



## Sea connection to Russia

The stance of Iran on the maritime domain is a strategic view, and under political and security relations, the economic interests of the country can be secured in this way. Before the start of war in Ukraine, Russia used to export more than 800 million tons of goods from its ports; after the war, the figure has dropped to less than 400 million tons. Even though our northern ports en-

joy the capacity to clear nearly 30 million tons of cargo, in the last Iranian year of 1401, less than 20% of the amount, equal to less than six million tons of goods, were imported from Russia. While Russia's trade with India, after the Ukraine war, has reached nearly 80 million tons, which has increased by nearly 100%. In other words, before the war, about 40 million tons

of goods were sent from Russia to India, while after the war, the figure has reached 80 million tons. This is an economic opportunity that we can use, even with the current infrastructure, we can actually send 30 million tons of Russian cargo through the Caspian Sea. This is excluding the other border capacities such as the borders of the Caucasus and Incheboroun.



## Role of the incumbent Iranian gov't

The main change of attitude that occurred in the current government compared to previous governments was the emphasis on the good neighborliness policy. The emphasis has and will have a positive effect on facilitating Iran's transit connections with neighboring countries. Along with China and Russia, Iran is a country with many neighbors. But more importantly, in addition to the multiplicity of neighbors, it also has a unique advantage that distinguishes Iran from China and Russia, and that is the multiplicity and diversity of neighborhoods. In eastern and northeastern Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia are located, which connect us to the Indian subcontinent and China, from the south to the Arab countries along the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and

Bab al-Mandeb, and from there to Africa. From the northwest, we are connected to the Caucasus and Eurasia, and from the west we have access to the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal. All these neighbors and the geopolitical capacity represent diversity, simultaneous with multiplicity, while each of the neighboring countries is a so-called special economic, political and cultural geographical "plate", which may not be able to get connected with each other, except for Iran. For example, without Iran, the relationship between the Central Asian countries and the Persian Gulf littoral states cannot be formed in many cases, or due to their geographical positions, they cannot have easy access. But due to its cultural and geographical location, Iran can communicate directly with

each of its neighbors. Or, for example, Turkey and Central Asia can get connected, or this connection is very costly, but Iran is located in the middle and can connect them much more easily. This connection is not only a geographical connection, but also a meaningful connection; that is, our northeastern provinces can be socially and culturally connected with Central Asia, the same connection exists in other regions, including our Khuzestan, with Iraq or Kuwait, and the same regional relationship can facilitate the principle of connection with these countries. Therefore, the most important measure of the incumbent government on Iran's corridor connection is the "good neighborliness" policy, which is pursued both by the president and the cabinet.



## Geopolitical challenges, threats

What is indisputable about the corridor known as Zangezur is that the connection of Zangezur to the Republic of Azerbaijan and the blockade of the Lachin route will be detrimental to Iran - both a security and an economic loss. Regardless of Iran's redlines and the fact that the geopolitics of these regions should not change, the corridor's view is basically a competition-oriented view. Iran's concern is not only about passing a transit corridor through the Republic of Azerbaijan, but about the disruption of the geopolitical stability of the Caucasus and the influence of the Zionist regime in the region.

Iran supports the stability and security of its surrounding countries and has no problem with a competitive environment; high-ranking officials of the country have repeatedly emphasized, in direct and indirect meetings, that they consider the security of their neighbors as their own. The concept of corridor has been formed so that every actor plays its role actively. If we have a passive policy on the corridor known as Zangezur, or the Dry Canal of Iraq, or the Lapis Lazuli Corridor in Central Asia, we will suffer in all cases. For example, regarding the Dry Canal of Iraq, some people have claimed that "by con-

necting to Zangezur, it bypasses Iran", while the tact of our governing body on the corridor would be to manage its connection with our active policy. It is Iran that can be the best and most economical route to connect Arab countries to Central Asia, and connect Russia to the high seas. Therefore, if we are passive about the formation of the Zangezur Corridor and stand idly by, it is clear that we will lose the economic and geopolitical competition. But with an active approach by Tehran, regardless of the security-creating power of Iran, it is clear that the economic preference in the region is undoubtedly Iran.

