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Pezeshkian calls for closer regional engagement to boost trade

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How Iran can counter US economic strangulation



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OPINION EXCLUSIVE

The United States appears to be settling on a strategy that avoids renewed military strikes and a negotiated settlement with Iran. According to a report on US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's remarks to G7 foreign ministers, the Trump administration wants to maintain economic pressure and the naval blockade while restricting Iran's access to land routes. The aim is to raise the costs of standing firm until Tehran accepts Washington's terms.

This approach should be taken seriously, but it is not an entirely new challenge. Iran has lived with sanctions for years and learned how to keep parts of its trade and production moving. Experience, however, is not a strategy. The pressure described by US officials makes it urgent to address the weaknesses sanctions have exposed, rather than simply finding temporary ways around them.

The first priority is to keep trade routes open and diversified. A country dependent on a few ports or border crossings is vulnerable when those links come under pressure. Iran's location links the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman to the Caucasus, Central Asia, Turkey and beyond. It needs to turn that advantage into a functioning network of roads, railways, ports and customs facilities. The North-South Corridor and Eurasian Economic Union links need reliable, competitive services and efficient border handling.

This requires practical agreements with neighbors. Border procedures can be simplified, customs services coordinated and transit rules made predictable. Turkey, Iraq, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Central Asia offer different routes and markets. No single corridor can replace all others. A network gives traders alternatives when one route is disrupted.

Regional trade must be easier to finance. Banking restrictions turn ordinary transactions into costly exercises. Iranian exporters and importers need workable payment arrangements, including local-currency settlement, bilateral banking channels, countertrade and commodity exchanges. These mechanisms cannot replace normal access to international finance, but can reduce dependence on channels most exposed to US pressure. Such arrangements will attract partners only if they are commercially useful. Businesses need clear rules, timely payments and confidence that agreements will not change without warning. Governments can negotiate frameworks, but companies must be able to use them without excessive paperwork or political interference. Iran must also protect the foreign-currency income needed to finance imports and stabilize the domestic market. Oil remains important, but dependence on a narrow group of buyers or export channels creates risks. Maintaining energy relationships, expanding refined-product and petrochemical exports and developing non-oil sources of foreign exchange should go hand in hand. The effect of a blockade would be felt beyond headline export figures. Delays in shipping and payments can raise the cost of imported inputs, interrupt production and feed inflation. Protecting supply chains is therefore as important as finding new reliable buyers for exports.

At home, the most effective response is to reduce the cost of doing business. Sanctions become more damaging when combined with unpredictable regulations, multiple exchange rates, slow customs procedures and uncertainty over raw materials. These problems cannot all be blamed on external pressure. They are policy choices that can be corrected. Clearer currency allocation, priorities for essential imports, faster customs clearance and stable rules would help producers plan and keep factories operating.

This matters for machinery, spare parts and intermediate goods. A factory cannot maintain production if a critical component is unavailable. Import substitution is useful when economically viable and when it strengthens local capacity. It becomes costly when pursued without regard to quality, price or technology.

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IRGC unveils dual-missile liquid-fuel launcher

Army warns of immediate response to any new aggression

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The photo shows a dual missile liquid-fuel launcher unveiled by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps at an underground facility in Iran on November 21, 2026.
defapress.ir



58th US MQ-9 drone downed by Iran over Strait of Hormuz

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New standards planned to improve quality of handicrafts

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Hosseini tips Iranian women weightlifters to vie for global glory

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Tehran book fair to return in December after war disruption

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