# Majority in US and Europe foresee risk of third world war amid VE Day reflections



Polling conducted by YouGov reveals that a significant portion of the American and Western European populations perceive a substantial risk of a potential third world war within the next decade. This survey arrives as Europe prepares to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day, with respondents largely agreeing that the events of the second world war remain relevant today and should be imparted to younger generations.

The poll, which included responses from individuals across Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, indicated that between 41% and 55% of participants consider another global conflict either "very" or "fairly" likely to occur within the next five to ten years. In the United States, 45% of respondents shared this belief.

Concerns about the potential destructiveness of future conflicts are underscored by findings indicating that a majority—ranging from 68% to 76%—believes nuclear weapons would play a role in a new war. Furthermore, between 57% and 73% of those surveyed anticipate that a third world war would result in higher casualties than those experienced during the years 1939 to 1945. Alarmingly, a notable percentage, between 25% and 44%, thinks such a conflict could lead to the deaths of a majority of the global population.

National sentiments vary across the surveyed countries regarding military preparedness; while 89% of respondents in the UK expect their country would participate in such a war, confidence in defence capabilities appears lower, particularly in Italy (16%) and France (44%). Conversely, 71% of Americans reported confidence in their military's ability to protect them.

The survey indicates that perceptions of Russia as a key potential aggressor are widespread, with 72% to 82% of Western Europeans and 69% of Americans identifying it as the most likely catalyst for a future global conflict. Tensions with Islamic terrorism were also cited as a cause. Notably, feelings towards the United States as a potential threat are evident, with majorities in Spain (58%), Germany (55%), and France (53%) affirming this view.

Reflecting on the legacy of the second world war, varied levels of historical awareness were reported. In France, 72% of respondents felt they possessed a significant understanding of the conflict, closely followed by Germany (70%) and the UK (66%). Contrastingly, only 40% of Spaniards reported similar knowledge, reflective of Spain’s non-participation in the war. In educational contexts, 77% of French respondents stated they had received extensive wartime education, yet this figure was much lower in Britain (48%) and Spain (34%).

There is a strong consensus on the importance of teaching the second world war in schools, with overwhelming majorities (82% to 90%) across Western Europe and the US deeming it essential. Additionally, between 72% and 87% affirmed the continued relevance of the war’s events.

Addressing the potential for re-emergence of extreme offences similar to those committed by the Nazi regime, a significant percentage of respondents—ranging from 31% in Spain to 52% in the US—acknowledged the possibility of such crimes occurring within their lifetimes. In the context of neighbouring countries, between 44% and 59% believed that such acts could take place in “another Western European country,” including 52% of Americans.

When asked about contributions to defeating the Nazis, responses varied, with 40% to 52% across five countries crediting the US, while only 17% to 28% attributed this to the Soviet Union. In the UK, 41% mentioned Britain, a view not widely echoed by American or other Western European respondents.

The survey also examined perceptions of Germany's post-war handling of its historical actions, revealing that 46% of Germans believe their nation has adequately addressed its past, a sentiment shared by 49% of Americans and 58% of Britons. Notably, 47% of Germans felt that their country might have become “overly conscious” of its Nazi history, hampering a robust response to contemporary issues, while only 24% indicated that leadership had managed this balance effectively.

Moreover, in response to the question of who has maintained peace since 1945, majorities in all surveyed countries identified NATO as a key contributor, with other organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union also recognised for their roles in fostering stability across the region. Sixty-six percent of respondents cited NATO's efforts, whereas 44% to 60% credited the EU with significant contributions to peacekeeping objectives.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/43810-yougov-study-war-chances-global-conflict-and-impac> - This YouGov study reveals that 61% of Britons believe a major world conflict is likely within the next five years, aligning with the article's claim that a significant portion of Western Europeans perceive a substantial risk of a potential third world war within the next decade.
* <https://today.yougov.com/politics/articles/48981-most-americans-think-another-world-war-within-the-next-decade> - This YouGov survey indicates that 61% of Americans think a world war is either 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' in the next 5-10 years, supporting the article's assertion that a significant portion of the American population perceives a substantial risk of a potential third world war within the next decade.
* <https://www.ipsos.com/en/halifax-report-2023-conflict> - Ipsos' 2023 report shows that 76% of Americans believe the threat of their country entering an armed conflict with another country is real, underscoring concerns about the potential destructiveness of future conflicts, as mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.politico.eu/article/vast-majority-of-europeans-see-russia-as-an-adversary-poll-finds/> - This article reports that two-thirds of Europeans consider Russia an adversary, corroborating the article's claim that perceptions of Russia as a key potential aggressor are widespread among Western Europeans.
* <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/05/10/americans-hold-positive-feelings-toward-nato-and-ukraine-see-russia-as-an-enemy/> - Pew Research Center's 2023 study finds that 64% of Americans view Russia as an enemy, supporting the article's assertion that perceptions of Russia as a key potential aggressor are widespread among Americans.
* <https://www.politico.eu/article/vast-majority-of-europeans-see-russia-as-an-adversary-poll-finds/> - This article reports that two-thirds of Europeans consider Russia an adversary, aligning with the article's claim that perceptions of Russia as a key potential aggressor are widespread among Western Europeans.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/06/majority-in-us-and-west-europe-think-third-world-war-likely-within-10-years-poll-ve-day> - Please view link - unable to able to access data