



CZECH REPUBLIC

NATO member



since 1999

**Defence share
in GDP**

2017

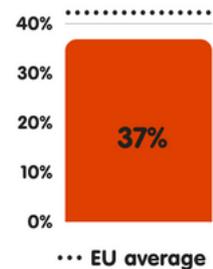


PESCO projects

Participant



Trust in EU



What does the country fear?

There is a gap between the Czech public and the Czech government in perceptions of security threats. The public are most concerned about migration and terrorist attacks, while the government is aware that the Czech Republic is neither a popular destination for migrants nor priority target for terrorists. Czech elites believe that the most important threats to their country are state collapse or civil war in the European Union's neighbourhood (a concern stemming from its proximity to Ukraine), cyber attacks, and external meddling in domestic politics. Politicians on the Czech Republic's extreme left and extreme right, as well as the openly pro-Russian president Milos Zeman, spread fear of uncontrolled migration and terrorist attacks to boost their political position.

Who does the country fear?

The Czech political establishment regards Russia and jihadists as the most threatening actors their country faces. Its view of Russia has rapidly dimmed in recent years, particularly since Moscow's annexation of Crimea and instigation of a conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014. However, while seven of nine parties in parliament are wary of Russia and largely supportive of the EU and NATO, the extreme right and extreme left view Moscow as an ally and Washington as an enemy, demanding that the Czech Republic leave NATO. Zeman's pro-Russian views have helped the extreme right's and extreme left's views enter mainstream public discourse (even though he declares himself to be pro-European and a staunch admirer of US President Donald Trump).

Essential security partners

The Czech Republic views Germany as its most important European security partner, due to the strategic dialogue between the countries and Berlin's leadership in shaping EU security policy. Prague also engages in close security cooperation with Bratislava and Warsaw, with which it has many shared security interests and threat perceptions. Prague sees Paris as another important partner, mostly because of French security capabilities and leadership within the EU. However, the Czech Republic has perceived the US as its main security guarantor during the last three decades, despite the fact that their bilateral cooperation has declined in recent years. Partly to please the US administration, the Czech government has pledged to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2024, almost double its current level.

The EU as a security actor

Prague sees NATO as vital to national security, and the EU as primarily an economic cooperation project. Nonetheless, there is a consensus among Czech civilian and military leaders that, in the long run, the EU should play an active role in developing European military and crisis management capabilities. Despite the Ministry of Defence's initial scepticism about PESCO, the Czech government eventually joined the initiative (albeit minimally) as a way to improve national military preparedness. Prague remains wary of European defence industry cooperation, fearing that this could weaken the defence industrial base of the Czech Republic and other small EU countries.