



# UNITED KINGDOM

**NATO member**



since 1949

**Defence share  
in GDP**

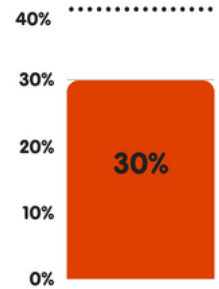
2017



**Uninvolved  
in PESCO**



**Trust in EU**



### *What does the country fear?*

Like France, the United Kingdom perceives cyber attacks and terrorism as the most significant threats to its security, but is also concerned about the deterioration of the rules-based international order, inter-state war involving the country or allies, state collapse in the European Union’s neighbourhood, and climate change. The UK’s concern about economic instability has declined since 2008, while its fear of cyber attacks has risen in the period. London expects the threat from cyber attacks to persist at roughly its current level during the next decade. The UK views itself as resilient against most threats, but vulnerable to that from another global economic crisis (given the City of London’s prominent role in global financial markets) and from external meddling in its domestic politics (particularly in relation to its 2016 vote on leaving the EU).

### *Who does the country fear?*

The UK views jihadists and Russia as the most threatening actors it confronts. The former have conducted attacks in London and Manchester in recent years, while the latter is linked to the use of nerve agent in Salisbury in March 2018. Having viewed Russia as a relatively minor threat in 2008, UK policymakers are now more concerned about the country than about any other actor due its aggressive posture in Europe – particularly its annexation of Crimea; support for political forces that undermine the rule of law in Europe and oppose the EU; disinformation campaigns; build-up of forces in Kaliningrad, the Arctic, and the north Atlantic; and increased military exercises on NATO’s borders. London also sees North Korea, Iran, and international criminal organisations as posing a significant threat. The UK believes that the threat from Iran has declined since the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and – assuming the deal holds together in some form – will have diminished further by 2028.

### *Essential security partners*

The UK perceives France, Germany, the Netherlands, and all Scandinavian countries as its key security partners in the EU. Intelligence sharing is central to all these relationships, with Franco-British cooperation also including technological collaboration and joint training. London views Dublin as important to internal security due to their shared border. The UK is heavily invested in its relationship with the United States. Political coordination between London and Washington, and the presence of American forces on British territory, have contributed to the UK’s security. But the focus of their security relationship is intelligence sharing (through the Five Eyes), technological exchange (covering support for the UK’s nuclear deterrent and fifth-generation combat aircraft capability), and the US nuclear guarantee, under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty.

### *The EU as a security actor*

Although it has not joined PESCO, the UK views the initiative as potentially addressing NATO’s vulnerability to threats such as disinformation campaigns. Most British leaders recognise that further EU defence integration could contribute to the stability of the European project and see a strong EU in their interests. However, the UK would be concerned about PESCO if the initiative began to compete with NATO. The UK hopes to be able to join some parts of PESCO after leaving the EU (it remains unclear whether this third country involvement will be possible). London is particularly keen to ensure that its departure from the Union will not disrupt cooperation with the EU on counter-terrorism, cyber security, and defence industrial development.