

# RESILIENCE IN A FRAGMENTED ORDER: EU-SINGAPORE THINK TANK DIALOGUE

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*From 16-17 March 2026, the EU Institute for Security Studies and the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, in partnership with the EU Delegation in Singapore, convened a two-day EU-Singapore Think Tank Dialogue, comprising two closed-door workshops and a public event. Held against the backdrop of a more fragmented and contested international environment, discussions focused on the evolving nature of security across economic, technological and maritime domains, and the implications for EU-Singapore cooperation.*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- > **Security challenges are increasingly systemic, with economic, technological, and maritime domains becoming intertwined.** Discussions highlighted the convergence between economic and security issues in policy intervention. Interdependence across supply chains, data flows, and critical infrastructure has transformed from an anchor of security to a source of vulnerability, with exposure to coercion and disruption shaping decision-making in both regions.
- > **Resilience is emerging as the central organising concept of EU-Singapore security cooperation.** In response to a more fragmented and contested international environment, both sides are prioritising resilience across key domains, including maritime security, critical infrastructure, cyber and hybrid threats, and digital systems. This signals a shift towards managing risk, reducing strategic dependencies, and strengthening preparedness.
- > **Maritime security and critical infrastructure, including subsea cables, are gaining prominence as shared strategic priorities.** The protection of sea lines of communication, maritime domain awareness, and the resilience of undersea infrastructure are increasingly central to EU-Singapore cooperation, given their importance for global trade, energy flows, and digital connectivity, as well as their exposure to both accidental disruption and geopolitical risk.
- > **EU-Singapore cooperation is becoming more practical and interest-driven, focused on deliverable outcomes.** While alignment on core principles such as sovereignty and the rules-based international order remains strong, discussions underscored that cooperation is most effective where concrete interests converge, particularly in areas such as cybersecurity, digital governance, supply chain resilience, and trusted technology standards.
- > **Flexible, issue-based partnerships are likely to shape future security cooperation.** In a context of geopolitical fragmentation and constrained multilateralism, participants highlighted the growing importance of bilateral, mini-lateral, and issue-based arrangements to advance cooperation, while respecting regional sensitivities and preserving ASEAN centrality.

### a) Security as a systemic, cross-domain challenge

Discussions underscored that security that is responsive to public concerns must be understood in broad human security terms. Economic interdependence, technological systems, and critical infrastructure are increasingly embedded within strategic competition, blurring the line between civilian and security domains. Supply chains, data flows, and financial and digital networks are now seen as potential areas of vulnerability, as dependencies may be exploited during periods of geopolitical tension. This points to a broader recognition that economic security, technological governance, and traditional defence concerns are becoming increasingly interconnected across both the European and Indo-Pacific contexts.

#### b) Resilience as the organising principle of cooperation

In response to these dynamics, resilience has emerged as a central organising concept shaping EU-Singapore engagement. Rather than focusing solely on openness and efficiency, both sides are placing greater emphasis on preparedness, redundancy, and risk management across key sectors. This includes strengthening cyber defences, enhancing protection against hybrid threats, reinforcing critical infrastructure, and improving the ability to absorb and recover from disruptions. The growing focus on resilience also reflects an effort to reduce exposure to single points of dependency while preserving the benefits of interdependence. A stable, rules-based order is jointly regarded as a fundamental ingredient for resilience.

#### c) Maritime security and critical infrastructure vulnerabilities

Maritime security featured prominently as a shared strategic concern, reflecting the continued importance of sea lines of communication for global trade, energy flows, and regional stability. Discussions highlighted the increasing complexity of maritime threats, ranging from geopolitical tensions and grey-zone activities to piracy, cyber risks, and GPS interference. Particular attention was given to the vulnerability of critical undersea infrastructure, including subsea cables, which underpin global communications, financial systems and energy trade. Strengthening the resilience of these systems requires a combination of technical solutions, regulatory frameworks, and enhanced coordination, offering a concrete avenue for EU-Singapore cooperation.

#### d) From principles to practical cooperation

While both the EU and Singapore remain strongly aligned on the importance of multilateralism, the rules-based international order and sovereignty, these baseline principles need support through practical, interest-driven cooperation. The most promising areas are those where shared vulnerabilities and capabilities intersect, including cybersecurity, digital governance, supply chain resilience, and trusted technology ecosystems. Existing initiatives, including digital partnerships and bilateral defence cooperation with EU member states, point to a broader shift from declaratory alignment towards operational collaboration. At the same time, cooperation in hard security domains will continue developing primarily through bilateral arrangements with individual EU member states.

#### e) Flexible formats in a fragmented order

The dialogue also highlighted the limits of traditional multilateral frameworks in a more fragmented geopolitical environment. While global and regional institutions remain essential, flexible forms of cooperation are proliferating, including bilateral arrangements, mini-lateral groupings, and issue-based coalitions. These formats allow for more targeted and pragmatic engagement, particularly in areas such as technology governance, infrastructure resilience, and capacity-building. At the same time, participants emphasised the importance of ensuring that such approaches remain compatible with broader multilateral principles and sensitive to regional dynamics, including ASEAN centrality.

### POLICY DIRECTIONS

The dialogue pointed to several avenues for further EU-Singapore cooperation. Priority areas include strengthening resilience in maritime and digital infrastructure, particularly subsea cables and critical sea lines of communication; advancing collaboration on cybersecurity, hybrid threats, and trusted technology governance; and supporting supply chain diversification and secure data flows. Participants also highlighted the value of flexible, issue-based partnerships to deliver practical outcomes, alongside continued engagement in multilateral and regional frameworks. Taken together, these directions suggest a pragmatic approach to cooperation centred on building resilience, reducing vulnerabilities, and reinforcing shared security interests across regions.