



GERMANY

NATO member



since 1955

Defence share in GDP

2017



PESCO projects

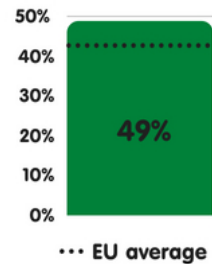
Leader



Participant



Trust in EU



What does the country fear?

Despite its size, economic power, and geopolitical strength, Germany feels vulnerable to a wide variety of new and traditional threats. The government is most concerned about terrorism, a lack of state resilience, the potential for state collapse in the European Union’s neighbourhood, and the possible disintegration of the EU. It also regards cyber attacks, external meddling in domestic politics, and the deterioration of the rules-based international order as serious threats. Berlin sees uncontrolled migration, along with its root causes and effects, as the principle stability risk Europe faces. Berlin believes that all these threats have intensified since 2008.

Who does the country fear?

Germany sees Russia and, to a lesser extent, China as the most threatening actors it confronts. The 2016 German White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr states: “Russia is openly calling the European peace order into question with its willingness to use force to advance its own interests and to unilaterally redraw borders guaranteed under international law, as it has done in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. This has far-reaching implications for security in Europe and thus for the security of Germany.” The paper portrays jihadism as a “cross-cutting issue” that is highly important. Berlin perceives Iran as a potential risk due to questions around its involvement in arms proliferation and the destabilisation of the Middle East, but not as a pressing issue. Germans have also begun to regard the United States as a kind of security threat, as the unpredictability of the current US administration has created “unprecedented insecurity” in transatlantic relations.

Essential security partners

Germany views France as its most important security partner by far. The countries generally cooperate closely within an EU framework, often basing their security partnership on a shared willingness to promote the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Germany also sees the United Kingdom as an important partner due to the latter’s military power and the cooperation between their defence industries. Berlin perceives Poland’s investment in military capacity and defence industry as important to German national security, and maintains close cooperation between the German and Dutch armed forces. For Germany, the US security guarantee and cooperation within NATO are crucial. The government has significantly upgraded its engagement within NATO in reaction to instability in Europe’s neighbourhood. However, due to the growing risk that the US security guarantee will lose its credibility, German leaders largely agree that they need to enhance and modernise national defence capabilities while also promoting closer CSDP cooperation.

The EU as a security actor

The German government is hugely supportive of EU security and defence integration, believing that it is central to German security. In a speech to the Munich Security Conference in February 2018, German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen stated: “We want to stay transatlantic – and at the same time become more European. It is about a Europe that can mobilize more military weight; that is more independent and can assume more responsibility – in the end, also in NATO.” The German government’s coalition treaty states: “We will fill the European Defence Union with life. This implies advancing the PESCO projects and the use of the newly established European Defence Fund.” Yet German officials acknowledge that there has been little progress on European defence integration, and that the process is as much about the integrity of the broader European project as it is about security.