

With the UK General Election campaign under way, what impact will defence and security issues have on voting intentions? Public opinion polls conducted by MORI between February and March suggest that defence and security are less of a concern for voters than the economy. When MORI asked what is the most important issue facing Britain today, 55% of respondents considered the economy as the most pressing concern. By comparison, 14% regarded defence, foreign affairs and terrorism as the most important issue facing the country.

In a survey carried out between 19th and 22nd March, 32% of respondents considered managing the economy as the most important issue to help them decide which party to vote for. Only 3% considered defence as the most important determinant. Interestingly 3% and 5% of respondents considered Iraq and Afghanistan respectively as an important issue.

Since the last election defence, foreign affairs and international terrorism have most often been important issues facing Britain in the aftermath of terrorist events. After the July 2005 London bombings approximately 60% of respondents considered these as the country's most pressing issues. In response to the failed terrorist attacks in London and Glasgow in 2007 only 40% considered defence and security issues as high priority. As the UK began to withdraw troops from Iraq in 2009 less than 10% considered defence, security and foreign affairs as the most important issue facing the country. This represents the lowest score for such issues since 9/11.

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