



GREECE

NATO member



since 1952

Defence share in GDP

2017



PESCO projects

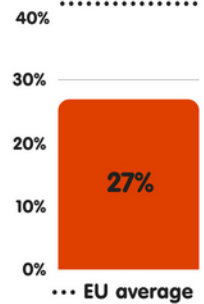
Leader



Participant



Trust in EU



What does the country fear?

As it prepares to end its third financial bailout programme, Greece continues to see economic instability as one of the top threats to its security. It is equally concerned about inter-state war, uncontrolled migration, and terrorist attacks (among other EU countries, only Poland sees inter-state war as top threat).

Who does the country fear?

Athens' concern about inter-state war and migration relates to the erosion of Turkish democracy under Recep Tayyip Erdogan: Greeks fear not just his neo-Ottoman regional aspirations but also his ambivalence to the EU-Turkey refugee agreement. Greece perceives Turkey as the most threatening actor it faces, despite the fact that they are both members of NATO (among other EU countries, only Cyprus and Bulgaria regard Turkey as at least a significant threat). There is greater tension between Athens and Ankara than at any time since 2003, when Erdogan came to power. Turkish policies on the Aegean Sea and Cyprus's exclusive economic zone have caused alarm among Greeks, prompting Athens to look for new defences against potential Turkish aggression. The Greek government also sees international criminal organisations and jihadists as major threats, fearing that these actors will enter Greece from Turkey by using the refugee crisis as cover. Athens does not view China or Russia as threats (although Russia is a divisive issue in Greek politics).

Essential security partners

Greece sees France and Germany as its most important European security partners, having bought military equipment from both countries. Athens believes that Paris supports its views on Turkey, and that it can count on Germany to restrain Erdogan's regional ambitions. Greece also closely cooperates with Cyprus and Italy, often joining them in military exercises that involve Israel and the United States as well. Viewing Washington as its key non-European security partner, Greece expects the US to upgrade a military base in Crete, partly in response to Turkey's perceived unreliability as a NATO member. Greece prioritises security cooperation with the US as a hedge against potential Turkish aggression, engaging in efforts such as the modernisation of F-16 fighters, and diplomacy to discourage military deals between Washington and Ankara.

The EU as a security actor

Like their counterparts in most other EU countries, Greek elites largely view the European Union a transatlantic geopolitical project that has NATO as its backbone. They believe that the EU can provide little protection against the threats they perceive as linked to Turkey and, therefore, heavily rely on the US and NATO. Although Greece has the lowest trust in the EU of any member state, it supports EU security and defence cooperation (as seen in its leadership of two PESCO projects) so long as it remains inclusive and poses no challenge to NATO.