

THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE FROM THE ASPECT OF THE NEW GEOSTRATEGY AND THE IMPACT ON THE SAFETY FACTORS IN ROAD TRAFFIC

ABSTRACT: The paper presents one of the activities at the global level and, there is partially analysed its impact on safety factors in the transport of passengers and goods, as well as in the provision of services in this area at the moment. The issue of road safety cannot be viewed isolated from the rapid economic and social development. Significant efforts have been made to improve safety factors, in particular the construction of the road infrastructure. Having all that in mind, it was necessary to pass appropriate regulations, which seems to be done through the adoption of legislation, the implementation of education, the adoption of the standards for vehicle safety, as well as through a technological development.

Keywords: *road safety, geostrategy, the “Belt and road” initiative.*

1. Introduction

We live in a world of uncontrolled globalization and neoliberalism, “through which political, social and economic areas are not governed by more states, but by the owners of big capital. In such a world, geopolitical goals are not achieved primarily in armed conflicts, but money is the key factor

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for territorial conquests, which is no longer in the possession of the state, but in the possession of individuals or groups of people. In these geopolitical processes, there was a multipolarization of the world, in which we can talk about three dominant world powers, namely: the United States, Russia and China, while the European Union is sandwiched between their interests. There are different ways of achieving geopolitical goals, and some authors believe that the project “Belt and Road” is one of them” (Grahovac, 2017, pp. 30, 39, 174, 176).

2. The impact of China’s social and economic development

China’s rapid economic and social development, which began at the end of the last century, gained its new dimension in 2013. Given the already existing global problem with infrastructure in trade, China positioned itself globally, providing a solution to this problem through the idea of a new Silk Road, i.e. the “One Belt, One Road” Initiative, later reformulated into “Belt and Road”. This initiative will connect Asia, Africa, Europe and South America through the economy and trade, investment, infrastructure, capital and people. It is a Chinese strategic project, which will transform the constellation in the global economy, with China as a key player. The project is designed to be open to all countries, as well as to all public and private companies. Connection is planned through rail, road, sea and air transport and infrastructure development, which includes digital infrastructure. Initially, the project included 64 economies, but over time it has expanded to more than 170 countries that are involved in various ways in the project. Through a combination of six corridors, China plans cooperation and investment in a large number of countries and promotes the connection of infrastructure and economy (Brakman, Frankopan, Harry & Van Marrewijk, 2019, pp. 3–16). The six main economic corridors within this project are China and: “Mongolia and Russia, Eurasian countries, Central and Western Asia, Pakistan, other countries of the Indian subcontinent and Indochina.” The initiative has a positive impact on the countries involved in the project, especially due to Chinese investments and infrastructure construction. On the other hand, China will be able to develop the market for its products and relocate its industry, which is its biggest polluter (China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape, 2018, p. 3).

3. "Belt and Road" as a driver of economic cooperation

"Belt and Road" does not represent the beginning of economic cooperation between China and the European Union, on the contrary, it represents the continuity of these relations, which began in 1975, to be characterized in 2003 as a "strategic partnership" and in 2007 as a comprehensive strategic partnership". From a country that was almost in last place as a foreign trade partner of the European Union, in 2014, China emerged as one of the leading countries in terms of imports into the European Union. For the implementation of Juncker's plan from 2015 for the development of European infrastructure, i.e. investments, China gave its consent and presented financial support for its realization. China's accession to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development implies joint financial projects with European Union countries. The interest is not one-sided, but leading European countries, such as Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain, are showing their initiative for joint financing of infrastructure projects through inclusion in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (Obradović, 2021, p. 163).

4. The impact of the Belt and Road on the Balkan states

The Belt and Road initiative includes Balkan countries, including Serbia. The process of cooperation between 16 + 1, i.e. cooperation between China and 16 countries in Eastern and Central Europe, began somewhat earlier, with the tendency of Eurasian connection through the most important transport corridors and projects. These countries are included in the western direction of the Belt and Road Initiative, as a significant part of the global Chinese project. Serbia is among them, with the fact that there has been a strategic partnership between China and Serbia since 2009. Through a number of bilateral agreements, China has negotiated with the Balkan states the construction of highways, such as the Belgrade-South Adriatic maritime highway with Serbia, then Macedonia's Albania-linked highway, as well as road links of directions of the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas and the port of Piraeus, through Macedonia, Serbia and further north. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, the challenge for the countries of Southeast Europe is to set general goals and harmonize them with the Chinese economic concept, then to include the possibilities offered by the Initiative in national strategies and plans, especially as it means that national policies of states from this region will be harmonized. At the same time, the European path of the countries of Southeast Europe is not compromised by taking part in the Initiative, since

many countries of the European Union are involved. It is especially useful that this will improve the position of the countries from this region in the geoeconomic sense, primarily in terms of gaining importance in transport, especially in Turkey, Greece and Serbia (Obradović, 2021, pp. 166–169).

5. “Belt and road” as a standard

China has adopted an Action Plan for connecting the “Belt and Road” standards for the period 2015-2017, which must be international, in order to facilitate connection, trade and cooperation between many countries and different systems on the Asian, African and European continents. Without standardization, it is almost impossible for the governments of these countries to pursue policies and formulate plans at the macro level in terms of technologies, products and services. Therefore, it is important to systematize and accelerate mutual recognition of standards, especially in steel, non-ferrous metals, railways, highways, engineering for transport of water, oil, natural gas, especially in new industries such as intelligent transport, biology, new energy, new materials and similarly. The action plan mentions standardization in terms of road construction (标准联通, 一带一路’行动计划 Standard Unicom Belt and Road Action Plan, 2021).

We mentioned that there are major shortcomings in world trade due to infrastructure. The world’s biggest investment needs are in road transport and energy infrastructure. It is projected that global investments in this sector, specifically in connecting transport, will be lacking in the coming decades by 0.4 trillion US dollars a year. The planned Chinese investments in foreign infrastructure within the Belt and Road Initiative for the period 2017-2027 amount to as much as one trillion US dollars. Only on the basis of this data can one get an impression of the significance of the entire project at the global level (China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape, pp. 3–6). The main goals, defined in the 13th Five-Year Plan from 2016, include the improvement of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in trade and investment, the establishment of a network of high standard free trade zones along the road, strengthening financial cooperation to finance infrastructure, access to natural resources and international cooperation, energy and in the production chain, but also the deepening of cultural cooperation (China’s Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape, pp. 6–10).

Special emphasis within the project is placed on strengthening the multimodal transport infrastructure through highways, i.e. the so-called express

roads, railways and connecting seaports. Certain projects include the construction of subways, for example in Vietnam, Russia and Nigeria, while in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Georgia, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, highways are being built (Wang, 2020, p. 8). In this regard, the goal of sustainable development by 2030 is related to ecology and environmental protection through the revolution in energy technologies, as well as maintenance and construction of infrastructure while respecting all environmental standards, through so-called green transport, green buildings and green energy. The standards, which China wants to apply globally, also apply to the digital aspect of the Initiative. The 5G network is a major player in new technologies and major trends, such as the management of automatic vehicles, drones, smart cities (China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape, pp. 15–27).

6. Impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on global gross domestic product and further development of transport at the global level

The impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on global gross domestic product, according to some research, will increase by 1.3% by 2030, while global trade is expected to increase by 5%. It is predicted that most of the profits will go to the countries included in the "Belt and Road". It is assumed that, as a consequence of the implementation of this project, the margins of road transport will be reduced by 25%, and the total exports from this group of countries will increase by 5 to as much as 135 billion dollars. The reduction in domestic trade costs in the countries of the Initiative is 10.2%. By comparison, this amount in non-Initiative countries is 5.9% (Maliszewska & Mensbrugge, 2019, pp. 4–9).

The construction of the corridor within the Belt and Road Initiative aims not only to increase the volume of trade and to integrate the countries in the regions of these corridors, but also to reduce the speed of transport. Namely, the transit time on the corridors is expected to be shortened by 12%, and only one day less in transit increases trade by 5.2%. Reduced transport time is especially important for the trade in fresh fruits and vegetables. This progress will not only have a positive impact on the countries along the corridor, but also on all other countries, including those that are not part of the Initiative, where transport times will be reduced by 3% and trade will increase by an average of about 3%. In addition, all countries will feel the reduced price of trade. However, if accompanying reforms are lacking in certain countries along the corridor, such as establishing free trade and shortening the length of

retention of goods at borders, the amount of investment in infrastructure may outweigh the benefits (Raiser & Ruta, 2019).

Investing billions of dollars in the countries involved in the “Belt and Road” project will lead to increased economic activity, which will, in turn, significantly improve urban transport through electrification, automation and digitalization. The use of artificial intelligence will enable optimal traffic management and more efficient use of roads. This enables digital connectivity between people, goods, vehicles and infrastructure, and will be able to point out road hazards to each other, collect important transport data and analyze it to better organize mobility, for example, to change direction for better traffic, better reaction due to weather conditions and the like. However, this development may have negative consequences for the environment due to increased emissions. Therefore, special emphasis is placed on so-called green transport. Namely, by 2033, it is expected that the concept of sustainable urban transport will be applied in the cities along the “Belt and Road”. This would include public transport with fast electric buses and adapted infrastructure, while infrastructure adapted to private cars is kept to a minimum. The infrastructure for non-motorized transport would be greatly expanded. The transport of goods will be done by electric and automated vehicles, with the use of smart technologies that increase the efficiency of the infrastructure. As a result, reduced carbon emissions, more efficient transport and industrial expansion of countries along the Belt and Road and green technologies are achieved (Wang, 2020, pp. 10–18).

7. Comparative legal analysis regarding safety factors and their role in road transport contracts

Of great importance for the safety of road traffic, and therefore for more efficient, flexible and reliable provision of transport services, is the standardization of safety. In 2009, the World Health Organization published the Report on Global Road Safety, based on data submitted by 178 countries. So, only 11 years ago, it was determined that the legislation that regulates risk factors for traffic safety in more than two thirds of countries is incomplete, and that in those countries where legislation exists, it is not implemented properly. The report, which followed five years later, did not show better results in a number of countries, although in the meantime, in 2010 and 2012, the United Nations General Assembly adopted two resolutions 64/255 (5) and 66/260 (6), calling for states to enact comprehensive legislation on key risk factors in road traffic, as well as to improve its implementation (World Health

Organization: Strengthening road safety legislation: a practice and resource manual for countries, 2013, p. 1).

The question is what are the factors due to which there are such drastic differences between countries in the world in terms of legislative measures, which regulate the field of traffic safety. In addition to the undeniable impact of traffic accident mortality statistics, political will plays an important role, especially for legislative reforms, public pressure, as well as social norms and values. By regulating acceptable behavior in traffic, such as the obligation to fasten seat belts or the prohibition of drunk driving, legal norms can influence and change people's behavior.

We will present certain national legal systems and the way in which the factors of road traffic safety are regulated in them, from the aspect of man, vehicle and road.

7.1. Serbia

The place and role of the traffic safety system in the Republic of Serbia are regulated by the Constitution, then by recognized international sources, laws and bylaws. The laws that primarily regulate the traffic safety system are: Law on bases of traffic safety on roads (2009), Law on road traffic safety (2009) and Law on public roads (2005).

The Law on Bases of Traffic Safety on Roads (2009) contains provisions relating to drivers and vehicles, as well as the part relating to roads. In addition, the Law on Traffic Safety regulates rights and obligations, regulates traffic, as well as all other provisions important for traffic safety.

The main task of the Law on Road Safety, as well as its implementation is to achieve a high level of road safety through: monitoring changes in the behaviour of traffic participants through building awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills through adequate education and information; application of adequate control measures and sanctioning measures in case of violation of traffic safety measures; if necessary, removal (temporarily or permanently) of traffic participants who do not meet the requirements for safety of traffic participation.

7.2. Croatia

The most important legal act that regulates the issue of road traffic safety is the Law on Road Traffic Safety. The law was passed in 2008, but had several amendments, with the last one adopted in 2020 (The Road Traffic Safety Act, 2008).

Driver: The priority of the Croatian National Program, which concerns drivers as a factor in road safety, refers to improving their behaviour in terms of speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, better education, aggressive driving and the like.

Vehicle: Compulsory technical inspection issues are similarly regulated in Croatia and other EU countries.

Road: Permitted speed on urban roads in Croatia is up to 50 km / h, on rural roads is up to 90 km / h, while the speed of motor vehicles on the highway is limited to 130 km / h (Article 54 of the Law).

7.3. Montenegro

The Law on Road Safety of 2012 adopted the measures planned by the Strategy (Law on Road Safety of Montenegro, 2021).

Driver: The Law on Road Traffic Safety in Montenegro regulates the issue of drivers as a safety factor, prescribing conditions for driving a vehicle, age conditions for obtaining a driver's license, health ability to drive a vehicle, as well as restricting the right to drive a motor vehicle.

Vehicle: All technical standards that a vehicle must meet in Montenegro are prescribed by law (Article 242 of the Law).

Road: Roads in Montenegro are mostly regional, followed by highways, and the rest of the roads are local. The legal limit for the maximum speed in a populated area is 50 km / h. Outside the settlement, the Montenegrin legislator distinguishes the speed of movement on the highway (there is still no highway in Montenegro), which limit is 130 km / h, except for buses with a limit of 100 km / h, then on the highway, 100 km / h, on other roads this limit is up to 80 km / h.

7.4. Bosnia and Herzegovina

The issue of road traffic safety in BiH is regulated at the state and entity levels, which recognize the importance of safety factors for drivers, vehicles and roads, as well as their interaction. These factors of road traffic safety are regulated in more detail by the Law on Fundamentals of Road Safety in BiH (Law on Basic Safety of Road Traffic in BiH, 2006).

Driver: Drivers are obliged to respect the speed limit for motor vehicles on urban roads up to 50 km / h, on rural roads up to 80 km / h, while the speed limit on the highway in BiH is up to 130 km / h (Article 44 of the Law).

Vehicle: The European Commission has stated that the technical inspection and control of vehicles in BiH is regulated by the above-mentioned Law, which is partially harmonized with Community law, but that there is no effective application of its provisions in the entities. Restrictions on the weight and dimensions of road vehicles, which are enforced throughout the country, are also harmonized with EU law (Commission Staff Working Document, 2019, p. 119).

Road: The European Commission stated in a report from 2020 that the legislation of BiH on the issue of road quality testing is in order. The provisions of the Law, which regulate the restrictions on the maximum weight and dimensions of vehicles, are in line with EU law.

7.5. Germany

Germany's last program on traffic safety was made in 2011 for the period until 2020. The primary goal was to reduce traffic fatalities by 40% by 2020. With this goal in mind, the plan addressed the improvement of road infrastructure safety, the introduction of automatic driving and vehicle safety systems on the market, as well as the field of human impact on road safety (OECD, International Transport Forum: Road Safety Annual Report Germany, 2019, p. 2).

Driver: The legal obligation of the driver is to drive the vehicle exclusively at a speed that allows him constant control over the vehicle.

Vehicle: The German highway is reserved only for motor vehicles, which can move at speeds higher than 60 km / h (Section 18 of the Road Traffic Act).

Road: The driving speed is prescribed according to the type of road to which it refers. Thus, the speed limit for passenger vehicles on German rural roads is up to 100 km / h, in populated areas 50 km / h, while for motorways, speeds of up to 130 km / h are recommended. Therefore, there is no prescribed speed limit on the highway (Section 3 of the Road Traffic Act).

7.6. Russia

Given the size of the country, the Russian Federation has one of the largest transportation networks. Therefore, the number of traffic accidents on the roads is large. However, the percentage in which drivers caused traffic accidents is as much as 85%, of which 7.8% of cases are responsible for increased blood alcohol concentration (Ichkitidze, Sarygulov & Ungvari, 2017, pp. 242–246).

Driver: The speed of the vehicle on the roads must be within the allowed limits, but it must also adapt to the conditions of traffic intensity at that time, the characteristics and condition of the vehicle itself, weather conditions and visibility on the road. The prescribed driving speed depends on whether it is an inhabited place or a road outside the settlement.

Vehicle: The engine of the vehicle must be such that the content of harmful substances in exhaust gases and their smoke do not exceed the values specified in GOST R 52033-2003 and GOST R 52160-2003, while the permissible level of external noise does not exceed the values specified in GOST R 52231-2004 (Article 1, 3, 10 and 11 of the Basic Provisions, as well as the Addendum to the Basic Provisions).

Road: Road traffic safety in Russia, which refers to the road as its factor, has been regulated since 1993 through the State Standard for Roads and Streets and the conditions of their maintenance to ensure traffic safety (GOST R 50597-93 Автомобильные дороги и улицы, 2020). This standard determines the indicators of the operational condition of highways, streets and roads in cities and settlements, as well as technical means for traffic control, necessary for traffic safety, protection of life and the environment. The application of these standards is mandatory.

7.7. United States

In order to approach the analysis of road safety factors in the United States, it is necessary to briefly describe the way in which the legal system of this federation functions in this regard. Power is divided at the federal, state, and local levels, with common jurisdiction in some areas, while in others each level of government has its own sovereignty. Congress passes laws at the national level, but most traffic safety legislation is at the state level. Congress typically provides financial support to states for law enforcement and traffic safety strategies.

Driver: The prescribed upper limit for the presence of alcohol in the blood, which is tolerated, is the same in all US states and amounts to 0.8 g / l, with Utah lowering the limit to 0.5 g / l from 2018. Especially young people between the ages of 21 and 24 were the highest percentage of drivers in an alcoholic state, who caused fatal traffic accidents. Drivers under the age of 21 are prohibited from having even the lowest blood alcohol levels while driving in all U.S. states.

Vehicle: The U.S. Code defines motor vehicle safety as protecting the public from the unreasonable risk of an accident and its consequences that may result from the design, construction, or performance of the vehicle (para. 30102, Code).

Road: The speed limit range on urban roads ranges from 25 to 35 miles / hour, on rural roads from 25 to 55 miles / hour, while on highways the vehicle can travel at speeds of 55 to 80 miles / hour, depending on the US state.

7.8. China

Significant efforts have been made to improve safety factors, in particular the construction of road infrastructure. With all this in mind, it was necessary to adopt appropriate regulations, which the Chinese government has done by adopting legislation, conducting training, adopting vehicle safety standards, as well as technological development (Ono, Silcock, & Gerilla-Teknomo, 2013, p. 3).

Driver: China has adopted a points system in case of road safety violations. The period of collecting points is 12 months. If the driver reaches 12 points, he will be ordered to have his driver's license revoked and will have to participate in trainings on traffic safety rules and take an exam.

Vehicle: In 2017, the Chinese legislature amended the national standards of technical safety of motor vehicles, which ensured safety for taking part in the traffic of as many as 400 million motor vehicles.

Road: The speed of motor vehicles on rural roads in China is limited to 100km / h, while on highways the speed limit is 80 to 120 km / h. The speed of urban roads ranges from 30 to 50 km / h. Local authorities may also prescribe lower limits. Express roads, as a specific type of highway, have a prescribed speed of up to 110 and 120 km / h, respectively.

8. Conclusion

What can be concluded is that the construction of infrastructure, with an emphasis on transport, is a need of a large number of underdeveloped countries, as well as those in development, given that the economic crisis after 2008 led to financial inability to start or complete many necessary projects in this area. It is noticed that in such global circumstances, China has positioned itself well with the “Belt and Road” Initiative, within which it makes an offer to countries around the world that is difficult to refuse. This globalization provides China with a strategic advantage in the international market in many areas.

From all the above, it is unequivocally concluded that the factor of safety in road traffic is gaining an increasing role, both in terms of existing modern scientific achievements and technological development, and in terms of the requirements of modern times and future development of mankind.

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INICIJATIVA „POJAS I PUT“ S ASPEKTA NOVE GEOSTRATEGIJE I UTICAJ NA FAKTORE BEZBEDNOSTI U DRUMSKOM SAOBRAĆAJU

REZIME: U radu je predstavljena jedna od aktivnosti na globalnom nivou i, delom, analiziran i njen uticaj na faktore bezbednosti u transportu putnika i roba, kao i u pružanju usluga u ovoj oblasti u sadašnjem trenutku. Pitanje bezbednosti u drumskom saobraćaju ne može se posmatrati odvojeno od naglog ekonomskog i društvenog razvoja. Značajni naponi su preduzimani na unapređenju faktora bezbednosti, posebno na izgradnji putne infrastrukture. Imajući sve to u vidu, nužno je bilo doneti odgovarajuću regulativu, što se čini usvajanjem zakonodavstva, sprovođenjem edukacija, usvajanjem standarda za bezbednost vozila, kao i tehnološkim razvojem.

Ključne reči: bezbednost u drumskom saobraćaju, geostrategija, Pojas i put.

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