



SPAIN

NATO member



since 1982

Defence share in GDP

2017



0.92%

PESCO projects

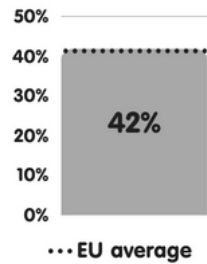
Leader



Participant



Trust in EU



... EU average

What does the country fear?

Spain views cyber attacks and terrorism, followed by uncontrolled migration and state collapse in the European Union’s neighbourhood, as the most significant threats to its national security. The country feels most vulnerable to cyber attacks. In contrast, in 2008, the country felt most vulnerable to terrorism – having recently experienced Basque separatist and jihadist attacks – and to then high levels of uncontrolled migration. Spain expects the threats it faces to persist at roughly their current level until at least 2028, with its concern about state collapse in the European Union’s neighbourhood, EU disintegration, and the deterioration of the rules-based international order growing during this period. Spanish leaders also anticipate turbulence in north Africa – with the likely ascent of new leaderships in Algeria and perhaps Morocco – in the next decade. Although Catalonia’s independence movement looms over its thinking on security, Spain views itself as resilient against external meddling in domestic politics.

Who does the country fear?

Madrid perceives international criminal organisations and jihadists as the most threatening actors it confronts. The former have a significant presence on the Mediterranean coast, and in Cádiz and Galicia; the latter have carried out large-scale attacks in Spain, including in Madrid in 2004 and in Barcelona in 2017. Russia is the only state that Spain perceives as a moderate threat. Spain’s main political parties largely share the security establishment’s threat perceptions, albeit while viewing Russia as slightly less of a threat.

Essential security partners

Spain sees France, Germany, Portugal, and Italy as its crucial security partners within the EU. Madrid views Washington as its key ally in NATO, recognising that the US troop presence at bases in southern Spain are important to the country’s power projection in the Mediterranean. Most Spaniards have an extremely negative view of US President Donald Trump, but since the early 2000s the country’s relationship with the US has become a less divisive political issue. There is strong bipartisan support for the EU and European defence and security cooperation across Spanish political parties, particularly the ruling Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party. Seeing Brexit as a potential source of security problems, Madrid is keen for the EU and the United Kingdom to quickly create a new security partnership, thereby preventing any disruption in intelligence and counter-terrorism cooperation. However, the security establishment also views Brexit as an opportunity to pursue Spain’s claim to Gibraltar, as the EU will no longer be a neutral actor in the Anglo-Spanish dispute over the territory.

The EU as a security actor

Maintaining a very positive attitude towards PESCO, Spain is determined to actively participate in the initiative’s development and to be considered one of the main drivers of European security capabilities development and industrial cooperation. Madrid leads PESCO’s Strategic Command and Control System project for EU operations, seeing the development of capacity for military intervention as crucial to EU security. The Rota naval base in Cádiz will be one of the EU’s five operational headquarters, replacing one at Northwood after Brexit. The Rota base will also take over from Northwood as the headquarters of Operation Atalanta. Spain supports the creation of the European Defence Fund within the next EU budget.