

*Research Article***Iran's look east policy and its role in the sustainable development of Amirabad port with a focus on the belt and road initiative****Morteza Ghourchi¹, Mohammadreza Joufar^{1*} , Soroush Farshchin¹**

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Abstract

After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, various approaches were adopted in Iran's foreign policy. One of these approaches was the Look East Policy, which was seriously addressed during the ninth government. This policy marked a significant shift from the pre-revolution foreign policy. In this approach, Iran emphasized cooperation with Eastern countries to enhance its international position, ensuring national interests and security. Accordingly, sustainable development along the coasts is one of the advantages of the Look East Policy, which Iran can emphasize given its geopolitical position. The North-South Corridor, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are tools that, in addition to emphasizing the Look East Policy, can foster sustainable coastal development and facilitate Iran's economic advancement and integration into regional flows. Amirabad Port, as the largest northern port of the country, connected to the southern coasts through road and rail routes, can play a crucial role in this regard. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the question: "What impact can the Look East Policy have on the development of Amirabad Port?" This research is descriptive-analytical in nature, utilizing library-documentary methods and drawing from books, scientific-research articles, and online resources. Ultimately, the study concludes that the Look East Policy can activate the capacities of Amirabad Port and promote its sustainable development, as well as attract foreign investments for revenue generation and job creation at regional and national levels.

Keywords: Look East Policy, Sustainable Development, Corridor, Amirabad Port, Shanghai.

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Introduction

After the 1979 Revolution in Iran, the approach to foreign policy and international relations underwent a complete turnaround. Iran exited the Western bloc, and policymakers in the realm of foreign policy adopted the Look East Policy and sought to expand international relations with emerging economic power centers in Asia. However, with the onset of the ninth government, the Look East Policy was practically implemented (Applied Geopolitics) and became prominent in public perception (Popular Geopolitics), forming the basis of the country's foreign policy strategy. This approach was particularly emphasized when pressure from Western countries intensified, leading to a conflict of interests between the parties involved (Shafiei and Sadeghi, 2010). The existence of fundamental obstacles in normalizing relations between Iran and the United States is a significant reason for adopting this approach. The economic and technological growth of East Asian countries, which has elevated their status both domestically and internationally, is another crucial factor in this regard. Iran's strategic relations with major developed economic

powers in the East can, in turn, provide a suitable platform for enhancing Iran's status at regional and international levels. This platform can take shape within frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China's Belt and Road Initiative, or the International North–South Transport Corridor. These frameworks are presented within the context of the Look East approach, and by adopting such a policy, Iran must expand its relations with these countries across various dimensions. Given the capacity of Amirabad Port, it can play a significant role within the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the North-South Corridor, and even in the convergence with China's Belt and Road Initiative. This port, being the largest northern port of the country and connected by rail to Bandar Abbas port, can have a strategic role in the economy of Iran, the countries surrounding the Caspian Sea, and even landlocked countries in the region. As illustrated in Map 1, the location of Amirabad Port within Iran is indicated, while the continuation in Map 2 depicts the position of this port on a regional scale.

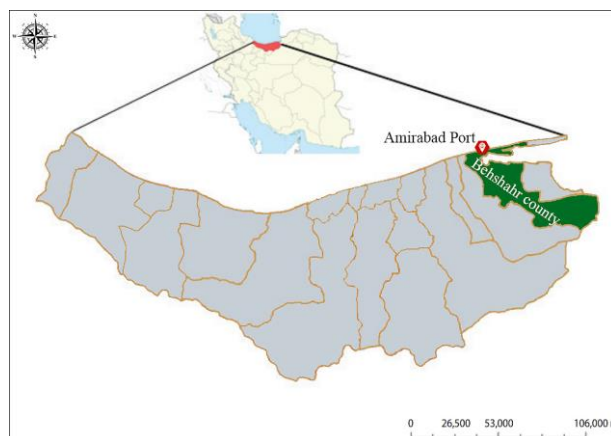


Fig. 1: Location of Amirabad Port

This study examines the dimensions of the Look East Policy and its role in the development of Amirabad Port. Therefore, it seeks to answer the question: "What impact can the Look East Policy have on the development of Amirabad Port?" The authors hypothesize that the Look East Policy will have a positive impact on the development of this port.

Conceptual Framework

Given the subject of the research, it seems necessary to examine the conceptual

frameworks. Therefore, this section of the article discusses the Look East Policy in Iran.

A. Iran's Look East Policy

The Look East approach is a strategy that emerged at the beginning of the ninth government in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Based on this policy, Iran seeks to enhance its international position by leveraging cooperation and close interaction with Eastern countries to secure national interests and enhance its international standing. Generally,

there are three perspectives within this strategy, which are outlined below:

The First Perspective describes the East as a geographical-ideological sphere that is somewhat opposed to the Western bloc. In this viewpoint, some Latin American countries are also included within the East, representing a value-oriented and ideologically driven stance in opposition to the current Western norms and order in the international system (Europe and the United States). Additionally, East Asian countries, particularly those in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, such as Russia, China, India, and Pakistan, are also highlighted.

The Second Perspective is a fully ideological viewpoint that positions the East against the

West, reminiscent of the bipolar world era. This perspective, arising from Iranian Islamist viewpoints, includes the countries of the Islamic world. It has fewer supporters and carries semantic and spatial ambiguities, making it less capable of securing the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Third Perspective examines the East as a civilizational domain from a regional and neighboring angle, which is more pragmatic and encompasses elements of cooperation, including alliances and coalitions. This perspective, with a clear definition of identity, place, and geography of the East, can claim to guarantee national security and strengthen the interests of the country (Adami, 1998).

Table 1: Perspectives on the Look East Policy

Perspectives of the Look East Policy	
1	The East as a geographical-ideological sphere opposed to the West
2	Ideological perspective meaning the East against the West (derived from the Iranian Islamist viewpoint)
3	The civilizational domain of the East with a regional and neighboring perspective

B. Sustainable Development

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations published the report Our Common Future, commonly referred to as the Brundtland Report. This report included a definition of "sustainable development" that continues to be used today. Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It encompasses two key concepts: 1. The concept of "needs," specifically the essential needs of the world's poor, which should be prioritized; 2.

The idea of limitations imposed by technology and social organization on the ability of the environment to meet present and future needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Therefore, sustainable development seeks to create a balance between economic development, environmental protection, and social welfare. Overall, sustainable development is an organizing principle aimed at achieving human development goals while enabling natural systems to provide essential natural resources and ecosystem services to humanity (Johnson et al, 2023).

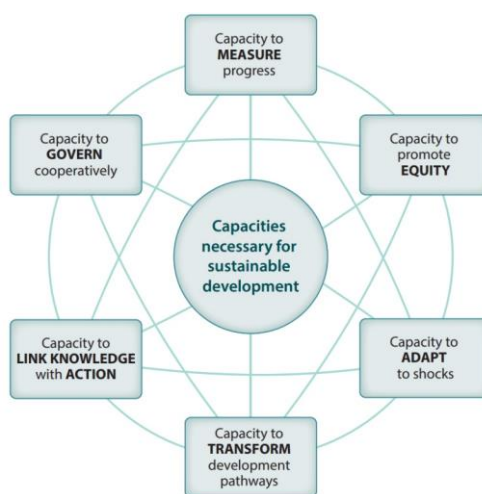


Fig. 2: Six Core Capacities Necessary for Sustainable Development (Clark and Harley, 2020).

Materials and Methods

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the Look East Policy on the sustainable development of Amirabad Port by extracting the components of this policy and examining its effects on the development of the port. The methodology of the research is descriptive-analytical in nature, and the data analysis strategy is inductive. The study is applied in nature, and the data collection method is documentary-library-based, involving the study of books, journals, articles, and online resources to draw conclusions from the discussion. After collecting and classifying the information, the analysis of these data contributes to the conclusions drawn from the discussion. In order to operationalize the topic under study, key indicators such as port connectivity (rail-sea), foreign investment potential, logistical capacity, and regional cooperation role were considered. These criteria helped assess Amirabad Port's sustainable development within the Look East Policy framework.

Results and Discussion

Amirabad Port

Amirabad Port, or the Amirabad Special Economic Zone, is one of Iran's commercial-industrial ports located in the north of Behshahr County in Mazandaran Province. It was introduced as a special economic zone in 1997, covering an area of 60 hectares, by the then government. Attached as Appendix 1 is a comprehensive map of the Amirabad Special Economic Zone. This port is the only northern port connected to Iran's railway network and is

regarded as the largest northern port in the country and the sixth largest port in Iran (Statistics Operations System, 2023). In addition to being a significant export and commercial capacity in the region, Amirabad Port, with its various factories, such as those producing gypsum, steel, and paper, is classified as a third-generation port. About 7.5 million tons of export goods from various countries enter Amirabad Port via the ports of Astrakhan, Aktau, Olya, Baku, Gusan, and Makhachkala. The connections between the ports are illustrated in Map 2. This area has been designed in three phases with 34 berth positions, of which seven public berths are currently operational. The total area of this special zone is 1,000 hectares. With extensive supporting lands, modern multimodal transportation infrastructure, and rail-truck docks for seamless transit and transportation of goods, as well as easy access to consumer markets in the region, Amirabad Port can play a significant role at both national and regional levels. Key features of Amirabad Port include its connection to the national railway network, the availability of 15 berths with a capacity of 7.5 million tons, and its role in connecting to the International North-South Transport Corridor. The unique Ro-Ro rail dock, the availability of 15 berths with a capacity of 7.5 million tons, 1,060 hectares of supporting land for various investment opportunities, the main connection of the International North-South Transport Corridor, and the possibility of connecting to Central Asia and the Caucasus are among the important capacities of this port.

Table 2: Area of Warehouses and Port Facilities of Amirabad Port by Category

	Warehouse / Area	Area/Capacity
1	Covered Warehouse	7 hectares
2	Open Storage	200 hectares
3	Grain Silos	170,000 tons
4	Storage Tanks for Petroleum Products	16,200 cubic meters
5	Storage Tanks for Edible Oil	5,000 cubic meters
6	Total Area of the Port and Oil and Industrial Investment Zones	1,060 hectares

(Amirabad Port, 2021).

Prospective Developments for Amirabad Port

The following prospects have been identified for the development of Amirabad Port:

- Connectivity to Shahid Rajaei and Imam Khomeini Ports via Railway Network: This connection is expected to enhance trade efficiency and facilitate seamless transit operations.

- Construction of 34 Berth Facilities in the Final Phase: This infrastructure expansion aims to significantly increase the port's capacity for handling various types of cargo.

- Transit Capacity for Oil and Commercial Goods: The port is projected to manage a transit capacity of up to 5 million tons in the initial phases and 10 million tons in the final phase.

- Availability of Ro-Ro-Rail and Ro-Ro-Truck Terminals: These facilities will support modern multimodal transport principles, ensuring uninterrupted and efficient cargo movement.

- Allocation of Extensive Lands for Intermediate Industries and Oil Refining: This initiative will promote the establishment of petrochemical industries and related sectors.

- Easy Access via Air, Land, and Maritime Communication Networks: The port will ensure connectivity with other regions of the country and with Central Asian countries, Russia, the Middle East, and the Far East.

- Proximity to Sadra Shipbuilding Industries and Oil Platforms: This geographical advantage will bolster the maritime sector.

- Adjacency to the Strategic Neka Oil Port and Neka-Rai Oil Pipeline: This location offers significant logistical advantages for oil transportation.

- Closeness to the 2100 MW Shahid Salimi Neka Power Plant: This proximity will ensure a consistent and reliable energy supply for industrial operations.

- Proximity to the Provincial Center with Access to Urban Amenities: This factor will facilitate logistical and operational support for businesses.

- Presence of Major Industrial and Production Centers and Tourist Attractions: The vicinity includes protected areas such as Miankaleh, the Lopu Wetland, and the historical region of Abbasabad, enhancing both economic and recreational opportunities.

The Role of Amirabad Port in the North-South Transport Corridor

The newly proposed North-South Transport Corridor will establish commercial and transit links between Northern European countries, Scandinavia, and Russia with other European nations, traversing Iranian territory and utilizing Iranian ports in the Persian Gulf, ultimately extending to the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. This corridor will enable a broad range of Asian and European countries to exchange their goods more efficiently. Before the establishment of the North-South Transport Corridor, traders in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean typically relied on maritime routes via open seas for shipping their goods to Central Europe, Northern Europe, and Russia. In this shipping method, goods are transported through the Indian Ocean, the Sea of Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Suez Canal to reach

the Mediterranean Sea. Goods destined for southern Russia and Ukraine are routed through the Black Sea to the Port of Odessa, while those intended for Northern Europe and Northern Russia navigate through the Strait of Gibraltar, the Atlantic Ocean, the English Channel, and the Baltic Sea to reach Northern Europe, Helsinki, or the Port of Saint Petersburg. This shipping method is notably time-consuming and costly for trading between Indian Ocean and Northern European countries. The implementation of the North-South Transport Corridor is expected to yield substantial savings in both time and transportation costs for goods exchanged among these nations. The combined population of Central Asian and Caucasian countries, along with Russia, is approximately 222 million (Statista, 2023). Countries in Asia and Europe can exchange goods through the North-South Transport Corridor at nearly twice the speed compared to the Suez Canal route. Given the emergence of new countries in Central Asia and the formation of new global markets in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf regions, this corridor holds significant importance for both continents. The North-South Transport Corridor, a crucial link traversing Iranian territory, is poised to become the most vital and suitable transit route for goods between Asia and Europe. It may begin in the Indian Ocean (Mumbai Port) and connect to Bandar Abbas in southern Iran via maritime routes. Within Iran, goods will be transported by road or rail to northern ports (Anzali and Amirabad) and subsequently shipped via the Caspian Sea to the ports of Astrakhan and Lagansk in Russia. With the completion of the Qazvin-Astara railway in Iranian territory, road and rail access to the Caucasus region and Russia will be facilitated. The cost of transporting transit goods between the Indian Ocean and Northern Europe through the North-South Transport Corridor is expected to be approximately 30% lower than existing traditional routes. Southeast Asian, Central Asian, Middle Eastern, Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, and Northern European countries can join the International North-South Transport Corridor, which is one of the multimodal corridors, to benefit from rapid and cost-effective transportation of their goods between Asia and Europe. Among the significant advantages of this corridor are its multiple intersections with various routes connecting

Central Asia and Europe, including TRACECA and ALTID (Amirabad Port, 2021). As depicted in Map 2, the northern ports of Iran, particularly Amirabad Port, possess the potential for connectivity with Caspian countries, as well as with Central Asian and Caucasian nations,

provided that adequate capacity is established. The realization of this connection necessitates the development of diplomatic infrastructure in external spaces, alongside physical and civil infrastructure improvements internally.



Fig. 3: The potential for Connecting Amirabad Port to the Ports of the Caspian Sea and the Southern Ports of Iran

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an international Eurasian political, economic, security, and defense organization established by China and Russia in 2001. It is the largest regional organization in the world in terms of geographical scope and population, covering nearly 80% of Eurasia's land area and 43% of the world's population (Strategic Comments, 2018: 1). By 2021, the combined GDP of the SCO member states accounted for about 20% of the global GDP (AFP, 2021). The organization's members include Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and its latest member, Iran, which

joined in 2023. The countries of the SCO accommodate 43% of the world's population, making it the largest regional actor in the world by population and a dominant force among other regional arrangements (Ansari Nasab and Bidmal, 2022). China, with a population of over 1.4 billion, and India, with around 1.38 billion people, are the most populous countries in the world and members of this organization (Factbook, 2023). In terms of territory, it is also the second-largest organization globally after the United Nations. The vast territory and population of the SCO position it as a significant regional and global actor.

Table 3: Characteristics of the SCO

Feature	Details
Area	80% of Eurasia
Population	43% of the world's population
Total GDP	20% of global GDP
Key Characteristic	Second-largest organization in the world
Type of Cooperation	Political, economic, security, defense

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has become a crucial tool for China's cooperation with Central Asian countries and Russia (Chao, 2022). The organization's members comprise a mix of developed and developing countries from various regions, including Central Asia, the Middle East, East Asia, and the Caucasus, collaborating across multiple domains such as security, economy, culture, environment, and more (Ansari Nasab and Bidmal, 2022). Economic cooperation is a core aspect of the SCO, aiming to expand and integrate economic relations among its members. In 2019, then-Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan proposed using local currencies instead of the US dollar to strengthen these relations and also suggested the establishment of an SCO bank (Khaliq, 2019). Iran has similarly proposed the creation of a common currency among members to facilitate trade and financial exchanges. The member countries of this organization possess the potential to form one of the world's largest international economic, trade, foreign

investment, energy, and military hubs in the coming decades. Both China and Russia maintain powerful militaries and growing economies (Bozorgi and Hosseini, 1389). The organization's trade volume has surged from \$667 billion in 2001 to \$6 trillion in 2020 (CGTN, 2022). These figures reflect the economic integration within the SCO, emphasizing customs unions, tariff removals, and the reduction of trade barriers, all of which promote economic growth among member states (Ansari Nasab and Bidmal, 2022). Additionally, the SCO boasts significant oil and gas reserves, economic potential, historical-cultural ties among member countries, a shared sense of threat, nuclear capabilities, and the presence of two veto-wielding powers on the United Nations Security Council, all of which are advantages that Iran can leverage for its economic and political objectives (Bozorgi and Hosseini, 1389). Achieving this, however, requires fostering close relations with SCO members and positioning itself as an active player within the organization.

Table 4: The capacities of the SCO for Iran

Political	Economic
Implementation of the Look to the East policy	Trade volume exceeding \$6 trillion
Convergence with member countries	Economic convergence
Two member states with veto power in the UN Security Council	Formation of customs unions and removal of tariffs and barriers
Presence of a common sense of threat	Geographic proximity to Iran
Technology and nuclear weapons of some countries	Adequate oil and gas reserves of member states

The Belt and Road Initiative

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), known in China as "One Belt, One Road," is a global infrastructure development strategy launched by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in more than 150 countries and international organizations (World Bank, 2018). This initiative is a crucial element of China's foreign policy and a significant component of its diplomatic strategy, reflecting China's growing role in global affairs in line with its increasing power and status (Smith, 2021). The importance of the BRI to China is underscored by its inclusion in the Chinese Communist Party's constitution in 2017 (The Economist, 2020). The Chinese government describes the BRI as an effort to strengthen regional connectivity and embrace a brighter future (Xinhua, 2018). This initiative is a crucial element of China's foreign policy and a significant component of its diplomatic strategy, reflecting China's growing role in global affairs in line with its increasing power and status (Smith, 2021). The importance of the BRI to

China is underscored by its inclusion in the Chinese Communist Party's constitution in 2017 (The Economist, 2020). The Chinese government describes the BRI as an effort to strengthen regional connectivity and embrace a brighter future (Xinhua, 2018). This initiative, proposed as a counterpart to the Maritime Silk Road, includes land routes for road and rail transportation that pass through the landlocked countries of Central Asia, including Iran, and ultimately extend to Europe. Examples of necessary investments include infrastructure projects like roads, ports, skyscrapers, railways, bridges, airports, dams, and power plants (Kuo and Kommenda, 2018). The estimated completion date for the project is 2049, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Studies conducted by the World Bank estimate that the BRI could increase trade flows in 155 countries by up to 4.1% and reduce global trade costs by between 1.1% and 2.2%. It could also boost GDP in developing countries in East Asia and the Pacific by an average of 2.6% to 3.9%

(KPMG, 2019; World Bank, 2018). China's western regions, which are less developed compared to its coastal areas, stand to benefit from the BRI through increased international trade flows and economic integration, linking them to the international economic and trade networks (Yu, 2017). This effect is also anticipated for member countries, particularly

those in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Iran, creating a significant economic link between them and international markets. This connection is expected to enhance economic, social, and cultural interactions among these countries, leading to economic growth in practice.

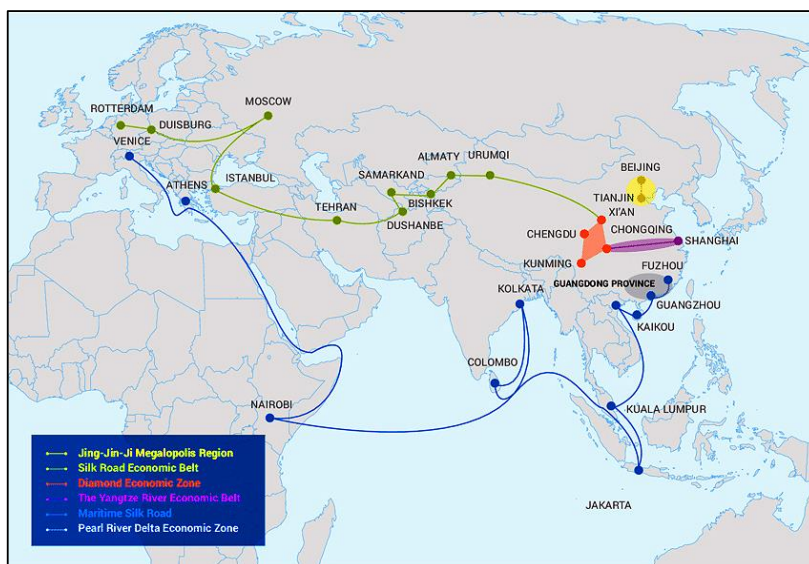


Fig. 4: The Belt and Road Initiative includes one-third of global trade and GDP, and over 60% of the world's population (World Bank, 2018; Perry et al, 2016).

The Role of Amirabad Port in Integrating Iran's Economy into Space of Flows

In the process of globalization and the formation of regional groupings worldwide, countries' economies, whether naturally or through managed efforts, gradually move towards greater integration and alignment within the evolving global production and trade structures. One of the main indicators for measuring the level of integration and advancement of a country is analyzing the structure of foreign direct investment (FDI) flows in that country. The share of each country in attracting FDI flows can indicate the extent to which a country's production structure aligns with the global production structure, as investors aim for long-term profits through participation in large-scale economic activities. Since FDI flows have a direct impact on the ability to develop the commercial potential of member countries, examining the status of countries in attracting FDI is of significant importance. On the other hand, the expansion of FDI has enabled industrial production to become decentralized, with components being sourced from various regions. This means that many countries have become both exporters

and importers in specific industries simultaneously. The intra-industry trade index, which measures the share of intra-industry trade, has increased rapidly in recent decades (Borzouei and Hosseini, 2010). Amirabad Port, due to its strategic location on the Caspian Sea and its capability to facilitate the transfer of goods to open waters via southern ports, has the potential to attract foreign investments in industry, services, infrastructure, and more. Moreover, it can facilitate the integration of Iran's economy into international economic flows. This integration can occur through the corridors discussed in this study and, additionally, through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Analysis of Findings

In light of Iran's "Look to the East" policy, prioritizing economic and political cooperation with Eastern countries is crucial. With its strategic connectivity potential, Iran can position itself as a central hub for Eastward policies involving Central Asian and Caucasus countries, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) members, and others. Amirabad Port can serve as the economic tool for this convergence.

Compared to other ports like Gwadar and Aktau, Amirabad Port shows notable strategic advantages in multimodal connectivity and access to Central Asian markets, though its infrastructural capacity still requires further investment. Despite limited access to local statistical data, the study has used all available official sources from PMO and related ministries. The research findings suggest that Amirabad Port has the potential to play a pivotal role in the SCO, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and Iran's North-South Corridor. Given its access to sea, land, and air infrastructures, the port is well-equipped for this purpose. The primary feature for the development of any geographic area is connectivity and accessibility. Amirabad Port benefits from road, rail, and air connections (Amirabad Port, 2021). If the port's capacity is expanded and Iran emphasizes its role in its diplomacy, it could not only achieve sustainable development but also become a revenue-generating center and a national development hub. Through the North-South Corridor, Iran can connect Caspian Sea countries to Amirabad Port and, subsequently, via roads or railways, to Bandar Abbas or other ports on the Gulf of Oman. Landlocked Central Asian and Caucasus countries could leverage this advantage, and Russia's access to warm waters would also be facilitated. By linking Amirabad Port to Aktau or other SCO member states along the Caspian Sea coastline, Iran's "Look to the East" strategy would be further actualized. This would promote Iran's alignment and convergence with regional countries, enhancing its role in the Caspian Sea and the SCO, positioning it as an active player. Furthermore, within the framework of China's Belt and Road Initiative, Amirabad Port could serve as a crucial secondary route. By connecting to Aktau or other eastern Caspian Sea ports, it could facilitate easy access to international waters. Finally, the relationship between Amirabad Port and sustainable development is reciprocal. If the port is developed sustainably, its connectivity and services will expand. Likewise, increased connectivity and services, along with the associated revenue generation, would further drive Amirabad Port's development. All these factors hinge on the active implementation of the "Look to the East" policy, emphasizing Amirabad Port in Iran's diplomacy within the

SCO and various corridors. If these conditions are met, foreign investment in Amirabad Port would be attracted, paving the way for its sustainable development

Conclusion

The conclusion of the present study indicates that Amirabad Port has the capacity to connect with other ports in the Caspian Sea. Such connectivity would not only link Iran to Central Asia and other neighboring regions but also align with Iran's "Look East" policy, turning it into a practical reality. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) presents suitable opportunities to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, the overall process of development, increased tourism, growth in exports and imports, higher investments, and enhanced economic and social stability could be realized. Amirabad Port possesses the capacity for all these elements, and its connection with other ports, particularly Aktau, would catalyze this change. This transformation would not only affect the immediate area around the port but also have broader implications for the entire country and region. The effective implementation of Iran's Look East Policy, alongside the activation of regional initiatives like the BRI and SCO, will depend largely on practical instruments such as Amirabad Port. Therefore, targeted investments and regional cooperation must prioritize this port to fulfill strategic policy goals. This research aimed to explore how the "Look East" policy impacts the sustainable development of Amirabad Port. The study endeavored to answer this question in detail. As previously mentioned, Amirabad Port, by connecting with the Caspian Sea ports, especially Aktau, could become a part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a secondary route. In this scenario, Iran would play a significant role in the initiative. Moreover, given Amirabad's capacity, such as its connection to the national railway network, the port could also facilitate the North-South Corridor, linking the Oman Sea or the Persian Gulf with the BRI, thereby playing a crucial role in regional geopolitics. This development would implicitly support Iran's "Look East" policy, fostering convergence and strengthening relations at various levels between Iran, Central Asian countries, China, and Russia. To achieve these goals, it seems necessary to focus on further

activating Amirabad Port's infrastructure, enhancing its projected capacities, and assigning Amirabad a pivotal role in Iran's diplomacy. With its "Look East" approach, Iran can utilize tools like the Belt and Road Initiative and the North-South Corridor to increase foreign exchange revenues and integrate into global trade flows. In this strategy, Amirabad Port's role, if connected with Aktau and other Caspian ports, is essential. Additionally, given the SCO's emphasis on supply chains, energy, food, water, and similar resources, the sustainable development of this port is anticipated. The authors hypothesized that the "Look East" policy would directly impact the sustainable development of Amirabad Port. The findings and analysis of the research support this hypothesis, suggesting that the port's sustainable development is contingent upon Iran's adoption of the "Look East" approach, its increased involvement in international corridors, particularly the Belt and Road Initiative, and its engagement with the SCO.

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