RECONSTRUCTING THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF ARMENIA: OVERCOMING CONTEMPORARY TURBULENCE THROUGH ROLE MODELS

GARIK POGHOSYAN *[iD]

Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia

Abstract

This article deals with the problem of reconstructing the political future of post-war Armenia and overcoming modern turbulence in the context of regional instability. Characteristic features of overcoming widespread anxiety in the Armenian society, which manifested itself on the political stage in different ways, from popular protests and early elections to heated debates about the political future in recent years, are highlighted and described. The most important condition for the development of post-war Armenia is the extent to which Armenian society is able to form a concept for its future. Ideas about the future were of particular importance in critical epochs, when the traditional picture of the world was destroyed and new opportunities for social development opened up. But for many centuries, these ideas did not go beyond prophecies, predictions and various kinds of hoaxes, which essentially became the first attempts to predict the future.

This article attempts to uncover the main causes of modern instability in Armenia, thereby contributing to the Armenian society to deconstruct and reconstruct the political future. In this context, it also means that even the scientific methodology for knowing the future has not yet been developed, since most scientific methods remain imperfect and do not give the researcher confidence in the accuracy of the forecast.

Introduction

The relevance of the task of systematizing various ideas about the concept of the future of post-war Armenia is not least dictated by the fact that the modern period of history is deeply contradictory and in many ways crisis-ridden. The post-war Armenia has

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* **Garik Poghosyan** is a PhD candidate of the Chair of Political Governance and Public Policy at the Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia. Email: garik.poghosyan2011@gmail.com. ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5777-4056.

been facing an uphill battle. The difficulty of overcoming widespread anxiety has unfolded itself on the political scene in multiple ways, from popular protests and snap elections to heated debates over the political future in recent years. Coupled with regional and global volatility, economic challenges, the increasing precariousness of human security at local and global levels, social scientists have come under growing pressure to find solutions to most pressing issues, such as the political future of the Republic of Armenia**,** political turbulence and uncertainty. In this context, we have synthesized the experiences of various plausible models of development to address the contemporary turbulence in Armenia. This way, we have made an attempt to come up with a formula that is potentially capable of helping the Republic of Armenia, and the Armenian public, to deconstruct and reconstruct a political future built on specific models, i.e. other countries' success stories, rather than general theories or guidelines. Briefly, against the backdrop of the discussion offered in this paper, we have examined the plausibility of Greek, Israeli, Iranian, Chilean, South Korean, East European models laying the groundwork for separate case studies.

The discussion of political future can be both intimidating and challenging. At various levels and across the spectrum, questions arise related to the political future of nations stemming from both contemporary issues of transition and societal polarization and the ever-changing geopolitical contours and rivalry. We agree with A. Aleksanyan in his interpretation of human progress and civiliarchy, which has national, regional and global dimensions (Alexanyan 2005b, 135-137; Aleksanyan 2011, 119-120). According to the political scientist, "there are many universal patterns of the progress and regress of society which establish a base to create internal as well as international models of cooperation and conflict" (Alexanyan 2005a). In this context, M. Margaryan has made a bold attempt to establish a link between the spatiotemporal and sociocultural values on the one hand and the political conceptualization of human life on the other hand through the study of the legacy of medieval Armenian clergyman and philosopher, St. Gregor Narekatsi (Margaryan 2023). Expanding the spatiotemporal context of the subject matter, M. Margaryan problematizes the sociocultural profile of the contemporary man, who has relinquished his mindset and value system in order to meet his material expectations serving anyone (Margaryan 2023, 65). In order to overcome this anxiety of existence, Margaryan suggests, deriving the guiding principles from the spiritual legacy of Grigor Narekatsi, adopting moral intentions of action. In this case, it becomes possible for a creative person, who forms part of the public network and is thus 'publicized', to self-govern, which implies responsibility (Margaryan 2023, 162). This interpretation of civic responsibility resembles the Korean attitudinal mindset. According to Hong Nack Kim, "under the Confucian system, the fundamental goal of government was to create harmony and unity among men and between man and the universe" (Kim 1998, 101). It is perhaps this formulation of the Korean worldview that led us to the ensuing research and discoveries. Further, the author depicted Korean political leaders as "corrupt, incompetent, authoritarian, and accustomed to exercising nepotism and favoritism, self-righteousness {toksonjui}" (Kim 1998, 104) before the advent of liberal democracy heralded by Americans in the middle of the 20th century.

This dichotomy between harmonious cultural underpinnings and self-righteous inclinations of traditional political leaders made the South Korean experience a particularly well-suited model for the Republic of Armenia. Having struggled for centuries to gain independence and having succeeded periodically with long hiatuses in between, Armenia has faced the post-soviet legacy of weak institutional democracy, corruption, incompetence and self-righteousness on the part of the governing elite. Further, dealing with its historical scars of territorial loss, humiliation and externally imposed systems of governance and ideology, Armenia is positioned well to benefit from the model of South Korea, which seems to offer an authentic guide through post-colonial independence, harmonious culture, successful liberalization and economic prosperity coupled with a flexible foreign policy and security reliance on an external ally, the latter two being especially relevant for Armenia (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2017; UN Trust Fund for Human Security 2016).

In this context, in has become crucial to dissect the internal dynamics of political undercurrents in an attempt to comprehend the intricate interplay between global and local issues. Endeavoring to extend the notion of T. Parsons that, "illness is not merely a state of the organism and/ or personality, but comes to be an institutionalized role" (Parsons 1978, 21), we have applied it to a variety of political dimensions incorporating it in a body of social, historical and political phenomena. As a result, we deem it necessary to investigate the urgency of the proposed research topic in a way that addresses both the "institutionalized" and "role" aspects of the matter, something that comes up, albeit obliquely, in this article now and again (Ayhan and Jang 2023; Buzo 2002).

As both local and global issues arguably tend to crisscross at local, regional and universal levels as well as across a wide array of institutions, the significance of political future has come to the fore. In putting forward our arguments and assumptions we assume A. Ferguson's conception of human progress to be our guiding principle and analytical basis: "The progress of mankind from a supposed state of animal sensibility, to the attainment of reason, to the use of language, and to the habit of society, has been accordingly painted with a force of imagination, and its steps have been marked with a boldness of invention" (Ferguson 1996). Thus, it is through imagination and inventiveness that we have compared and contrasted urgent issues of local and global significance to elaborately construct the domain of the postulates of this article.

First, we look into political and socio-political phenomena of change and continuity to try and understand the concept of political future arriving at the necessity of, what we call, human fellowship. Then, we develop of brief discussion of possible models of future development and orientation for the Republic of Armenia. Through a succinct process of elimination, we arrive at the conclusion that the South Korean experience is possibly an ideal model for the Republic of Armenia to look up to. Nevertheless, the advantages of other models (Greek, Israeli, Chilean, East European, Iranian) are also highlighted as our research is analytical in nature and comparative in outlook. We do not aim to offer an exhaustive analysis of either contemporary turbulence, political future or a thorough investigation of possible role models. What we do hope to achieve, arguably for the first time in the history of social science, is the comparison of

two strange bedfellows-Armenia and South Korea[1]-something that paves the way for further cross-country comparative studies, case studies at local, regional and global levels (Public Intelligence 2015).

Choosing a role model can be tough. To make matters, worse, there are hardly any two countries in the world with identical strategic experiences. Hence, whatever our choices are, we are bound to come up against the necessity to measure our choices against a certain set of criteria. In other words, what is it that we attach importance to, weigh up, look up to, compare with? The umbrella term here is 'strategic', which requires some explanation. In no particular order, we will look at the following dimensions (or criteria for that matter) in a nutshell.

First, to what extent is the country's history dramatic and how much drama is reflected in foreign and domestic policy? Has the country had a frozen conflict in its recent history? Is the country located in a geopolitically volatile region with intense great power competition? Has the country had a thorough transition to democracy? Is it, in general terms, economically, educationally, technologically, culturally competitive? Is its foreign policy flexible with a multiplicity of bi-, tri- and multilateral cooperative schemes and partnerships? Does it firmly and unequivocally belong to a bloc or is it more reliant on an external security guarantor (via foreign military presence, for example)? The examples of South Korea, Israel, Greece, Iran, Eastern Europe and Chile have been selected thanks to a perceived approximation of their histories, vision and certain capabilities with those of Armenia based on the mentioned criteria.

The preceding questions are derived from Armenia's historical and recent sociopolitical experience. To be precise, the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire (European Parliament 2015; the White House 2023), when 1.5 million Armenians perished in horrific crimes against humanity, has scarred the Armenian psyche for decades. Further, the country is reeling from the 2020 war over Nagorno-Karabakh[2]-an Armenian-populated enclave in the former Soviet Azerbaijan that had forcibly been incorporated into the entity by the Soviets (Libaridian 2023; Poghosyan 2022; Kocharyan 2015), and is fighting for self-determination. Moreover, Armenia, with the help of the international community, is struggling to return the prisoners of war (European Parliament 2021) from Azerbaijan, open the Lachin (the Armenian name Berdzor) corridor to terminate the on-going humanitarian catastrophe[3] in the region of the conflict. Furthermore, the country's strong national identity, commitment to civilization, unique cultural identity and a prolonged post-Soviet democratic and economic transition, marred by pervasive corruption, require being on the lookout for

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[1]Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI). 2022. Country Report - South Korea. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung. Accessed July 16, 2023. https://bti-project.org/fileadmin/api/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2022_KOR.pdf.

[2]Source: International Crisis Group. 2021. "Post-war Prospects for Nagorno-Karabakh." Report N°264, Europe & Central Asia June 9, 2021. Accessed July 16, 2023. https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/nagorno-karabakh-conflict/264-post-war-prospects-nagorno-karabakh.

[3]Source: International Court of Justice. 2023. "Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan): Request for the modification of the Court's Order indicating a provisional measure." *No.2023/40*, 14 July 2023. Accessed August 16, 2023. https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/180/180-20230714-pre-01-00-en.pdf.

similar role models (Long 1997; Aleksanyan and Aleksanyan 2022, 80-91). In addition, the country is at a crossroads of civilizations, hosts a foreign military base[4] and is wedged between North and South, East and West. Al these factors complicate its situation and warrant scholarly research in search of answers comparing various models.

An attempt to identify a new framework for constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing the political future

The changing facet and landscape of external as well as internal political dynamics in various geographic areas demonstrates the need to address seemingly unrelated issues in the wider context of current turbulence and political future. This way, it is possible to extract both learnable lessons and feasible formulae for the political future of a specific country or region with the possibility of a universal conceptual extension. Instead of extrapolating a theory or testing a hypothesis, we have set ourselves an analytical goal: to conduct a critical discussion aimed at identifying new frameworks for constructing, reconstructing and deconstructing the political future.

Thus and thus, the scholarly objectives of this article are threefold. First, we have aimed at rediscovering and reconstructing the interplay of the multitude of factors underlying the internal and external dimensions of political realities (Ostermann and Person 2011). Second, we have made an attempt to comparatively forecast the strategic developmental and foreign policy options of the Republic of Armenia derived from the de-contextualization of foreign experiences, contemporary political issues and conceptual transformation across the political spectrum linking choices to possibilities. In this sense, we have looked into the rationale behind various national and international ambitions and aspirations being unfolded on the international stage. Third, we have analyzed the sub-contexts of the mentioned analytical frameworks drawing conclusions with regard to the comparative-normative values of our critical assessments. Therefore, this article adopts a comparative and critical approach to the subject under investigation. Synthesis, deduction, induction, compare and contrast, the process of elimination is used throughout.

Theoretical framework

How would the Republic of Armenia respond to external, as well as internal, challenges if it had to rely on certain developmental and foreign policy models (e.g. Greece, Eastern Europe, Israel, Iran, South Korea, Chile)? In what ways would projecting the trajectories of other countries with similar geostrategic orientations assist in dissolving the fears of Armenia's strategic incompetence (assuming such fears exist)? Seemingly vague and lacking in conceptual orientation, these questions are key to understanding the political foundations of discussing the future at a political level.

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[4]Foreign Ministry of the RA. 2023. "Russia: Bilateral relations." Accessed August 27, 2023. https://www.mfa.am/en/bilateral-relations/ru.

With this in mind, we have proceeded to investigating tools and options to address the current turbulence within a broader, concept-driven and politics-oriented investigation of the future and its characteristics. If J. S. Nye, describes the soft-power approach to behavior construction in terms of the "observable but intangible" (Nye 2004, 7) features of attraction, then how would an amalgamation of a multitude of factors display themselves on the political stage without an underlying principle to govern the forces of concentration and dispersal? Obviously, geopolitical rivalry, transition to democracy, economic and political causes demonstrate an inherent vulnerability: we argue that cause-and-effect relations behind political and socio-political tendencies are reliant on an intricate network of interdependencies. In this sense, hardly anyone would expect contrasting results in similar applications of political paraphernalia.

In choosing models of development, we have made an attempt to distinguish categories and criteria that can become a theoretical bedrock for further studies. As it becomes obvious from the reading of this paper, there are certain approaches and guidelines that are almost taken for granted throughout. One conspicuous example is the notion of civil society.

It is true that in choosing models to follow essential civilizational differences remain. For instance, M. Margaryan aptly distinguishes between a dynamic and technological West and a nature-oriented, socially constant East clamoring the need for a universal civilization (Margaryan 2004; Margaryan 2021). However, the political forces and factors that shape political realities pierce socio-cultural and spatiotemporal boundaries in the porousness and dynamics of the 21st century. This arguably holds true for a number of context-determined situations. First, progress and regress in democratic terms carries the weight of experiential knowledge rather than purely geographic or cultural relevance (Kwang-Bae 1997; Deacon 2021).

To be precise, "scholars examining the changes in all Freedom House scores between 1972 and 2012 concluded that the trend of democratic recession was marginal since it mainly occurred in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, regions where backsliding democracies already tended to be frail even before they began actually regressing toward authoritarianism (Chu et al. 2020, 169)." Consequently, even though backsliding in largely confined to certain regions, it is mainly because of lack of democratic experience rather than existing geopolitical realities. Shaped by a mixture of history and geography, transitions to democracy are, when it comes to theoretical generalizations, probably expandable, hence universal.

Interestingly enough, the extension of spatiotemporal characteristics of political issues applies not only to democratic experiences but great power ambitions as well. As the great power rivalry intensifies over the fate of the Arctic region, it has been argued that, "having placed its first Arctic research station, Yellow River Station, on Svalbard in 2004. China is keen to ensure that Arctic issues are not simply decided by the five Arctic coastal states or the eight nations and indigenous participants of the Arctic Council" (Conley 2018, 3). Admittedly, the spatiotemporal dimension of international relations lacks a clear-cut structure but, at the same time leads to a more structural understanding of issues of strategic relevance.

To avoid the trap of overgeneralization and dogmatic assumptions, let us, at this point, refer to Ch. Fucks: "Structures are routinized and regularized social relations between humans that are relatively constant in space-time. They do not occur spontaneously once, but are repeated forms of action that repeatedly take place in specific spaces at specific times. Structures are created and re-created by human practices that in turn are conditioned by existing and emerging structures" (Fucks 2015, 69). Therefore, what has been discussed so far should be analyzed and interpreted in the light of existing and emerging recreations, structures and routines capable of breaking down even the most rigid one-dimensional theoretical edifice.

As the crisscrossing patterns of our investigation suggest, each and every one of the conclusions goes back and forth between the basic postulates and generalizations made as the arguments unfold themselves. In this case, it is appropriate to hark back to a similar deduction with regard to democratic principles. J. Muller claims that, "there is no single, fully agreed-upon model of European liberal democracy that could serve as a guideline or checklist for determining whether a country is departing from shared "European standards"" (Muller 2013, 138).

Within the broader concept of security, something that refers both to external realities, borders, security apparatuses and societal, international levels, humans are seen as objects of security perceptions. In other words, while democracy-related issues and the aspirations of great powers have overcome the previously acknowledged spatial limits and boundaries, so has the concept of security due to its novel depth and breadth. According to J. Large and T. D. Sisk, "human security emphasizes the protection of people from grave threats to their lives, their safety from harm and violent conflict, and their empowerment against such social threats as disease or crime" (Large and Sisk 2006, 14). This implies that whatever risks and dangers occur in different corners of the world, there is now a globalized understanding of those interrelated issues.

To be specific, human security become and addition to the family of notions that reconstruct our understanding of the fine demarcation between local and global. These common threats include, according to the 1994 UNDP report, freedom from hunger, health security: access to prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, protection from pollution and the depletion of nonrenewable resources, freedom from fear for communities, such as protection of traditional cultures and vulnerable groups, to name but a few (UNDP 1994).

These notions of the almost infinite extension of human-related risks and fears arrived with the advent of the era of new technologies. Currently, as humans are leading increasingly more virtual space-oriented lives, information and communication tools have become both risks and opportunities. These potential risks have transformed the political landscape as well leading to a number of controversial topics and practices to mark and mar the international political scene. S. E. Spaulding and E. Goldstein explain that, "Even as bot-driven disinformation or manipulation campaigns had perhaps inestimable impacts on the 2016 election, the Experts Group observed that advances in computational power will likely make this challenge more significant in the immediate future. Of note, improvements in artificial intelligence (AI) and human emulation will allow malicious actors to share (dis)information with increasing speed

and scope while raising the difficulty of distinguishing bots from real people unless countervailing technologies are developed" (Spaulding and Goldstein 2018, 7). In what ways will these technology-led conversion affect the universal concepts of democracy and security is unknown but the fact that information technology has already become a double-edged sword and requires a renewed, locally-driven but globally-acknowledged understanding is amply patent.

As we have already seen from the preceding discussion, democratic ideals, great power designs and ambitions, information and technology can all potentially lead to the blurring of previously visible boundaries between geographic areas and regions when it comes to a universal bargain associated with political concepts and perceptual margins. The harsh realities of fast-paced changes in conceivably all domains of human activity point in the direction of psychosocial transformations as well. For example, O. Feldman and S. Zmerli argue that media are capable of framing specific aspects of perceived reality as they choose and freely exclude what to report on, including gender-biased news and femininity (Feldman and Zmerli 2019; Feldman and Kinoshita 2019).

Thus, what has been framed by media is in fact an either randomly designed or strategically framed mindset or attitude that pervades the perceptions of the audience as they are exposed to the selection outcome of decision-makers in the area of media and news. Communication technologies, as a consequence, become an invisible hand to lead, manipulate and even downright cheat human audiences potentially determining what is right and what is wrong in their view. A threating combination of media and information technologies is thus dangling in front of universal audiences blurring national distinctions and exposing commonalities and vulnerabilities.

However, the belief in the universality of means and choices should be exercised with great caution. It is still widely accepted that "many—if not most— of the practical actions that advance human security is within the purview of national and subnational governments, including local governments. And civil society has a key role at the local level, including in violent conflict settings" (UNDP 2022). These local manifestations of importance include, but are not limited to, people-centered concept of security, access to personal healthcare, safety from natural disasters, environmental degradation, domestic violence, crime and human rights. These inherently global characteristics of local issues are an indication that the merger of local and global issues and civilizations is a reality requiring a revision of conceptually isolationist views and theories (Snyder, Lee, Kim and Kim 2018).

As global issues form both practical and conceptual constellations, not only cyber issues, human security and democratization but also political economy poses formidable challenges to the construction of the future: "Broadly speaking, the political economy refers to the social, economic, cultural and political factors that structure, sustain and transform constellations of public and private actors, and their interests and relations, over time"[5]. The structure-oriented definition of political economy is alarmingly important for the state of economic affairs both within individual countries

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[5] Source: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2022. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022. Repurposing food and agricultural policies to make healthy diets more affordable. Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0639en.

and beyond as "in the mid-2000s, it was estimated that four large companies dominated 70 to 90 percent of the global grain trade"[6].

It follows that whether or not the compatibility of distinct approaches and methods to the analysis of political future are agreed upon, political future is fundamentally a human security-oriented analytical framework as the latter encompasses the sheer amplitude of contemporary human experiences. Not surprisingly, it has been argued that "human security addresses the full range of human insecurities faced by communities including, but not limited to, violent conflicts, extreme impoverishment, natural disasters, health pandemics, etc., as well as their interdependencies, both across human securities and geographically" (Human Security Handbook 2006).

In order to distinctly problematize the political future of the Republic of Armenia, we shall look into and spotlight a number of characteristic features of political futurology. First, on a democratic plane, it should be noted that "in Free countries in particular, declining satisfaction with democracy is driving down support for democracy. This is the case in Benin, Brazil, Cape Verde, Chile, South Africa, and Uruguay. There are a few exceptions showing distinctive local dynamics. In Mongolia and Peru, support for democracy had already fallen below 50 percent before the drop in satisfaction with democracy became manifest" (Chu et al. 2020, 173). Consequently, a future that is associated with democracy and a successful and complete democratic transition would require the establishment of sufficiently developed sociocultural links between public attitudes, the role of the civil society and the institutionalized forms of democracy that lead as back to the fundamental pillars of this article: roles and institutionalization (Clark 2000; Kagotani, Kimura and Weber 2014; Jochheim 2022).

Furthermore, as the country delves into choosing models of development and political value systems, it should heed attention to the availability of the readily identifiable reproductions that have already proved perceptibly admirable in historical transitions. In this sense, Nye was right in claiming that "the idea that war is now unthinkable among countries that fought bitterly for centuries, and that Europe has become an island of peace and prosperity creates a positive image in much of the world. In the late 1980s, when Eastern Europeans were asked which countries would serve as models for their future in terms of economic growth, equality, democracy, and individual freedoms, Western Europe outranked the United States" (Nye 2004, 77). A finely picked distinctiveness based on a positive image and success in the fields of economy, democracy and freedom, as well as a more security-oriented, conflict-driven, dramatically historicized, pragmatically and geopolitically molded national model, such as South Korea's, would arguably be ideal for the purpose of serving as a replica for the political future of Armenia. Gordon G. Ghang states that "Kim family has never abandoned its overarching goal of ruling the entire peninsula. Therefore, the North continually attempts to subvert, coerce, and extort South Korea" (Ghang 2022, 50). Time and again, the complicated geopolitical situation of South Korea highlight its strategic similarity to the Republic of Armenia, which faces the dual challenge of confronting the ambitions of Azerbaijan bolstered by a growing Turkish aggrandizement in the region. However, unlike the Turkish denial of the Armenian

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[6] Ibid.

Genocide and the Azerbaijani aggression against Armenia, South Korea has managed to overcome the resistance with regard to the recognition of crimes against humanity carried out against the Korean people. To be precise, Japan was held accountable for crimes against humanity by Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery in Tokyo in December, 2000 (Kim and Motaghi 2017; Wiegand 2015), something that Armenia has not achieved against the backdrop of widespread international recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

This turning point highlights the importance of devising tools to enter into multifaceted cooperative schemes with regional as well as global powers. As the numerous challenges and fears coalesce into an evolving magnet of political issues on societal, national, regional and global levels, understanding the value of human-to-human, society-to-society dialogue develops into a structural ability to resolve nascent conflicts, cultural misunderstandings, perceived insecurities and the general climate of international relations. T. M. Nichols (2017) exposes the deep-running and fare-reaching effects of relegating knowledge and expertise to the nonchalant presumptuousness of masses on the American society. As cultural degradation and educational decadence are becoming more and more salient issues across regions and societies, an authentic search for developmental, social and political models considers not only the geographic, human security, ideological dimensions but also the spatiotemporal convulsions of sociocultural dynamics peculiar to contemporary human societies (Yim 2002; Kalyvas and Katznelson 2008; Le 2019).

Moreover, given that borders and boundaries are deconstructed and then reconstructed politically, human experiences involve unprecedented tosses and turns due to ideologically-motivated policies and revisions, something to be considered seriously given the volatility of the nature of the political future of any country, let alone the Republic of Armenia. Human experiences have manifold political manifestations running the gamut from violent conflicts and migration policies to the political economy, democratization and sustainable development and the never-ending search for a genuine collective, as well as individual, Self (Levin and Han 2002).

How would an isolationism be reflected in the political future of the Republic of Armenia? We are convinced that a sociopolitical solitary confinement might, in combination with other fractious realities, spell the end of the Armenian civilization and statehood as it would deprive the country from the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, the free flow of human fellowship. Therefore, one of the central pillars of a viable Armenian state and civilization in the future is going to be its ability to capitalize on and augment human fellowship. As forced displacement, hunger, intellectual debasement and ideology-inspired international turbulence, violation of human rights plague nations and civilizations, it has become urgent to find alternatives ways of dealing with the concept of human fellowship. To do so, Armenia needs viable models of development to look up to deconstructing and reconstructing its political future.

South Korea as a unique authentic model for Armenia

There are a number of reasons why South Korea stand out as a uniquely authentic model for the Republic of Armenia. First, the dramatic setting in which South Korea survived and developed through wars and division in the 20th century sets it apart as an example for the post-war Armenia that is struggling to overcome its recent, as well as previous, traumas and build a sustainable, reliable future, including for the people in Nagorno-Karabakh. Second, US-South-Korean alliance and the military presence of the United States on the Korean peninsula resembles the Russian military presence in Armenia. Hence, South Korea's ability and experience building overlapping bi- and multilateral partnerships and alliances is an indication whether being reliant on an ally in security terms constrains foreign policy dexterity or not (O 2022). Third, as a homogenous society wedged between East-West. North-South ambitions and power clusters, South Korea remains an actively engaged, sovereign and deft political actor, a status that the Republic of Armenia should constantly aspire to.

Even though an Iranian search for alternatives world orders, a Greek transition to democracy and Europeanization, an East European narrative of post-Cold War reconstruction and non-alignment (or realignment) are also viable models of the future for Armenia to look up to and synthesize with its own vision for the political future, in this article we argue that that best developmental and foreign policy model for the Republic of Armenia in current times of turbulent transition and post-war shock is that of South Korea. V. D. Cha and M. Dumond (2017) from CSIS have compiled multilayered essays on the distinction of South Korea and its politics of the future in a tridimensional spatiotemporal domain.

The geostrategic importance of South Korea for Armenia is well-grounded. First, due to its middle-power status in international relations, South Korea offers flexible, learnable roles that would provide a dominant role for the Republic of Armenia in cumbersome regional affairs. To be precise, "depending on a host of factors—including the regional and global balance of power, its geographic location, the ideological nature of its regime, and the political fears and ambitions of its leaders—a middle power can position itself within its region as either a: balancer, stabilizing the regional system when it is in disequilibrium; kingmaker, tipping the scales in favor of one of the regional major powers or coalitions; or tertius gaudens, playing one side off of the other to its own advantage" (Cha and Dumond 2017). Further, South Korea's network capabilities, economic attractiveness as well as the vitality of civil society make it an even more attractive example: "its corporate networks are global in scope; openness to inward foreign direct investment has grown in recent years, further expanding the economic networks of which it is part. South Korea, like other middle powers, also has a vibrant civil society sector" (Cha and Dumond 2017).

As Armenia has been seeking multiple bilateral and multilateral partnerships to enhance its international profile as well as negotiating capabilities vis-à-vis its regional rivals, the lesson the South-Korean experience teaches is also about effective multilateralism (Noland 2012). To be specific, "Korea sets a high standard in terms of provision of public goods for regional security, with activities ranging from participation in UN peacekeeping operations to counter-piracy and active diplomacy in

the Six Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear program. Indeed, as a peninsular power wedged between China and Japan, Korea's choices on regional architecture and community-building could determine the region breaks down along continental-versus-maritime divides or integrates continental China with the democratic maritime states like Japan and the Philippines. For these reasons, Korea's role in both regional and international institution-building merits further examination" (Noland 2012, 20).

However, caught between eastern and western political, economic, ideological and cultural currents, what the future holds for the Republic of Armenia is firmly mired down in its ability to interact with regional powers, reconstruct its national Self vis-à-vis other regional players and deconstruct any global futures that do not fit in with its own idea of the future. Pragmatically workable and conceptually rigorous, such an attitude can give rise to a new conception of not only political future but also political culture, in which the global and local dimensions of political phenomena are interwoven with local notions and preferences being of paramount importance (Ha 2023; Heo, Jeon, Kim and Kim 2008).

One the one hand, cultural and geographic proximity lays the foundation for the creation of close partnerships and mutually beneficial alliances. On the other hand, grasping regional dynamics involves a renewed understanding of others' cultural Self in order to try and inject an acceleration of partnership-building. To illustrate the mentioned tactic, A. Vatanka dissects the ideological facet of Iranian foreign policy with regard to democracy: "While Khamenei considers the issue of human rights to be a tool that mighty states use to pressure weaker ones, he nonetheless seems to recognize that the issue does carry weight. But he has yet to devise a convincing alternative to the accepted conventions. Back in 1987, before becoming supreme leader, he explained: "We do not believe that Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin and their like had the smallest consideration for human rights in the true sense of the word," adding that the Allied leaders were insincere "in forming the United Nations and drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Vatanka 2015, 63).

This reference to Khamenei's words leads to a preliminary assessment of what might an attempt to understand Iranian ideological-political realities entail. First, the perceived hypocrisy of all major powers. Second, the acknowledgment of human rights as a universal phenomenon. Third, condemnation of the existing world order based on rational considerations of power-realpolitik. Fourth, an obvious search for an alternative, just and egalitarian world order (perhaps an Islamic one). Challenging some aspects of the existing world order might be desirable for Armenia.

However, due to sheer size, resources and ambition, the Republic of Armenia is no match for Iran, hence an alternative world order, let alone a theist one, is out of reach. Moreover, the Iranian nuclear program and the associated partial political isolation imposed by the West are a scenario Armenia is not capable of sustaining in neither political and ideological, nor economic and foreign policy terms due to its limited dexterity and scarce resources. The Armenian-Iranian ties hark back to millennia. The two neighbors share a lot in common and have witnessed each other's civilizational contributions to humankind. At this stage, the two appear to be perfect allies for the purpose of maintaining regional stability and a humanistic streak in the cruel politics of the Middle East. However, due to some aspects of vision and sheer capabilities, these

circumstances convert the nature of Armenian-Iranian partnership into a potential alliance rather than make either country a role model for the other.

Another possible model is the Greek one. Even though the geographic, civilizational proximity and historical, political ties suggest Greek transition to democracy and modernization through European integration is a coveted model for the Republic of Armenia, it is partly true due to two powerful reasons. First, during the Cold War Greece received substantial American aid (Bechmann 2012) to become firmly embedded in the Western bloc within a wider US effort to contain the spread of communism. This also led to NATO membership for Greece, something that Armenia cannot consider in the foreseeable future due to its own membership in the Russia-led CSTO. An unexpected turnaround could lead to unpredictable consequences given the country's security dependence on Russia. Another reason is that Greek democracy is still plagued by clientelism as well as populism (Sotiropoulos 2018), things that are arguably one of the defining features of post-Soviet Armenia. Admittedly, Greece is a valuable regional partner, a possible future ally and investor. However, the above-mentioned constraints do not seem to qualify it as a near-perfect model of development for Armenia to follow reconstructing its political future.

By contrast, South Korea appears to be an ideal model for democratic transition through turbulent times. The Korea Foundation Korea Fellow and Senior Research Fellow for Northeast Asia with the Asia-Pacific Programme at Chatham House, Dr. John Nilsson-Wright confirms that: "Rapid post-war economic development fostered a process of modernization, including mass education, social awareness and the development of a prosperous middle class, that arguably contributed to the emergence of South Korea as one of contemporary Asia's most successful democracies" (Nilsson-Wright 2022, 2). Moreover, even though it is true that, "Japan in 1965 provided South Korea with much-needed economic resources, in the form of some $800 million worth of direct financial assistance to fuel what came to be known as the 'Miracle on the Han River" (Dae-jung), it was not delivered in a Cold War mentality and did not lead to any foreign or security policy choices on the part of South Korea. This assistance is what marks the difference between the type of US assistance Greece received in the 20th century and the Japanese assistance delivered to South Korea. This is why we place the assistance Armenia has received from its donor countries[7] as well as from its relatively huge, prosperous and pro-Armenia diaspora (Minoian and Freinkman 2005) since it gained independence in 1991 within the cooperative scheme that South Korea has had with its foreign partners rather than within a broader East-West Cold War.

Furthermore, Israel-a country with a dramatic history and an on-going conflict coupled with successful economic development and democratization-might seem a perfect model for Armenia. On the surface, both peoples suffered from genocide, gained independence in the 20th century and have a frozen conflict. Therefore, the Israeli success story should be exemplary for Armenia. What this argument misses are the widening gap between the foreign and security policies between the two countries. While Armenia has been trying to address the grievances of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh, fight for their right of self-determination, Israel has been described through

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[7] Source: Global Economy. 2021. Foreign aid and official developmental assistance received. Accessed July 16, 2023. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Armenia/foreign_aid/.

the lens of oppressiveness against the Palestinian people[8], including their right of self-determination. Meanwhile Armenia, much like South Korea coveting an orderly reunification, has never seen either the recreation of Armenia by the American President Woodrow Wilson's justice-based and rights-oriented Sevres Agreement (Theriault 2020) or the decolonization of Nagorno-Karabakh after the Soviet rule. Moreover, by becoming a military ally (Murinson 2014) of an unfree by the standards of Freedom House country[9], Azerbaijan, Israel has intensified the bloodletting in the region and played a divisive role, something that further alienates Armenia.

These dramatic episodes knit Armenia and South Korea together in terms of their historical grievances, the injustice and losses they have confronted. Eun A. Jo refers recounts a profoundly dramatic historical injustice the Korean people encountered. To be specific, "Dozens of "comfort women" statues, commemorating victims of Japanese sexual slavery during World War II, have been erected in South Korea in the last decade. Since the 1990s, survivors of forced labor have also steadily challenged Japanese companies in court. Tensions finally came to a boiling point in October 2018, when, in a controversial verdict, South Korea's top court ordered Japan's Mitsubishi steel company to compensate the claimants" (Jo 2022, 467). Not only is this similar to the humiliation the Armenian people went through because of the Genocide in 1915 and lost control over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 but also, against the backdrop of Turkish and Azeri policy of denial, highlights the importance of the Korean struggle for recognition and compensation. In either case, whether Koreans or Armenians succeed in redressing their historical grievances, the success would set a precedent for the other because of similar historical-political circumstances (trauma-struggle for recognition-denial).

As well as this, as Armenia makes an attempt to connect more extensively to its Diaspora communities, the South Korean experience illustrates the significance of having a coherent strategy to enhance soft power and reach foreign policy objectives. Kwang-jin Choi mentions, among other things, the goal "to proliferate current knowledge and understanding of Korea by rectifying factual errors in foreign textbooks and promoting Korean studies and Korean-language courses overseas" (Choi 2019, 19). The historical wounds of the Armenian people with regard to a long-lost homeland and a desperate struggle for self-determination in Nagorno-Karabakh would resonate well with the Korean public as historically the Korean press, "emphasized Korea's ancient consciousness of national unity by clearly declaring that at the heart of such nationalism and rhetoric was a strong identification of Dokdo and Ulleungdo as Korea's historic territories" (Jo, 111). The astonishing congruence of historical resentment among the Armenians and Koreans highlights the importance of drama and trauma in choosing a model for development. This suggests that the Armenian public

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[8]Source: Amnesty International. 2022. "Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity." February 1, 2022. Accessed July 16, 2023. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/; The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study / International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Arab States. Beirut: ILO, 2018. https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ILOSTUDY_040418.pdf.
[9]Source: Freedom House. 2023. "Freedom in the world: Azerbaijan." Accessed July 25, 2023. https://freedomhouse.org/country/azerbaijan/freedom-world/2023.

would in all probability welcome the idea of living up to a success story that went through the same historical ordeal and has a similar, deep-seated anxiety over past losses.

Two other competitors for Armenia would be Chile-a story of successful democratization and economic growth-and Eastern Europe-the small states of the former Socialist bloc, such as Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Lithuania, Hungary, Slovakia or the Czech Republic. Both, however, have shortcomings, in the context of the political future of Armenia, compared with the South Korean model. First, Chile is an example of incomplete democratization (Garreton 1999). Although it is striking that both Chile and Armenia began their post-totalitarian democratization at roughly the same time (early 90's), an incomplete democratization is what Armenia itself has achieved, hence Chile becomes an incompetent model to follow at least in terms of successful democratization. Furthermore, even though the economic growth in Chile is enviable, the structural composition of the country's economy, particularly its dependence on mining (Ffrench-Davis 2016; OECD/UN 2018), raises questions about its suitability as a model of development for Armenia since the latter has long been struck between the need to develop mining and the legitimate concerns of its increasingly eco-conscious public.

Last but not least, even though the East European model might be coveted in Armenia, it might not be the best model of development for the country. While it is true that East European countries have made a significant post-Cold War economic breakthrough and a successful transition to democracy, replicating their model would be unrealistic for the Republic of Armenia[10]. First, Eastern Europeans had ideological motives striving for forming part of the liberal world. Meanwhile, the Armenians led a national independence struggle, the Eastern Europeans, who lived in independent countries, strove to overcome the Iron Curtain and become full-fledged members of the free world. The Romanian-American political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu aptly describes the East European experience: "Through the 1960s, 70s and 80s, the intellectuals in Eastern Europe gradually abandoned Marxism and eventually arrived at diverse but unified theories of human rights. Once this happened, within a few years the populations of the region lost their faith in Marxism and then their fear of the regimes. Coming onto the streets as individuals – in the tens, hundreds, thousands and by 1989 the millions – they presented a challenge to the system that it could not really face" (Tismaneanu 2019, 113). In line with this argumentation, the eminent Armenian political scientist M. Margaryan explains that the rationale behind East European Velvet Revolutions was the self-identification of East Europeans with Europe (Margaryan 2023). As these nations were aspiring to reunite with the rest of the continent to form a civilizational-political whole, the Armenians coveted an independent nation and the implementation of the right of self-determination of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Further, most countries of Eastern Europe became NATO members. This too limits the plausibility of replicating the East European model in Armenia as a NATO membership is controversial in the case of Armenia as it

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[10] Republic of Armenia in the Eurasian Economic Union. First Results. 2018. Eurasian Economic Commission and Interstate Bank. Accessed July 29, 2023. https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/files/paos/library/Armenia_eng.pdf.

still does not have diplomatic relations with two of its neighbors, namely Azerbaijan and Turkey-a NATO member and a staunch supporter of Azerbaijan, whose large-scale aggression against Armenia since May, 2021 has been condemned by the European Parliament (Sanders and Salameh 2020; European Parliament 2021). Thus, what Armenia needs as a model is a country with a rather flexible foreign and security policy in bi- and multi-lateral formats. The presence of US troops on Korean soil and the dependence of South Korea on continued US security assistance closely resemble the Russian military presence in Armenia and the dependence (or vulnerability for that matter) of the latter vis-à-vis the Russian Federation.

Conclusion and discussion

This paper is possibly the first attempt to eradicate stereotypical boundaries that might crop up in choosing successful models of development for a certain nation, in this case Armenia. While the majority of countries in the region have closer historical and cultural ties with Armenia due to geography, common civilizational roots or historical legacies, the possibility to replicate other countries' models of development should be based on strategic rather than narrowly-defined, culture-oriented, geographically determined criteria, especially in the context of a more globalized world with porous borders and accelerated communication. It is tempting to choose a model of development on an isolated small set of criteria that seem to be essential, such as geographic proximity and historical ties (Iran, Greece), a successful combination of post-totalitarian democratization and economic growth (Chile), dramatic history (Israel) or a coveted developmental and foreign policy trajectory, something that is ideationally preferred rather than geopolitically feasible (Eastern Europe). However, a closer look reveals their inherent inconsistencies and controversies that warrant a wider search for solutions across countries and systems.

Possibly, our research has laid the groundwork for further comparative studies between Armenia and South Korea in order to extract workable, area-specific formulae (Kim 2007). Moreover, differentiating between an ideal role model and other successful models of development also suggests being able to concentrate on more tangible, area-specific cooperation in bilateral formats. In other words, knowing what to learn and from whom might generate more fragmented, yet more productive cooperation and cross-cultural exchange. South Korea's diplomatic capability to play with but not against any great power engaged in the international affairs of the Asia-Pacific is of particular interest to Armenia, a country that also hosts a foreign military base and is tasked with achieving a balanced foreign policy. However, recently the presence of US troops on Korean soil has paved the way for some regional speculations (Smith 2022).

With human fellowship being one of our chief objectives, South Korea, too, offers a multi-layered and astonishingly identical to Armenia base of experiences. From Japanese colonial rule (Kim 2009) and the US-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953 (Congressional Research Service 2023a, 2023b) to the "economic growth and urbanization, improvement of education levels, and development of the media resulting

from economic growth, citizens' political expectations and desire for political participation" (Academy of Korean Studies 2017, 44). Convinced in the righteousness of this approach, we have discussed the geopolitical context of the South Korean strategic–mainly developmental and foreign policy– experience against the backdrop of the political future of the Republic of Armenia. First, "the Republic of Korea overcame the calamities of colonization and war to enter the ranks of developed countries in a remarkably short period of time" (Academy of Korean Studies 2017, 40). This is a promising start for a post-war Armenia still in post-soviet transition to full-fledged political independence and democratization. Second, "transitions from despotic regimes to democratic societies, and from conflict to peace, necessitate reworking collective memory: adopting post-heroic narratives that recognize past abuses and introducing necessary legal-political measures, such as trials or truth commissions, that embed the mnemonic shifts in emergent political institutions" (Jo 2022, 770).

The above-mentioned example obviously comes to bolster Armenia's own reconciliation with its own history-memory of the Armenian Genocide, loss of independence and territory under Soviet rule and the painful, on-going struggle to ensure the realization of the right of self-determination for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. Even though the cultural and geographic latitudes place the two countries within an unbelievably unattractive distance from each other, the political profiles of their strategic similarities make them strange bedfellows from a scholarly perspective. Our chief argument is that the South Korean model is preferable for Armenia vis-à-vis Greek, Israeli, Iranian, East European and Chilean based on the strategic criteria exposed in the article.

Supplementary material

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Conflict of interests
The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

Ethical standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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