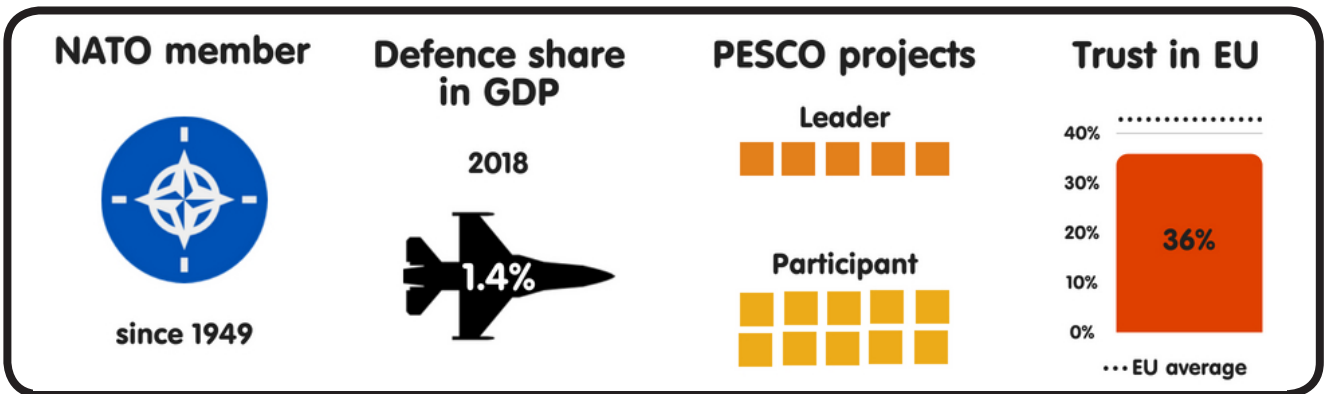




ITALY



What does the country fear?

Italy's greatest security concerns are uncontrolled migration, state collapse in the European Union's neighbourhood, and terrorist attacks. Viewing all three as intrinsically linked, Rome has become more worried about these threats since 2008 and expects them to persist at roughly their current level in the next decade. Italy's 2016 national security strategy laid the groundwork for operations in Libya and the wider Sahel region, where people trafficking and political turmoil pose a serious threat to Italian security. Rome feels most vulnerable to disruptions in the energy supply because of its dependence on other countries for oil and gas, the volatility of energy prices, and political instability in major energy-producing countries.

Who does the country fear?

Italy regards international criminal organisations, jihadists, and North Korea as the most threatening actors it faces. This perception has persisted since 2008, and is likely to continue to do so until at least 2028. In the case of Iran, the Italian political elite is in favour of maintaining strong relations with Tehran and therefore fears the effects of the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal on stability in the Middle East. Unlike most other EU member states, Italy does not see Russia as a major threat. Rome believes that there is a moderate risk of Russian interference in Italy through cyber attacks, disruptions in the energy supply, and information warfare, but little threat from Moscow in other areas. Italian political parties take roughly the same line on Russia, albeit while adopting different tones. The League staunchly supports a close relationship with Russia, while the Five Star Movement has called for cooperation with the country as "a fundamental strategic partner" – citing the economic benefits of this and Moscow's influence in Middle East and north Africa.

Essential security partners

Italy's key European security partners are France, Germany, and Spain. However, there has been persistent friction between Paris and Rome since France participated in the 2011 military intervention in Libya, exacerbated by Italy's perceived lack of support for French military operations in Mali. Nonetheless, Italy and France signed the Quirinal Treaty in January 2018, aiming to improve their relationship. Most Italian political parties view the United States as an essential security partner: there is a US troop presence in Italy, and Rome regards the US nuclear security guarantee – along with US-Italy high-level political coordination, and technological, intelligence, and military cooperation – as crucial to national security. Before entering government, both the League and the Five Star Movement called for NATO reform. Since then, however, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has reaffirmed in parliament Italy's commitment to NATO and its principles.

The EU as a security actor

Viewing further EU defence integration as one of the central pillars of its security policy, Italy is a firm supporter of PESCO and participates in almost all of the initiative's projects. As discussed in the 2016 security strategy, Rome has long acknowledged the need for the EU to increase its defence capabilities and commitments, aiming to transform the Union into a security provider in the EU's neighbourhood. Italian leaders perceive these goals as increasingly important due to the unpredictability of the current US administration.