PORTUGAL

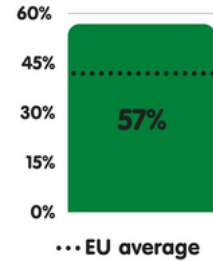| NATO member	Defence share in GDP	PESCO projects	Trust in EU
since 1949	2017 — 1.7%	Participant	57% — EU average

What does the country fear?

Portugal is one of two EU countries that sees economic instability – which it associates with corruption, poverty, and social exclusion – as one of the greatest threats to its security (the other is Greece). Lisbon also regards state collapse or civil war in the European Union's neighbourhood as a significant threat, partly due to Portugal's proximity to north Africa and position on NATO's European southern flank. Portuguese leaders perceive terrorism, cyber attacks, and the deterioration of the rules-based international order as major threats that will remain important throughout the next decade.

Who does the country fear?

Like many southern EU states, Portugal perceives international criminal organisations that engage in drugs, arms, and people trafficking as one of the most threatening actors it faces. The country also views jihadists as a significant threat, especially given that it participates in the coalition fighting against the Islamic State group. Portugal is one of five EU members that regard Russia as posing no threat to their security (the others are Greece, Cyprus, Italy, and Hungary). Portugal acknowledges that Europe neighbours two regions in crisis: the Middle East and north Africa, and eastern Europe. However, for reasons of proximity, it prioritises measures to counter threatening actors to its south.

Essential security partners

Largely responsible for Portugal becoming a founding member of NATO, London is Lisbon's essential security partner in Europe. Portuguese leaders are concerned that Brexit could weaken not just the European Union but also the transatlantic relationship. Lisbon's other key European partners include Madrid, Paris, and Rome. The Portuguese and the Italians are both preoccupied with stability in the Middle East and north Africa – a concern that has led them to cooperate with each other in formats such as MED7, EUROMARFOR, and the 5+5 Dialogue. Portugal also increasingly cooperates with the Netherlands on defence investment. Nonetheless, historically, Portugal's most important strategic partner has been the United States. Lisbon has consistently sided with the US in disagreements between NATO countries, including that over the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. Portugal believes that its resilience against security threats largely stems from its NATO membership and strategic alliance with the US.

The EU as a security actor

Portugal sees itself as both a European and a transatlantic power. The country is a founding member of the eurozone and the Schengen Area. There is widespread support for both the EU and NATO among Portuguese leaders – despite the fact that the two far-left parties working alongside the ruling socialists in parliament have traditionally opposed the US, NATO, and European integration. The Portuguese government signalled its view of NATO as the core of collective defence in Europe by avoiding PESCO's launch ceremony. Lisbon initially feared the initiative would compete with NATO, distract the EU from more pressing issues such as the eurozone, and damage EU cohesion (by, for instance, allowing large countries to dominate small ones in defence industrial cooperation). Nonetheless, Portugal eventually joined PESCO because it wanted to remain at the forefront of European integration, and because it believed the initiative could improve the interoperability and readiness of member states' armed forces.