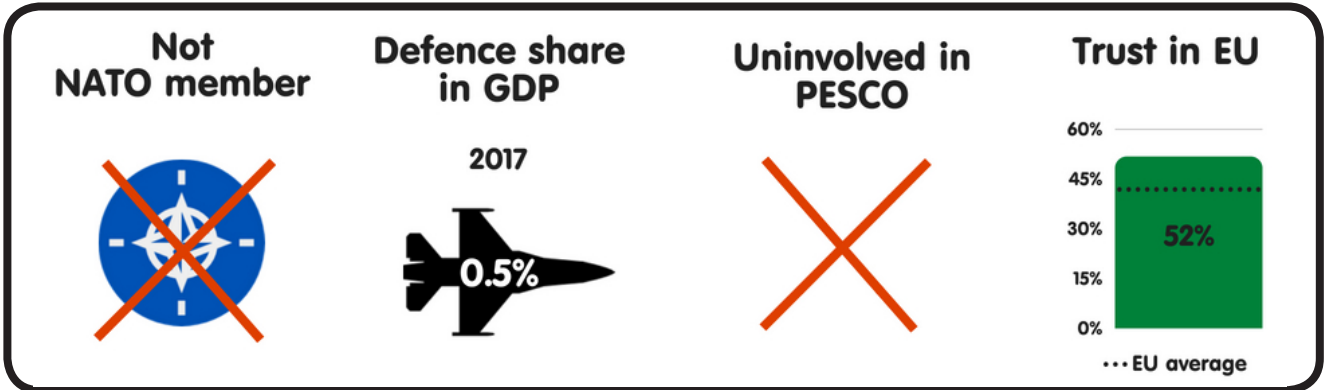




MALTA



What does the country fear?

Due to its location, Malta sees conflicts in the Middle East and north Africa as the greatest threat to its national security. These conflicts hinder Maltese trade, empower terrorist organisations, and drive refugees into Europe. Malta also sees these refugee flows as one of the most significant threats to its security, mostly because of the difficulty of controlling the number of people entering the country. Malta is also one of four EU members seriously concerned about potential economic instability affecting national security (the others are Greece, Portugal, and Slovakia).

Who does the country fear?

Malta perceives international criminal organisations and jihadists as the most threatening actors it confronts, believing that they can profit from instability in the Mediterranean region and enter the country disguised as refugees. Maltese leaders are especially concerned about the Islamic State group’s involvement in the conflict in Libya, a country to which it has long-standing cultural and economic ties. Malta is among the EU members least inclined to regard Russia as a threat.

Essential security partners

As a former British colony, Malta maintains a close relationship with the United Kingdom. Brexit may even lead to stronger bilateral cooperation between the countries. Malta’s other essential security partners in Europe include neighbouring Italy, as well as France and Germany. Malta is not a NATO member and has a constitutional commitment to neutrality. Malta engages in some security and intelligence sharing with the United States, but it does not see the US security guarantee as essential to its security.

The EU as a security actor

Malta has, like the UK and Denmark, opted not to join PESCO – a position that has broad bipartisan support due to the country’s neutrality. Nonetheless, Malta’s commitment to neutrality has declined in the past decade, with Valletta increasingly engaging in security cooperation and intelligence sharing within the EU, especially in the context of a conflict in Libya and irregular migration across the central Mediterranean route.