become what we are because of the community. Leaders must have the tenacity to pull through. You come back to the issue of popularity - I don't feel that would be an end to itself.

Cheah Vannath, having escaped to the United States during the Khmer Rouge regime returned willingly, to work on reconciliation:

I just feel the sense of duty - what I need to do. I feel strongly this sense of duty because before the Khmer Rouge, I was born in a family where I do not need to worry about whether I live or survive. I took that for granted. I did not know another world - the world that could not

afford. I feel that for the country, we had the politicians who did it - but when the whole thing collapse, it was a wake-up call for me. I trust the leaders, the politicians, maybe I got the wrong perception about trusting. From now on, I need to get involved, to be part of the process. If something happens, bad or good, I am involved - the Khmer Rouge episode that woke me up.

Her compatriot, human rights advocate, Pung Chhiv Kek, learnt that keeping the faith with her people was key to earning their trust. She learnt this very early in life from her mother who was campaigning for a seat in government among factory workers:

In Kandal, there were few factories and my mother knew pretty well that most of the workers were women so she addressed the women and said, "I know that you did the same work as men but you didn't have the same salary. So I promise you that if you vote for me, I will do all my best to get the same salary." And then another thing that she promised was maternity leave. "Most of you have children and if the owner of the factory cut your salary, it's not at all good so I promise that if I'm elected, you will have the full salary during the three months of maternity leave." And for these two reasons she was elected and she was appointed as Minister of Social Action and she put her promise into consideration, into force.

To Ramon Navaratnam, a good leader is someone who serves the people to the best of his ability, with integrity, intelligence and consultation. "Even from fisherman and farmer", he said, "you can learn a lot of wisdom":

If you are honest, have an open mind and listen and are determined to take the necessary action, whether popular or not, people will rally around you. People will know you are sincere and serve their best interest, not your own interest.

Integrity and strong ethics and governance were what distinguished the tenure of the politicians like Chuan Leekpai and Fidel Ramos. Chuan Leekpai reported that one of the Cabinet resolutions undertaken by his government in 1999 was aimed at urging both the public and private sectors to exercise good governance in their organisations so as to prevent political crises from happening again.

When I was Prime Minister, some ministers were suspicious to the public. I told my subordinates personally and directly not to be

involved in any corruption, as I wouldn't be able to protect them. I said no matter who it would be, politicians or civil servants, I wouldn't be able to protect any corrupt person. I said, however, if they worked with honesty, I would protect them.

He also ensured to the best of his ability that social justice prevailed:

If the rich break the law, they must be sentenced; the same applies to the poor. Poor people aren't always less happy than rich people; they may earn less but they can have a better life. The fact that they have to work and live economically doesn't mean their way of living is inferior to that of the rich. What they must be given equally though is legal justice. For me, this always remains true.

A strong sense of social justice was what drove Fidel Ramos to declare the army's withdrawal of support from President Marcos in support of the Minister for National Defence, Juan Ponce Enrile. He judged that the President "had gone astray" and "abused his powers":

That's a matter of conscience. The constitution called for our enforcing the legal laws of the country. But when we perceived that some of the commands coming from above were no longer legal based on the constitution or our system of laws, but already personal in nature, that's when I think the greater part of us in the Armed Forces rebelled. And it had to be me to gather them, mobilise them and inspire them to join the ranks of the rebels.

Civil servant Herman Hochstadt attributed the economic success of Singapore to the strict adherence to the principle of incorruptibility established by its first prime minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. He told of how when he was recruiting for the civil service, there would be occasions when applicants would offer money in return for a favour in getting them a job. In order to educate a young man who did so, he went to the extent of getting the head of the Corruption Bureau to call up the young man to give him warning rather than let it pass.

And he... the PM in those days would walk around the constituencies and tell, say you know about the corruption and all that he'd say "if I take money from somebody, my ministers will take money, my Permanent Secretaries will take money and my postmen will take the stamps off the letter". These are examples that go down to the ground, so these, I think, are things that were very, very important.

As a young Member of Parliament, Joseph Conceicao

recalled how he was called up by Mr Lee Kuan Yew one day over inappropriate behaviour on the part of staff in his constituency:

I went to his office. He was very polite, very charming and he passed a paper over to me. He said, "Read it." It was from the CPIB (Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau) you know. "You do something about it." It was about some people in my constituency showing dirty films in one of my branch office. So he said, "You do it." I went back and I did it. I did it, I sacked the fellas, wrote back to him, the matter was dropped.

As a businessman, Indonesian tycoon, Ciputra set his company staff strict rules to abide by:

One thing (I insist on) was that all our money we borrow, we use for the company. We don't use outside the company. And our company (function) with integrity, we don't have any overpricing. If we borrow from the bank, A, we spend A. Not borrow from the bank, spend B and the difference is in your own pocket. Ah you will be in trouble. That's why I said integrity is very important. We went to the bank to ask for a discount. They negotiated with us, we went to the contractor, "look, give us time to pay." "Ok, I give you time." Sometimes we pay with the land that we owned. "Ok, you take land." The buyer, they give already downpayment to us, we cannot finish. "Ok, you don't get one house. You order from us one house, but you will get two houses." Thus he's happy. We don't, I'm sorry. I never go to, we never go to the court. We never go to the court.

Business woman and top judge, Kartini Muljadi had clear advice for young Indonesian entrepreneurs:

Make the best product so that it can be successful. But number 1 (rule), stay honest. Don't be tempted by bribing, paying or receiving bribe and stay as much as possible within the truth.

When asked which were the most difficult cases she had to deal with as a judge, her response was that "every case is difficult":

You have to try in good faith and in an honourable way to reach a decision. This positive decision making, you get by training and then by get a sixth sense in which direction you have to take. But you have to set your direction that it is a professional, correct and honorable decision.

She admitted that as a judge during her time, she did not receive a salary that was adequate for the family. However, it was "a matter of principle" whether one wants to be corrupt or not. There had been clients who offered bribes but she would not take them, to model the right values and principles for her children and those around her:

Besides being very much afraid, of what the consequences could be frankly, yes, the second is we are not used to just trespassing the law. And I show that even though I'm not corrupt, I eat well, I live well, I dress well. And I'm happy and not afraid every minute that the police will come to pick me up.

In many instances, tough decisions had to be made where one's stand and values were tested. Those who earned the respect of their superiors and peers were the ones who showed courage of conviction.

Joseph Conceicao recounted how he opposed the bill for right to abortion that was passed in parliament while he was a Member of Parliament because of his own Catholic beliefs:

Every time you frustrate a child from being born, you're going against the very principle of life. That's what the abortion bill is all about, so I could not agree with it and I voted against it. The whip had been lifted... but even if the whip had been not lifted I have to vote against the bill.

As Singapore's ambassador to Indonesia, S R Nathan related the time he had to handle the crisis involving two Indonesian KKO's (Marine Corps) who were under trial in Singapore. They had exhausted all channels of appeal through the Privy Council and others and there was a tremendous amount of tension in Jakarta and the Singapore embassy "was sacked". Tension mounted when the Indonesian ambassador knocked on his door to ask for the bodies to be returned to the Indonesian embassy for the people to pay their respects. Mr Nathan maintained his position that under Singapore law, no honours would be due the offenders and that if the bodies are taken out of Singapore territory, the Indonesians can do what they like. Even though that incurred the wrath of the ambassador, Mr Nathan held the Singapore position and did not budge even though the ambassador used "a lot of businessmen from Chinatown and others who had Indonesian connections to threaten" him and warned that "there would be wider repercussions".

A Humble Disposition

What was common among many of the interviewees as

well as in the leaders they appreciate is a *humble disposition*. The term “humble disposition” encompasses *modesty in behaviour* and *an openness to learning from others*. Several of the pioneer leaders mentioned have learnt much from their difficult start in life. They value the cultivation of the intellect and are able to exude a kind of wisdom that comes from understanding collective aspirations and values.

President S R Nathan left home at an early age, after having been expelled from school, and had to fend for himself and eke out a living on his own in Ipoh. This, he claimed, made him grow up faster than he would otherwise have been able to. His journey to the Istana was a story of tenacity, fortitude and a lifetime of commitment to serving his country.

Having such an early childhood, you learnt about the good things in life, the bad things in life, you learnt about good people, you learnt about bad people. You learnt about things you should not do and which others were doing or misleading you to do. So you grew up ahead of your time. What somebody would have done over a period of 10 years, you probably learnt all the lessons within one or two years and you were more mature and ahead of your times. And then also in the early period you went through the Japanese occupation and you also learnt from that because you saw people in the raw. People were exploiting each other, people were getting some into trouble; others were saving others. So you come across the reality of life face to face.

When asked which was the toughest challenge he faced at the start of his civil service career, he admitted that no one was really prepared for the job of building a nation at independence:

You can't specifically say a job was the toughest, because we were all acting with little or no experience. The leaders were also learning on the job. And we were not an independent country before. We didn't have any of the institutions that countries had before they attained certain nationhood. We were just caught overnight and with no support services, no experienced people. So we were really struggling to do what we had to do, not knowing whether what we were doing was likely to succeed or likely to become more problematic.

Michael Wong Pakshong, when asked to start a Central Bank by the late Goh Keng Swee, was very humbled as he did not have any central banking experience. He was fortunate to have a team of people, who, though, junior, were open to learning from one another:

Well, we all knew that we were, in a way, beginners in central banking. And because of that we shared our knowledge so that we all became exposed to the various aspects of central banking. And they worked so well and I learned so much from them, and maybe they learned something from me, and it was a cooperative effort. And in my whole working career, that was the most exciting and exhilarating job I've ever had.

It was this humility of spirit and the willingness to listen to the ground that enabled the Central Bank or the Monetary Authority of Singapore to gain credibility and trust among the banks in Singapore and the region:

We were open to both local and foreign banks. And this we did by keeping our ears to the ground. For example, we started up discount houses, and this was headed by a very senior officer, and he listened and interviewed the discount houses who then told him what was going on in the banking and financial world. And then we introduced a series of lunches where, every Wednesday, we'd invite bankers to have lunch with us, and keep our ears open. It was a way of keeping in touch with the market to hear the latest scandal or, shall I say, embryonic scandals that might be building up. So, in that sense, we got to know the people. And once you got to know the people, you could explain to them officially, unofficially, what we wanted to do.

A humble demeanour was also what Bruneian civil servant Dato Alimin exuded when interviewed. Having just wanted to be a teacher, he felt that there are better brains in the government than his. He took on all the assignments that the government wanted him to, out of a sense of duty as well as the humility to learn on the job and contribute. His role model was the Sultan of Brunei whom he claimed was someone who is always respectful of his subjects and always punctual for appointments and meetings:

Underlying punctuality is respect. There is something about his (the Sultan's) humility we can talk about. Not even once, and bear that in mind, with all the functions you see happening in Brunei. I am very certain that whenever he agrees to a function, he will always be there. He works hard despite the fact that he has a very big family and a lot to take care of.

Cheah Vannath used the term “humble” to describe her own attitude when interacting with the Cambodian authorities and that had been the key to enabling her to communicate well with them and to advance the cause of her Centre:

Maybe it was my approach - I am always very humble, with anybody, especially with the authorities, I respect their role and responsibility. I express the truth. I don't mean to convince them to believe me, no, that's what I have to tell you and it's up to you - how you do it. I need not press anybody to do anything.

As a social advocate, Mdm Pung Chiv Kek, Cheah Vanath's compatriot gained trust mainly because of her humility. Her classmates never knew both her parents were cabinet ministers. Her parents had also taught her to "be nice with everybody especially with the poor, to be humble and very polite":

This is my reward, you know. They trust me, they respect me when they talk to me. I don't need to say respect me or trust me. No, no, no. When they have problems they come to me and then I encourage them and I am honest with them. If I don't know I said, you know, it's not because I went to France to study that I know everything. This I don't know, so let's find out together.

Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai recounted his approach to negotiating with the Americans on an issue over university fee hikes for Thai or overseas students in US colleges during the Asian financial crisis:

When President Clinton invited me over, I made several requests. I told the US government directly that those requests were necessary, including the issue of the tuition fee. Actually I also talked about that in England with then Prime Minister Tony Blair. The crisis also took me to a discussion table in Switzerland, where I said Thailand did not blame any party and that what had happened was a result of our country's weakness, which needed solving, to restore our strength and to prevent the crisis from occurring again. To solve the crisis, we needed to work with honesty and rationality within the rule of law; this is the principle the then Democrat-led government followed.

One of the Indonesian leaders whom Dr Emil Salim admired was Vice President Mohammad Hatta whom he described as an "intellectual":

Hatta was very keen to educate, rather than agitate. The difference between Hatta and Soekarno is - agitation by Soekarno, education by Hatta. Every Wednesday afternoon from 4 to 6, we had a meeting in his house. And there, the student leaders may have a free discussion with him, very intellectual, very free, you can ask any question. So, I was very much impressed. He is a man, Vice-President, and

yet, does not show that he is willing to use his power, but his intellectual mind. It strongly influenced me, that mind becomes very important. So, you have to study.

From President Suharto, Emil Salim learnt the Javanese way of non-confrontational communication. He recounted how he openly opposed an army general who proposed that Indonesia take on an expensive project to produce artificial rice in the presence of President Suharto; and how, when the meeting adjourned, he was pulled aside by Widjojo and told "how to get things through without hurting (other people's) feelings". Suharto himself followed on by giving him lectures on Javanese culture.

The leader whom Vietnamese veteran fighter, Nguyen Khac Huynh admires most was Ho Chi Minh, the revolutionary Communist leader who was prime minister and president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It was not merely because of the courage and vision of the former but his modesty:

Is there any other leader that, when he died, he didn't have any property of his own? Who? Can you find any other leader in the world, living a life like that, that when he said goodbye to this world, his hands were still clear? Anyone? Any leader in the world whose hands were clear of any property? Probably there is only Ho Chi Minh who, when he passed away, still had nothing of his own. Even until now, his hands are still clear, lying in the mausoleum. He had nothing of his own. That is the most incredible thing about Uncle Ho.

As can be seen from the wide range of traits that a humble disposition connotes, humility can be expressed in terms of a lack of arrogance and a strong respect and regard for others. It can also refer to an openness to other viewpoints as well as a high regard for the life of the intellect. As manifested in the life of strong and resolute leaders like Ho Chi Minh and Lee Kuan Yew, it also connotes a selfless devotion to one's country and a modest approach to wealth and possessions.

Insights on Societal Influence, Leadership and Impact

Significance of context

From the analysis of the interviews with the twenty Southeast Asian leaders, a few factors have emerged that define their leadership style, influence and impact. Firstly, the era in which the leaders found themselves and the social challenges they faced at the transitional stage of their nation's political and economic development have led the majority to seize the moment and rally people to unite for a worthy cause. A single-minded focus and resolve coupled with a good head for strategy helped many achieve their goals and create societal impact.

Early political leaders such as Dominic Puthuchery co-founded Barisan Sosialis with the aim of attaining, for their country, independence from the British. Nguyen Khac Huynh joined the Viet Cong to rid Vietnam of the Americans or American ideology, and Somsavat Lengsavat played an important role in the establishment of the Lao People Democratic Republic. In Indonesia and Myanmar, Goenawan Mohamad and Ko Ko Gyi were willing to sacrifice their freedom and life for the sake of democratic freedom and expression, in the face of oppressive governmental regimes. The social challenge was an impetus for action, for each of these leaders.

Significance of religious and cultural philosophy

The indigenous people of Southeast Asia are largely collectivist in their worldview, and have a strong affinity for group affiliation⁶. Values such as a strong sense of social justice, and a love for harmony and equality

drove many of the leaders interviewed. This nationalistic zeal and strong beliefs tended to have their roots in religious or cultural philosophies. Many of the leaders in the study are concerned with their role in the community, and gauge their success by the good they can do for their community at large – this is something that is rooted in Buddhist, Confucianist and ancient Indian philosophies. Cheah Vannath believed in reconciliation more than justice or retribution, in spite of her abhorrence of the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge. In her interview, she repeatedly referred to her Buddhist belief in the *natural cycle of life and death, and the law of nature and the need for equilibrium*.

The Chinese business leaders in Indonesia held a paternalistic view towards leadership. "Paternalistic" leadership, with its roots in Confucianism⁷ encompasses the concepts of authority, morality and benevolence.⁸ Mochtar Riady and Ciputra have both set up foundations and invested in educational institutions in Indonesia and abroad. Both worked hard to maintain a strong work ethic among their staff and family. Both believe in entrepreneurship as a way toward economic growth for their community and the commitment to "give back" serves as a moral obligation for those who are wealthy. An early influence in Kartini Muljadi's life was to have been involved in an organisation of practising lawyers called Candra Naya who gave pro-bono legal advice two days a week to people who could not afford lawyers. This was an organisation set up by the Chinese community and what they did was a social norm among the wealthy Chinese in Indonesian society. In highly hierarchical societies, such as Brunei and the Malay sultanates, there is an inherent belief in the benevolence of the leader

⁶ Liden, R. C. (2012). Leadership research in Asia: A brief assessment and suggestions for the future. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 29.

⁷ Chen, H.Y., & Kao, H.S.R. (2009). Chinese paternalistic leadership and non-Chinese subordinates' psychological health. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20.

⁸ McDonald, P. (2012). Confucian foundations to leadership: a study of Chinese business leaders across Greater China and South-East Asia. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 18 (4).

and trust that subjects have, that all in power will work towards social good.

Sensitivity to cultural norms and aspirations of the people

A third factor that success at the societal level necessarily hinges upon is how much a societal leader is able to live up to societal expectations, understands where his or her people have come from and is sensitive to the cultural norms and aspirations of the people. Pioneers of institutions such as Michael Wong Pakshong, Herman Hochstadt, Joseph Conceicao and SR Nathan gained understanding and wisdom from being on the ground, and treating the people they serve with respect. Political leaders such as Fidel Ramos, Somsavat Lengsavad and Chuan Leekpai gained the trust and confidence of their followers, peers and countrymen because they took time to understand history and were sensitive to human behaviour and needs. As with the successful businessmen and women, they modeled integrity, a strong work ethic and principles as well as a humble disposition that enabled them to earn the respect of those they led or have dealings with. These are definitely common traits that surfaced in the reports from people who knew them well. Because of their humility, they tended also to empower others to act, guard their welfare and involve them in decision-making. The wisdom that they exude arises from years of listening, observing and understanding human behaviour and wants, as well as an awareness of the moral principles or natural laws that govern the universe.

Conclusion

From the experience of the twenty societal leaders, we can see that there is definitely an abundant source of intellectual and cultural wisdom that traditional Asian leaders possess, which sometimes run counter to the more transactional and rationalistic foundations that characterise Western business practices. That said, leadership practices can no longer remain intuitive in the face of competition and the war for global talent. Asian leadership has traditionally been centred on an individual or a business family. In this age of globalisation, leadership has to extend beyond that to an institutional concept. The factors that have made Western corporations great, such as leading for organisational impact, change management and systematic talent management will be important concepts for Southeast Asian and Asian leaders to grasp but there is a lot Western institutions can learn from their Asian counterparts as well.

This study has attempted to delineate the contextual factors that have shaped Southeast Asian leaders in the

pioneering era. It has also highlighted, using evidence from the interviewees' recount of their leadership challenges, the practices that distinguished them as well as the key traits that they share. An extension of this study to involve a younger generation of Southeast Asian leaders will be necessary to ascertain if the traits that make people effective societal leaders differ across socio-cultural and historical contexts. As the Southeast Asian economies become more industrialised and globalised, it is predicted that cross-border adaptations will occur and when that happens, leadership practices may become more similar globally. It will be interesting in the study of leadership traits of Southeast Asian leaders, to establish whether the core values in Asian and Western cultures necessarily lead to different leadership styles, or whether the issue may be more about historical starting points. Would interviews with American business leaders, politicians and social activists in the period immediately after the civil war, for instance, surface similar traits? The next iteration of this study on Southeast Asian leaders will explore this more explicitly.

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Profiles of Interviewees (In alphabetical order)

1. Dato Alimin Wahab

Country

- Brunei

Early life

- Born 6 February 1947

Educational highlights

- 1972: BA (London)
- 1974: PGCE (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne)
- 1978: MA (Sussex)

Career highlights

- 1972-1977: Education Officer (Secondary school teacher, Principal)
- 1977: Superintendent of Secondary Education
- 1977-1980: Assistant Director, Security & Intelligence Officer
- 1980: Head, Training Unit, Brunei Administrative Service
- 1980-1982: Deputy Director, Radio Television Brunei
- 1983-1986: Civil Secretary (Royal Brunei Armed Forces)
- 1987-1991: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence
- 1992-1997: Permanent Secretary, Prime Minister's Office
- 1998-2001: Chairman, Royal Brunei Airways
- 2001-2003: CEO, Petroleum Brunei
- 2006-present: Senior Trustee at Pusat Ehsan, a private charity for children with mixed disabilities

2. Dr Arifin Siregar

Country

- Indonesia

Early life

- Born 11 February 1934 in Medan

Educational highlights

- 1956: Bachelor of Arts, Netherlands School of Economics, Rotterdam
- 1958: Master of Economics, Munster University, Germany
- 1960: PhD in Economics, Munster University, Germany

Career highlights

- 1961: Economist at United Nations General Bureau of Economic Research and Policies (New York)
- 1963: Founder, Economic Section of the United Nations Economic and Social Office, Beirut, Lebanon
- 1965: Economist, Asia Department of the IMF, Washington DC
- 1969-1971: IMF Representative in Laos as Financial Advisor/Monetary Government of Laos
- 1971: Director, Bank of Indonesia
- 1973-1983: Governor for IMF for Indonesia
- 1983-1988: Governor of Bank of Indonesia & Governor IDB for Indonesia
- 1988-1993: Minister of Trade
- 1993-1997: Ambassador to the US and Grenada
- Co-Chair of United States-Indonesia Society (USINDO)

3. Mdm Chea Vannath

Country

- Cambodia

Early life

- Born in 1943
- Daughter of a jeweller
- Married a physician who was a Major in the Cambodian army

Educational highlights

- Diploma in public financial management
- 1991: Masters in Public Administration from Portland State University (Oregon)

Career highlights

- Worked as fiscal officer in the treasury department
- 1975: forced to work in labour camps with her family when Khmer Rouge seized power
- 1980: escaped to Thailand, then Philippines
- 1981: left for America - San Francisco, then Oregon
 - o worked as coordinator for all organisations assisting refugees in America
 - o worked as board member of the Cambodian Network Council to preserve Cambodia's tradition and culture
- 1981-1990: programme monitor for International Refugee Center of Oregon and Southeast Asian Refugee Federation (in Oregon)
 - o Programme coordinator for Early Employment Project of the Metropolitan Community Action in Portland
 - o Programme specialist for Oregon State Refugee Program, Department of Human Resources
- 1992: returned to Cambodia
 - o translator for United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)
 - o Head of Financial Review and Compliance Unit, Asia Foundation - Cambodia (funded by US Agency for International Development)
- 1996: Vice President, Center for Social Development (CSD)
- 1998: President of CSD
 - o Promotes school curricula on transparency, monitors the courts and parliament
 - o Organises public debates on the Khmer Rouge tribunal, corruption and other issues
 - o Stepped down in 2006
- 1999: First to organise forums for ordinary Cambodians to express their experiences to say whether the trials should be held
 - o also invited Khmer Rouge members to participate to speak their minds
- 2005: nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

4. Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai

Country

- Thailand

Early life

- Ethnic Chinese, born 28 July, 1938
- Mother was a school teacher, father sold vegetables

Educational highlights

- Studied at Wat Amarintraram (temple school) in Bangkok
- 1962: Bachelor of Law at Thammasat University
- 1985: Honorary Doctorate (Political Science), Srinakarinwirot University
- 1988: Honorary Doctorate (Political Science), Ramkhamhaeng University

Career highlights

- 1969: Elected MP of Trang
- 1980: Minister of Commerce
- 1982-1983: Minister of Agriculture
- 1983-1986: Minister of Education
- 1986-1988: Speaker of the House of Representatives
- 1988-1989: Minister of Public Health
- 1989-90: Deputy Prime Minister
- 1990: returned to the Ministry of Agriculture
- 1991: leader of the Democratic party
- 20 September 1992 - 19 May 1995: Thai Prime Minister
 - o first prime minister to come to power without either aristocratic or military backing
 - o a key policy was constructive engagement with military government of Burma. Provoked much criticism but policy was much like previous administrations.
 - o Emphasis on national economic stability, decentralisation of administrative powers to rural provinces, fostering income, opportunity and economic development distribution to the regions.
 - o administration fell when members of the cabinet e.g. Suthep Thaugsuban, were implicated in profiting from Sor Phor Kor 4-01 land project documents distributed in Phuket province. Fierce public and press criticism and dissolution of Parliament were the reasons for his administration's downfall
- 9 November 1997 - 9 February 2001: Thai Prime Minister
 - o assumed power following the fall of the Chavalit Yongchaiyut administration, which was held responsible for the economic crisis in 1997
- 2003: stepped down as head of the Democrat Party

5. Mr Ciputra

Country

- Indonesia

Early life

- Born 1931 as Tjie Tjin Hoan

Educational highlights

- 1960: Bachelor in Architectural Engineering, Bandung Institute of Technology
- 2008: Honorary Doctorate degree, University Tarumanagara
 - o for contributions and dedication to Indonesian property development with a visionary entrepreneurship spirit

Career highlights

- Founder and Chairman of Ciputra Business Group
- 1961: founded PT Pembangunan Jaya
- 1971: PT Metropolitan Development Tbk
- 1981: established PT Citra Habitat Indonesia, which later became PT Ciputra Development
- 1994: President Commissioner, Ciputra Business Group
- 1995: President, PT Jaya Real Property
- 21st richest Indonesian according to Forbes with net worth of US\$1.69 billion

6. Mr Dominic Puthucheary

Country

- Malaysia

Early life

- Born in 1934
- Brother of James Puthucheary
- Father of PAP MP Janil Puthucheary

Educational highlights

- 1969: LLB (Honours) from Queen's Belfast
- admitted to the English Bar at Lincoln's Inn.

Career highlights

- Trade unionist with Lim Chin Siong, Fong Swee Suan, Sidney Woodhull, Jamit Singh and ST Bani who called for "genuinely full internal government" and abolition of the Internal Security Council.
- 1954: Organising Secretary for People's Action Party, later became assistant general-secretary of Singapore's General Employees Union
- 1956: revamped the Singapore Trades Union Congress into the Trades Union Congress
- 1961: leader of the Singapore Association of Trade Unions (Satu) and Founder Vice-President of Barisan Socialis
- 1963: Detained under Operation Coldstore
- 1986: Vice President of Gerakan
- 1990-1995: Member of Parliament in Malaysia for the constituency of Nibong Tebal
- Appointed as one of the legal advisors to UMNO, acting as advisor on constitutional issues to the Prime Minister

7. Dr Emil Salim

Country

- Indonesia

Early life

- born in Lahat, South Sumatra
- Born of Minangkabau parents
- uncle is Agus Salim, one of the founding fathers of Indonesia and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the early 1950s.

Educational highlights

- 1959: graduated from the Faculty of Economics, University of Indonesia
- 1964: PhD (Economics) from the University of California, Berkley
 - o teaching assistant to Prof Sumitro - Dean of Faculty of Economics at University of Indonesia and Minister of Finance at the time

Career highlights

- 1964: Faculty at Economics Dept at the University of Indonesia
- part of the 'Berkeley Mafia' team of economic advisers, working with Professor Widjojo Nitisastro
- 1966: member of the team of economic advisers to President Suharto (Note: influential in development policy)
- 1969-1973: Vice Chairman of *Bappenas* (the National Development Planning Agency - key institution for economic development in Indonesia)
- 1971-1973: Minister of State for the Improvement of the State Apparatus
- 1973-1978: Minister for Communications
- 1977: Professor of economic development at the University of Indonesia
- 1978-1983: Minister of State for Development Supervision and the Environment
 - o pursued the coexistence of the environment and development by introducing innovative environmental policies such as formulation of the National Law for Environmental Management and creation of the Environment Impact Management Agency.
 - o Led discussions at ASEAN conferences and meetings. contributions, opinions of the Asian countries became important inputs for the international community.
- 1983-1993: Minister of State for Population and the Environment
- 1994: appointed co-chair of the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development, modeled after the Brundtland Commission, and compiled "Our Forests Our Future."
- 2002: chaired the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on Sustainable Development
- 2007-2010: Member of the Advisory Council to President SBY, as the adviser for environment and sustainable development issues.
- 2010-2014: Chairperson, The Advisory Council to SBY

- 2010: Awarded MIDORI Prize for outstanding contributions and impact on future activities for biodiversity conservation
- co-chaired the United States-Indonesia Society (USINDO)

8. President Fidel Ramos

Country

- Philippines

Early life

- Born March 18, 1928
- father, Narciso Ramos - Philippine signatory to the ASEAN declaration forged in Bangkok in 1967

Educational highlights

- 1950: Bachelor of Science, United States Military Academy (Westpoint)
- Masters in Civil Engineering, University of Illinois
- Masters in National Security Administration, National Defense College of the Philippines
- Masters in Business Administration, Ateneo de Manila University

Career highlights

- 1966-1968: Chief of Staff of 1st Philippine Civic Action Group to Vietnam (non combat role in Vietnam war)
- 1972-1986: Chief of Constabulary; responsible for enforcing martial law under Marcos (his second cousin)
- 1975-1986: Director-General, Integrated National Police
- 1983-1985: Acting Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff after Ver was implicated in assassination of former opposition Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr
- 1982-1986: Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed forces
- 1986: Military leader of the People Power Revolution 1986
- 1986-1988: Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines
- 1988-1991: Secretary of National Defence
- 1992-1998: President of the Philippines

Key achievements/events of his term:

- peace agreements with Muslim separatists, communist insurgents and military rebels
 - o even though he battled Communist rebels, he signed into law the Republic Act 7636, which repealed the Anti-Subversion Law which made membership in the Communist Party of the Philippines legal
- Social Reform Agenda (SRA) - addressed long-standing problems regarding poverty, health, education and skills training, housing, environmental protection, children and the youth, the elderly and the handicapped, jobs and livelihood, agrarian reform and access to equal opportunity.
- Negotiated with Singapore over the Flor Contemplacion case in 1995 but failed to get her off the hook.
- Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 - peso devaluated

9. Mr Goenawan Mohamad

Country

- Indonesia

Early life

- born in Batang, Central Java
- born Goenawan Susatyo

Educational highlights

- 1963: Psychology and Philosophy, University of Indonesia
- 1967: Political Science in Belgium
- 1990: Nieman Fellow, Harvard University

Career highlights

- 1967: joined student newspaper Harian Kami a few years after Suharto overthrew Sukarno. Took advantage of the brief freedom offered by the nascent Suharto regime. Banned in 1974
- 1971: founded Tempo, which sought to keep the Suharto government accountable to the public.
 - o Chief Editor from 1971-1993 and 1998-2000
 - o Suspended in 1982 when it reported on violence instigated by the government-backed Golkar Party at an opposition campaign rally
 - o In 1994, the magazine criticised Indonesia's purchase of 39 used navy ships from the former East Germany which drew attention to a dispute between B. J. Habibie, the author of the deal and then a powerful cabinet minister, and a number of senior generals. Suharto was reportedly enraged with the airing of his regime's dirty linen in print. Tempo was banned and its publication licence revoked in June 1994, along with the licences of two other popular news magazines.
 - o Started publishing again after the fall of Suharto in 1998
- 1987: founded Lontar, a non-profit organisation to promote the translation and publication of Indonesian literary works with writers Sapardi Djoko Damono, Umar Kayam, and Subagio Sastrowardoyo and American translator, John H. McGlynn
- 1994: joined the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), an association of independent journalists in Indonesia that promotes press freedom
- 1995: co-founded Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information (ISAI), which produced alternative media intended to circumvent censorship. Also documented violence against the press in Indonesia
- 1998: one of four winners of the CPJ International Press Freedom Awards
- 1999: named International Editor of the Year by World Press Review magazine
- 2000: established Komunitas Salihara - and arts community
- 2014: visiting history professor at the University of California at Berkeley

10. Mr Herman Hochstadt

Country

- Singapore

Early life

- Born 1933
- Grandfather John Hochstadt was founder of Singapore Casket Company

Educational highlights

- Studied at St Andrew's School
- University of Malaya
 - o President of the Raffles Society

Career highlights

- 1960: Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Finance
 - o among first three administrative officers to join the Administrative Service after the PAP came into power
- 1965: Acting Director of Manpower, Ministry of Defence
 - o laying foundation for armed forces
 - o part of delegation to the UN for Singapore's admission to the body
- 1970: Deputy Secretary, Treasury
- 1972-1976: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communications
- 1976-1980: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
- 1980: Deputy Managing Director, Monetary Authority of Singapore
- 1980: Mass Rapid Transit Authority board
- 1984: Chairman, Neptune Orient Lines
- 1989: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Law
- 1990: Singapore's non-resident High Commissioner to Mauritius and Tanzania
- 1992: Singapore's Special Representative to South Africa
- 1995: Pro-Chancellor, Nanyang Technological University
- 1995: High Commissioner to South Africa
- Patron of the Eurasian Association

11. Mr Joseph Francis Conceicao

Country

- Singapore

Early life

- Grass cutter for the Japanese during the Occupation

Educational highlights

- Studied at St Patrick's school
- University of Singapore
- Australian Catholic University

Career highlights

- 1940s: Teacher at St Patrick's school
- 1966-1977: Director, Extra-mural Activities Department, University of Singapore
- 1968-1984: People's Action Party Member of Parliament for Katong
- 1977-1981: Ambassador to Soviet Union with concurrent accreditation to Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Poland and Romania
- 1981-1986: Ambassador to Indonesia
- 1986-1990: High Commissioner to Australia with concurrent accreditation to Fiji
- 1990-1991: Ambassador to Moscow, Soviet Union with concurrent accreditation to Poland
- 1992-1994: Ambassador to Moscow, Russia

12. Mdm Kartini Muljadi

Country

- Indonesia

Early life

- Born 17 May 1930

Educational highlights

- 1958: graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia
- 1967: post-graduate studies for Public Notaries at Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia

Career highlights

- 1958-1973: judge of Special District Court in Jakarta, mainly handling Civil and Commercial Law cases
- 1974-1990: started notary firm
- 1990: Founded law firm Kartini Muljadi & Rekan (corporate and commercial law firm)
- 2002-2006: Chairperson, Board of Trustees of the University of Indonesia
- 2004: Awarded Capital Markets Lifetime Achievement Award by the President
- 2013: #19 in Forbes Indonesia rich list (only woman); wealth comes from family's company Tempo Scan

13. Mr Ko Ko Gyi

Country

- Myanmar

Early life

- Born 18 December 1961

Educational highlights

- 1988: Final year International Relations student at Yangon University

Career highlights

- 15 March 1988: together with fellow student leaders, led a peaceful rally on the campus of Yangon University
- 16 March 1988: among students beaten by the police while attempting to march to the Yangon Institute of Technology
- 28 August 1988: Vice-chair of outlawed All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABSFU) led by **Min Ko Naing**.
- 1989-2012: Spent 17 years in total in prison over multiple terms
 - o 27 April 1989: held in detention for 44 days
 - o 11 December 1991- March 2005: arrested for involvement in a student protest at Yangon University, held to honour Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest, for her receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Spent 13 years in Insein prison
 - o 27 September 2006-11 Jan 2007: arrested, together with Min Ko Naing, Htay Kywe, Min Zeya and Pyone Cho, for pro-democracy activities, (including the White Sunday Campaign, held in support of family members of political prisoners), which began in early 2006.
 - o 1 August 2007-28 Aug 2008: detained in Insein prison without trial for more than a year for the Saffron Revolution (sparked by the government's decision to remove fuel subsidies. Buddhist monks joined in the protest in Sept)
 - o 11 November 2008: sentenced to 65 years in prison (for the 2007 demonstrations)
 - o 13 January 2012: released with nearly 600 other political prisoners
- July 1989-Dec 1991: led ABSFU while Min Ko Naing was in detention
- Sept 2005: founded the 8888 Generation Students group with Min Ko Naing
- August 2007: He and other activists from the 88 Generation movement marched to protest against high fuel prices. Sparked the Saffron Revolution. Largest demonstrations since 1988.
- General Secretary of 88 Generation Peace and Open Society
- Observer to peace talks at the Myanmar Peace Centre
- Member of Rakhine Investigation Commission to investigate the sectarian violence in Rakhine state

14. Mr Michael Wong Pakshong

Country

- Singapore

Early life

- 1931: Born in Durban, South Africa. Chinese family migrated there during the Gold Rush

Educational highlights

- Studied at the University of Natal till Apartheid forced him to quit
- Bachelor of Arts with Honours and Hon. L. L. D. from the University of Bristol

Career highlights

- 1961: Arrived in Singapore. Worked as Audit Assistant for Price Waterhouse
- 1964-1970: Assistant General Manager, OCBC Bank
- 1970: Director of Board, Malaysia-Singapore Airlines
- 1971-1981: Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore
- 1981-1986: Managing Director, Straits Trading Company Limited
- 1981-2008: Director, Straits Trading Company Limited
- 1973-1981: Governor of the IMF for Singapore
- 1982-1989: Honorary Consul for Luxembourg
- 1990: Honorary Consul-General for Luxembourg
- 1997-2003: Chairman of Esplanade
 - o credited for laying the founding principles to Esplanade as a centre for the arts

15. Mr Mochtar Riady

Early life

- Born in Malang, East Java on 12 May 1929 as Lie Mo Tie
- Child of batik traders
- 1947: detained in Malang and later expelled from Indonesia by the Dutch because of involvement in anti-colonial activities

Educational highlights

- 1947: Studied Philosophy at the Southeast University, Nanjing.
 - o But a civil war was raging between the nationalists and the communists so he had to return to Indonesia soon after
- Took night classes at the University of Indonesia - met Emil Salim, Ali Wardana etc
- Received Honorary Doctorate from Golden Gate University, San Francisco, USA and Southeast University, China

Career highlights

- 1951: worked for his wife's family's bicycle shop (age 22)
- 1954: went to Jakarta wanting to set up a bank
- First foray into banking: Bank Kemakmuran - owned by Andi Gappa
 - o Convinced Gappa to make him Director despite his lack of experience
- 1964: Bank Buana
 - o Bank was going through a crisis because Indonesia was undergoing macro-economic change
 - o Mochtar was aware of the changes because of classes at UI and changed the policy direction of Bank Buana.
- 1970: Bank Panin - combination of Prosperity Bank, Industrial Bank Jaya, and the Industrial Bank of Commerce Indonesia
 - o Government was encouraging smaller banks to merge
 - o Within three years, its assets rose 20-fold, and it became one of Indonesia's biggest private financial institutions.
- 1975: Bank Central Asia
 - o In BCA, Mochtar was given a share of 17.5 percent and gained the trust Liem Sioe Liong.
 - o BCA assets when Mochtar joined was only Rp 12.8 billion. Assets when Mochtar left at the end of 1990 was around 5 trillion rupiah.
 - o Gained moniker "Magic Man of Bank Marketing"
- 1981: Took a majority stake in Bank of Commerce Indonesia
 - o Join Hasyim Ning
 - o Commerce Bank Indonesia assets soared to more than 1,500 percent to Rp257,73 billion.
- 1989: Bank Commerce Indonesia merged with Commercial Bank of Asia and became Lippo Bank.
 - o This is the forerunner of the Lippo Group
 - o Recapitalised after the Asian financial crisis of 1997.
 - o Mochtar subsequently managed to regain control of the bank
 - o March 2005: resigned from his position as Chief Commissioner of Lippo Bank. Marked end of Riady family's direct involvement in the management of the bank. Bank was sold and later merged with CIMB Niaga Bank, controlled by Malaysia's CIMB group.
- Founder and Chairman of Lippo Group
 - o Lippo Group is committed to contributing to the betterment of the community, in particular through education. It set up the Pelita Harapan Educational Foundation in Indonesia, with the vision to open 1,000 schools in the next two decades. Currently, it has established two universities, and 20 schools with over 30,000 students. In addition, the Group has made donations to the development of universities in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Singapore.
 - o 5th richest Indonesian according to Forbes with net worth US\$2.8 billion

16. Mr Nguyen Khac Huynh

Country

- Vietnam

Early life

- Born August 15, 1927

Educational highlights

- 1941-1945: Quoc Hoc Hue (Secondary School)
- 1946: Quảng Ngãi land-forces University

Career highlights

- March 1945 - Took part in the Revolution of National Liberation
- 1946-1950: Officer at the General staff, Vietnam People's Army
- 1951-1960: Professor, Artillery Officer University
- 1960-1965: Officer, Artillery Command Department
- 1965-1968: Diplomat
- 1968-1975: Member of the Paris Agreement
- 1976-1983: Leaders, Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 1983-1987: Ambassador to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia
- 1996-2000: Professor, Foreign Affairs Institute and Nguyen Ai Quoc Political Department

17. Mdm Pung Chhiv Kek (Kek Galabru)

Country

- Cambodia

Early life

- Born 4 October 1942

Educational highlights

- 1968: Medical degree in France

Career highlights

- 1968-1971: practised medicine and conducted research in Phnom Penh
- also practised in Canada, Brazil and Angola
- 1987-1988: played key role in opening negotiations between Hun Sen, president of the Cambodian Council of Ministers and Prince Sihanouk of the opposition that led to the peace accords ending the civil war in 1991
- 1992: Founded Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
 - o Promotes human rights, with a special emphasis on women and children's rights, monitors violations, disseminates educational information about rights
 - o During 1993 elections, LICADHO's 159 staff taught voting procedures to 16,000 people, trained 775 election observers and produced and distributed one million voting leaflets
- 2005: nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize as part of the 1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize project
- 1999: First to organise forums for ordinary Cambodians to express their experiences to say whether the trials should be held
 - o also invited Khmer Rouge members to participate to speak their minds
- 2005: nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

18. Mr Ramon Navaratnam

Country

- Malaysia

Early life

- Born 6 Jan 1935 in Kuala Lumpur
- Lived through the Japanese Occupation - worked as an office boy at the Japanese Road Transport Department in Ipoh

Educational highlights

- 1959: Economics degree (Hons) at University of Malaya (Singapore)
- 1969: Masters of Public Administration, Harvard University

Career highlights

- 1959: Assistant Secretary, Health and Social Welfare Ministry
- 1961: Administration Division, Treasury
- 1964-1972: Economic Division, Treasury
- 1971-72: Malaysia's Alternate Executive Director at the World Bank
- 1972-1978: Under-Secretary, Economic Division, Treasury
- 1979-1986: Deputy Secretary-General of Ministry of Finance
- 1985: First government representative at the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange Executive Committee
- 1986-1989: Secretary-General of Malaysia's Ministry of Transport
- 1989: member of the National Development Planning Committee
- 1989-1994: ED and CEO, Bank Buruh Bhd
- 1994-1995: Executive Vice-Chairman of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (KL)
- Former President of Transparency International Malaysia

19. Mr Somsavat Lengsavad

Country

Laos PDR

Early life

- Born 15 June 1945 in Luang Prabang
- Ethnic Chinese, ancestry from Hainan

Career highlights

- 1961: Joined the People's Revolutionary Movement
- 1961-1964: Combatant in Northern Laos
- 1964-1975: Officer, Cabinet of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee
- 1975-1982: Head of the Secretariat, Cabinet of the LPRP CC
- 1982-1988: Deputy Chief of the Cabinet of LPRP CC and the Council of Ministers; Deputy Minister; First Vice-Chairman of the LPRP CC History Research Commission
- 1989-1991: Ambassador of Lao PDR to Bulgaria
- 1991: Elected Member of the LPRP CC at the Fifth Party Congress
- 1991-1993: Chief of Cabinet of the Council of Ministers and the Cabinet of LPRP CC; Minister to the President's Office
- February 1993: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Commission for External Relations of the LPRP CC; President of the National Commission for Mothers and Children (NCCMC)
- 1996: Re-elected Member of LPRP CC at the Sixth Party Congress
- February 1998: Deputy Prime Minister
- February 1998-June 2006: Minister for Foreign Affairs; Chairman of the Commission for External Relations of the LPRP CC; President of NCCMC and President of the National Commission for the Advancement of Women (NCAW)
- March 2006: Re-elected Member of the LPRP CC and Member of the Politburo at the Eighth Party Congress
- June 2006: Appointed Standing Deputy Prime Minister
 - o Chairman of the Joint Commissions for Bilateral Cooperation between Lao PDR and Socialist Republic of Vietnam and between Lao PDR and People's Republic of China
 - o Head Supervisor for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication
 - o President of the Poverty Reduction Fund
 - o President of National Commission for Mothers and Children and National Commission for the Advancement of Women
 - o President of the Executive Board of the Central Bank
 - o Chairman of the Steering Committee on National Education Reform
 - o Honorary Chairman of the Fund for Promoting Education
 - o President of the National Commission on Education for All
 - o Head of the Steering Committee for the Development of Nationwide Special Economic Zone and Economic Exclusive Zone
 - o Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Establishment of the Securities Market
 - o Chairman of the International Fund Mobilisation Committee
 - o Chairman of the 25th SEA Games Organising Committee

- o Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Commemoration of the 450th anniversary of Vientiane capital
- o Chairman of the National Committee on World Heritage

20. Mr S R Nathan

Country

- Singapore

Early life

- Born 3 July 1924
- Father accrued debts due to the Great Depression and the rubber slump, and eventually killed himself when Nathan was eight
- At the age of 16, Nathan fell out with his mother and left home to work at an architectural firm, Arbenz & Co. He later moved to Muar to work as a clerk and to keep his family from finding him. Four years later, he returned to Singapore and reconciled with his mother and family.

Educational highlights

- ACS Primary, Rangoon Road Afternoon School
- Victoria School - completed secondary education through self-study
- 1954: Diploma in Social Studies (Distinction), University of Malaya (in pioneer batch of Social Work students)

Career highlights

- Japanese occupation: worked for the Japanese Civilian Police as a translator
- 1955: Medical social worker
- 1956: Seaman's welfare officer, Ministry of Labour
- 1962-1966: Labour Research Unit (Assistant Director-Director)
- Jan 1966: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Assistant Secretary-Deputy Secretary)
- Aug 1966: Director, SID
 - o 1974: Laju incident
 - o 1975: awarded Meritorious Service Medal
- 1979-1982: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 1988: High Commissioner to Malaysia
- 1990-1996: Ambassador to the US
- 1996-1999: Director, IDSS
- 1 Sep 1999: Sworn in as Singapore's 6th President (longest serving President - 12)
- 2005-2011: elected President uncontested for second term
 - o 2009: approved the government's use of S\$4.9 billion from the reserves to fund anti-recessionary measures. (First time the government had applied to use part of the reserves, which requires the approval of the president and the Council of Presidential Advisers.)