



Contemporary Researches on Islamic Revolution



Neighborhood Policy in Times of Crisis: A Constructivist Analysis of Armenia's and the Republic of Azerbaijan's Positions toward Iran during the Wars of 2025 and 2026

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Scientific Research	Objective: Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan, as significant northern neighbors of Iran, have consistently played a central role in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), largely due to their ongoing and historical disputes. The Iranian government's approach toward these states has been a point of contention among Iranian elites and policymakers. Consequently, assessing which of these two countries demonstrates greater reliability, especially during periods of crisis, remains a critical issue in IRI foreign policy. The military conflicts of 2025 and 2026, including Israeli and United States attacks on Iranian territory, present a valuable context for this assessment. Utilizing constructivist theory to identify the characteristics of a "Good Neighbor," this article conducts a comparative analysis of Yerevan's and Baku's responses to the 2025 and 2026 attacks, with particular attention to official statements, elite perspectives, and public opinion in both countries.
Article history: Received: 2026-07-10 Received in revised form: 2026-27-27 Accepted : 2026-07-31 Available online: 2026-10-24	Research Method: In this comparative study, data were collected from library resources and online sources. A mixed quantitative–qualitative content analysis method was employed to analyze the data.
Keywords: Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Wars of 2025 and 2026, Armenia, Republic of Azerbaijan, Good Neighbor.	Findings: Analysis through a constructivist framework and empirical data from the two wars demonstrates that Armenia's positions align more closely with the constructivist understanding of a "Good Neighbor." This alignment is evident in Armenia's respect for the norm of non-use of force, prioritization of regional stability, and conceptualization of security as a shared interest. The constructivist perspective suggests that the notion of a good neighbor develops through extended processes of identity formation and socialization.
	Conclusion: This study demonstrates that Yerevan's policy of good neighborliness during the two wars was shaped by Armenia's identity and perceptions of its southern neighbor. By contrast, given its strategic identity as both a partner of Israel and a neighbor of Iran, the Republic of Azerbaijan exhibited dual behavior that resulted in a policy of cautious balancing. This policy was characterized by considerable ambiguity and equivocation. The difference between the two countries cannot be explained solely in terms of material considerations. Rather, the two governments' differing understandings of "Neighborliness," "Security," "Interests," "Friendship," and "Enmity," all of which operate in a meaningful relationship with "Identity," played a fundamental role.

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Introduction

A transformed future for international relations is approaching at an accelerating pace. Its principal characteristic is the emergence of fundamental changes in the structure of the international system. These conditions call for new priorities in the formulation of countries' foreign policies.

The reality is that the rapid transformations currently taking place across the world, together with the shortening of the time required for the future international system's structure to stabilize, have led many governments to move away from simple-linear models and toward complex-nonlinear approaches. In formulating new foreign policy frameworks, they are consequently giving greater priority than before to quantum perspectives.¹

This emerging era is one in which neighboring and contiguous countries have assumed greater importance than in the past. All available evidence and indications suggest that the global system's unipolar-multipolar structure is moving toward a multipolar, multi-centered configuration, around which the future international system will revolve (Haghgoo, 2025 AD/1404 SH: 167). Although the emergence and consolidation of this new structure remain some distance away, there is broad agreement that neighboring countries and regional orders will become more prominent in the new global order than they have been previously.

In an era whose most salient characteristic is the "Dispersion of Power," countries such as Iran, which has numerous neighbors, possess unprecedented opportunities to play an effective role at the regional and global levels. Realizing these opportunities, however, depends on whether a country's foreign policy can capitalize on the prevailing conditions by making appropriate choices regarding its preferences and priorities.

The significance of this issue becomes even clearer when we consider that, over approximately the past 200 years, substantial portions of Iran's territories have been separated from its political domain. This has gradually raised the question of how, following such territorial separation, these lands, now bearing an Iranian historical identity and situated within separate political units, should co-exist in the future while remaining within different political frameworks (Javadi

1. According to this perspective, contemporary society differs fundamentally from the simpler societies of the past, and considerable uncertainty shapes the processes governing present-day communities. From this standpoint, those who formulate and make decisions are required to take account of the multiple characteristics of a quantumized world, including the fragmented identities of individuals, groups, and societies. In today's quantum world, society resembles a living and complex organism in which relationships, probabilities, interactions, and moment-to-moment conditions shape outcomes.

Arjamandi et al., 2014 AD/1393 SH: 37; Ashraf, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 140).

The experience of the wars imposed on Iran by Israel and the United States, the 2025 Twelve-Day War and the 2026 Ramadan War, appears to have brought this objective closer to realization, with these conflicts serving as a pivotal point in the region's future transformations. In this context, understanding the positions and actions of Iran's neighboring countries at the two critical junctures of the 2025 and 2026 wars is of considerable importance.

There is no doubt that, among Iran's neighboring countries, Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan occupy a particularly significant position for various reasons, including their ongoing and historical disputes with one another. These disputes have consistently constituted an important issue in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Recent developments in the Caucasus, particularly in relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, have also intensified the ambiguity surrounding Iran's foreign policy and created reciprocal opportunities and threats. Unless these circumstances are addressed intelligently, they will not benefit Iran (Ajili et al., 2024 AD/1403 SH: 1).

The importance of this issue is further underscored by the fact that Iranian elites and politicians have never maintained a uniform position on how the IRI should respond to these disputes; disagreements have periodically emerged in this regard. Despite these differences, which are often expressed within the context of political rivalries, the official policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, even following the formation of Masoud Pezeshkian's administration, has remained focused on "Active Balancing" between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Although some indications suggest that this policy has become more active than before, supporters of the current administration maintain that the approach neither entails full alignment with Baku nor distancing Iran from Yerevan. Rather, they describe it as an effort to reduce tensions with the Republic of Azerbaijan, preserve strategic relations with Armenia, and prevent geopolitical changes in the South Caucasus. Conversely, certain political currents and even security institutions remain concerned about Baku's strategic relationship with Israel and its implications for Iran's national security.

Given the importance of this issue to the foreign policy of the IRI, the central research question of this article concerns which of the two countries, Armenia or the Republic of Azerbaijan, demonstrated greater good-neighborly conduct toward Iran during the two critical episodes of Israeli and United States military aggression against Iran in 2025 and 2026, referred to in Iranian official circles as the Twelve-Day War and the Ramadan War, respectively.

Answering this question could play an important role in shaping Iran's future foreign policy toward these two countries. To address it, the article first reviews

the background to the debate. Then it draws on constructivist insights to conduct a comparative assessment of the two countries' records during the aforementioned periods, examining their positions at three levels: official, elite, and public.

The data for this article were collected through library research and Internet-based sources. Subsequently, using a comparative method and drawing on the tenets of constructivism, the study comparatively examines the positions of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan toward the wars imposed on Iran in 2025 and 2026. The data were analyzed using a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach, drawing on both inductive and deductive approaches. It should be noted that, depending on the subject matter, comparative methods and content analysis were employed in this study. In examining data concerning the positions of the two aforementioned countries toward the two wars of 2025 and 2026, a quantitative-qualitative content analysis method was used. It should also be explained that the collection and analysis of Internet-based data were conducted both manually and digitally, with the assistance of software and artificial intelligence tools. To minimize errors and the common bugs associated with AI tools, each examination was conducted at least three times.

1. Literature Review

Before examining the main issue addressed in this article, it is necessary to review the most recent sources related to the subject. This review was organized around interconnected themes, including "The positions of Iran's neighboring countries toward the wars of 2025 and 2026 against Iran, the place of the conflicts between Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, constructivism and good-neighborliness in the foreign policies of states," and related topics.

Several recent studies are relevant to the issue addressed in this article, although they differ significantly from the present study. For example, in the article "The Necessity of Redefining Iran's Regional Priorities in the Future International System from a Constructivist Perspective (With a Focus on the Twelve-Day War)," Javad Haghgoo (2025 AD/1404 SH) employs constructivist literature to examine the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, his primary focus is on the need to redefine the scope of Iran's regional boundaries in light of the experience of the Twelve-Day War. Sinaei et al. (2024 AD/1403 SH), in their article "Iran and the Active Neighborhood Strategy: Fractal Patterning in Region-Oriented Foreign Policy," make no direct reference to the two recent wars. Instead, they examine Iran's active neighborhood foreign policy as a multi-neighbor state within the systemic structure of the international system and recommend the use of strategic and intelligent diplomacy in Iran's foreign policy, intelligent

synergy, and attention to institutional practices for structuring an active and coalition-building neighborhood policy. The article "A Theoretical Representation of the Foreign Policy Outlook of Masoud Pezeshkian," by Ahmadinejad et al. (2024 AD/1403 SH), likewise formulates the discursive-system outlook of Masoud Pezeshkian's foreign policy. Esmaeili and Haghnas (2023 AD/2023 AD/1402 SH SH), in their article "Coalition-Building by the Islamic Republic of Iran Based on Neighborhood Policy, with an Emphasis on the Axis of Resistance," focus primarily on the compatibility of the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy with the provisions of the Constitution over the years and essentially do not refer either to the two recent wars or to constructivism. The article "Presenting a Strategic Model of Neighborhood Policy for the Islamic Republic of Iran," by Barzegar and Azghandi (2023 AD/2023 AD/1402 SH SH), likewise seeks to provide a strategic model for neighborhood policy. Abbas Araghchi (2022 AD/2022 AD/1401 SH SH), in his article "Good-Neighborliness Policy: Approaches and Requirements for the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran," examines practical requirements concerning neighborhood relations from the perspective of a diplomat and seeks to offer strategies for strengthening Iran's good-neighborliness policy.

The articles "Cultural Iran and Civilizational Convergence in Central Asia and the Caucasus," by Rashidi et al. (2022 AD/1401 SH); "Para-diplomatic Regionalism with an Emphasis on Cultural Iran," by Saei (2020 AD/1399 SH); "The Soft-Power Capacities of the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Cultural Iran Region," by Haghgoo (2019 AD/1398 SH); "Iran's Civilizational Sphere, Globalization, and the Future of the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in This Region," by Javadi Arjmand, Haghgoo, and Azimzadeh (2014 AD/1393 SH); "The Theory of Persian Civilization or Cultural Iran," by Mohammadi (2013 AD/1392 SH); and "Explaining Iran's Indigenist and Regionalist Approach to Cultural Iran in the Process of Globalization," by Ahmadi (2012 AD/1391 SH), likewise provide recommendations concerning the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, focusing primarily on Iran's civilizational sphere and the concept of Cultural Iran. Essentially, however, they do not focus either on the recent wars or on explaining the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the perspective of the concept of neighborhood and the constructivist approach. The article "Constructivism, Identity, Language, and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran," by Mottaghi and Kazemi (2007 AD/1386 SH), although it draws on a constructivist approach, focuses primarily on theoretical analysis. Accordingly, the review conducted in this study demonstrates that, because the aforementioned works have not addressed issues such as "Employing the Constructivist Theoretical Approach to Understand Neighborhood Policy" and "Ex-

amining the Positions of the Aforementioned Countries during the Twelve-Day War and the Ramadan War,” the present article offers an innovative contribution and introduces a new line of inquiry.

Nevertheless, the aforementioned works have been used as sources where relevant to the discussions developed in this article.

2. Concepts

Among the concepts employed in this article, the two expressions “The Wars of 2025 and 2026 against Iran” and “Good Neighbor” require precise clarification. The following brief discussion therefore seeks to explain the definitions and criteria adopted by the author for these terms.

2.1. The Wars of 2025 and 2026 against Iran

In 2025 and 2026, the Islamic Republic of Iran was subjected to attacks by Israel and the United States on two separate occasions. The first war, commonly referred to as the Twelve-Day War, began on 13 June 2025 (23 Khordad 2025 AD/1404 SH in the Solar Hijri calendar) with an Israeli air attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities, military bases, and residential areas. Israel declared that the objectives of the war were to destroy Iran’s nuclear and missile programs, alter the country’s political structure, and reduce regional threats. More than one thousand people, including a number of senior military commanders and nuclear scientists, were killed in these attacks. The attacks were carried out according to prior Israeli planning and with U.S. support. On the tenth day of the war, the U.S. military directly entered the conflict by bombing Iranian nuclear facilities. In response, Iran launched hundreds of missiles and drones at targets in the occupied territories as part of Operation True Promise 3. The war continued from 13 June to 22 June 2025 (IRNA, 16 Khordad 2025 AD/1404 SH; Nour News, 14 Khordad 2025 AD/1404 SH; Euronews, June 15, 2025; The Times of Israel, 2025).

Several months after the Twelve-Day War, on 28 February 2026 (9 Esfand 2025 AD/1404 SH in the Solar Hijri calendar/10 Ramadan 1447 in the Islamic lunar calendar), another attack against Iran was launched by the United States and Israel. The aggression by the two countries began with attacks on several locations in Iran, including the Leader’s compound. During this war, numerous senior Iranian officials, including the Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, were killed. The attacks, which prompted an Iranian response in the form of Operation True Promise 4, continued for 39 days, and a temporary ceasefire was established on 8 April 2026 (19 Farvardin 1405). In the official Iranian discourse, this conflict is referred to as the “Ramadan War.” (Wikipedia, 2026 Iran War)

2.2. Good Neighbor

Although various definitions can be offered for the concept of a “Good Neighbor” as one of the principal theoretical concepts of this article, in the present study a good neighbor refers to a neighboring country that behaves more responsibly toward its neighbor during various crises, such as war, provides assistance to its neighbor, and regards its neighbor’s security as part of its own security. It should be noted that there is no single, independent perspective on this important theoretical concept within the field of international relations; however, constructivists have addressed it more extensively than proponents of other theoretical approaches. From the perspective of constructivists such as Alexander Wendt, a good neighbor is not merely a product of interests; identity, trust, and norms are also important. According to this perspective, if two countries regard each other as friends, share a common identity, and have developed historical trust, they will behave more responsibly toward one another even during crises such as war. As will be explained in the theoretical framework below, in *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999), Wendt identifies three cultures or patterns of interaction among states under three approaches: Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian. From Wendt’s perspective, a bad neighbor belongs to the Hobbesian culture and exploits a neighbor’s crisis to increase its own power. An ordinary neighbor operates according to the Lockean culture: “It respects the rules but does not engage in deep cooperation.” A good neighbor, by contrast, belongs to the Kantian culture: “In times of adversity, such as war, it assists its neighbor and regards its neighbor’s security as part of its own.” Of course, the precise conceptualization of this notion in the present study is not based solely on Wendt’s views; we have also drawn on the perspectives of Nicholas Onuf, Peter Katzenstein, and Martha Finnemore.

3. Theoretical Framework: Constructivism as an Approach to Explaining the Concept of a “Good Neighbor”

Although constructivism does not offer an independent theory of “Neighborhood,” among the major theories of international relations it has the greatest potential for explaining the concept of a “Good Neighbor.” Unlike realism, which largely regards neighboring states as sources of threat, constructivism maintains that the nature of relations among neighbors is a product of identity, norms, perceptions, and social interactions, rather than merely geography or the distribution of power (Wendt, 1992). This approach should be regarded as one of the most widely used theoretical perspectives in contemporary international relations.

However, a full understanding of it cannot be achieved without an understanding of its philosophical foundations.

As a philosophy, constructivism reflects particular tendencies and conceptions

concerning ontological, epistemological, and anthropological questions, and the combination of these conceptions provides a particular understanding of the world (von Glasersfeld: 7-8; Delanty, 1997: 8).

The constructivist doctrine can be traced from both meta-theoretical and theoretical perspectives. Given the period in which this approach emerged, the simultaneous engagement of theorists such as Alexander Wendt and Nicholas Onuf in these two domains appears to have been, above all, a consequence of the extensive criticisms directed at the mainstream theoretical approaches in international relations (Haghgoo, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 36). Unlike influential approaches such as Kenneth Waltz's perspective, constructivists have shifted the focus of debate from epistemology to ontology (Wind, 1997: 225). In Wendt's words, what matters more is what exists, rather than how we can know it (Wendt, 2000: 170). It is precisely for this reason that, as some scholars have noted, the constitutive role of ideational factors has acquired a unique position in constructivist thought (Risse, 2000: 5), while material elements, which were often given disproportionate attention in international relations theory, have given way to non-material elements such as ideas, meanings, and related constructs.

Constructivists are, of course, distinguished from certain radical approaches, such as radical post-structuralism, by their acceptance of and attention to material elements. In other words, constructivists emphasize both the material and ideational dimensions of social life (Haghgoo, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 37). It is on the basis of this dual perspective that Wendt, the best-known theorist of this approach, who has at times been accused by critics of scientism, maintains that a world exists independently of the minds and languages of individual observers, and that scientific theories, even if this world is not directly observable, generally refer to it (Wendt, 2005 AD/1384 SH).

Although Wendt distinguishes between "Natural Kinds" and "Social Kinds" despite the criticisms directed against him, he considers social kinds to be more dependent on the beliefs of actors (Wendt, 1999: 372). Wendt argues that actors act on the basis of meanings constructed through interaction (Wendt, 1992: 391). In other words, from this perspective, meanings do not exist inherently within being or reality; rather, they are secondary constructions. Wendt emphasizes the need for a cultural perspective in understanding social phenomena such as neighborhood and argues that emphasizing the cultural dimension of structure can open up new possibilities for change (Wendt, 2000). In this sense, shared cognitive structures provide the context within which material resources operate and confer upon those resources the meanings necessary for human action (Wendt, 1995).

In a related vein, Nicholas Onuf argues that constructivism cannot affirm knowledge of the world independently of discourse (Onuf, 1989). For Onuf, too,

attention to material elements is an accepted premise. Nevertheless, he maintains that it is rules that transform material factors into resources (Onuf, 2002: 133). The issue of actors' identities can be regarded as the most important subject of constructivist scholarship. This issue assumes particular significance in relation to the concept of neighborhood. From a constructivist perspective, identity should be regarded as a relational category embedded in a social context. In Wendt's formulation, actors acquire identities through participation in collective meanings, and these identities, as characteristics of international actors, generate their motivational and behavioral dispositions (Wendt, 1999: 229). In other words, it is these diverse and changing identities that shape the interests and behaviors of actors (Haghgoo, 2023 AD/1402 SH: 38).

With regard to the concept of neighborhood, this approach moves beyond purely objective and material criteria, which generally emphasize geography and material inter-dependence. Instead, it focuses on ideas and cognitive constructs, discourse and the power of language, culture, and, more broadly, non-material and ideational structures. Within this theory, the concept of neighborhood can be examined in connection with issues such as anarchy. Wendt argues that international anarchy does not, in itself, compel states to engage in hostility and competition. Wendt's famous proposition that "Anarchy is what states make of it" directly addresses this point. His argument is that if two neighboring countries develop relations based on trust, cooperation, and shared norms over the course of many years; they can maintain non-hostile relations even in the absence of a world government. Thus, neighborhood is not merely a geographical condition; it is a social relationship (Wendt, 1992).

From Wendt's perspective, states do not enter the international system with predetermined identities; rather, their identities and interests are formed through the process of interaction with other states. If neighboring states consistently engage in positive interactions, economic cooperation, political dialogue, and cooperation in crisis management, they will gradually define one another not as "Enemies," but as "Partners" or "Friends." Consequently, even in times of war or natural disasters, their behavior will be influenced by this social identity rather than solely by material calculations. In this connection, Wendt identifies three cultures of anarchy in international politics. First, the Hobbesian cultures, in which states regard one another as enemies; relations are characterized by distrust and threats, and the possibility of war is ever-present. Second, the Lockean cultures, in which states are rivals but recognize one another's existence and maintain rules for regulating competition. Third, the Kantian cultures, in which states regard one another as friends, resolve disputes peacefully, and support one another in the face of threats. If this framework is applied to relations among neighboring

states, it can be argued that a bad neighbor belongs to the Hobbesian culture and exploits a neighbor's crisis to increase its own power. An ordinary neighbor operates according to the Lockean culture: "It respects the rules but does not engage in deep cooperation." A good neighbor belongs to the Kantian culture: "It assists its neighbor in times of war, earthquakes, floods, or humanitarian crises and regards its neighbor's security as part of its own security." (Wendt, 1999)

In addition to Wendt, the perspectives of other constructivists, such as Nicholas Onuf, Peter Katzenstein, and Martha Finnemore, concerning the concept of neighborhood also warrant attention. Onuf demonstrates that rules and social practices constitute the reality of international politics; therefore, relations among neighboring states are likewise products of shared rules and norms (Onuf, 1989). In his works on the culture of national security, Katzenstein argues that culture, identity, and shared values play fundamental roles in shaping the security behavior of states, an argument that can also be applied to the analysis of relations among neighboring states (Katzenstein, 1996). Finnemore likewise demonstrates that international norms influence the definition of states' interests. Consequently, actions such as humanitarian assistance or providing aid to a neighboring state can be regarded as part of a state's identity and interests rather than merely as instrumental choices. Unlike realist approaches, which explain state behavior solely in terms of cost-benefit calculations, Martha Finnemore argues that states often act according to the "Logic of Appropriateness"; that is, they ask: 'What should a responsible and legitimate state do under such circumstances?' (Finnemore, 1996)

Accordingly, states' behavior toward their neighbors is not merely a product of material interests. Still, it is also influenced by norms regarded as legitimate within the international community, including respect for sovereignty, opposition to the use of force, solidarity in times of crisis, and responsibility for regional stability. From a constructivist perspective, a good neighbor is not a natural or geographical fact but a social construct. A country is considered a good neighbor when, through sustained interactions, confidence-building, adherence to shared norms, and the formation of non-hostile identities, it establishes a relationship that, even under conditions of crisis, leads to cooperation, mutual support, and joint crisis management rather than exploitation of its neighbor's vulnerability. Within this framework, war merely constitutes a test of pre-existing identities and norms; it is not, in itself, a factor that independently determines states' behavior.

4. Examination of the Positions of Iran's Two Northern Neighbors toward the Wars Imposed on Iran in 2025 and 2026

Understanding how states respond to their neighbors, particularly at critical junc-

tures such as war, is by no means straightforward, and naturally requires consideration of numerous components and variables. This is particularly challenging in relation to events such as the two Twelve-Day Wars and the Ramadan War, which occurred only relatively recently. Nevertheless, drawing on the capacities of modern research tools, this section of the article seeks to provide a relatively comprehensive examination of the responses of Armenia and Azerbaijan to the two aforementioned wars, with simultaneous emphasis on three dimensions: “Official Statements,” “The views of academic elites and think tanks,” and “Public Opinion.” It should be explained that these three dimensions were selected simultaneously in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the overall positions of the two countries toward the wars of 2025 and 2026. Clearly, focusing solely on the official statements of the governments concerned or solely on public opinion in these two countries, or solely on the perspectives of their elites could not, by itself, adequately represent the positions of these countries toward the two wars. For this reason, a combination of the three dimensions was taken into consideration, and their overall convergence was treated as indicative of the positions of the two countries. It should be emphasized that, in formulating states’ foreign-policy relations, simultaneous attention to different levels of analysis, including the three levels identified above, is essential.

4.1. Examination of Armenia’s Position at the Official, Elite, and Public Levels

Armenia was one of the few neighbors of Iran to explicitly and unequivocally condemn Israel’s attack. The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that “The unilateral attack against Iran poses a threat to regional peace and must be stopped immediately.” (Mirror-Spectator; OC Media; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia) Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan also emphasized the need to prevent the war from spreading (BESA Center; OC Media; Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia). The Armenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially stated: “We condemn this action and call for the immediate cessation of hostilities.” (Armenian Radio; Armenpress)

This position was also adopted during the second war in 2026.

During the second war, because the United States was officially the initiator of the aggression against Iran, some observers expected Armenia, in light of considerations relating to the position of the United States as a hegemonic power within the structure of the international system, to adopt a different position from that taken during the first war. Nevertheless, Armenia adopted a similar position. The Armenian government condemned the attacks and called for the immediate cessation of military operations. At the same time, Armenia’s National Security

Council convened an extraordinary session to examine the security of the southern border, transit routes, and the possibility of an influx of refugees.

This condemnation was not limited to the official positions of the Armenian government. An analysis of the media and social-media networks active in the country also clearly indicates that, for various material and ideational reasons, public opinion in Armenia, as well as a significant segment of the Armenian intellectual and elite community, strongly condemned the aggression and expressed solidarity with Iranian society (Reddit data and social-media platforms active in Armenia; APRI Institute). In this regard, and merely as one example, the Applied Policy Research Institute of Armenia (APRI) has argued that Iran's stability constitutes a vital interest for Armenia's security. The institute's experts have advanced various arguments in support of this claim and have even stated that the 2026 war posed greater risks to Armenia than the 2025 war (APRI Institute). Furthermore, an examination of the content of several Armenian websites, such as CivilNet and EVN Report, during the two wars provides sufficiently credible evidence that the official, elite, and public discourse in the country concerning Iran can, to a considerable extent, be situated within the framework of a good-neighborliness policy toward Iran.

4.2. Examination of the Positions of the Republic of Azerbaijan at the Official, Elite, and Public Levels

Due to the severe restrictions on the media in Azerbaijan, examining this issue proved more challenging than in the case of Armenia. Nevertheless, at least according to the official statements issued by the presidency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, it is clear that, unlike Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan did not condemn the Israeli attacks in 2025 and did not express support for Iran. Based on the wording of these statements, Baku merely called on the parties to exercise restraint and engage in dialogue. Notably, the same position was reiterated during the second war (MFA of Azerbaijan; President of Azerbaijan). Initially, the Republic of Azerbaijan emphasized restraint by the parties and sought to ensure that its relations with Israel would not be adversely affected. It should be noted, however, that following the reported strikes by drones in the Nakhchivan region, which Baku attributed to Iran, while Tehran denied responsibility, the position of the Republic of Azerbaijan toward Iran became more critical. The country's Security Council even convened a meeting (APRI Institute). One notable aspect of Azerbaijan's conduct was that, according to research reports, Baku had reportedly asked Israel through diplomatic channels not to target Iranian areas with predominantly ethnic Azerbaijani populations, particularly Tabriz (OC Media; BESA Center).

Although reliable survey data concerning public opinion in Azerbaijan during the two wars are limited, available analyses indicate that part of Azerbaijani society supported the government's position because of the country's strategic relationship with Israel. At the same time, another segment, particularly religious groups, viewed the attack on Iran critically (BESA Center). Among the country's elites, there was likewise no strong consensus. Researchers close to the government, who have considerably greater opportunities to express their views within Azerbaijan's closed political system, adopted positions broadly consistent with the official Baku line, emphasizing three principles: "Maintaining the strategic alliance with Israel," "Preventing the war from spreading to the Caucasus," and "Maintaining minimal relations with Iran in order to prevent instability along the border." (BESA Center)

It should not be overlooked, however, that Azerbaijani elites with religious orientations naturally held different perspectives. Nevertheless, because their views conflicted with the government's official position, they generally had limited opportunities to express them openly. This issue has also been noted by some Western think tanks, such as the Center for Security Studies (CSS) at ETH Zurich (CSS, ETH Zurich). It is important, however, to distinguish between explicit support for the Islamic Republic of Iran and condemnation of the U.S. and Israeli attacks against Iran.

Among Azerbaijani religious elites living outside the Republic of Azerbaijan, particularly Shi'a clerics residing in Qom, Najaf, Turkey, and certain European countries, some clerics associated with the Qom seminary, emphasizing the "Necessity of supporting the Axis of Resistance" and "Shi'a Solidarity," defended the positions of the Islamic Republic in its confrontation with Israel and expressed the strongest degree of support for Iran. Most of these individuals do not currently reside in Azerbaijan. In this context, members and supporters of the Muslim Unity Movement of Azerbaijan are particularly well known as the most important Shi'a movement critical of the Azerbaijani government. Although a significant number of members of this movement have engaged in media activities outside Azerbaijan (in Turkey, Iran, and Europe) following domestic repression, it should be noted that these individuals are predominantly Azerbaijani clerics living abroad and do not necessarily represent the dominant current among religious elites within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

As noted above, unlike the Republic of Azerbaijan, which during the 2025 and 2026 attacks primarily emphasized restraint and diplomacy, Armenia, in official statements by its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, condemned the military attacks against Iran as actions threatening regional peace and stability (MFA Armenia, 2025 & 2026; OC Media, 2025 & 2026). This position was also reflected in anal-

yses by Armenian think tanks, with APRI and EVN Report describing Iran's stability as a vital interest for Armenia's security (APRI, 2026; EVN Report, 2026). To conclude this section and facilitate the analysis of the central issue of this article through the lens of constructivist theory, the positions of the two countries toward the wars of 2025 and 2026 are presented comparatively in the following table.

Table 1. Positions of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan toward Iran during the Wars of 2025 and 2026

Indicator	Armenia	Republic of Azerbaijan	Comparative Assessment
Official Positions	Explicit condemnation of military attacks against Iran; emphasis on respect for Iran's sovereignty and territorial integrity; call for the immediate cessation of the war	Call for restraint and diplomacy; avoidance of directly condemning the United States and Israel; efforts to maintain a balance between relations with Iran and Israel	Armenia showed greater alignment with Iran's position, while Azerbaijan adopted a more ambiguous position
Academic Elite Perspective	Most analyses regarded Iran's stability as vital to Armenia's security and assessed the attacks as a threat to regional security	Government-aligned elites emphasized balance and national interests; some religious elites outside the country supported Iran, but this was not the dominant view	Armenia was more aligned with Iran; Azerbaijan was more pluralistic and balance-oriented
Public Opinion	Widespread concern about the consequences of weakening Iran for regional security, the economy, and regional corridors; greater sympathy toward Iran in the media and public sphere	Public opinion was fragmented; some segments were influenced by the partnership with Israel, while others, particularly religious groups, were critical of the attacks on Iran	A more sympathetic orientation toward Iran was observable in Armenia, whereas no clear consensus existed in Azerbaijan
Overall Outcome	In both wars, at the official and elite levels, Armenia's positions were generally closer to those of the Islamic Republic of Iran and emphasized opposition to the use of force and the preservation of regional stability	The Republic of Azerbaijan sought to balance its strategic relationship with Israel against the need to preserve relations with Iran; consequently, it avoided adopting explicit positions in support of Iran	In the two crises examined, Armenia demonstrated greater overall alignment with Iran's positions, whereas the Republic of Azerbaijan pursued a balancing approach

Source: Author

5. Discussion and Analysis: The Neighborhood Policies of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan toward Iran during the Wars of 2025 and 2026 from the Perspective of Constructivist Theory

As noted in the theoretical discussion, from the perspective of the principal constructivist thinkers, particularly Wendt, Onuf, Katzenstein, and Finnemore, greater support can be interpreted as an empirical indicator of the existence of a shared identity, shared perceptions, and the internalization of neighborhood norms. From the perspective of these scholars, states' behavior in times of crisis is not merely the product of material calculations or the balance of power; rather, it largely reflects social identities, internalized norms, mutual perceptions, and shared mean-

ings that have developed through historical processes of interaction among states. Through his well-known proposition concerning the logic of anarchy in the international system, that "Anarchy is what states make of it," (Wendt, 1992) Wendt emphasizes that hostility, competition, or friendship among states is not an inherent characteristic of the international system, but rather a consequence of states' perceptions of the "Other." Accordingly, the quality of relations among neighboring states depends less on geographical proximity than on the types of identities and shared meanings that have developed between them. In Onuf's perspective, whose work is closely associated with the influential role of rules, norms, and recurrent practices in constructing social reality, a "Good Neighbor" is not merely a state located alongside another state's geographical borders; rather, it is a state that, in practice, reproduces the rules of good-neighborliness, including respect for sovereignty, opposition to the use of force, refraining from exploiting a neighbor's vulnerabilities, and cooperation in crisis management.

Katzenstein, for his part, demonstrates that security cultures and regional identities shape states' perceptions of their national interests. From this perspective, interests are not predetermined; rather, they emerge from identity and political culture. If a state regards the security of its neighbor as part of its own security, it will behave differently in times of crisis from a state that regards its neighbor merely as an external actor or geopolitical rival. Martha Finnemore, likewise, unlike realist approaches that explain states' behavior solely in terms of cost-benefit calculations, argues that states often act according to a "Logic of Appropriateness"; that is, they ask: 'What should a responsible and legitimate state do under such circumstances?' (Finnemore, 1996)

Accordingly, states' behavior toward their neighbors is not merely a product of material interests. Still, it is also influenced by norms regarded as legitimate within the international community, including respect for sovereignty, opposition to the use of force, solidarity in times of crisis, and responsibility for regional stability. Finnemore's perspective provides an important complement to the analysis of the behavior of Iran's neighbors in this study. From her perspective, it can be argued that Armenia aligned its behavior with accepted norms of good-neighborliness and regional responsibility to a greater extent than the Republic of Azerbaijan. The condemnation of military attacks, emphasis on Iran's territorial integrity, warnings concerning the humanitarian and security consequences of the war, and emphasis on diplomatic solutions all indicate that, within the official discourse, as well as among a significant segment of Armenian elites and the public, there was a normative conception of the role of a "Responsible Neighbor." Within Finnemore's framework, this behavior can be regarded as an indication of the internalization of international norms

and an attempt to act as a responsible member of the regional community. By contrast, the behavior of the Republic of Azerbaijan can be analyzed more appropriately as a combination of norms and strategic calculations. Although Baku expressed concern about the expansion of the war and emphasized the need for dialogue, it refrained from explicitly condemning the attacks because of considerations arising from its strategic relationship with Israel. From Finnemore's perspective, this situation indicates that neighborhood norms competed in the decision-making process with norms and commitments arising from other identity and security networks, such as the strategic partnership with Israel and close ties with Turkey.

As noted above, one of the key concepts in constructivism is "Collective Identity." In his well-known article "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," (1994) Wendt explains that collective identity can be said to exist when states define each other's security and welfare not merely as instrumental interests, but as part of their own interests. Accordingly, under conditions of war and crisis, political support, humanitarian assistance, preservation of communication routes, opposition to harm against civilians, and efforts to mitigate the effects of a crisis on a neighboring state are not merely tactical measures; they can constitute empirical indicators of the existence of a collective identity and a sense of a shared "We." From this perspective, the concept of a "Good Neighbor" in international relations can be defined beyond legal good-neighborliness. A good neighbor is a state that, in times of crisis, regards its neighbor's security as inseparable from its own security, does not exploit its neighbor's vulnerability for its own benefit, participates in reproducing norms of cooperation, and demonstrates a sense of mutual responsibility through both discourse and practice.

Therefore, states' behavior during crises can be regarded as one of the most important indicators for assessing the depth of shared identity among neighboring states. Drawing on this theoretical framework, the behavior of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan during the wars of 2025 and 2026 can be interpreted beyond the simple question of political support or non-support. The findings of this study indicate that, during both crises, Armenia defined Iran's stability as part of its own stability and security. The condemnation of the attacks, emphasis on preserving Iran's territorial integrity, warnings regarding the consequences of instability in Iran for the South Caucasus, and continuation of political communications all indicate that, within the official discourse and among a significant segment of Armenian elites and the public, there existed a shared perception of the security destinies of the two countries. From a constructivist perspective, this behavior can be regarded as an indication of the internalization of neighborhood norms and the formation of a form of relational identity, an identity in which the neighbor

is not merely an adjacent political unit, but is regarded as part of “Our” security and social environment.

By contrast, the behavior of the Republic of Azerbaijan during the same period indicates that, although Iran’s stability was important to Baku, this importance was interpreted primarily in terms of its geopolitical, economic, and security consequences rather than through the lens of a shared identity. The Azerbaijani government, while emphasizing the need to prevent the war from spreading, refrained from directly condemning the attacks and sought to balance its strategic relationship with Israel against the necessity of maintaining relations with Iran. Within a constructivist framework, such behavior is more indicative of a competitive-balancing identity, that is, a relationship in which interaction exists, but the “Other” has not yet become part of the “We.”

Based on the evidence examined in this study, it can be argued that during the two wars of 2025 and 2026, Armenia exhibited more indications of a relational identity and shared perception with Iran than the Republic of Azerbaijan. This finding does not imply the existence of a “Complete collective identity” or a “Security Community” between Iran and Armenia. Rather, it indicates that, during these two crises, neighborhood norms were more deeply internalized in Tehran-Yerevan relations than in Tehran-Baku relations. By contrast, the approach of the Republic of Azerbaijan was more strongly based on balancing calculations, the preservation of strategic flexibility, and the simultaneous management of relations with Iran and Israel. It should be noted that, from the perspective of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, this finding carries an important implication. If constructivism is adopted as the analytical basis, neighborhood policy should not be formulated solely on the basis of material variables such as trade, military capabilities, or geopolitical considerations. Rather, the degree of shared identity, mutual trust, internalized norms, and the quality of mutual perceptions should also be incorporated into foreign-policy calculations. In other words, when assessing which neighbor is more likely, under conditions of crisis, to cooperate, provide support, or refrain from opportunistic behavior, material indicators alone are insufficient. It is also necessary to ask which neighbor, in practice, defines itself as part of the “We” with Iran and which neighbor continues to perceive Iran primarily as the “Other.”

From the perspective of this study, Armenia’s behavior in the two wars under examination provides greater evidence that it defines Iran as part of the “In-group” and as sharing a common security environment. In contrast, the behavior of the Republic of Azerbaijan more closely reflects a conception of Iran as an important neighbor, but one that remains separate from its own security and political identity. This difference can be explained not merely at the level of political posi-

tions, but also at the level of identity and mutual perceptions. It is precisely at this point that constructivism offers greater explanatory power than realist theories for understanding the concept of the “Good Neighbor” in international relations.

Conclusion

As discussed above, combining the perspectives of four well-known constructivist thinkers, Wendt, Onuf, Finnemore, and Katzenstein, made it possible to provide a more comprehensive definition of the concept of the “Good Neighbor.” From this perspective, a good neighbor is not merely a country that shares geographical proximity with another state or maintains extensive economic exchanges with it.

Rather, it is a state that, at the identity level, regards its neighbor’s security and stability as part of its own security and stability (Wendt); at the normative level, has internalized the norms of good-neighborliness, respect for sovereignty, opposition to the use of force, and cooperation during crises, and acts accordingly (Onuf and Finnemore); and, at the cultural and security levels, regards its neighbor as part of its own security community and regional identity while preventing the emergence of mutually reinforcing threat perceptions (Katzenstein).

In light of this integrated framework, it was argued that, in the two crises examined, Armenia demonstrated greater evidence than the Republic of Azerbaijan of a relational identity, internalized norms of good-neighborliness, and a sense of shared responsibility for Iran’s security. In other words, what brought Armenia’s positions closer to those of Iran during these two wars was not merely a temporary political convergence, but rather a greater overlap in security perceptions, shared norms, and an understanding of Iran’s stability as part of its own stability and security. A final point is that, from the perspective of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the findings of this article have an important theoretical implication. If analysis is based solely on realism, the focus will primarily be on the balance of power, military capabilities, or economic interests. Constructivism, however, demonstrates that the long-term sustainability of neighborhood relations depends above all on the quality of shared identities, the level of trust, the internalization of norms of cooperation, and the extent to which a “Shared Sense of We” develops among neighboring societies and states. Therefore, one of the strategic objectives of Iran’s neighborhood policy should be to strengthen shared identities, expand social and cultural interactions, and institutionalize norms of regional cooperation and solidarity. Under conditions of crisis, these normative and identity-based resources can influence the behavior of neighboring states to an extent comparable to material resources, or even to a greater extent.

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