



# Eclectic ideas about leadership

Singapore Management University (SMU) president Arnoud De Meyer and SMU chairman Ho Kwon Ping co-edited *The Art Of Leadership: Perspectives From Distinguished Thought Leaders*.  
ST PHOTO: LEE JIA WEN

**A new compilation features lectures given at Singapore Management University by those at the top of their respective fields**

**Venessa Lee**

It is probably easier to spot good leaders than to analyse what makes them tick.

This seems to be borne out by the recently published coffee-table book, *The Art Of Leadership: Perspectives From Distinguished Thought Leaders*, which features selected lectures given at Singapore Management University (SMU) by visiting world leaders.

Speaking on the sidelines of the book launch earlier this month, SMU president Arnoud De Meyer alludes to how leadership is more of an art than a science.

"There is no unified theory about

what leadership is. Perhaps each lecture is a case study," says Professor De Meyer, 63, who co-edited the book with Mr Ho Kwon Ping, 65, the chairman of the board of trustees for SMU.

The book, published by World Scientific, showcases speeches given over more than 15 years, under the auspices of two lecture series held at SMU: The Presidential Distinguished Lecturer Series and the Ho Rih Hwa Leadership In Asia Public Lecture Series.

It features leaders in politics, business and academia, including Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, former United Nations chief Ban Ki Moon and former South African president F.W. de Klerk, who received the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with the late Nelson Mandela for peacefully dismantling apartheid in their country.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong is featured in the book, as is his father, former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, who gave the first Ho Rih Hwa lecture in 2002, which is

named after Mr Ho's father, a prominent businessman and ambassador.

Even as universities are places for the discussion and a confluence of ideas, the book is part of SMU's "branding" as "a centre for thought leadership", says Mr Ho, who is also the founder and chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, a worldwide chain of luxury resorts.

Although the book examines eclectic ideas about leadership, some common themes emerge.

These include concerns about sustainability and climate change, as well as the need for "more collaborative" leaders, who have to convince their followers to come on board with their ideas in an increasingly networked world with independent players such as nation states, multinational companies and international organisations, says Prof De Meyer.

He adds: "The old command and control, where the boss knows best, works less and less."

Prof De Meyer says another

insight he gleaned from working on the book was that "to be a successful leader, you have to have a clear purpose and strong values".

He acknowledges, however, that this perception can become ambiguous.

For instance, he says, Ms Suu Kyi, who delivered a lecture at SMU in 2013, probably would not have anticipated how the current Rohingya crisis in Myanmar would affect her standing.

Ms Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Laureate, has been criticised for failing to address the plight of more than 650,000 Rohingya, who have fled to nearby Bangladesh to escape a crackdown by the military in Myanmar.

"The Rohingya crisis is something that is not fully understood within Asean and SMU intends to take a role in trying to increase a better understanding of this whole crisis," adds Mr Ho, declining to provide further details.

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