



A strong and competitive European Union is in the interest of Singapore

Stephen Marchisio, Tadeusz Chomicki and Jane Chan



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By Stephen Marchisio, Tadeusz Chomicki and Jane Chan

SYNOPSIS

“First principle: never to let one's self be beaten down by persons or by events.” – Maria Skłodowska-Curie

COMMENTARY

On 9 May 2025, France and Poland signed a Treaty on Enhanced Cooperation and Friendship and celebrated the first edition of the Polish-French Friendship Day on April 20 this year. Why does it matter to Singapore?

First, France and Poland are striving for a strong Europe. A strong and competitive European Union is in the interest of Singapore – an open economy attached to a rules-based open trading system. When Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and French President Emmanuel Macron signed the groundbreaking treaty in Nancy last year, they included, among other provisions, mutual security guarantees for Poland and France, as well as collaboration in the defence industry, economy, agriculture, and science.

This commitment is pivotal in the context of the joint support for Ukraine, which continues with outstanding courage to defend itself against Russian aggression. In the current geopolitical turmoil, faithful upstanders for international law are crucial to rebuilding an international order. Poland's recent history offers a compelling example of a nation's fight for sovereignty and resilience in confronting an oppressive system.

Both Poland and France are driven by the same firm belief that spheres of coercion belong to the past and have no place in contemporary interstate relations. Revisionist agendas and the dismantlement of UN principles, be it denying territorial integrity,

national sovereignty or freedom of navigation, can only serve as fuel for the fires of instability, war and destruction.

Second, France and Poland, as maritime countries, are deeply committed to maritime security, a core priority for Singapore – a global port hub. Both strengthen ports' safety through joint participation in the EU Global Port Safety programme and through efforts to counter the issue of shadow fleet vessels engaging in illegal or deceptive shipping practices.

This last issue is particularly important because it poses an economic and environmental threat, both in European and Asian waters, endangering our marine ecosystems, our coasts, our shipping lanes, and our maritime infrastructure due to substandard and poorly insured vessels.

Singapore is a valuable partner on this issue, given its stated intention to work closely with international partners and fully implement relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and sanctions. Vessels that do not comply with Singapore's domestic legislation and requirements, as well as the relevant conventions and instruments of the International Maritime Organisation, may be denied entry into or detained in Singapore.

What is more, some European States have taken action against "Stateless" tankers in the shadow fleet by denying them passage in their territorial sea and interdicting them in their Exclusive Economic Zone or even by intercepting them on the basis of Article 110 of the UNCLOS. States in Asia have not taken such actions.

While Singapore's approach to freedom of navigation and to the safety and security of sea lines of communication, is both pragmatic and principled, its vital interests, as a critical hub in the global trading system, lie in ensuring the freedom of navigation and overflight under international law.

Similarly, it is in the interest of all states to build resilience, including in critical underwater infrastructure. Warsaw and Paris both contribute to these efforts, improving European tools to counter deliberate sabotage of our critical undersea cables. Protecting the security, resilience, and integrity of such infrastructure is critical to global communications and economic growth. There is scope for more cooperation on these issues between Singapore and Europe.

Lastly, like Singapore, Poland and France are aware of the challenges our societies face in protecting our values and social cohesion in the face of increasing cyberattacks and foreign interference. Both the French and Polish states and citizens for instance are significant targets of constant cyberattacks and sophisticated, large-scale disinformation campaigns.

In the face of these persistent threats, they not only developed tools to counter them but also implemented cooperation, bilaterally and within the EU, to strengthen their democratic resilience. Both Polish and French cyber defence forces are among the best in the world and have developed robust mechanisms to respond to Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI). Freedom of expression should not

be used as a pretext to undermine our societies, spreading false facts, fake news and hate speech, disrupting our public debate and undermining our security, social cohesion and fundamental values.

For these reasons, it is no surprise that not long after the signing of the Nancy Treaty last May, both the French President and the Polish President paid a state visit to Singapore in 2025: at the end of May for President Macron and mid-June for President Duda, to exchange views with President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong on these topics and to deepen their respective cooperation with Singapore. Both promoted a strong and vocal European Union – one committed to countering the undermining of the fundamentals of our international system.

Because, as Maria Skłodowska-Curie once said, we should never let one's self be beaten down by persons or by events.

Ambassador Stephen Marchisio and Ambassador Tadeusz Chomicki are, respectively, the French and Polish ambassadors to Singapore. Jane Chan is Senior Fellow and Head of Maritime Security Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU). This commentary commemorates the Polish-French Friendship Day, which is celebrated on 20 April, the anniversary of the entombment of Maria Skłodowska-Curie and Pierre Curie in the Panthéon in Paris. This event holds significant meaning for both Poland and France, as Maria Skłodowska-Curie – the first woman to be awarded a Nobel Prize – was also the first woman to be buried in the Panthéon in recognition of her achievements.

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