《李光耀：世界稳定需要强大的美国》

Former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said the U.S. needs to put its fiscal house in order to recover its competitiveness and suggested U.S. President Barack Obama would improve both his re-election chances and U.S. standing in Asia if he finds a way to work with Republicans and "tackles this problem."

????????(Lee Kuan Yew)????????????????????????????????(Barack Obama)??????????????“???????”????????????????????????????

The 87-year-old founder of modern Singapore also said in a rare interview with The Wall Street Journal that he thought opposition leaders would pick up some seats in a planned election there early next month in a vote that analysts believe could be one of the most competitive in Singapore's history.

Reuters????????(Lee Kuan Yew)??????????87??

Singapore, one of the most important financial centers in Asia, has been an important ally of the U.S. -- although the wealthy city-state has also taken pains to stay on good terms with other Asian powers such as China, especially as trade with those countries has grown. Still, Mr. Lee said it was in the world's interests for the U.S. to remain a pre-eminent power and fully recover from its recent economic troubles, so that it can help preserve the balance of power world-wide.

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Casually dressed but formal in manner, Mr. Lee was clearly concerned about the prospect of a diminished U.S. global role, politically and financially, arguing that its international influence had been a cornerstone of Asia's rapid economic rise. His answers, delivered with a robustness that was in contrast to a somewhat frail physique, revealed a close interest in the ebb and flow of policy debates in Washington.

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"The world has developed because of the stability America established," he said. "If that stability is rocked, we are going to have a different situation," he said.

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Mr. Lee said he thinks a "challenge may come gradually from China," but he doubts China and the U.S. will come into serious conflict anytime soon. China needs American markets, American investments and American

technology, and won't want to "upset the apple cart," he said. "While there will be keen competition, I do not see conflict."

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The world faces other risks, though, including a Japan weakened by natural disasters and a turbulent Middle East, where the U.S. may be the only military that has the power to play a decisive role in settling conflicts in places such as Libya. "France has taken the lead but they do not have the equipment to settle the issue militarily," he said.

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Despite Singapore's outsize success and reputation for transparency and efficiency, Mr. Lee has drawn criticism from human-rights groups and civil-society organizations over the years for cultivating a top-down management style that critics say limits the freedom of the press and suppresses dissent. Freedom House, a Washington-based advocacy group, last year ranked Singapore 151st in the world in press freedom, behind Liberia and Iraq.

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????????(Freedom House)????????????????????151??????????????

Mr. Lee has dismissed the critics by pointing to Singapore's rise as an economic power in an unstable region and by saying that Western-style democracy isn't appropriate for all countries. He has said freedom of the press sometimes must be subordinated to the needs of nation-building.

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In his interview, Mr. Lee said the growth of China and India would help bolster Singapore, as it lifts economies across the region. "We are at the crossroads between the two giants. You've got to pass Singapore to go from the Indian Ocean into the Pacific," he said.

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As for the U.S., Mr. Lee said he was confident it would remain strong in the long run, but it faces serious problems, including "budget deficits, debts, [and] high unemployment figures' that have 'lingered on over several administrations."

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"My impression is that presidents do not get re-elected if they give a hard dose of medicine to their people," he said. "So, there is a tendency to procrastinate, to postpone unpopular policies in order to win elections. So the problems have been carried forward."

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U.S. President Obama "knows he has got this responsibility but he has got to tussle with the Republicans," he added. "I believe if he tackles this problem, it will improve his chances of re-election. There must be enough reasonable and thinking Americans who know that this is the only way forward to recover their competitiveness."

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Mr. Lee played down the risk of major conflicts between the U.S. and China. "I do not have a crystal ball but I would say for 10, 20, 30 years, it is not in the interests of China to have other than stable relations with America, growing exports to America, imports of American technology, investments from America and sending students to America to learn." He said, it helps that the U.S. is sending more students to China, which should help improve America's understanding of the country.

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"Why should [Westerners] fear China?" he asked. Despite China's and India's impressive growth, "I believe the Americans will always have the advantage because of their all-embracive society, and the English language that makes it easy to attract foreign talent."

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