

## **S'pore should be mentally prepared for US-China tension to last for up to 30 years: George Yeo**

*Jean Chien Tay*

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Singapore should be mentally prepared for up to 30 years of tension between the U.S. and China, former foreign minister George Yeo said on Jan. 11.

The 67-year-old, who is currently a visiting scholar at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said the intensity of the tensions between the two major powers could vary over time, and there were even "the possibility of skirmishes out at sea or proxy wars".

Yeo made the remarks when he was speaking at a curtain-raiser for the annual Singapore Perspectives conference organised by the Institute of Policy Studies think-tank.

The event was moderated by ambassador-at-large Chan Heng Chee, with Yeo and former master planner of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Liu Thai Ker as panellists.

### **Singapore will be caught in U.S.-China competition**

Responding to Chan's question on whether Singapore will be among the great cities in the next two decades, Yeo said the prospects for Singapore are bright if the country positions itself well.

However, the former diplomat said there were no guarantees of continued success as Singapore is competing with others, and there are possibilities where the country could make "bad mistakes".

Yeo added that the tension between the U.S. and China "will mark this period of history", projecting the situation to "go on for years to come".

He warned that Singapore will be caught in the great powers' competition, and if the country remains as "just a city-state", it might find itself "frequently between a rock and a hard place, and injured".

### **Singapore has potential to become "a capital of Asean"**

Yeo stressed the need to be "organically reconnected" to the region, adding that Singapore needs Asean (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

He also opined that Singapore needs to "reroot" itself in the region, adding that Singapore has the potential to become "a capital city of Asean, not the capital city of Asean" as the country is already linked to the other nine Asean countries, all of which have "sizeable communities" in Singapore.

"This is our region, we are Southeast Asians, we are citizens of Asean", Yeo added.

### **Singapore & Asean should not "take sides"**

Yeo further said that Singapore should not "take sides".

"(...)If anyone pushes us too hard, we'll work together with Asean, to lean a little to the other side," he added.

Yeo opined that Asean needs to play its cards right to be "completely non-threatening" to the major powers and become a "convenor".

### **Future of S'pore depends on the quality of its leadership**

The former minister also said that the leaders of Singapore must be able to anticipate conflicts and dangerous possibilities, and steer the country away from them.

Yeo further said that the quality of Singapore's leadership would need to be on par with that of its founding leaders in order to "take the country into the future".