

STRATEGIC COMPLEXITY AND COMPREHENSION: "THE ROAD TO A NEW SECURITY ARCHITECTURE"

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Abstract: *It is essential to comprehend the current and future state of affairs, the importance and use of technology in crises, while also knowing how to make a right choice regarding collaboration and strategic alliances. It is important to understand the complex and volatile environment in the European Continent and beyond. While we live in the world of change, the digital ecosystem is borderless and showing us the ways to the future. It is a matter of a contemporary challenge. Therefore, we have to be agile, well-versed and multidimensional in approach and processes when examining the greater picture ahead of us, regionally and globally. At the time of new emerging alliances interrupting the current state of affairs and partnerships, we have to be resilient and reliant on short-term variables, and provide optimal solutions to risk assessments in the future. Through this chapter, we envision what we will call "the road to a new security architecture". The chapter deems it a requirement against the current market and political volatility ahead of us. It analyzes the current state of affairs, considers regional and ongoing global phenomena and the need for long-term alliances. It is a theoretical research approach that includes a risk assessment analysis and requests further support for more profound pragmatic-based research.*

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Introduction

It is essential to identify "the political ecosystem" of our region, namely, the Balkans and the Southeast Mediterranean region. We consider developments around us. There is a need for a risk assessment in order to forecast and identify the current and future challenges, local or peripheral, to indicate options for a possible breakthrough, having in mind that the world is not peaceful at this stage. Through this chapter, we envision what we will call "*the road to a new security architecture*" and we deem it a requirement against the current market and political volatility ahead of us.

This chapter assumes that regional and national threats are interconnected as political issues and affect negatively all regions. The area, in turn, looks and feels volatile in a constantly changing political, economic and military environment. This chapter seeks to comprehend the boundaries that define the interconnected political ecosystem through strategic and security approaches. In turn, the chapter attempts to envision methods that can be used when translated into political affairs, what we call peace resolutions, the end of conflicts or premature avoidance of a potential dispute that may be implemented. The region of our interest in this chapter is the Balkans and the East Mediterranean region.

This chapter calls for a regional power balance, that is, a new strategic and security architecture that first provides regional stability and then the future one. This chapter calls for the first actual road map that defines, among other things, a new security architecture for the Balkans in its totality. The path to the Western Balkan Euro-Atlantic integration may be an option and a course. However, this is a greater vision. The pragmatic process states that this will ultimately depend on regional power solutions and multilateral collaboration; other paths will be created if they fail.

This chapter requires scientific and political openness, a feasibility mentality and an approach to dimensional comprehension. If one attempts to read this chapter, political realism and pragmatic awareness are necessary. Moreover, if one is likely to be associated with the actual methodology from a theoretical approach, it will transform it to a practical one, thus improving the theory on security architecture in the 'world' of political affairs.

A new security architecture is considered a road map. It defines ways or solutions for possible collaboration and ultimately calls for regional alliances. The current chapter seeks critical solutions considering regional pending problems. The cases continue to emerge regarding the global geostrategic landscape, which is also in a state of flux. This new political spectrum defines and examines possibilities, at a theoretical level, between coordinating subjects and considering the regional needs and approaches in a greater need for stability. This includes a combination of requirements for the following groups: economic, social, political, criminal justice, national security, international affairs, defense, technology, investment and business, since all cases are somehow interconnected to each other, as we have stated above. In a combination with their regional issues, this calls for a new strategic and security architecture.

This chapter considers three facts in real time: the changing political landscape, the scarcity of natural resources and the increase in competition. At the same time, wars rage worldwide and actual regional cooperation is necessary. Volatility is a truly vital characteristic of our region and the world today.

Moreover, this chapter believes that multipolarity with multiple actors in similar regions damages the element of peace and, therefore, a balance of power. It disrupts the purpose of regional prosperity. Additionally, the main characteristic of the Balkans and the Southeast Mediterranean region defines issues as regions competing with each other with regional national issues that are yet to be solved. The global changing political landscape requires countries to be simultaneously more active in an attempt to have a more prosperous, more stable, and thus more peaceful region.

This chapter provides the theoretical recording and request for an architectural proposal for a regional strategic and security architecture, which defines a much-needed regional balance of power that may bring us closer rather than apart. This chapter is about the needs and requirements related to a security architecture, that is, a design that feels like using, to a possible extent, modernity and technology as core tools to negotiate for. In a changing financial and geopolitical landscape, with the scarcity of natural resources and commodities, reliance on actual free trade economies is necessary. Currently, there are some agreements on the enhanced trade, but this is based on power projection and competition, which we consider, in the long run, undermining actual security resilience and business continuity while the world becomes more multipolar.

We examine and analyze technological importance to strategic reality and security architecture in the first part. We do not see technology solely as a tool. Instead, we envision technology as a part of the epicenter for a regional political balance discourse. This chapter believes that technology could be leveraged for this reason. We could establish stronger cooperation during this regional and global change ahead of us, where new power balances are being created. Bearing in mind the need for the modernization of technology when research and development (R&D) increase in military affairs, we foresee that the use of technology to increase the level of collaboration and mediation is to be enhanced further. Moreover, technology has continued to hold a great deal of military utility, which will be shown in this chapter. Technology is believed to have a political purpose and utility for peace. Technology can be leveraged, as stated above, to the level to become a tool to negotiate pending cross-regional issues, drifting away from volatility.

In the second part, we examine and emphasize the importance and efficiency of strategic cooperation. What is the best or right choice for possible strategic alliances in our regions, considering transient commitments and/or the option to have hybrid partnerships? Therefore, we assume that the current powers or the ones seeking to be powers comprehend viable and long-term cooperation and ultimately alliances.

The third part proposes the path to a new security architecture. Resilience and reliance on the current and future affairs are considered to be vital characteristics. We forecast the possibility of positive future if only viewed as a power option between newly allied states, defining the character of modern alliances in a futuristic environment. The complete chapter considers various events that require agility,

resilience and decisiveness at a national level, while giving an impetus for strong alliances to thrive, thus possibly raising the standard of regional power stability, cooperation and respect. Operational recommendations and conclusions on the main subject will follow in the end.

As disclosure, the author would like to state that this chapter is theoretical and hopes to be used as a theoretical construct for a complete set-value comprehension community in order to enable a broader public and scientific discourse in the hope of elevating it to a political level. Therefore, the whole paper is considered to be in its initial steps. It views and examines the issues holistically. Regionally, we cannot escape from global things and the vibes we receive from global events. The entire paper is not related to any government, institution/organization or affiliated with any government or political centers. These are scientific assumptions. There are merely analyses for consideration and proposals that are to be considered an act of scientific submission solely by the author.

It is essential to state that this chapter considers two main points: firstly, the world is in a state of flux and we seek options that may ignite public discourse on the possibility of a more stable political ecosystem and the second point is more directly related to the chapter itself. Various terminologies in this chapter, definitions, explanations and analyses have been carefully used. We believe that the theoretical thinking and use of terminologies complement each other. As stated above, the thinking behind it should be understood as a first attempt to record the request and the need for a security architecture in our regions that we consider missing, while premature thinking may be there – having in mind the ongoing changing landscape and geostrategic chessboard. Any expressions of the current or future state of affairs are, by definition, tough to combine and define or explain. Thus, we comprehend what is happening around us at different dimensions. We attempt to clarify thoughts about what is taking place and what could take place positively or negatively from a theoretical point of view. This entails the future and further analysis of any critical issues raised through this current publication.

The title of this chapter includes the terms complexity and comprehension, and this is what we try to do. This chapter considers the current regional and global political complexity, as well as attempts to comprehend it and propose elements for a more peaceful ecosystem. History has shown us that our environment is, by now, extremely complex and cannot be "simplified" if we do nothing about it.

Reading this chapter requires open-minded and holistic thinking, as well as the will to agree to the state of affairs as we go through it. When reading this chapter, one should think above the national spectrum. As we aim to examine and analyze what is taking place or its shape, we do not attempt to take any national position or lead the reader to any assumptions. We state the theoretical facts through an analysis approach that is based on realism and pragmatism. We merely seek to showcase what we consider a much needed security architecture, therefore requesting negotiations rendering deeper cooperation and leading to possible alliances starting from a regional standpoint, considering global and regional volatility. We attempt to identify policy options that unite regional states rather than keep them apart.

This chapter discusses various questions raised in real time. The time of writing this chapter takes place in the summer of 2023. To put it in a nutshell, the chapter forecasts that we are expected to see the rise of more regional competition. At the same time, while globality gives rise to further challenges, opportunities, instability, insecurity and volatility, the considered developments have to be overcome first.

The paper does not necessarily relate things as they may be to the current power cooperation that we deem to be established for the purpose of pure national interest by each nation separately. We believe that if such collaboration does not include depth and a security architecture established on the basis of strategic cooperation in order to create a possible alliance, considering our new characteristics, the current associations may be short-lived. Thus, we are to see attempts for a more substantial presence of regional power engagement and, therefore, regional competition between powers that would like to be engaged further and ultimately and will have to compete with current neighbors or collaborators.

By 2023, many countries have already attempted to write modern and future history based on ancestry or historical values or earth-related values that make up for their national need for grander posture and strategic depth. However, this may not mean that modernity, technology and supranational threats may require more than a single attempt for regional power status in a changing world.

Setting the pace of a necessary new architecture

To envision peace, one has to propose peace, at least the architecture of it. This current chapter is the first attempt. It projects and offers the establishment of a new security architecture, the one that necessitates a collective process, both political and sociological methodologies for development. The aim is to seek a peaceful resolution to the current or upcoming issues in order to avoid further escalation of small or large claims that may lead to new conflicts. As aforementioned, we are more than ever volatile, and a "spark" can ignite hate, fear, competition and regional wars. Unfortunately, this seems to be the reality of a multipolar world without "standards" of cooperation and alliances, without a regional balance of power.

The current global state of affairs, as such, is in flux. It affects all of us. The war in Ukraine, which continues throughout 2023, may not end as soon as one may have wished or anticipated, having in mind the seriousness of the matter. For those who comprehend the relationship between Ukraine and Russia, or the NATO-Russia and NATO-Ukraine relations, the possibility of marking the subject of Ukrainian-Russian relations as volatile was always there (European Parliament, June 2022). The case of the conflict has been developing over years, and there is a lot to say about it on various fronts: religious, political, military, sociological, even identity one (Friesendorf and Wolff, 2022). Nevertheless, this is not the main aim of this chapter at this stage.

Inter alia, war has managed to raise questions on power and leadership, globally and regionally. On a global scale, the current state of affairs cannot be considered to

have any kind of balance at any level (financial, political or military), rather than "transient commitments" in the socio-political and economic business affairs. Many people have viewed the shift to a multipolar world as an opportunity. They have considered the balance of power and the need or wishes of all states to develop and compete. It was first seen by the fall of the Soviet era and the Cold War when liberalism overtook socialism. By 1989, in the bilateral world, the balance of power between the West and East could no more rest at a bilateral level. Instead, there was a move to a new, more multilateral perspective and prospect for greater ability to occur in business and trade, political affairs, communications, healthcare, research and development, investments, production, defense and regional or global politics. New country actors were to emerge (Shlapentokh Dmitry, 2012). If we could only create time-lapse events, the 1990s would reorganize the financial status and infrastructure, and the mid-1990s would lead to regional and national wars for independence on the appearance of need/wish and opportunity.

The 21st century events have been/are considered, among other things, to be characterized by the age of technology, the fight against terror and other forms of conflicts, financial attempts to overthrow or control trade wars, the dawn of genetics and healthcare, space race and competitive industrial development. By the beginning of the 21st century, the fight against global terror has shifted socio-political, religious, trade and business assumptions and ideologies and has established new paths for new alliances in the world that would soon attempt to become multipolar.

The rise of technology and, within this, the ever-growing digital ecosystem and amongst it the internet, the later social media and now artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing and/or genetics in the world of robotics (UNCTAD, 2021), has the power to emerge even further, offering an abundance of options and choices, from minor to mega projects, involving the complete socio-political "stratosphere" of our communities.

The overall environment and our climate are changing. New forms of economics and finance are emerging, some regulated and yet-to-be-regulated cryptocurrencies. These are to become a complete set of new digital conditions of living that will add value to the digital format of our ecosystem, that is, a new living standard that goes with technology. This crossroads between the virtual world we live in and our tendency to spend more than approximately 7 hours per day (according to our phone/computer data provided by our service provider or phone we have) put to the 21st century equation with a digital living model. And more is yet to come.

The rise of digitization of our lives provides the opportunity for a new world structure. Inter alia, there are more social rights to an individual, who may have been discriminated against. This would ultimately create movements for even more freedom, such as gender movements and greater civil rights to the individual or collective in nations that have been/are considered as "traditional". This is the new "digital society Modus vivendi".

In politics, such elements and characteristics, if we can call them in such a manner, have proven to enlarge the agenda with the emergence of new social and

political issues, mixed with the current or pending national historical problems between states and political, economic and religious matters. Through them, the wish or need for further regional powers to emerge, leads to balance and/or control. This allows countries to become regional powers and "bid" for possible power globality in the 21st century new strategic chessboard.

In the post-Covid crisis era, firstly within the 21st century, while some say that more may come, human volatility is now marked. In its totality, humans are volatile from many issues, and now a global health crisis, the one that can be deadly indeed. Opportunistic, as this can be viewed, such elements mentioned above give rise to new political, economic and sociological options.

Within 2023, various global powers continue to seek political improvement in their regional status and others from regional to global power status. This is, after all, their right to do so, to create history or claim their record or claim the future history. As stated, this is the new Game of Thrones (Efthymiopoulos, 2014), a possibility for new cooperation and new or revived alliances. Thus, the request for a new security architecture appears.

To date, states have started claiming some or all power and bid for power through primary sources, trade and commodities, negotiations and investments, governance and participation in global affairs and negotiations. Furthermore, the wish has developed to take over others in various ways, including "a peaceful way" that may not be as peaceful after all as we wish to be or as one may initially think. The rising or falling demographics, the increase in power through necessary industrial development and space race, where genetics also meets robotics, when the discovery and use of our human DNA are now globally examined, among other things, completes the 21st-century equation (Sergey Nurk et al., 2022). This is the greater picture of the global world in the 21st century with no balance of power. This is the environment we live in and it is as simple as this. We just need to accept it... or not.

The projection of power or the projection to control resources makes up for an excuse to exercise influence and establish power. This is the modern framework. Whether we like it or not, new alliances, greater than the current ones, are necessary in the world of competition that the author has also called "hybrid alliances" (Efthymiopoulos, 2019).

A 'hybrid methodology of alliances' dedicates the mixture of activities and resources to a specific time frame and time shift used inside an association and implemented through political/economic/technological elements, whereas, in the business world, Andersen and Medlin call this hybrid nature of things or "transient commitment". For example, all socio-economic and political affairs affect the European EU and non-EU member states. Trade, business and technology are involved and interrelated now more than in the past. This is the core of "negotiations and discussions" on achieving power. Each state would like to ensure, *inter alia*, that its economy and society operate well, modernize constantly and develop.

Trade routes have been affected due to the extent of wars. New ones are thus negotiated. As such, a fresh balance of trade and business is attempted. A "domino" of new options and new cooperation/alliances has been created. New potential regional players emerge, making good use of an opportunity to initiate processes of a country's "upgrade" in regional and global affairs.

We are thus called upon to adapt to new realities. This eventuality brings new options, opportunities, challenges and regional or global threats. And we need to, first and foremost, be aware of this reality. In its totality, Ukrainian illegal invasion by Russia in February 2022, which led to war, has brought Europe (as a continent) and the globe into a new reality, not that the world was more peaceful earlier (i.e., the fight against global terror and the war in Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, to name a few, or the ever ongoing wars in Africa and the bid to control Asia). However, this war has affected socio-political, economic and trade market structures. Our regional proximity including the Balkans, the East Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa has been affected and the global war machine is raging havoc. Power is thus transient. It has moved to a hybrid mode of cooperation and alliances. The world is no longer balanced and indeed not peaceful.

This chapter seeks to end the possibility of new or spillover wars meaning wars that, for any reason, may also "blossom" elsewhere. For some, this period is "a true opportunity" to rise in power. Global and regional politics look more volatile than ever before while powers dream of a grander vision of force against "the opponent".

As we comprehend this "new reality", the paper recommends a call for an architectural design of security and stability including a new order of things, that is, a new regional order, not solely a temporary balance. This may be the sole solution to avoid further ignitions of war and become a step closer to the world war that people may call World War III. The characteristics of the war around the globe seem to be very retrospectively similar to World War I, leading to a new rise of ideologies (extreme and therefore security related) as World War II.

From the abovementioned paragraph, one wonders about "the temporary balance" that we believe is not even achieved, or moreover, about the characteristics of the possibility of a new world war. These are due to the fact that there is no respect for actual rules in the ongoing power games that are taking shape globally. International law, being ill-utilized, announced and desired by all parties, seems not to be obeyed. We should consider that the activities of the United Nations (UN), at times, operationally, may not even be admired. There are many examples of it that we could refer to on a global scale. The not-so-far to the Balkans, divided Island of Cyprus, located in the Southeast Mediterranean region, is a crucial example of what happens when the invader does not respect not only the sovereignty of an independent state, but also the activities of the UN in the buffer zone of Pyla (UN report on operations in Cyprus, 2022) or back to the Balkans, how easily an issue can elevate international concern over car plates (UNMIK, 2022). And again, one may say that both cases are complicated. And they are. However, the lack of ability to resolve issues is what raises concern. The fact that all issues become "a gray zone" and that these issues may be examined at some point does not provide solutions.

We, therefore, first have to comprehend the current state of affairs we live in, that is, actually envision a more stable and prosperous future meaning to wonder about possible solutions that we may add on some mediation/negotiation platforms. In other words, we have to envision and elaborate realistically and pragmatically on our near future and forecast long-term for us and our communities. We need to assure and ensure a balance in order to establish cooperation, avoid insecurity and at least minimize volatility. We need to comprehend the concept and design of architectural security in our regions, to accumulate and resolve issues using accurate methods that are reliable and practical. The opposite may be disastrous: with more threats and challenges to come and, ultimately, clashes and conflicts. The fact that scenarios are constantly written and presented to the public as a communication effort, in case of ignition of regional wars, is not a good signal (Jabbour, 2021).

Leaders have realized the needs within a pragmatic world: 1. routes to trade with, 2. great use of natural resources to survive, 3. provide both regional and global systems with direct access to primary resources. 4. race for industrial success, 5. mega-project planning that secures development investment, communication and trade, 6. engagement in international affairs of the global community.

We have to bear in mind that while all leadership skills and personalities matter, modern leadership values have changed. Leaders would like to be considered no less grand leaders today. Therefore, their respective states should be no less than regional or extraordinary powers. This is the only way they may envision their own "leadership abilities", unlike past leaders, where different values were implemented.

The rise of technology defines strategic priorities for architectural design

Technology development leads to world affairs. It defines priorities in all sectors: political, military and business. This is evident. It is a primary characteristic of our 21st century. It is called the century of technology, after all. Technology defines the length and extent of all issues. Among them, it "provides a push" for potential political negotiations to follow if a peace plan or a road map of architecture can be implemented. This is because technology allows us to see beyond regional or global volatility. With technology, we can "dream and implement" faster. Through a strategic architecture and road map, technology is located at the epicenter of issues. It renders the countries vulnerable and volatile to developing when used appropriately to bring communities together in such a way that when the opportunity arises, cross-border trade and development, infrastructure and economies rely on technology or cross-knowledge technology. Technology uses, ensures and assures acquiring business knowledge that, if implemented regionally, can bring parties together.

Technology has always been at our side. It has always been a tool of utility. Yet, politically, it has never been at the epicenter of all political, business and societal

discourse on the future of regions and stability itself. The human approach to things has always been the critical element, the epicenter of progress. However, technology has not.

Today, technology continues to be a tool. Yet, while there are human-centered discussions, technology has become an increasing facilitation method and device. Technology provides credibility of issues that are or may be required to bring parties together during great market uncertainty and scarcity of resources. Technology has been upgraded to become a tool for the epicentral use of human-centered progress. Therefore, when implemented in societal/governmental terms, power and stability make an impact. Technology enables constant, efficient methods for negotiations and mediation on all socio-political, economic and political issues. It multiplies efficiency and capabilities for development, research and production. By a general overview, technology is, therefore, a tool for progress, communication, observation, the one that allows our "analogue" and "digital ecosystem" for practical use.

The utility of technology is everywhere. It surrounds us. It is at the forefront of our every day and our world, our society, family communication and employment. We are connected by technology. The continued and constant research and development have allowed us to increase all levels of employment, production, services, contact, policy research, efficient decision-making methods, medical issues and defense, among other things.

The question that one may ask is: can technology be used to become an interlocutor for peace? Can technology render innovation that can be related to peace and alliance in the decision-making, regionally and globally, when combined with political affairs? The answer could be a positive one.

Consider the following: The age where science fiction stories have become the reality, where technology has been seen as the epicenter of things. And this is precisely the case today. The world of dreams, when somehow taking books and stories or history to what we all know as "the small screen", otherwise television, has initiated a variety of options. New objectives and goals were successfully included in small or large-level films that made us dream and combine books with history and stories, allowing us to see how people view and envision future things. Moreover, it helps us establish a societal framework for the future. Furthermore, documentaries help us become more knowledgeable and aware at all times in combination with pure research and reading materials.

By the time technology became a central point for development, states realized the necessity and use of it in the most significant possible ways. Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, technology has continued progressing, and multiplied in its efficiency, has created, among other things, a new digital world. Nevertheless, it has become more business-oriented. Technology today is used almost everywhere in modern architecture, design, social structures, healthcare, education and defense. Technology is everywhere around us and has enabled a new market economy, a new reality. It has brought people closer.

It has also been exploited mainly by information methods, known as the world of the media, followed by the creation of the internet and the combination of things. A new world, digital in nature, progressively develops and simplifies our lives. While in the world of healthcare, it provides us with the most significant depth in the battle against any medical obstacles, technology helps us live longer. In defense, technology has changed pathways. While it was used for national security against external threats, now every nation that aspires through constant development to continuously expand security resilience ensures military technology agility and strength.

Technology has furthermore allowed us to explore our world geologically, to dig deeper and greater for the current or new natural resources, utility methods, to exploit. What has been provided by Mother Earth? However, it is a cycle. Natural resources and commodities provide substantial fungibility. With them, we further increase our knowledge and terms of use of technology to facilitate the exploitation of resources.

Having in mind two following examples, it is no coincidence that through the 21st century and even more, mainly from 2010 to date, the use of natural resources and commodities, as shown below, has been massively exploited and increased. The industrial development has leveraged technology to manipulate as many resources as possible to ensure economic prosperity; economic knowledge for our economy is implemented in our societal structure.

Total revenue of Pioneer Natural Resources from 2010 to 2022
(in million U.S. dollars)

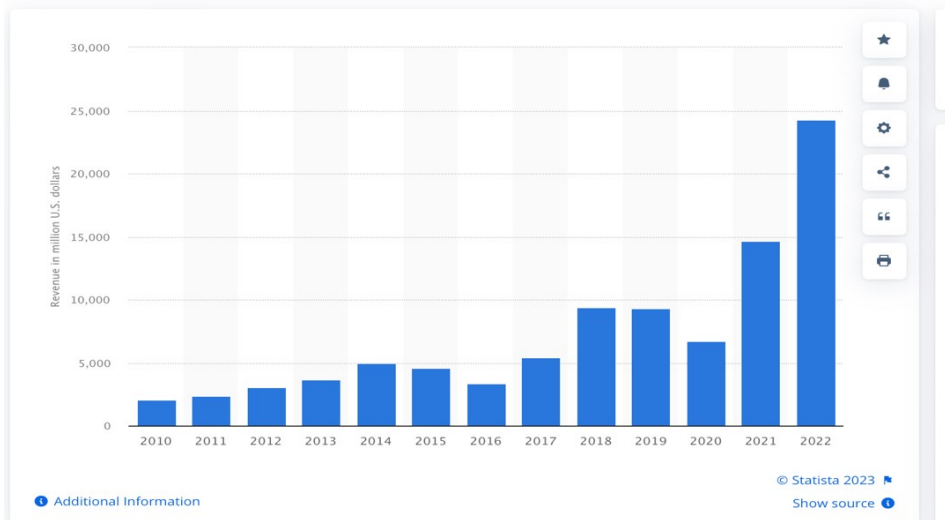


Figure 1 – Statista 2023²

² Total Revenue of Pioneer Natural Resources from 2010 to 2022 (in US dollars)

The digitization of things "includes all elements of the value chain including product design, supply chain, manufacturing, while creating new business models." The digitalization of manufacturing across industries, in turn, has "resulted in the emergence of service-based revenue models to complement the already existing product-based models". Furthermore, digital technologies "have also begun to usher in an era of customization at a much lower cost in both B2C and B2B segments" (Statista, 2023).

Technology is, therefore, everywhere. Through this chapter, it is believed that we can and have to use the "fruits" of technology in a greater capacity and capability to render our regions more peaceful and stable through development.

On the government level approach, technology and resilience matter. It matters to all extents and depths of our societal needs and our assurance that our society develops. Moreover, it increases power and efficiency when using technology to trade while having negotiating elements that need to be dealt with through technology. The chart below shows the importance of globalization and trade through the use of technological advances, which are directly related to political affairs as they progress.

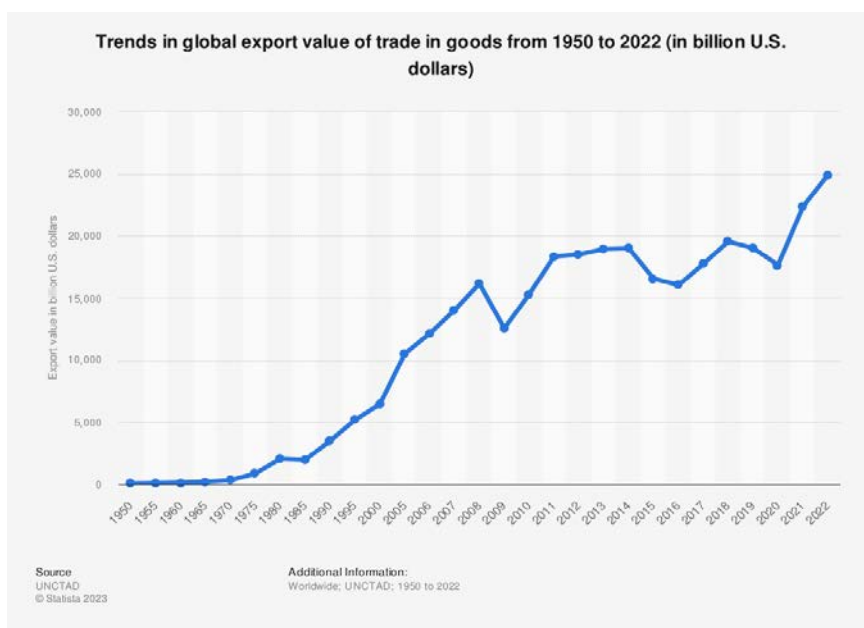


Figure 2 – Statista (August 2023)³

³ "In 2022, the global trade value of goods exported worldwide amounted to approximately 24.9 trillion US dollars at current prices. This figure stood at around 6.45 trillion US dollars in 2000. The rise in the value of goods exported worldwide reflects developments in international trade, globalization, and technological advances". <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264682/worldwide-export-volume-in-the-trade-since-1950/> Main source: UNCTAD.

Technology is also used for the military to narrow issues related to this current chapter, which is based on strategy and security. Technology assures national security resilience in national defense and overall military affairs. Since we live in a volatile security-based environment and, moreover, the arms race continues due to insecurity, technology spending for the military has increased. As shown below, global military expenditure has increased radically since 2001.

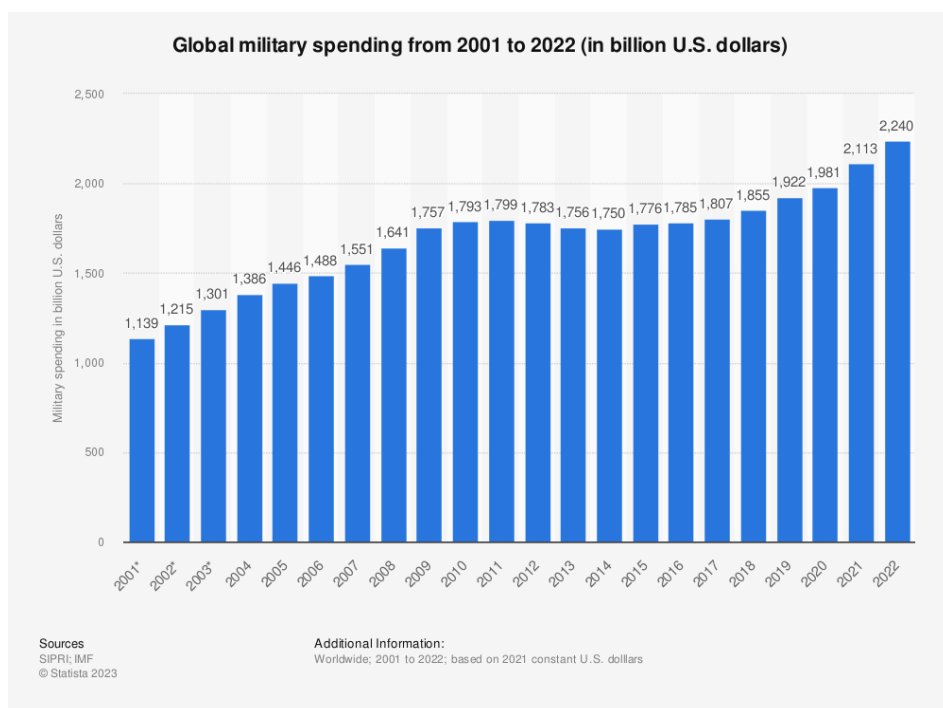


Figure 3 – Statista (August 2023)⁴

The distribution by country presented below clearly shows the dependence on technology, while global volatility is now evident.

⁴ Published by Statista Research Department. "In 2022, the military spending worldwide amounted to 2.24 trillion US dollars, including the highest one during the period under consideration. The reasons for this are the Russia-Ukraine war and increasing tensions in the South China Sea. The United States accounted for nearly 40 percent of total military spending globally".

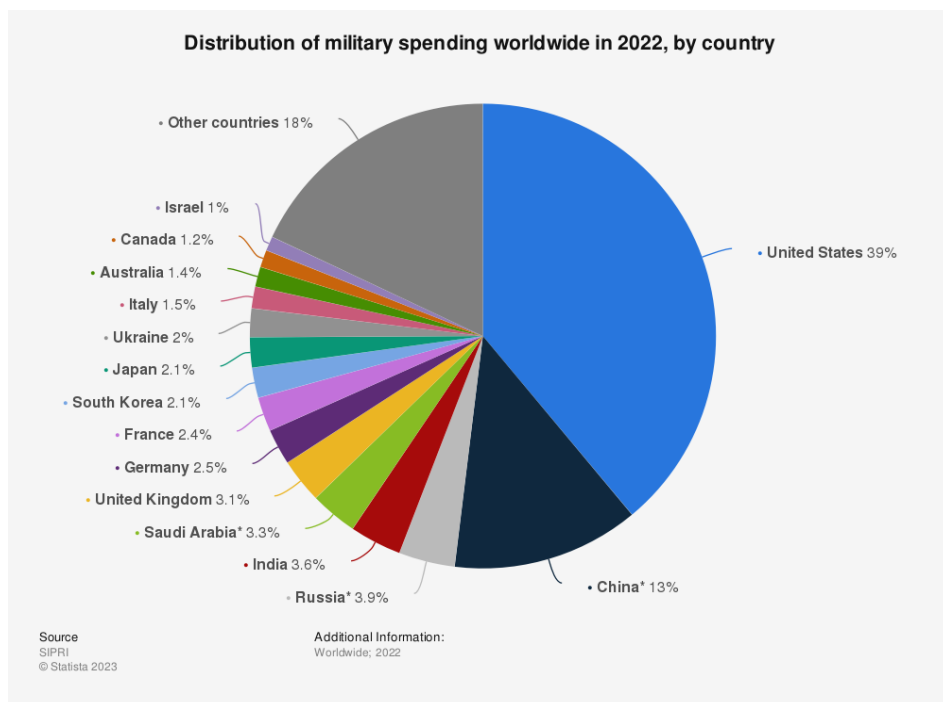


Figure 4 – Statista (August 2023)⁵

Regionally, it has been noted that as volatility remains, insecurity leads countries to spend more. To this end, various instruments, such as trade agreements and increased technology-based defense spending, increase in regions (i.e., Balkans and the Southeast Mediterranean region) or continue to grow steadily considering the purpose of self-defense.

The tables below show the Balkan and Southeast Mediterranean states that are members of both NATO and the EU or aspire to become either members of the Euro-Atlantic link or seek a more multipolar world. In all cases, the essential element is that all countries consider the political and military environment to be fragile and volatile; therefore, military expenditure increases. Technology is at the epicenter of all levels of military build-up, as seen below in details provided by SIPRI:

⁵ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272481/shares-of-selected-countries-in-world-military-spending/>

Military expenditure by country as percentage of government spending, 2015-2022 © SIPRI 2022

Countries are grouped by region and subregion

Figures are for military expenditure expressed as a percentage of general government expenditure, and are for calendar years except where otherwise stated.

Data for general government expenditure are from the IMF World Economic Outlook, and include spending by all levels of gov.: central/federal, state/provincial/regional, municipal and local government, etc

Figures in blue are SIPRI estimates. Figures in red indicate highly uncertain data.

“. ." = data unavailable. "xxx" = country did not exist or was not independent during all or part of the year in question.

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Europe								
Central Europe								
Albania	3.78%	3.79%	3.78%	4.03%	4.39%	3.98%	3.87%	5.12%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2.32%	2.23%	2.13%	2.08%	2.02%	1.83%	2.17%	2.00%
Bulgaria	3.34%	3.80%	3.82%	4.22%	8.74%	4.21%	3.93%	4.06%
Croatia	3.67%	3.42%	3.68%	3.42%	3.50%	3.15%	3.94%	3.93%
Kosovo	2.86%	2.73%	2.85%	2.73%	2.78%	3.05%	2.91%	3.83%
North Macedonia	3.08%	3.12%	2.82%	3.12%	3.69%	3.41%	4.12%	4.59%
Montenegro	3.03%	2.97%	2.89%	2.90%	3.03%	3.20%	3.53%	3.95%
Romania	4.23%	4.49%	5.56%	5.61%	5.45%	5.24%	4.97%	4.97%
Serbia	4.28%	4.17%	4.58%	3.97%	5.27%	4.36%	4.31%	5.25%
Slovenia	1.91%	2.18%	2.23%	2.25%	2.44%	2.07%	2.52%	2.55%
Western Europe								
Cyprus	4.19%	3.77%	4.31%	4.14%	4.69%	4.36%	4.45%	4.52%
Greece	4.81%	5.15%	5.29%	5.60%	5.49%	5.12%	6.63%	7.26%

Figure 5 – SIPRI 2022 showcases the military expenditure by country as a percentage of government spending in the period 2015-2022 [seen August 2023]

Military expenditure by country, in constant (2021) US\$ m., 2015-2022 © SIPRI 2022

Figures are in US \$m., at constant 2021 prices and exchange rates

Figures in blue are SIPRI estimates. Figures in red indicate highly uncertain data.

“. ." = data unavailable. "xxx" = country did not exist or was not independent during all or part of the year in question.

Country	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Europe								
Central Europe								
Albania	178.4	171.7	178.2	192.9	217.0	210.4	222.8	296.6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	176.8	175.4	168.9	175.1	176.5	177.4	209.7	187.7
Bulgaria	760.6	814.9	844.9	1043.0	2394.8	1199.2	1275.2	1336.5
Croatia	999.4	950.5	1009.8	986.5	1070.2	1044.9	1361.2	1341.2
Kosovo	58.3	60.6	64.9	67.5	71.9	84.7	79.6	108.0
North Macedonia	116.2	121.1	114.5	127.2	162.6	166.2	205.6	230.9
Montenegro	65.2	71.1	72.9	77.4	79.8	88.1	91.1	97.7
Romania	2906.5	3066.6	4161.0	4627.8	5065.8	5418.7	5300.0	5161.1
Serbia	911.4	903.9	970.3	891.2	1282.4	1216.2	1270.8	1443.5
Slovenia	456.3	513.1	526.0	549.2	616.4	600.2	762.8	758.9
Western Europe								
Cyprus	358.6	328.7	389.9	460.5	498.5	513.8	541.8	514.6
Greece	5195.8	5412.3	5408.0	5780.5	5683.9	6063.0	8299.9	8347.5

Figure 6 – SIPRI 2022 showcases the military expenditure by country in constant (2021) US\$ m. in the period 2015-2022 [seen August 2023]

Defense build-up is a fact and technology, as mentioned above, is at the epicenter. The use of technology is, therefore, critical. Modern war capabilities include military technology and intelligence, advanced weaponry, cyber security, logistics and support systems.

What seems clear is rapid technological advancement globally and regionally. This means that defense technology will continue to evolve. As volatility increases, new technologies and systems develop to provide militaries with a strategic advantage on the battlefield. We assume that future military affairs will continue growing, including space military weaponry and exploration technology. What happens to the overall possibility of peace in avoiding war-like situations from evolving, but keeping it solely for explorative or balanced defense purposes in what is becoming a multipolar world? At what end do the current powers request to remain powers in their region and not emerge to become a competitive power to others regionally and potentially globally?

There is solely one certainty among other things - that technology surrounds each state socio-political, economic and military methods and approaches. Technology reaches out to governmental policies satisfying both national security and national interest.

This chapter questions whether technology resilience and/or research or development can be used for more peaceful purposes and in a balanced sheet. For 2022, R&D World editors forecast that \$2.476 trillion will be invested globally in R&D efforts, which is an increase of 5.43% over \$2.348 trillion spent in calendar 2021(R&D Global Forecast 2022). So, what if technology becomes a tool for a new strategic and security architecture? If one is proposed?

Strategic cooperation: the right choice for possible strategic alliances

Making the right political choices in any form is necessary for cooperation. Marking and making the proper steps for constructive step-by-step cooperation is a pragmatic political move. In establishing or upscaling strategic cooperation into strategic alliances by 2023, the format of the coalition has to be developed for the long term and with an actual purpose, because without them, they can be short-lived.

In this 21st century multipolar environment, we see alliances to be hybrid, as stated by Efthymiopoulos (Efthymiopoulos, 2019), or transient, as Andersen and Medlin state (Andersen and Medlin 2022). And that applies everywhere, both in the business and intelligence world.

And where peace is achievable or negotiable, we have to reach out for a new security architecture considering the constantly changing landscape.

According to Randall (2006), on Alliances, "...the greatest challenge is the translation of overwhelming might..." of alliances "...into effective influence". The

conditions of the 20th century chessboard, according to Brzezinski (Brzezinski, 1997), leveraged power through bilateral and multilateral alliances based on power and influence. Even so, the establishment of Alliances, based on Steven Walt's *Origins of Alliances* (Walt, 1987), assumed a role of power effectiveness, but also influenced the world that was, back in the day, ready to change.

The challenge is to seek out force-command and leadership regionally and globally, with a vision that supersedes the current issues, challenges and threats in the world where its order is yet to be defined, where unconventional threats are explicitly seen and shown. In the world of structured hybrid alliances, allies seek operational capacity development, power and influence of leadership that acquires and requires strong legitimacy and power effectiveness. Alliances reflect future societal global and regional governance models with morality, ethics and values. Models should be, therefore, of hybrid nature: self-nurtured and self-adaptive to new challenges or threats constantly facing the threat of instability.

In a modern and constantly self-modernizing society, the method of understanding and cooperative delivery, the approach to alliances, should be simplified. As of 2023, the world will be more volatile. We seek a security architecture, a framework of possible dimensions that alliances are not yet applicable at. The current Alliances are somehow "static" (Efthymiopoulos, 2019). Necessary rules of and for political stability and resilience to peace and, moreover, sustainable growth could be implemented in an otherwise volatile environment.

In a truly global and interconnected society, alliances should reflect our societal needs and requests. They should provide clear-cut and simplified rules with the aforementioned self-adaptive methods; regulations should be robust and resilient; actions should provide effectiveness and political happiness for success and regional or global security resilience. Alliances should be methodological and operational of hybrid capacity-building and delivery.

In 2023, the world is in a state of alliance fluidity. Alliances are being reshuffled. The war in Ukraine called upon Europe and NATO to renew its alliance posture objectives and methodologies. Furthermore, it has called for more alliances to emerge as the world becomes more multipolar and states seek solutions. In the structure of initial cooperation in various fields, this strategic cooperation between two or more states has the potential to emerge as new alliances.

For those new alliances, being financial, military or political one does not matter. We foresee that such partnerships will become the impetus for further or deeper structured associations.

Alliances have changed in their character of operations and objectives. Today, they are inspired by a hybrid format, which translates into needs. They are transient, although currently known alliances are founded on factors and timeless common objectives of security, strategic affairs and challenges, threats, and also opportunities.

New cooperation in the form of alliances, such as the BRICS (created today on the basis of tactical objectivity, political acceptance, and the rule of law that is

comprehended on a hybrid methodology) considers the political and strategic ecosystem challenges and changes, while the regional and global geopolitical chessboard is constantly changing. New forms of cooperation necessitate the change of each state into an element of power and influence. Good management allows a state to become a security provider at least to the region it is located in, giving reasoning and purpose while political importance on strategic cooperation to become new formats of alliances. We live in the non-symmetrical world that is indeed 'hybrid'.

Towards a new security architecture

It is believed that new and modern alliances will emerge from targeted strategic cooperation as long as there is a purpose, reasoning, objective and pragmatic comprehension of where we are, where we are heading and which tools can be used. It is a matter of power projection and efficiency in multilateral world.

Regional or international alliances can be short-term or long-term. They require resilience, continuity, robustness and efficiency. In the age of constant changes in the world that tends to become more and more multipolar, complete hybrid definitions are yet to be acknowledged and defined, but they will certainly come. We seek innovative methods of approach to a new security architecture, the one that is modern in societal and financial terms, political, civilian, economic and military combined.

Through capability and capacity building, there has to be a moral capacity to deliver peaceful resolutions and mediations, leadership skills and great use of technological advances. Moreover, it is necessary to have the ability to discuss power balance and peace in a new format that allows for the resolution of the current or potential conflicts that are not merely projected by the increased military spending due to volatility, but rather due to the cooperation approach of joint security power providers.

In the 21st century, during the 4th revolution of technology, where resilience on security is of imperative importance, where cooperation is not an option yet a solution, we seek clear strategic leadership and vision in cooperation that does more to promote regional and international environmental strategic cooperation, i.e., the Balkans and Southeast Mediterranean region—at the same time, understanding the current and future challenges.

We need a security architecture that goes beyond and creates a clear political momentum with a clear vision, mission and objectives - considering emerging unconventional threats that may continue to trouble the European countries in the continent.

We are now at the forefront of asymmetrical challenges with no conventional solution methodology approach. We seek national solutions that may not be viable without a regional process and discussion. Threats are yet to be defined, still threats need to be responded to. Illegal migration, for example, has become an unconventional challenge and possibly one of the elements of hybrid threat (Treverton et al., 2018).

We therefore consider a road map made of security architecture, to build on a 'path' that includes:

1. the comprehension of our landscape
2. regional resilience on national and regional security
3. knowledge and recording of regional issues to be negotiated
4. methodology of approach in business-to-business and direct free trade between the Balkan countries and Southeast Mediterranean states
5. capability building and trust methodologies between neighboring states
6. negotiations and mediations on the issues of regional concern without external interlocutors
7. agreement to engage international interlocutors when and if negotiations between regional leaders fail
8. projection of a regional development framework for the next fifty years to include sociological elements, infrastructure, research and technology dependence between states
9. each state should be acknowledged to hold a primary "identity in research and development that seeks out global and regional agreements for progress"
10. development of a free market economy between states that holds the values and capabilities, similarities and standards as observed by the European Union
11. agreed values on all peaceful resolutions of any issues and conflicts
12. multinational program development in the exploitation of the landscape of the regional alliance and approach in levels of new technology use and practice such as outer-space exploration and science

In a regional architecture, resilience and reliance on each other's economies and power abilities should be characterized. As an ongoing global phenomenon, from war-torn areas to climate changes, the scarcity of resources and the need for an alliance, technology in a versed understanding of the current state of affairs is required. These exact elements are the ones that will bring parties together.

Conclusion

Throughout the paper, we have deemed it essential to identify the regional "political ecosystem", that is, the spectrum of regions such as the Balkans and the Southeast Mediterranean region and their holistic needs. We aimed to identify upcoming current needs and needs related to a constant geopolitical landscape. We have attempted to indicate several theoretical options for a possible much-needed breakthrough, considering that the world is not peaceful at this stage. We have entitled it "*the road to a new security architecture*".

This chapter has assumed that regional and national threats are interconnected as political issues and affect all regions negatively. This chapter has attempted to comprehend the boundaries that define the interconnected political ecosystem through strategic and security approaches.

This chapter called for a new regional power balance, that is, a new strategic and security architecture that first provides regional stability and then the future one. A realistic and pragmatic process states that this will ultimately depend on regional power solutions and multilateral collaboration if agreed upon to a road map for a security architecture that can offer more than the current political situation.

As we move along in time, we forecast more and more insecurity and market volatility. There is a need for social and security inclusion, that is, more utility of methods that bring us together to solve our problems. The world pandemic that we survived from 2019 to 2021 may only be the beginning of things. A holistic approach has been considered while security elements have been examined.

This is merely the beginning of grander research that requires further details and an additional approach to many issues from a theoretical perspective to a practical one. However, this is only the beginning of a public document that we hope will become the commencement of a vision of what can be achieved considering the multipolar world we are moving on to and the choices that we have or may hold ahead of us, considering climate changes and the scarcity of resources while at the same time adding to them any current and future hybrid challenges.

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