

## **Between Geography and International Relations: Explaining the Neighborhood<sup>1</sup>**

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Received: 19/01/2022

Accepted: 03/03/2023

<https://doi.org/10.22034/igq.2023.167801>

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### **Abstract**

Geographical distance has always been one of the factors affecting relations between states. This has highlighted the position of neighbors in the foreign policy of countries and they have often adopted special strategies towards them. However, a glance at theories of International Relations (IR) shows that there is no specific theory about the neighborhood. Therefore, the main question is how to achieve a plan to explain the neighborhood in international politics? It seems that a hybrid theoretical approach can be presented by means of an eclectic approach and relying on the capacity and relevance of IR theories with geographical proximity and neighborhood. Therefore, the four approaches of Regionalism, Economic Interdependence, the English School and the Copenhagen School have been selected from different theories in the discipline of IR. Then, by collecting the scattered statements of the theorists of the mentioned approaches about the relations of states in close geographical distances, an attempt has been made to formulate a theoretical framework for explaining the neighborhood in international politics. This scheme not only explains the neighborhood in international politics but also introduces the link between Geography and IR.

**Keywords:** Neighborhood, Regionalism, Regional International Society, Regional Security Complex.

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1. This Article is Derived from Research Plan 56275 which was Approved and Implemented in Ferdowsi University of Mashhad.

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## **1. Introduction**

Geographical distance among states throughout history has affected the quality of their relationship. It is no coincidence that the emphasis on the principle of "good neighborliness" in treaties between neighbors and in the diplomatic literature has often been a frequent and popular phrase. While today, thanks to the development of the transportation industry and the communication revolution, the impact of geographical distance on international relations has diminished, it is still a significant variable. When we study the foreign policy of states, especially multi-neighboring ones, there is a neighborhood policy in their approach and behavior. However, there is no definitive approach regarding the consequences of neighborhood and geographical proximity, and in particular, one can distinguish between the following two views in this regard.

On the one hand, historical experience shows that when states are geographically far apart, they can easily establish friendly relations. They do not have disputes over borders, river divisions and transnational ethnic ties. In other words, geographical neighborhood may create ambiguity and conflict in any of these areas. For example, one of the main causes of Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980 was the false territorial claims of that country to parts of Iran. In the next case, the division of border river water over the past decades has overshadowed Iran-Afghanistan relations and its effects are likely to increase in the coming years. The same is true for Iran's relationship with other neighboring states. Finally, in the third example, cross-border ethnic ties between the Turks of Iran and the Turks of Azerbaijan and Turkey in the past have led to political and security crises and have affected our relations with our northwestern neighbors.

On the other hand, The smaller the geographical distance, the lower the transportation costs and the geographical barriers to trade. as a result, increased trade and economic relations contribute to reduce the conflict. This approach is especially emphasized in the theory of economic interdependence. It is true that today the transportation industry is developed, but geographical proximity is still a comparative advantage in the field of international trade, elevating the neighbors to a unique position. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that at least half of Iran's top ten trading partners have been our neighbors over the past decades. More importantly,

Iran's trade balance with its neighbors is often positive, indicating that they are primarily our export destinations.

As seen above, historical evidence leads us to conflicting conclusions about the advantages and disadvantages of neighborhood. This contradiction is partly due to the lack of a specific theoretical framework in this field. The article aims to contribute a little towards solving this problem. So, the main question that arises here is how, according to theories of IR, a scheme can be provided to explain the neighborhood in international politics?

## **2 .Methodology**

The hypothesis proposed here is that it is possible to explain the neighborhood by articulating geographical, historical, economic and security elements in a coherent scheme. To analyze this hypothesis, it is necessary to focus on the commonalities of the approaches of Regionalism, English School, Economic Interdependence and Copenhagen School on the effect of geographical distance. So, the hypothesis is examined by a kind of meta-analysis method.

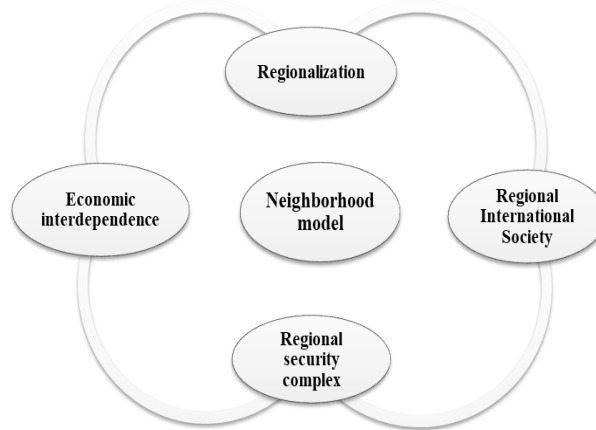
## **3.Literature Review**

Although neighborhood and geographical proximity play an important role, whether positive or negative, in international relations and show a close relationship between international politics and geography (Gartzke,2003: 371), but theories of IR or Foreign Policy (FP) often does not directly address geographical variables. However, there are some works about the neighborhood policy of different states from which theoretical approaches could be deduced. One of these works is Zhang's article on China's neighborhood policy (Zhang,2016). He argues that few countries in the world have such complex and complicated neighborhood relations as China. This simple geographical fact means that China and its neighbors are closely bounded by geography. Moreover, Sandy Gordon (2014) discusses the requirements of neighborhood and regionalism in the Indian foreign policy. He mainly sees India's neighbors as one of the challenges of its foreign policy, which requires careful planning and management. Renda (2011) examines Turkey's neighborhood policy in the same way. He argues that a fuller understanding of the activism in Turkish foreign policy at the beginning of the 21st century, and in particular the changing nature of relations with its neighbors, requires us to engage in the study of the

increasing economic interdependence. Therefore, this paper explains Turkey's relations with its neighbors through the neo-liberal theory model put forth by Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, which underlines the importance of interdependence and cooperation among states. Pål Røren (2019) examines the neighborhood in the Nordic region. He argues that the numerous societal linkages between the Nordic states have made their region into a 'friendly neighborhood'. Specifically, turning their social group into a friendly neighborhood allows the Nordic countries to posture as a collective polity and seek status on behalf of it. Røren finds that the Nordic states are unlikely to compete in ways that might harm their friendship or their neighborhood.

In addition to the above works, which only focus on the neighborhood policy of one or more countries, some studies deal with the neighborhood in international politics with a more theoretical approach. One of the classics in this field is *Neighborhood Politics* written by Crenson (1983). In this work, he deals with the nature of neighborhood and its effect on relations between states. Gartzke (2003) also pays attention to the linkage between geography and international politics in a general view, and in the meantime, especially examines the role of the neighborhood. He argues that states are defined in terms of borders, and conflict often involves competing claims to territory. Zhukov and Stewart (2013) specifically study proximity and neighborhood in international relations. They make choices about how proximity is defined and which neighbors should be considered more important than others. Finally, Filep (2018) focuses on good neighborhood and especially discusses this issue in Central Europe.

As the above literature review shows, the few works that exist in this field are either related to neighborhood policy in specific states or dealt with the neighborhood effect in international politics in a very general and marginal way. Therefore, in the article, an attempt is made to provide a model for neighborhood with a multidimensional and inferential approach from the theories of IR, International Security (IS) and FP. This model relies on four phenomena in international politics: regionalization, regional international society, interdependence, and regional security complex (Figure 1).

**Figure (1): A Scheme for Explaining Neighborhood**

#### **4. Research Analysis: Outlines of the Scheme**

In this section, the views of Regionalism, the English School, Interdependence, and the Copenhagen School are analyzed, respectively, and their contribution to explain the neighborhood is examined.

##### **4-1. From Neighborhood to Regionalism**

One of the approaches that is proposed in IR and FP and can be used in neighborhood analysis is the theory of Regionalism. Regionalism is an approach that has no clear boundaries and carries multiple interpretations; Because in recent years, several theories in IR and International Political Economy (IPE) have studied Regionalism. These approaches range from (neo)Functionalism to Constructivism, from Neo-realism to Critical Theory, and from Neoliberal Institutionalism to liberal Intergovernmentalism (Hetne and Soderbaum,2008:61).

Therefore, Regionalism should be considered as a continuum that can be viewed with a variety of state-centered, intergovernmental, and social approaches. In the first approach, the focus on neighborhood construction pits national governments against the image of globalization. In the second attitude, although Regionalism opens the space for the domination of great powers, smaller actors can also express their ideas, participate in technical affairs, and even ally with each other. In the third approach, Regionalism emerges from a relatively monopolistic position and seeks to reconcile liberalization with deregulation through regional free trade agreements.

Today, Regionalism is a combination of the three (Cooper and et al,2008:2-3).

Regional integration is a practical process that consists of initiatives by government actors and supportive or confrontational responses of internal social groups (Dash,2008:40). The three basic assumptions of regional integration are: a) An institutional model must determine the outcome of the integration process; b) Conflict of interests between links with regional patterns and that with trans-regional countries should be resolved in favor of regional patterns; And c) any decision should be made based on the approach of 'disjointed incrementalism'. The approach usually refers to a particular type of decision-making in situations of uncertainty and is the result of bargaining between members whose interests are sometimes convergent and sometimes conflicting. This is the best 'rational' strategy available under current constraints. Disjointed incrementalism is accepted by decision makers as an existing reality, good or bad (Haas,1976:173,183). Experimental generalizations about regional integration show that:

- a) When exchanges between members of a regional group increase in relation to a third party, they consider themselves interdependent;
- b) If the actors feel that their regional partner benefits more than them, they evaluate the interdependence negatively, but if they feel that in some areas but not all of them benefit as much as their partner, they assess it positively;
- c) The relative size of member states in the regional group is not a good measure of integration success. Inequality may lead integration to certain economic and political tasks and hinder its progress;
- d) The expansion of organizational networks, both state and non-state, in the region creates interdependence between members;
- e) It cannot be predicted that the expansion of integrative activities in some areas will lead to de facto or de jure political alliances; and
- g) Among all political issues and areas, the commitment to a common market provides the most favorable ground for rapid regional integration and maximum spill-over (Haas,1970:614-6).

The above approach, which is mainly known as classical integration theory, has been widely criticized. Theorists in this field sought to offer a deductive approach, but also chose the European experience of the 1950s and 1960s as a practical context. This recent inductive nature has become the most important focus of criticism against classical integration theories, and has

been largely exploited by new regionalist thinkers (Rosamond,2008:82). New regionalist thinkers emphasize regionalization rather than integration. Regionalization, which is the subject of new Regionalism, is often seen as a multifaceted economic, security, cultural, and environmental process that takes place at multiple levels simultaneously (Vayrynen,2003:39). More precisely, regionalization is the process by which governments, civil societies, and corporations combine resources to achieve commonly agreed goals at the regional level, and distinctly at the domestic and global levels. Paying attention to this distinction among the three levels has significant implications for the study of peace and security at the regional level (Graham,2008:160). Thus, the old Regionalism that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s and the new Regionalism that emerged after the 1980s and is still going on today are distinguished (Hetne and Soderbaum,2008:62).

While the first wave of regionalism focuses on North-North and South-South trade arrangements, the second wave deals with North-South relations (Faizal,2004:346-7). In addition to the structural transformation of the international system and the decreasing importance of third world alliances at the same time as the second wave of regionalism, the change in regionalization goals has also been effective in this shift. The old Regionalism was aimed at creating peace and saw the national state as a 'problem' and not a 'solution'. The most important theoretical approaches in this wave of Regionalism include Functionalism, Neo-Functionalism and Federalism. In this context, both Functionalism and Federalism focused on the elimination of the state, but Neo-Functionalism focused on a political integration. In contrast, the new Regionalism refers to a political desire and commitment to organize the world in the form of regions. As such, this concept refers to a specific regional project (Hetne and Soderbaum,2008: 63).

To sum up, the characteristics of the new Regionalism are: Usually one or more small countries are associated with a large country; Smaller countries have usually moved towards significant unilateral reforms recently; There is no impressive free trade between members and the level of liberalization is usually moderate; Smaller countries start liberalizing sooner than larger ones; Regional arrangements usually require deep integration; Regional arrangements are geographically within a region and its members are neighbors (Ethier,1998:1150-2); And these trade arrangements have spread

throughout the world during the second wave (Bandara,2004:57). If the above topics are to be summarized and old Regionalism and new Regionalism are compared, the most important indicators to consider are:

- a) While the old Regionalism was formed in the context of the Cold War bipolar system, the new Regionalism is constituted in the multipolar system;
- b) Although the old Regionalism was created by the superpowers from above, the new Regionalism is more spontaneous and bottom-up, and is supported by the regional governments themselves;
- c) While the old Regionalism was introverted and protectionist in terms of economic integration, the new Regionalism is often open and welcoming;
- d) The old Regionalism was almost one-dimensional (economic or security-oriented), but the new Regionalism has a more comprehensive and multidimensional trend; and
- e) While the old Regionalism was only state-centric, the new Regionalism has both state and non-state actors (Hetne,2012:57-56).

**Table (1): old Regionalism vs New Regionalism**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Old Regionalism</b>	<b>New Regionalism</b>
<b>Host structure</b>	Cold War bipolar structure	Post-Cold War multipolar structure
<b>Origin of Formation</b>	Upward	Downward
<b>Economic Approach</b>	Protectionism	Open and welcoming
<b>Process</b>	One-dimensional	Multi-dimensional
<b>Actor</b>	State-centric	Multi-centric
<b>Subject</b>	Economic integration	Regionalization

One of the best examples of the link between the neighborhood approach and Regionalism can be seen in the European Neighborhood Policy. The European Neighborhood Policy, introduced in 2004, pursued three main goals: (a) Supporting the national development strategy for the partner country; (b) integration of partners in the social and economic structures of the European Union; And (c) to achieve the objectives set out in the Union's agreements with neighboring countries (Hoekman,2007:13). Regionalism, both the first and the second wave, is one of the approaches in which the issue of neighborhood in foreign policy can be analyzed. Because one of the main principles of Regionalism is the geographical proximity of the countries present in a particular region, which is mainly associated with



cultural-political similarities and joint interests in the economic concerns. Another useful approach to explain neighborhood will be discussed below.

#### **4-2 .Neighborhood: A Platform for the Regional International Society?**

The English School Theory, especially its idea on ‘international society’, is among the approaches on which a neighborhood conception could be deduced. According to this theory, the international society is made up of many members, including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, transnational networks, and individuals (Jackson,2000:102-114). The idea of the international society proves that despite the anarchical international situation, the states mostly respect the rules and norms (Talebi Arani,2017:111). English School theory emphasizes both the anarchic structure of the international system and the possibility of cooperation among states. So, this approach could be a good model by which to simultaneously explain the cooperation and conflict between neighboring states.

A question raised here is how the international society is formed. In this regard, Martin Wight focuses on two elements: (a) the common culture and language of the members of society, and (b) their sense of belonging to a great civilization and their distinction from foreigners or ‘barbarians’ (Linklater,2012:135-134). Other English School thinkers such as Hadley Bull (1977) and Robert Jackson (2000) consider Wight's approach to be impractical, especially in the contemporary era, and focus on issues such as common concerns for order, economic interdependence, mutual recognition, diplomacy, and so on. Summarizing the views of Martin Wight and Hadley Bull, Barry Buzan mentions two ways of forming the international society, which are *Gemeinschaft* (civilizational) method and *Gesellschaft* (functional) one. In his view, history shows that the formation of international societies has been largely based on the civilizational model (Ghavam and Fatemi Nejad, 2008: 189). Anyway, it can be concluded that according to the English School, the international society is formed based on the commonalities of different societies in both cultural and functional parts (Fatemi Nejad and Hashemi,2016:127).

In addition to the civilizational and functional elements, one of the assumptions of the international society is that there is an intersubjective agreement between statesmen (Little,2014:163). In other words, the formation and perpetuation of the international society depends on the

governments and decision-makers of the members of it reaching an intersubjective agreement on the fundamental rules of the society and the rights and duties of each member. One of the most important rights and duties mentioned is to limit the use of force and to civilize their foreign relations (Linklater,2012:137). Thus, the international society has at least four salient features, which are: (a) The international society is made up of organized societies called states; (b) The number of members of the international society is always small compared to other societies; (c) Members of the international society are more heterogeneous than individuals and differ greatly in territory, population, cultural ideals, and social arrangements; and (d) Members of the international society are relatively stable and immortal (Wight,1979:106-107).

International order is among the most important issues in the international society. Maintaining order in the international community depends on three elements: common interests, shared rules and joint institutions (Bull,1977: 66-72). This is clearly stated in Hadley Bull and Adam Watson's definition of the international society:

...a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements (Bull and Watson,1985:1).

International institutions are among the important factors in creating international order. The English school focuses more on primary international institutions (Falkner and Buzan,2019). International institutions have several essential characteristics, which are: (a) These institutions are sustainable patterns of common practice rooted in the shared values of members; (b) practices, in order to be considered an institution, must have a constitutive role in relation to the actors and the rules of the game; and (c) Primary institutions are neither permanent nor fixed, despite their stability; Rather, they evolve throughout history. Institutions such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, diplomacy, balance of power, trade and nationalism are among the most prominent primary institutions of the English School (Buzan,2009:201-198).

But the issue here is the connection between the idea of the international society and the issue of neighborhood. It is true that the neighborhood confirms a relationship between a number of neighboring states in a particular region, but when we talk about the international society in the English School, whether rightly or wrongly, a universal international society comes to mind. In other words, in most classical and contemporary works of the English School there is this approach that the only valid level of analysis is the systemic or universal one. But one of the dangers of this approach is that it neglects the possibility and reality of the regional level. Historical experience shows that sub-global/regional international societies can be formed on the basis of the common foundations of the global international society; Like what has happened in Europe, the Islamic world, and Southeast Asia (Buzan,2009:34-31). Therefore, we need to search for the theoretical foundations of the sub-global/regional international society.

It should be noted here that the theoretical context of the idea of a regional international society has long been in the forefront of the English School. For example, according to Wight, all historical international societies, such as the Hellenic international society in ancient Greece or the international society consisting of Italian city-states during the Renaissance, were regional and sub-global in nature. This caused them to face the problem of foreigners, or in his words, 'barbarians' (Buzan,1388:33).

Hadley Bull also considers and articulates the distinction between a regional and global international society in different ways. For example, he states in his outstanding work *Anarchic Society* that from the twentieth century onwards, thinkers active in this field no longer regarded the international society as 'European' but as 'universal' (Bull,1977:38). This shows his distinction between the regional (European) and global international society. In addition, his discussion of 'revolt against the West' confirms this. According to Hadley Bull, the five stages of rebellion against the West are: (a) the struggle for equal sovereignty; (b) the anti-colonial revolution; (c) The struggle for racial equality; (d) Fight for economic justice; and (e) The Struggle for Cultural Freedom and Autonomy (Bull and Watson,1985:220-223). In fact, this 'revolt against the West' (which took place from the nineteenth century onwards) turned the regional (European) international society into a global international society by accepting new members outside Europe. In the case of the regional international society, which is

considered here and corresponding to Regionalism, the opposite of the above trend is practically happening; And states in a particular region emphasize their regional commonalities.

In addition to the approach of the pioneers of the English School, in recent years more and more attention has been paid to the possibility of forming a regional international community (Fatemi Nejad and Hashemi,2016:127) and significant works have been written focusing on the regional approach (Buzan and Gonzalez-Pelaez,2009). Apart from this, the classical approach of the English School, when defining the international society, refers to a group of independent states or political communities, and is essentially not a global or regional constraint (Buzan,2009:28). Therefore, with a free reading, the idea of the international society and all its features can be applied at the sub-global /regional level and the neighborhood index can be explained within the framework of common norms, rules and institutions of this approach.

So far it can be concluded that there is an international society on a global scale based on the acceptance of primary institutions such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, diplomacy, international law and so forth. But along with this universal international society, its sub-global and regional clusters have also been formed, which in addition to the above-mentioned cases, also have special commonalities. For example, the European Union, East Asia, and North America are all instances of a regional international society in which the level of integration within them is much higher than their level of convergence with other regions (Buzan,2009:224-223).

A prime example of a regional international society can be seen in the relationship between China and its neighbors. Although China's economic rise has played a significant role in strengthening its relations with its neighbors (Takahara,2012:54), the normative and institutional commonalities in the region cannot be ignored. China, meanwhile, has contributed to this trend with its 'Good Neighbor Policy'. With this policy, Chinese leaders have sought better relations with neighboring countries in the Asia-Pacific region (Chung,2009:107).

In sum, the English School can help explain the neighborhood in FP and IR by proposing the idea of a regional international society based on shared cultural and functional considerations. Accordingly, neighboring state in a particular region are, first, influenced and bound by the rules of international

law such as sovereignty, prohibition of intervention, non-use of force, etc.; Second, most neighboring countries have common civilizational and cultural backgrounds; Third, given their common destiny and geographical proximity, these countries are likely to have common considerations in functional areas such as regional order, economic exchanges, and human movement. All of these can be a good analytical framework for the neighborhood phenomenon.

#### **4-3 .Neighborhood and Economic Interdependence**

In addition to the two approaches discussed above, the economic interdependence approach also has good potential for explaining the neighborhood; In particular, this approach can be useful in analyzing the conflict between neighbors. Interdependence is a special type of international relationship and is formed from the bond of states based on interactions that may be both costly and beneficial (Gasiorowski,1986:24). In other words, interdependence is a multifaceted phenomenon that not only has costs and benefits for states but also exceeds trade among them (McMillan,1997:52). The most advanced interdependence occurs when the alternatives are limited, compliance is costly, and the economic relationship between the parties is very significant (Crescenzi,2003:812).

Although economic interdependence has significant consequences in various fields (Avdan,2014), what matters here is the effect of interdependence on peace or conflict among nations (Powell and Chacha, 2016). One of the main indicators of interdependence is trade. While many view trade as pacifying, others argue that dependencies increase friction and the risk of war (Gartzke and Westerwinter,2016). Regarding the relationship between economic relations and conflict, there are three cases: (a) Economic exchange causes peace; (b) Economic relations causes war; and (c) Economic exchange has nothing to do with peace or war between states (Crescenzi,2003:809-10; Barbieri,1996:30; Gasiorowski,1986:26; Maoz, 2009:225). These three relationships are discussed below, respectively.

First, the likelihood of conflict between the two countries is inversely related to the extent of their economic interdependence. That is, the greater the interdependence between the two states, the less likely they are to be in conflict. Because the interdependence of the two states on the one hand according to the 'opportunity-cost argument', increases their economic benefits and consequently the costs of potential conflict, and on the other

hand, according to 'signaling arguments', provides communication tools to prevent disputes or resolve them (Russett and Oneal,2001:139; Krustev, 2006:244). Thus, if economic interdependence is reduced, the prospects for conflict will really increase; Because the level of trade is closely related to the prevalence of conflict (Russett and Oneal,2001:150). This result has been proven in all the tests of John Oneal and Bruce Russett (Crescenzi, 2005:9).

Second, interdependence is directly related to conflict. That is, the greater the economic interdependence between two or more actors, the more the likelihood of conflict between them. If the impact of contiguity, shared democracy, bonds of union, and relative capabilities on trade and peace are controlled, it will be clear that in most cases trade cannot prevent conflict. Instead, strong economic interdependence increases the likelihood of two states entering into armed conflict (Barbieri,1996:42). More importantly, war often does not have a significant impact on trade relations. Although war sometimes leads to a temporary reduction in the level of mutual trade, in most cases it has no lasting effect on trade relations and, in fact, trade expands in the post-war period (Barbieri and Levy,1999:475).

Third, interdependence and conflict are not significantly related. In this regard, thinkers such as Waltz and Buzan believe that economic exchanges are less important than those considered in international conflicts (Gasiorowski,1986:26). In addition, often new variables enter into this reciprocal ratio that make it uncertain. In this context, we can consider the ability of countries to change or abandon their economic ties, the issues at stake, their power ratio (Crescenzi,2003:827), the degree of dependence or symmetry / asymmetry (Barbieri,1996:32) and the persistence of armed conflict (Krustev,2006:256). Thus, if the question arises as to whether economic interdependence reduces or increases political conflict or has no effect at all, all three answers seem to be correct (Crescenzi,2005:143).

Regardless of the quality of the relationship between interdependence and international conflict, several theories in IR have focused on this issue, the most famous of which are Functionalism, neo-Functionalism, Regionalism, neoliberal institutionalism and other approaches to integration. Most of these approaches ultimately conclude that economic interdependence has the desired effect of bringing about peace between countries or at least does not lead to war between them (Keohane,1984; Hetne and Soderbaum,2008;

Haas,1970; Haas,1976; Gartzke and et al,2001; Robst and et al,2007). Although it is difficult to draw a clear line between the above views, these approaches are briefly discussed below.

The most prominent feature of functionalists and neo-functionalists is that, with a slight difference, they attach great importance to the economic factor in relations between states and focus on integration between them. They are primarily concerned with tasks, exchanges, perceptions, and learning, not with sovereignty, military capability, and balance of power. More specifically, functionalists and neo-functionalists seek to answer the question of how and why states relinquish their sovereignty and why they voluntarily merge with their neighbors (Haas,1970:608-10). Of course, in terms of the type of their response, one should pay attention to the focus of the functionalists on the low politics and the simultaneous attention of the neo-functionalists to the low and high politics.

In addition to the two above approaches, institutionalism also plays an important role in the discussion of interdependence. One of the most prominent institutional thinkers is Robert Keohane, who focuses on the role of international institutions in strengthening cooperation between nations. Keohane, in collaboration with Joseph Nye, had previously defined two basic indicators for measuring interdependence, namely 'sensitivity' and 'vulnerability'. Interdependence, then, means mutual dependence, in which states are highly sensitive and vulnerable to each other (McMillan,1997: 34). In his later work, Keohane focuses on how to cooperate when interests are shared, not on how to create common interests between states (Keohane, 1984:6). International institutions are involved in this process. But the problem here is the quality of the performance of these institutions in a conflict of interest rather than a resemblance of interest; A conflict that leads to a political dispute between two states. In addition, how regional and global institutions cooperate in responding to conflicts poses another challenge (Graham,2008:177).

The effect of neighborhood on interdependence can be seen in the relations of several states with their neighbors, including Turkey (Renda,2011). In the meantime, one of the relatively successful examples of institutionalism and interdependence among neighboring countries can be found in South America around Mercosur. The institution has played an effective role in linking the countries of the region to each other due to the integration of the

interests of the countries of the region and led by Brazil. In particular, the affairs of neighboring countries such as Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay, despite the differences between them, seem to be widely intertwined within this institution (Lambert,2016:37-38).

In sum, the common chapter of all the above approaches to the relationship of interdependence and conflict can be summarized in three areas: (a) the importance of bilateral cooperation between the states involved in the conflict; (b) the usefulness of international institutions in facilitating such cooperation; and (c) The centrality of the economy. These axes can be useful in explaining the relationship between neighboring countries. In other words, the neighborhood can be considered a good test for the interdependence approach. The last dimension of the neighborhood explanation scheme, i.e. the regional security complex, is examined below.

#### **4-4 .Neighborhood and Security: A Regional Security Complex**

The last approach that can be used in the analysis of relations between neighboring countries, especially in terms of security, is the so-called regional security complex. This approach is one of the innovations of the Copenhagen School of IS, which has been introduced in IR since the 1980s. According to Buzan and Weaver, regional security complexes are collections of units whose security dynamics and processes are so intertwined that their security problems cannot be analyzed or solved separately (McDonald,2013:130). Therefore, the regional security complex approach is a model of regional security that makes it possible to analyze, explain and to some extent predict developments within each region (Dehghani Firoozabadi and Nouri,2012:16).

Although this approach has been subjected to many criticisms (Barthwal-Datta and Basu,2017), geographical proximity is still one of the effective factors in in creating a security complex (Fatemi Nejad and Mohammadzadeh,2018:401). Regarding it, the 'region' is a sub-system that consists of security relations between a set of neighboring governments (Buzan,2010:213). In this approach, geography and neighborhood are central variables and cannot be eliminated. More precisely, the proximity variable is very important in security; Because many threats are easier to travel short distances than long ones. The effect of geographical proximity on security interaction in military, political, social and environmental



sectors is stronger and more obvious than other sectors (Buzan and Weaver, 2009:56).

Many factors contribute to the formation and identification of security complexes (Sazmand and Jokar,2020:150), the most important of which are power relations, the pattern of friendship and enmity, historical and geopolitical roots, regional rivalry between two or more powers, the inevitable presence of a number of small states, cultural solidarity, security interdependence, and economic relations (Buzan,1389:229-215). In this case, we can refer to the example of Iran-Turkey competition (Ahmadipour and et al,2019; Kolaei and et al,2016). Of course, the effect of these factors is not similar to each other, and some of them are more important, which will be examined below.

Among the four variables that make up the regional security complex, the variable that is of great importance in shaping the frameworks of relations of a regional security complex is the patterns of friendship and enmity that not only gives a constructivist dimension to Buzan's theory and makes it different from realist theories, but also determines the type of samples of relations governing member states of the regional security complex (Sazmand and Jokar,2016:156). These patterns can range from security coalitions and cultural and political convergences to historical conflicts and ethnic tensions.

The second prominent variable in regional security complexes is the security interdependence between members. The rationale for regional security complex theory is that all states are involved in some form of security interdependence. But because military and political threats are often easier to transmit at short distances than at long ones, insecurity is linked to proximity and neighborhood. As a result, most states are more afraid of their neighbors than distant powers (Buzan,2012:49). Of course, it should be noted that sometimes security interdependence has a positive meaning and includes security collaborations and coalitions.

The third influential variable in the regional security complexes is the number of actors in the complex, their level of power and the quality of their relationship. This variable is so important that based on it, security complexes can be divided into two broad categories, namely standard and centralized ones. Smaller states usually feel that they are tied to their

neighbors in a regional security complex, but greater powers infiltrate several neighboring regions (Buzan and Weaver,2009:57).

However, it is not possible to form regional security complexes in all regions and some factors prevent their emergence. From this perspective, two prominent factors can be named that affect regional security trends and prevent the formation of regional security complex. These two factors are: first, the extreme weakness of local states, which prevents their power from going beyond their borders; And second, the heavy presence of foreign great powers that suppress security movements among the governments of the region (Buzan,2012:51). These factors affect the relations of neighboring states with each other in different regions. For example, we can mention the developments in Iran's relations with its southern neighbors on the Persian Gulf. In relation to the Persian Gulf, there has been a minimal structural change (Buzan,2011). Considering US special relations with the mentioned countries and its engagement in the security trends of the region, the independence of the Persian Gulf region's security complex is disturbed.

As stated before, one of the salient features of security suites is the proximity of members to each other. In the meantime, countries like Iran can be placed in different security complexes at the same time. One of these security (sub)complexes consists of security interests and considerations in northwestern Iran and neighboring countries, especially the Republic of Azerbaijan. After independence, the Republic of Azerbaijan has always influenced Iran's security concerns in this region in various ways (Souleimanov and Ditrych,2007:106). These security considerations of Iran are influenced by several issues, including the internal developments in Azerbaijan or Baku's identity approaches. Especially, the Pan-Turkic tendencies of the Republic of Azerbaijan can lead to ethnic tensions in the northwest of Iran. Another example of the relationship between the neighborhood and security ties is the relationship between India and its neighbors in the South Asian security complex; Where India has a hegemonic dominance in relation to countries in the region except Pakistan (Ali,2020).

If approaches such as Regionalism and economic interdependence are useful to explain the effects of the economic factor on relations between neighboring countries, the regional security complex approach has the same function in terms of security. The view of the regional security complex by

emphasizing the independence of the regions in terms of security trends and the impact of friendships and hostility from geographical proximity can well help in analyzing the relations of neighboring countries, especially from a security perspective.

### **5. Conclusion**

Geographical distance has often affected on the relations among countries and has distinguished neighboring states from non-neighboring ones. On the one hand, concepts such as neighborhood, neighborhood policy and neighborhood community along with policies including good neighborliness, neighborhood first, etc. have been common among neighboring states for a long time. On the other hand, a significant part of the conflicts between neighboring states originates from their geographical proximity; These conflicts could be over drawing borders, dividing border waters, cross-border human flows, etc. Here, an ambiguity and controversy may arise about the real consequence of the neighborhood in the relations among international actors. Using IR theories and adopting an interdisciplinary approach (between Geography and IR), this ambiguity could be overcome to some extent. The aim of this article was to achieve a scheme in this context. hence, a good theoretical framework should cover security, economic, political and cultural dimensions. These four dimensions have been the basis for choosing four theories that are used in the article. Applying the combined model derived from this article (see Figure 1), it is possible to explain the security dimension of the neighborhood by the Copenhagen School, the political dimension of it based on Regionalism, the economic dimension of the neighborhood by means of Economic Interdependence, and its cultural dimension with The English School. Of course, it is clear that each of the mentioned theories have other explanatory capacities. This theoretical combination not only shows the role of neighborhood in relations among states, but also links International Relations with Geography.

### **6 .Acknowledgment**

The author thanks the Vice President for Research and Technology of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad for approving the research project.

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