SPEECH BY PRIME MINSTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE DINNER HOSTED BY THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER, MR. MORARJI DESAI, ON 13 DECEMBER 1978 IN NEW DELHI

In the seven years since I last visited India, many changes have overtaken the world, especially South and Southeast Asia.

Perhaps changes have a deeper imprint on young peoples. I come from a nation which, by Asian standards, has a very short history, just over 150 years. The distant past of our people lies with their ancestors in China, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia. We have no ancient monuments, temples and other glorious antiquities. As a result, we are only too eager to innovate and even to change our way of life.

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However, this lack of historical ballast could be dangerous at times of crisis. There is not the assurance of a long and splendid history to provide that confidence that destiny is on our side in coping with the next ominous crisis.

For instance, we in Singapore were startled by the sharp clash between two communist states to our North, for the time being confined to the Indo-Chinese Peninsula. We were startled because we could not believe one communist government had set out deliberately to subvert and overthrow another communist government. When a communist does this to a non-communist government, he calls it "liberation". When he does it to another communist government, he calls it "salvation".

We in Southeast Asia, a member of the countries of ASEAN, want to co-exist peacefully with all the communist states to our North, whatever their ideological idiosyncracies. India's commitment to non-communism and non-alignment makes her a natural friend of the countries of ASEAN. Singapore has always found India a reliable and steadfast friend. It is a friendship that springs from shared values of our common past and shared expectations of one peaceful and stable world in which cooperation in Asia will bring shared benefits. It is therefore a great pleasure for me to be in Delhi again. It is yet another opportunity to meet old friends and renew old friendships.

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Mr. Prime Minister, when I met you in London 18 months ago, after a lapse of nearly eight years, you left a deep impression on me of a man completely serene and self-contained and none the worse for yet another period of detention.

As you said, it was your conviction that good must triumph over evil which made all difficulties bearable. This is all a part of the Indian tradition, the Hindu ethos. This same ethos is what makes the Indian civilisation so durable. It is this long view of history that has seen India weather many a crisis with equanimity and quiet resolve.

Now, may I ask you to join me in a toast to the good health of the President of the Republic of India, to His Excellency the Prime Minister, and to the progress and prosperity of the Government and people of India.

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