

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore
March 29, 2022

President Biden. Well, Prime Minister, it's great to have you back. We've——

Prime Minister Lee. Happy to be here.

President Biden. ——spent a fair amount of time together.

This is a critical moment for, I think, both our countries and the region that you so ably represent.

And the strength of the U.S.—it seems to me, at least; I hope you think the same way—the Singapore Strategic Partnership to support peace and prosperity throughout the Pacific these many years: Today, that partnership is as important as it's ever been, in my opinion. As a matter of a fact, I think it's growing in importance.

And a rule-based order is facing unprecedented challenges. Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war against Ukraine is an urgent threat to both Europe and, I believe, to the Indo-Pacific as well. And it's attacking the core tenets of a rule-based international order. And the borders can't be changed by force. And all the nations, large and small, are equal and sovereign—in rights for their sovereignty.

And I want to thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for Singapore's principled leadership in supporting the people of Ukraine. I know it's not easy, but I want to thank you for it. You're a man of principle, and you've stepped up every time you've had to.

And even as we address the crisis in Europe, my administration is strongly supportive of moving rapidly to implement the Indo-Pacific strategy that we've talked about, as you know.

And the United States is a proud Indo-Pacific nation. It's hard for most other nations of the world to understand that, but we have a big country and a lot of Pacific territory. *[Laughter]* And I—it's a free and open area that we want to make sure is—we want to maintain it that way and connect it in purpose and security and in terms of our resilience.

And so, today, at the end of the day, we're going to discuss a number of important issues: the U.S.-ASEAN relationship, upholding freedom of the seas, promoting return of democracy in Burma, and advancing an inclusive and sustainable economic growth in both our areas.

And so I want to thank you, again, for making this journey. And, Mr. Prime Minister, the floor is yours, good friend.

Prime Minister Lee. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, especially, for receiving me at this critical moment in world affairs. And I'm sure you're completely seized with what's happening in Europe right now. But we doubly appreciate the time you are giving to the relationship with Singapore and with Southeast Asian countries generally, especially ASEAN.

Singapore is a very good partner of the United States. We are a major security cooperation partner of the U.S. And our relations are doing very well economically, as well as in the security and defense realms, and they prosper and grow and venture into new areas continuously.

And I hope to discuss that with the President today, as well as to further the relationship between the U.S. and ASEAN, which is an engagement which is important to the U.S. because it helps the U.S. to be present in the Asia-Pacific and to deepen its relations with many friends and to strengthen its strategic interests in the region.

We will, of course, exchange views also on Ukraine and what that means for the Asia-Pacific region.

Singapore hopes that the United States, amidst all its many preoccupations, will continue to deepen its relationship with countries in the Asia-Pacific—China, certainly, but also other countries besides China—and deepen it substantially in many different ways through the Indo-Pacific strategy and, in doing so, to foster the peace, stability, and security of the region, as you have done for so many decades since the war.

Thank you very much.

President Biden. I assure you that's our objective. I assure you.

Prime Minister Lee. Thank you.

President Biden. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Singapore, Prime Minister Lee.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Lee Hsien Loong.

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