



Singapore's Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh discussing the book *America: A Singapore Perspective* at the National Library yesterday. The book is a compilation of essays that he co-edited with ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute visiting senior fellow Daljit Singh (right). The discussion, part of the 37th Singapore Book Fair organised by SPH Media Trust's Chinese Media Group, was moderated by Straits Times foreign editor Bhagyashree Garekar (centre). ST PHOTO: EUGENE GOH

S'pore not immune to culture wars like those in the US: Tommy Koh

Aditi Bharade

Singapore is not immune to culture wars such as those happening in the United States over moral matters like abortion, gun laws, and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning) issues, said Singapore's Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh.

He made these comments yesterday at a discussion – moderated by Straits Times foreign editor Bhagyashree Garekar – that was part of the 37th Singapore Book Fair, organised by SPH Media Trust's Chinese Media Group.

Speaking to about 70 people at the National Library, Professor Koh discussed his book *America: A Singapore Perspective* – which he co-authored with diplomats, academics, and journalists from The Straits Times – to shed light on why the US is divided by polarising views on moral issues, and how the

Republic too could become increasingly polarised.

“Policies which we think are settled may not be so settled in the future, such as the abortion laws in America. There is a danger that Singapore could become more divided,” he said.

Prof Koh, chairman of the Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore, was the Republic's ambassador to the US from 1984 to 1990.

He served as the United Nations secretary-general's special envoy on a peace mission to Russia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1993.

Along with his co-editor Daljit Singh, a visiting senior fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, he broached several topics discussed in their book, which is a compilation of 29 essays on the US.

The essays span various aspects of the US, including governance, politics, economy, defence, foreign policy and culture. The book was published by the Straits Times

Press last December.

The duo also touched on topics salient to today's geopolitical climate, such as the tense relationship between China and the US.

Against the backdrop of security summit Shangri-La Dialogue, currently being held here, Prof Koh said he was looking forward to seeing the defence ministers of the two superpowers talking to each other, cooperating and considering their countries' common interests.

The talk drew many questions from the audience on topics like Singapore's defence and international relations, prompting Mr Singh to say he is happy to see such “lively discussion” among Singaporeans.

The book fair, held at the National Library and Bras Basah Complex, will run till tomorrow, with talks by local and international authors and speakers, heritage tours, book launches and more.

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