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Geopolitics and the development of transport corridors: a comparative analysis of the Western Balkans and Croatia

Geopolitika i razvoj prometnih koridora: komparativna analiza Zapadnog Balkana i Hrvatske

The purpose of this paper is to study the influence of geopolitical actors on the modern development and valorisation of transport corridors in the Western Balkans region and in Croatia, as a country neighbouring the region (of which it was once part) and, thus far, the only that managed to become a member state of the European Union. The historical conditioning of the transport corridors inherited from the former joint states still plays an important role in the Western Balkans and Croatia. The main thesis is that geopolitical conditions are important in the area of the Western Balkans for the development and valorisation of transport corridors. For the exploration of this thesis, the following has been studied: theoretical approach of the transport geopolitics scientific discipline, previous research regarding the development of transport corridors in the study region and Croatia, the most important contemporary geopolitical factors in the Western Balkans region, and the importance and perspective of the development of transport corridors in the future.

Key words: transport geopolitics, transport corridors, the Pan-European transport network, TEN-T network, Western Balkans, Croatia.

Svrha je ovoga rada istražiti utjecaj geopolitičkih aktera na suvremeni razvoj i valorizaciju prometnih koridora u regiji Zapadnog Balkana i u Hrvatskoj, kao susjednoj zemlji regije i jedinoj koja je, od početne klasifikacije koja je Hrvatsku smjestila u ovu regiju, uspjela postati članicom Europske unije. Povijesna uvjetovanost prometnih koridora naslijeđenih iz bivših zajedničkih država i dalje igra važnu ulogu na Zapadnom Balkanu i u Hrvatskoj. Glavna je teza rada da su geopolitički razlozi na području Zapadnog Balkana važni za razvoj i valorizaciju prometnih koridora. Za potrebe potvrđivanja ove teze proučavani su: teorijski pristup znanstvene discipline prometne geopolitike, dosadašnja istraživanja razvoja prometnih koridora u proučavanoj regiji i Hrvatskoj, najvažniji suvremeni geopolitički čimbenici u regiji Zapadnog Balkana te važnost i perspektiva razvoja prometnih koridora u budućnosti.

Ključne riječi: prometna geopolitika, prometni koridori, paneuropska prometna mreža, TEN-T mreža, Zapadni Balkan, Hrvatska.

Uvod

Geographical position is a changeable category, which considers the relative position of the spatial unit (in most cases, a sovereign state) that is under study, and especially its surroundings, the nature of relations (as well as qualitative and quantitative factors that determine these relations, between the unit and its neighbouring units), emphasizing geo-political factors and aspects.

The object of study in this paper is the role of geopolitics in the contemporary and possible future development and valorization of transport corridors in the Western Balkans and Croatia, with an emphasis on the continuing role of geopolitics between the Western Balkans and external actors (China and Russia) as well as in Croatia, as the only European Union (hereafter: the EU) member state that was initially placed in the Western Balkans region. The Western Balkan comprises the largest non-integrated part of Europe fully surrounded by the EU member states. This also means that the development of pan-European transport corridors in the Western Balkans is rather limited, compared to the financing possibilities in the EU member states. This negatively affects the general transport connectivity of the EU member states that are relatively isolated from the rest of the EU (Bulgaria, Greece).

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze geopolitical conditions that are significant for the development of transport geographical position and the valorisation of transport corridors in the Western Balkans region, focusing on the transport of goods.

Thus, the following were analyzed:

- the role of geopolitics in the development of transport corridors;
- previous research regarding the development of transport corridors in the study region and Croatia;
- the main geopolitical features of the Western Balkans region;
- the role of geopolitics in the present-day development and modernization of Pan-European transport corridors, and newer, Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) of transport corridors (*Transport Europa*);

Introduction

Geografski je položaj promjenjiva kategorija koja razmatra relativni položaj prostorne cjeline (u većini slučajeva suverene države) koja se proučava, a posebno njezina okruženja, te prirodu odnosa, kao i kvalitativne i kvantitativne čimbenike koji određuju te odnose, između cjeline i njezinih susjednih jedinica, s naglaskom na geopolitičke čimbenike i aspekte.

Predmet istraživanja u ovom radu jest uloga geopolitike u suvremenom i mogućem budućem razvoju i valorizaciji prometnih koridora na Zapadnom Balkanu i Hrvatskoj, s naglaskom na kontinuiranu ulogu geopolitike između Zapadnog Balkana i vanjskih aktera (Kina i Rusija) te u Hrvatskoj, kao još uvijek jedinoj državi članici Europske unije (u daljnjem tekstu: EU) koja je inicijalno bila smještena u regiju Zapadnog Balkana. Ta se regija naime sastoji od najvećega neintegriranog dijela Europe, u potpunosti okruženog državama članicama EU-a. Ovo također znači da je razvoj paneuropskih prometnih koridora na Zapadnom Balkanu prilično ograničen u usporedbi s mogućnostima financiranja u zemljama članicama EU-a, što negativno utječe na opću prometnu povezanost država članica EU-a relativno izoliranih od ostatka EU-a (Bugarska, Grčka).

Glavna je svrha ovoga rada analizirati geopolitička promišljanja koja su od velike važnosti za razvoj prometno-geografskoga položaja i valorizaciju prometnih koridora u regiji Zapadnog Balkana, s fokusom na prijevoz roba.

Tako je analizirano sljedeće:

- uloga geopolitike u razvoju prometnih koridora
- dosadašnja istraživanja razvoja prometnih koridora u proučavanoj regiji i Hrvatskoj
- glavna geopolitička obilježja regije Zapadnog Balkana
- uloga geopolitike u suvremenom razvoju i modernizaciji paneuropskih prometnih koridora te novije Transeuropske prometne mreže (TEN-T) prometnih koridora (Transport Europa)

- the role of geopolitics in the development of new transport corridors that are not a part of the Trans-European Transport Network, in several Western Balkans countries.

THEORETICAL APPROACH

This section discusses the relation between transport and geopolitics, which has an important role in the development of transport corridors, both domestic and international. Geopolitics influences decision-makers' actions regarding transport corridors, hence the ability to control space is one of the main powers of the state, and is therefore also a geopolitical matter.

When discussing the role of states in the development of transport corridors, Lin (2019) emphasized the role of states in shaping transport decisions, and pointed to Shaw and Sidaway (2011, 507), who underscored the need to consider the place of geopolitics in these debates, hence 'transport and travel concerns are at the heart of geopolitical thinking and practice'.

Namely, transport geopolitics remains an important issue in the changing world, with geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic aspects simultaneously influencing the decision-makers and, subsequently, the development of transport corridors. Ampleman (2021) has defined transport geopolitics as a 'discipline that connects transport geography and geopolitics, discussing the need for a structuralist and morphodynamical turn in the field of transport geopolitics', in order to avoid: 'a series of blind spots unseen by conventional utilitarian transport geography'. While transport geography mainly discusses how transport systems develop, transport geopolitics studies geopolitical factors that affect the development of transport systems, influencing political-decision makers.

Yip and Wong (2015) emphasized that geopolitical reasoning and action can determine the spatial networks, locations and functions of transport systems, and affect transport's feasibility and success. Therefore, it is necessary to study how transport is simultaneously shaped by geopolitical interventions among states (Lin, 2019) and to consider geopolitical factors and processes that shape the decisions of political actors in the field of transport geography.

- uloga geopolitike u razvoju novih prometnih koridora u nekoliko zemalja Zapadnog Balkana, a koji nisu dio Transeuropske prometne mreže.

TEORIJSKI PRISTUP

Ovaj dio rada bavi se odnosom prometa i geopolitike, koja ima važnu ulogu u razvoju prometnih koridora, kako domaćih tako i međunarodnih. Geopolitika utječe na djelovanje donositelja odluka na prometnim koridorima, stoga svladavanje prostora i sposobnost njegove kontrole pokazuje moć države te stoga pripada geopolitičkoj materiji.

Raspravljajući o ulozi država u razvoju prometnih koridora, Lin (2019) naglašava ulogu država u oblikovanju odluka o prometu i upućuje na Shaw i Sidaway (2011, 507), koji su naglasili potrebu razmatranja mjesta geopolitike u ovim raspravama jer su „brige o prometu i putovanju u središtu geopolitičkoga razmišljanja i prakse”.

Naime, prometna geopolitika ostaje važno pitanje u svijetu koji se mijenja, a geopolitički, geo-ekonomski i geostrateški aspekti paralelno utječu na donositelje odluka, a posljedično i na razvoj prometnih koridora. Ampleman (2021) prometnu geopolitiku definira kao: „disciplinu koja povezuje prometnu geografiju i geopolitiku”, raspravljajući o potrebi „strukturalističkog i morfodinamičkog zao-kreta u području prometne geopolitike” kako bi se izbjegao „niz slijepih točaka koje ne vidi konvencionalna, utilitarna prometna geografija”. Dok prometna geografija uglavnom raspravlja o tome kako se prometni sustavi razvijaju, prometna geopolitika proučava geopolitičke čimbenike koji utječu na razvoj prometnih sustava, utječući na donositelje političkih odluka.

Yip i Wong (2015) naglasili su da geopolitičko razmišljanje i djelovanje mogu odrediti prostorne mreže, lokacije i funkcije prometnih sustava te utjecati na izvedivost i uspjeh prometa. Stoga je potrebno proučiti kako se promet istodobno oblikuje geopolitičkim intervencijama među državama (Lin, 2019) te razmotriti geopolitičke čimbenike i procese koji oblikuju odluke političkih aktera u području prometne geografije.

According to Stellner et al. (2023, 286): ‘the analysis of the geostrategic perspective on transport policies is a rather unexplored territory’. Regarding the geo-strategic analysis, it is aimed at long-term costs and benefits (Isler et al., 2020), providing us with insight into the future impacts of transport policies—which are never neutral and reflect geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic aims of the actors (nation-states, supra-national organizations and integrations i.e. the EU, military and political alliances and various associations i.e. NATO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization etc.) involved in their planning.

The concept of transport corridor (TC), used in transport geography, however, appeared in the mid-1980s, when the Inland Transport Commission of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) commenced studies of transport flows in Europe in order to develop transit and traffic (Shcherbanin, 2006). Transport corridors and hubs compose traffic networks, i.e. infrastructure that forms the basis for economic and political structures in a region (Stellner et al., 2023, 287).

As stated by Quium (2019, 11), the synergistic, catalytic effect of transport corridors in socio-economic development is a result of the formation of a system that includes infrastructure, political institutions, investments. Transport corridors, as expected, have a positive effect on the economies of countries. Hashemi and Abdelghany (2016), who studied the state assessment of traffic networks in connection with the functioning of transport corridors, concluded that transport corridors also provide an increase in the well-being of the population. The authors also emphasized the importance of High-Volume Transport (HVT) corridors and networks, which comprise the most important roads and railways to form the national transport backbone, which connects the smaller feeder road and rail links.

The development of the TCs changes with the technological progress over time. Via the development of transport corridors, the state overcomes space, shows its power, and also controls its space, hence the possession of territory has to be shown and legitimized through effective territorial control. The thesis that transport corridors are inherently a geopolitical matter, as they represent power, is found in Allen (2003, 10–11): ‘Power as a result cannot and

Prema Stellneru i sur. (2023, 286): „analiza geostrateške perspektive prometnih politika prilično je neistraženo područje.” Što se tiče geostrateške analize, ona je usmjerena na dugoročne troškove i koristi (Isler i sur., 2020), dajući nam uvid u buduće utjecaje prometnih politika – koje nikad nisu neutralne, nego odražavaju geopolitičke, geoekonomske i geostrateške ciljeve subjekata (nacionalne države, nadnacionalne organizacije i integracije tj. EU, vojni i politički savezi i razne asocijacije, tj. NATO, Šangajska organizacija za suradnju itd.) uključenih u njihovo planiranje.

Koncept prometnoga koridora, koji se koristi u prometnoj geografiji, međutim, pojavio se sredinom 1980-ih godina, kada je Komisija za unutarnji promet Ekonomske komisije Ujedinjenih naroda za Europu (UNECE) započela studije prometnih tokova u Europi da bi se razvio tranzitni promet (Shcherbanin, 2006). Prometni koridori i čvorišta čine prometne mreže kao infrastrukture koje čine temelj za gospodarske i političke strukture u regiji (Stellner i dr., 2023, 287).

Kako navodi Quium (2019, 11), sinergijski, katalitički učinak prometnih koridora u društveno-ekonomskom razvoju rezultat je formiranja sustava koji uključuje infrastrukturu, političke institucije, investicije. Prometni koridori, očekivano, imaju pozitivan učinak na gospodarstva zemalja. Hashemi i Abdelghany (2016), koji su istraživali procjenu stanja prometnih mreža u vezi s funkcioniranjem prometnih koridora, zaključili su da prometni koridori također osiguravaju povećanje blagostanja stanovništva. Isti autori također su istaknuli važnost koridora i mreža velikoga prometa, koji se sastoje od najvažnijih cesta i željeznica i čine nacionalnu prometnu okosnicu koja povezuje manje dovodne cestovne i željezničke veze.

Razvoj prometnih koridora mijenja se s tehnološkim napretkom tijekom vremena. Razvojem prometnih koridora država prevladava prostor, iskazuje svoju moć, ali i kontrolira svoj prostor, pa se posjedovanje teritorija mora pokazati i legitimirati učinkovitom teritorijalnom kontrolom. Tezu da su prometni koridori inherentno geopolitička stvar jer proizvode moć nalazimo već kod Allena (2003, 10–11): „Moć kao rezultat ne

should not, according to the intellectual, be expressed from the resource base, regardless of its size and volume’. It also results from ‘proximity or distance, presence or absence’, so the very structure of a space ‘serves as both a resource and a means by which power is exercised’.

The development of a given international transport corridor (ITC) is greatly influenced by the geopolitical considerations of the country, in particular, the desire to strengthen their foreign policy influence via modern infrastructure, reduce the geopolitical risks of entering the main markets, and diversify options for linking with global markets (Vardomsky, 2023, 66).

To conclude, transport corridors are studied by geopolitics of transport (and not only by economics of transport, transport geography etc.), hence their importance and effects fall into the interrelations between space and power, and as such are inherently geopolitical. Such corridors also have economic value, along with geopolitical value, and the reasoning behind their development, maintenance (as well as abandonment) is influenced by geopolitics along with geo-economic and geostrategic aspects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section contains a chronological overview of the selected literature that was not mentioned in the theoretical approach section, which, among other aspects provided, mainly studies the geographical features and geopolitical importance of transport corridors in the Western Balkans region and Croatia.

In the period following the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Magaš (1997) conducted a historical analysis of the geopolitical difficulties in Croatia. Although this paper is no longer contemporary, the underlying tensions within the region have not fully dissipated. The proverbial ghosts of the past continue to return in various forms, confirming the fact that many aspects of the 1990s geopolitical situation are here to stay.

Lalić (2003) believed that Pan-European Transport Corridor X remained central in the region, even though the war cut off transport completely and later influenced the fact that the importance of transport

može i ne treba, prema mišljenju intelektualca, biti izražena iz baze resursa, bez obzira na njezinu veličinu i obujam”. Ona također proizlazi iz „blizine ili udaljenosti, prisutnosti ili odsutnosti”, pa sama struktura prostora „služi i kao resurs i kao sredstvo kojim se vrši moć”.

Na razvoj određenoga međunarodnog prometnog koridora uvelike utječu geopolitička razmatranja država, posebice želja da modernom infrastrukturom ojačaju svoj vanjskopolički utjecaj, smanje geopolitičke rizike ulaska na glavna tržišta i diversificiraju mogućnosti povezivanja s globalnim tržištima (Vardomsky, 2023, 66).

Da zaključimo – prometne koridore proučava geopolitika prometa (a ne samo ekonomika prometa, prometna geografija itd.), stoga njihova važnost i učinci spadaju u pitanje međuodnosa prostora i moći te su kao takvi inherentno geopolitički. Osim ekonomske vrijednosti, prometni koridori posjeduju i geopolitičku vrijednost. Na razloge njihova razvoja, održavanja (kao i napuštanja) utječe geopolitika, a uključeni su i geoekonomske i geostrateški aspekti.

PREGLED DOSADAŠNJIH ISTRAŽIVANJA

Ovo poglavlje sadržava kronološki pregled odabrane literature koja nije spomenuta u poglavlju *Teorijski pristup*, a koja, među ostalim navedenim aspektima, uglavnom proučava geografska obilježja i geopolitičku važnost prometnih koridora u regiji Zapadni Balkan i Hrvatskoj.

U razdoblju neposredno nakon ratova u Hrvatskoj te Bosni i Hercegovini Magaš (1997) je proveo povijesnu analizu geopolitičkih poteškoća u susjednoj Hrvatskoj. Iako je ovaj rad napisan davno, temeljne napetosti unutar regije još nisu u potpunosti nestale, nego se vraćaju u različitim oblicima, potvrđujući činjenicu da su mnoge geopolitičke datosti tu da ostanu.

Lalić (2003) je smatrao da je X. paneuropski prometni koridor ostao središnji koridor regije iako je rat u potpunosti prekinuo promet i kasnije utjecao na to da se značaj prometnih koridora svakako promijenio, preusmjeravajući promet

corridors certainly changed, re-routing transport towards Greece and Turkey mainly, to the Adriatic Sea, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, respectively.

Ilić and Orešić (2004) have emphasized the unequal development of the transportation network in Croatia. They considered the road infrastructure in Croatia to be superior to other forms, e.g. railways, which is the fact that is still relevant even 20 years later, with railroad infrastructure lagging behind significantly.

Poletan Jugović (2008) studied the importance of the Pan-European Corridor Vc. This corridor passes through Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, this corridor connects two distant parts of Croatian territory in the shortest manner, and is therefore very important for Croatia. Its northernmost and southernmost parts in Bosnia and Herzegovina also pass through the parts of this state with the largest Croatian population, so it has two-fold geopolitical importance for Croatia.

Sić (2012, 63–64) displayed a slightly different perspective by emphasizing the importance of the development of Pan-European transport corridors for the development of the region around Osijek, also emphasizing the importance of Pan-European Corridor X (a modern four-lane highway that was finally completed to the border with Serbia in 2006), as well as Corridor VII (the Danube River). For improved transportation-geographical position of Osijek, a modern connection to Corridor X is very important, and was accomplished via the building of Corridor Vc to the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a connection to Corridor X at Sredanci.

Maglić and Poletan Jugović (2013) studied the importance of Pan European Corridor VII (the Danube river) both for a small European area, i.e. the country through which the corridor is transiting, and for the wider European area, which represents the wider catchment area and the potential market for this vital river corridor(in the context of transport and economic significance).

Bendeković et al. (2014, 267) highlighted another potential policy solution by proposing that Croatia should engage in further development of intermodal transport.

Mazrekaj (2016) discussed the importance of the connection between the Adriatic and Black seas, that bypasses Serbia (namely the Pan-European Corridor VIII) and passes through Albania. This corridor con-

uglavnom prema Grčkoj i Turskoj, Jadranskom moru, Mađarskoj, Bugarskoj i Rumunjskoj.

Ilić i Orešić (2004) istakli su neravnomjeran razvoj prometne mreže u Hrvatskoj. Cestovnu infrastrukturu u Hrvatskoj smatrali su superior-nom u odnosu na druge oblike, što je činjenica koja je aktualna i 20 godina kasnije, dok željeznička infrastruktura znatno zaostaje.

Poletan Jugović (2008) istraživala je značaj paneuropskoga koridora Vc. Taj koridor prolazi kroz Bosnu i Hercegovinu te najkraćim putem povezuje dva udaljena dijela hrvatskoga teritorija, stoga je vrlo važan za Hrvatsku. Njegov naj-sjeverniji i najjužniji dio u Bosni i Hercegovini prolazi i kroz najbrojnije dijelove ove države naseljene Hrvatima pa za Hrvatsku ima dvostruku geopolitičku važnost.

Sić (2012, 63–64) daje nešto drukčiju perspektivu ističući važnost razvoja paneuropskih prometnih koridora za razvoj regije oko Osijeka, ističući i važnost paneuropskog X. koridora (tek je 2006., zbog rata, dovršena moderna četve-rotračna autocesta do granice sa Srbijom) te VII. koridora (rijeka Dunav). Za bolji prometno-geografski položaj Osijeka vrlo je važna moderna veza s X. koridorom, ostvarena izgradnjom ko-ridora Vc do granice s BiH, s priključkom na X. koridor u Sredancima.

Maglić i Poletan Jugović (2013) istraživali su važnost VII. paneuropskog koridora (rijeka Dunav) za malo europsko područje, odnosno državu kroz koju koridor prolazi, ali i za šire europsko područje, koje predstavlja širi slijev, a potencijalno tržište za ovaj koridor predstavlja vitalni riječni koridor (u kontekstu prometne i gospodarske važnosti).

Bendeković i dr. (2014, 267) istaknuli su još jedno potencijalno političko rješenje predlažući da se Hrvatska treba uključiti u daljnji razvoj in-termodalnoga prijevoza.

Mazrekaj (2016) piše o važnosti veze između Jadranskoga i Crnoga mora, koja zaobilazi Srbi-ju, odnosno o paneuropskom koridoru VIII, koji prolazi kroz Albaniju i povezuje je s lukama Bari i Brindisi u Italiji te lukama Varna i Burgas u Bugarskoj. U izgradnji je VIII. koridor koji po-

nects the ports of Bari and Brindisi (via Albania) in Italy, and the ports of Varna and Burgas in Bulgaria. Corridor VIII is under construction, linking the Albanian port of Durres to Varna (Bulgaria) via Tirana, Qa-fe-Thane, Skopje, Deve Bair, Sofia, Plovdiv, and Burgas.

Ejupi and Stiperski (2018) studied the wider geo-political significance of the Preševo Valley, politically a part of Serbia, in the context of the (at the time of writ-ing) geopolitical idea of a possible exchange of territo-ries between Kosovo and Serbia (Northern Kosovo for the Preševo Valley), concluding that although Northern Kosovo would be of great importance for Serbia, the Preševo valley, which gives control of the Pan Europe-an Corridor X connection between land-locked Serbia and sea ports in Greece via North Macedonia, is of the utmost geopolitical and geo-economic importance for Serbia, thereby emphasizing the geopolitical influence of transport corridors in the Western Balkans area.

Šarić (2018, 1478) re-emphasized the importance of the geostrategic location of Croatia, as ‘an underutilized asset that could lead Croatia to have a more prominent role in the region’. As the author has explained: ‘Cro-atia, perhaps for the first time in 30 years, through a combination of circumstances, reached an extremely favourable energy and geo-economic position from a strategic point of view, thanks to the fact that, even be-fore the acquisition of Croatian state independence, it had greater capacities for energy transport, production and storage than were Croatian national needs’.

Kos et al. (2018) studied the importance of Corridor Vc for the port of Ploče, identifying the port of Bar as its direct competitor. Both ports primarily have the function of serving their immediate hinterland (eastern Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro, respec-tively), which at this point largely overlaps.

Croatia’s strategic position is significantly strength-ened by the Croatian LNG terminal at the port of Omišalj, on the island of Krk. This position has be-come even more important of the Russo-Ukraini-an War in 2022, especially because geopolitical and geo-economic games are being played with the transit of oil and gas through Ukraine, the latest of which (at the time of writing) being the end of Russian gas transit through Ukraine (*BBC*), which most nega-tively impacts Hungary and Slovakia, whose leaders are, at the same time, promoting the end of the war in Ukraine and have very good relations with Putin.

vezuje albansku luku Drač s Varnom (Bugarska) preko Tirane, Qafe-Thanea, Skopja, Deve Baira, Sofije, Plovdiva i Burgasa.

Ejupi i Stiperski (2018) istraživali su širi geo-politički značaj Preševske doline, politički dijela Srbije, u kontekstu (u vrijeme objavljivanja ovo-ga rada) geopolitičke ideje o mogućoj razmjeni teritorija između Kosova i Srbije (sjeverno Ko-sovo za Preševsku dolinu), zaključivši da bi, iako bi sjeverno Kosovo bilo od velike važnosti za Srbiju, Preševska dolina, kontrolirajući vezu pa-neuropskog koridora X između kopnene Srbije i morskih luka u Grčkoj kroz Sjevernu Makedo-niju, bila od najveće geopolitičke i geoekonom-ske važnosti za Srbiju, čime se naglašavaju ge-opolitički utjecaji na ulogu prometnih koridora na području Zapadnog Balkana.

Šarić (2018, 1478) ponovno naglašava važ-nost geostrateškoga položaja Hrvatske, kao „nedovoljno iskorištenog dobra koje bi moglo dovesti Hrvatsku do istaknutije uloge u regiji”. Kako je objasnio autor: „Hrvatska je, možda prvi put u 30 godina, spletom okolnosti, dospjela u strateški izuzetno povoljan energetska i geoe-konomski položaj, zahvaljujući činjenici da je i prije stjecanja hrvatske državne samostalnosti raspolagala većim kapacitetima za prijevoz, pro-izvodnju i skladištenje energije nego što su bile hrvatske nacionalne potrebe.”

Kos i dr. (2018) proučavali su važnost kori-dora Vc za luku Ploče, identificirajući Luku Bar kao njezina izravnoga konkurenta. Obje luke prvenstveno imaju funkciju opsluživanja svoga neposrednog zaleđa (istočne Bosne i Hercego-vine, odnosno Srbije i Crne Gore), što se u ovom trenutku u velikoj mjeri preklapa.

Strateški položaj Hrvatske bitno je ojačan hr-vatskim LNG terminalom u luci Omišalj na oto-ku Krku. Ova je pozicija postala još važnija od rusko-ukrajinskog rata 2022. godine, pogotovo zato što se igraju geopolitičke i geoekonomske igre s tranzitom nafte i plina kroz Ukrajinu, a posljednja je prekid tranzita ruskoga plina kroz Ukrajinu (BBC), što negativno najviše utječe na Mađarsku i Slovačku, čiji čelnici u isto vrijeme promoviraju kraj rata u Ukrajini i imaju vrlo do-bre odnose s Putinom.

Lozančić et al. (2020, 146) focused on the importance of sea transport. They have concluded that Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are at risk of being marginalized in key trade corridors. The authors also emphasized the geopolitical and geostrategic significance of the Belgrade-Bar railway line for Serbia, which was demanding and expensive to build. It was built with the help of the whole Yugoslav federation, and completed in 1976.

However, the freeway that would connect Serbia and Montenegro also represents a future important road transport corridor. Its outlying parts, from Podgorica to Kolašin in Montenegro, and from Belgrade to Čačak in Serbia, have already been built, nevertheless leaving the most difficult and the most expensive “middle” section, due to the extreme obstacles of the topography, still far from completion. The importance of this highway, besides the geopolitical goal of connecting the two countries, is also as an expedited means of transport for *jadarit*, an ore that contains lithium, in the Jadar River Valley in Western Serbia. The current Serbian government has major plans for the exploitation of lithium, despite strong opposition from environment organizations, civil society, and the local population (Benačić, 2024).

GEOPOLITICS OF TRANSPORT CORRIDORS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

As this paper is focused on the Western Balkans region and Croatia, the most important features of the Western Balkans region, that belong to the field of transport geopolitics, have to be mentioned first:

- 1) Geopolitical relations and the fact the Western Balkans is not a part of the EU represent an important factor in the development and further valorization of transport corridors in the region and its surroundings;
- 2) The Western Balkans represents the largest non-integrated part of Europe fully surrounded by EU territory, with half of its states (three out of six) being nevertheless the part of NATO. These six states together comprised a population of about 16.8 million (*World Bank, Population*) in 2023 (Albania 2.75, Bosnia-Herzegovina 3.21, Kosovo 1.76, Montenegro 0.62, North Macedonia 1.82, and Serbia 6.62 million), and that number is declining continuously.

Lozančić i sur. (2020, 146) fokusirali su se na važnost pomorskoga prometa. Zaključili su da su Hrvatska i Bosna i Hercegovina u opasnosti da budu marginalizirane na ključnim trgovinskim koridorima. Autori su istaknuli i geopolitički i geostrateški značaj željezničke pruge Beograd – Bar za Srbiju, koja je bila zahtjevna i skupa za izgradnju. Izgrađena je uz pomoć cijele jugoslavenske federacije, a dovršena 1976. godine.

No, autocesta koja bi povezivala Srbiju i Crnu Goru također predstavlja budući važan cestovni prometni koridor. Njegovi rubni dijelovi, od Podgorice do Kolašina u Crnoj Gori te od Beograda do Čačka u Srbiji, već su izgrađeni, ali je najteža i najskuplja „srednja” dionica, zbog ekstremnih reljefnih prepreka, još daleko od završetka. Važnost ove autoceste, osim geopolitičkoga cilja povezivanja dviju država, jest i u lakšem pristupu prijevozu minerala jadarita, rude koja sadržava litij, u dolini rijeke Jadar u zapadnoj Srbiji, za čiju eksploataciju sadašnja Vlada Srbije ima velike planove unatoč snažnom protivljenju ekoloških organizacija, civilnoga društva i lokalnoga stanovništva (Benačić, 2024).

GEOPOLITIKA PROMETNIH KORIDORA NA ZAPADNOM BALKANU

Kako je ovaj rad fokusiran na regiju Zapadnog Balkana i Hrvatsku, potrebno je prije svega spomenuti najvažnije značajke Zapadnog Balkana koje pripadaju području prometne geopolitike:

- 1) Geopolitički odnosi i činjenica da Zapadni Balkan nije dio EU-a predstavljaju bitan čimbenik u razvoju i daljnjoj valorizaciji prometnih koridora u regiji i okruženju.
- 2) Zapadni Balkan predstavlja najveći neintegrirani dio EU-a, u potpunosti okružen teritorijem EU-a, pri čemu je polovica njegovih država (tri od šest) ipak dio NATO-a. Tih šest država 2023. g. (Svjetska banka, stanovništvo) zajedno ima oko 16,8 milijuna stanovnika (Albanija 2,75, Bosna i Hercegovina 3,21, Kosovo 1,76, Crna Gora 0,62, Sjeverna Makedonija 1,82 i Srbija 6,62 milijuna), a taj broj kontinuirano opada. Pad stanovništva u svim je državama Zapadnog

The population decline in all Western Balkans states except North Macedonia and Montenegro (so far) started during the 1990s, with two of the states mentioned following during the late 2010s. The overall GDP of the region was about 157.8 billion US\$ (current) (*World Bank, GDP*) estimateed for 2023 (Albania 22.98, Bosnia-Herzegovina 27.05, Kosovo 10.44, Montenegro 7.4, North Macedonia 14.76, Serbia 75.19 billion). Clearly, the largest country of the region is Serbia, comprising 39.4% of the region’s population and about 47.6% of its GDP. Nevertheless, this perceived “dominance” of Serbia is based mostly on its favourable geographical position, as the centrally located country in the region; in reality its economic power is weak, even compared to Croatia (3.85 million people – with roughly 58% of Serbia’s population and 82.69 billion GDP in current US\$, Croatia produces about 110% of Serbia’s GDP). The GDP per capita (PPP, current US\$) of the most “developed” Western Balkans state (Montenegro, 31 216) is still lower than in the least developed EU member state (Bulgaria, 38.690), only showing how all of these states are lagging behind in their economic development due to, among other reasons, being left out of the EU.

- 3) The largest foreign investors in the region are not the countries from the region, but from the EU. However, Russian and Chinese strategic investments (energy sector, infrastructure, banking) in some countries of the region (Serbia, Montenegro, and Serb-governed part of Bosnia-Herzegovina) have to be considered, hence these have clear geopolitical and geo-economic aims of containing the influence of the EU and promoting their own (Juzova, 2024).
- 4) The eastern part of the Western Balkans (alongside the Danube, Morava, and Vardar rivers) is much more important for transport corridor valorization than the central and especially southwestern part of the region. The reasons arise from physical-geographic features of both parts of the Western Balkans region (in the eastern part these are much more favourable for infrastructure building), which have influenced the fact, along with a historical legacy (the fact that Serbia was the politically dominant in both Yugoslav states from 1918 to 1991) that the Morava-Vardar Corridor remains the vital link of

Balkana, osim Sjeverne Makedonije i Crne Gore (do sada), započeo još tijekom 1990-ih godina, a u dvjema od njih uslijedio je tijekom kasnih 2010-ih godina. Ukupni BDP regije (Svjetska banka, BDP, procjena za 2023. g.) iznosio je oko 157,8 milijardi američkih dolara (Albanija 22,98, Bosna i Hercegovina 27,05, Kosovo 10,44, Crna Gora 7,4, Sjeverna Makedonija 14,76, Srbija 75,19 milijardi). Jasno je da je najveća zemlja regije Srbija, koja čini 39,4 % stanovništva regije i oko 47,6 % njezina BDP-a. Ipak, ova percipirana „dominacija” Srbije uglavnom se temelji na njezinu povoljnom geografskom položaju kao središnje smještene zemlje u regiji. Naime, njezina je ekonomska moć slaba, čak i u usporedbi s Hrvatskom (3,85 milijuna stanovnika – s cca. 58 % stanovništva Srbije i 82,69 milijardi BDP-a u tekućim američkim dolarima Hrvatska proizvodi oko 110 % BDP-a Srbije). BDP po stanovniku (prema jedinicama kupovne moći, američki dolari) „najrazvijenije” države Zapadnog Balkana (Crna Gora, 31 216) i dalje je niži nego u najnerazvijenijoj članici EU-a (Bugarska, 38 690), što samo pokazuje koliko te države zaostaju u svom gospodarskom razvoju, među ostalim, zbog toga što su izostavljene iz EU-a.

3) Najveći inozemni investitori u regiji nisu zemlje iz regije, već iz EU-a. Međutim, ruska i kineska strateška ulaganja (energetski sektor, infrastruktura, bankarstvo) u nekim zemljama regije (Srbija, Crna Gora i dio Bosne i Hercegovine pod većinskom srpskom upravom) moraju se uzeti u obzir jer imaju jasan geopolitički i geoekonomske cilj obuzdavanja utjecaja EU-a i promicanja vlastitoga (Juzova, 2024).

4) Istočni dio Zapadnog Balkana (uz rijeke Dunav, Moravu i Vardar) mnogo je važniji za valorizaciju prometnoga koridora od središnjega i posebno jugozapadnoga dijela regije. Razlozi proizlaze iz fizičko-geografskih značajki obaju dijelova regije Zapadnog Balkana (u istočnom dijelu one su puno povoljnije za izgradnju infrastrukture), koje su utjecale na činjenicu da, uz povijesno nasljeđe (činjenica da je Srbija bila politički dominantniji dio u objema jugoslavenskim državama od 1918. do 1991. godine), moravsko-varbarski koridor ostane vitalna

the eastern part of the region, and its intraregional importance as a connection between Greece/Bulgaria and Hungary and the rest of Central Europe keeps growing, with a key fact that transport from Belgrade is being increasingly diverted towards Budapest and further into Central Europe, thereby bypassing Croatia and Slovenia;

- 5) Out of six states comprising the region, three (Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Serbia) are land-locked, depending fully on neighbouring states for port access, and one state (Bosnia-Herzegovina) is de facto land-locked in terms of goods transport, depending mostly on the Croatian seaport of Ploče. This situation emphasizes the importance of seaports in “non land-locked” states (Bar in Montenegro for Serbia, and Durres in Albania for Kosovo) within the region and also in the neighbouring states (Ploče, Split and Rijeka in Croatia, Piraeus and Thessaloniki in Greece). Additionally, the importance of seaports for other landlocked states from Central Europe needs to be mentioned (mainly Trieste and Koper for Austria and Hungary, and Rijeka and Piraeus for Hungary);
- 6) Transport corridors in the Western Balkans region (except Albania) and Croatia still dominantly represent a legacy from the past, from the period of two joint states in the 20th century, although the situation has somewhat changed. Certain corridors that are part of today’s TEN-T network have in the former periods been completely neglected or even de-facto closed (e.g. all connections to Albania during most of the Cold War period). The example of previous neglect is the B branch of Pan European Corridor X (Budapest-Belgrade), which is now favoured by Serbia instead of Corridor X. A similar example is the Vb corridor, favoured by Croatia instead of Corridor X, reflecting the general economic decline of the Slavonia region (Matišić and Pejnović, 2015) after the Croatian War of Independence (in Croatia called the Homeland War). Namely, both states have, after the breakup of Yugoslavia, decided to pursue their own geopolitical and economic interests, without any influence from supra-national notions of former Yugoslavia, reflecting the fact that transport Corridor X remains an important European transport corridor, mainly for transit traffic.

poveznica istočnoga dijela regije i da njegova unutarregionalna važnost, kao poveznice između Grčke/Bugarske i Mađarske s ostatkom Srednje Europe i dalje raste, pri čemu je ključna činjenica da se iz Beograda promet sve više preusmjerava prema Budimpešti i dalje u Srednju Europu, zaobilazeći tako Hrvatsku i Sloveniju.

5) Od šest država koje čine regiju, tri (Kosovo, Sjeverna Makedonija i Srbija) su bez izlaza na more (kontinentske), što znači da u potpunosti ovisi o pristupu morskim lukama susjednih država, a jedna država (Bosna i Hercegovina) je *de facto* bez izlaza na more u smislu prijevoza robe, te ovisi uglavnom o hrvatskoj morskoj luci Ploče. Ova situacija naglašava važnost morskih luka u državama koje nisu kontinentske (Bar u Crnoj Gori za Srbiju i Drač u Albaniji za Kosovo) u regiji, kao i u susjednim državama (Ploče, Split i Rijeka u Hrvatskoj, Pirej i Solun u Grčkoj). Dodatno, potrebno je spomenuti važnost morskih luka za druge države srednje Europe bez izlaza na more (uglavnom Trst i Kopar za Austriju i Mađarsku te Rijeka i Pirej za Mađarsku).

6) Prometni koridori u regiji Zapadnog Balkana (osim Albanije) i Hrvatske još uvijek dominantno predstavljaju nasljeđe iz prošlosti, iz razdoblja dviju zajedničkih država u 20. stoljeću iako se situacija donekle promijenila. Određeni koridori koji su dio današnje TEN-T mreže u prijašnjim su razdobljima bili potpuno zanečarani ili čak *de facto* zatvoreni (npr. sve veze s Albanijom tijekom većega dijela razdoblja hladnoga rata). Primjer prethodnoga zanemarivanja jest ogranak B paneuropskog koridora X. (Budimpešta – Beograd), koji sada favorizira Srbija umjesto X. koridora. Sličan primjer je koridor Vb, koji preferira Hrvatska umjesto X. koridora, što odražava opće gospodarsko propadanje slavonske regije (Matišić i Pejnović, 2015) nakon posljednjega (Domovinskog) rata. Naime, obje države su nakon raspada Jugoslavije odlučile slijediti vlastite geopolitičke, a u ovim slučajevima i gospodarske interese, bez nametnute političke volje iz sada već nepostojeće federacije, što se odrazilo na činjenicu da X. prometni koridor ostaje važan europski prometni koridor uglavnom za tranzitni promet.

Geopolitical challenges and their continuing impact on the transport corridors in the Western Balkans region

Up to the beginning of what now can be referred to as the Russo-Ukrainian War, or War in the Ukraine, in February 2022, it seemed that after the years if not decades of continuous weak successes, the Western Balkans region lost its relevance for the EU, mainly due to internal problems of the EU and so-called “enlargement fatigue”.

Although promised a full EU membership, at least declaratively, in 2003, more than 20 years later, out of the whole initial Western Balkans groups of states, only Croatia managed to join the EU (in 2013). It seems unlikely that, in 2030, any of the Western Balkans countries will be an EU member state, reflecting the continuous hindrance and obstacles to integration. Namely, there are continuing tensions between Serbia and Kosovo, the rising influence of Serbia in Montenegro (Kulačin, 2024), the internal dysfunctionality and separatist tendencies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, numerous internal problems of North Macedonia, in addition to its relations with Bulgaria and Albania. The argument that EU membership of some or all states of the Western Balkans should happen, only to prevent external players from exerting greater influence is logically flawed; the NATO alliance already surrounds the most problematic parts of the region via the membership of the states from the southern part of the region, i.e. Albania (since 2009), Montenegro (2017), and North Macedonia (2020), and the NATO membership of all EU member states that surround the Western Balkans region.

Serbia remains the only state in the region that opposes NATO membership, declaring itself neutral in military terms, and maintaining strong relations with Russia, China, and Hungary; and Hungary’s Orban regime is the clearest internal opposition to the NATO and EU policies towards Ukraine (and in other important aspects, such as migration policy) and maintains important economic and political relations with Russia, concurrently promoting the membership of Serbia in the EU and showing understanding for separatist tendencies in the Serb-governed part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Accepting all Western Balkans states (with or without Serbia), without the fulfilment of rigorous and meticulous criteria in the EU membership, would mean proverbially ingesting all

Geopolitički izazovi i njihov kontinuirani utjecaj na prometne koridore u regiji Zapadnog Balkana

Do početka onoga što se sada može nazvati rusko-ukrajinskim ratom ili ratom u Ukrajini, u veljači 2022. g., činilo se da je nakon godina, ako ne i desetljeća, kontinuiranih slabih uspjeha regija Zapadnog Balkana izgubila svoju važnost za EU, uglavnom zbog unutarnjih problema EU-a i takozvanog „zamora od proširenja”.

Iako joj je punopravno članstvo u EU-u, barem deklarativno, obećano još 2003. godine, više od 20 godina nakon toga obećanja od čitave početne skupine država Zapadnog Balkana jedino je Hrvatska uspjela ući u EU (2013. g.). Čini se vjerojatnim da 2030. godine ni jedna od zemalja Zapadnog Balkana neće biti članica EU-a, što odražava stalne smetnje i prepreke integraciji. Naime, prisutne su stalne napetosti između Srbije i Kosova, rastući utjecaj Srbije u Crnoj Gori (Kulačin, 2024), unutarnja nefunkcionalnost i separatističke tendencije u Bosni i Hercegovini, uz brojne unutarnje probleme Sjeverne Makedonije te njezine odnose s Bugarskom i Albanijom. Argument da bi do članstva u EU-u nekih ili svih država Zapadnog Balkana trebalo doći samo kako bi se vanjski igrači spriječili u ostvarivanju većega utjecaja logički je pogrešan; NATO savez naime već okružuje najproblematičnije dijelove regije kroz članstvo država iz južnoga dijela regije Albanije (od 2009. g.), Crne Gore (2017. g.) i Sjeverne Makedonije (2020. g.), a članstvo u NATO-u imaju i sve države članice EU-a koje okružuju regiju Zapadnog Balkana.

Stoga Srbija ostaje jedina država u regiji koja se protivi članstvu u NATO-u, proglašavajući se vojno neutralnom i održavajući čvrste odnose s Rusijom, Kinom i Mađarskom. Orbanov je režim najjasnija unutarnja opozicija politici NATO-a i EU-a prema Ukrajini (i u drugim važnim aspektima, poput migracijske politike) te održava važne gospodarske i političke odnose s Rusijom, istodobno promičući članstvo Srbije u EU-u i pokazujući razumijevanje za separatističke tendencije u dijelu Bosne i Hercegovine pod većinskom srpskom upravom. Primanje svih država Zapadnog Balkana (sa Srbijom ili bez nje) bez ispunjavanja rigoroznih i pedantnih kriterija u članstvo EU samo bi značilo da EU ima veliki problem unutar

of these countries’ current issues rather than having them outside its borders.

Geopolitical conditions and their influence on the development and modernization of contemporary transport corridors in the Western Balkans

Geopolitical conditions in the Western Balkans that influence the prioritizing of transport corridors is analyzed in this part of the paper, via the analysis of the factors that influence it, such as geopolitical orientation of states, relations between Western Balkans states, and inherited problems and difficulties that are mainly a product of the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

The TEN-T corridor, Western Balkans-Eastern Mediterranean, by far the most important corridor for the Western Balkans region. It has more branches in its transport corridor network than the previous network of Pan-European transport corridors (primarily it expanded the network of Corridor X). The positive difference is mostly visible in Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Albania, hence several new corridor branches were added: parts of the so-called Ibarska

sebe umjesto da ima savladiv problem na svojim granicama.

Geopolitičko promišljanje i njegov utjecaj na razvoj i modernizaciju suvremenih prometnih koridora na Zapadnom Balkanu

Ovdje se analizira geopolitičko promišljanje na Zapadnom Balkanu koje utječe na pridavanje prvenstva pojedinim prometnim koridorima na temelju čimbenika koji na to utječu, kao što su geopolitička orijentacija država, odnosi među državama Zapadnog Balkana te naslijeđeni problemi i poteškoće koji su uglavnom posljedica raspada Jugoslavije 1990-ih godina.

TEN-T koridor Zapadni Balkan – Istočni Mediteran, daleko najvažniji koridor za regiju Zapadnog Balkana, uključio je više ogranaka u mrežu prometnih koridora od prethodne mreže paneuropskih prometnih koridora (prvenstveno je proširio mrežu X. koridora). Pozitivna razlika najviše je vidljiva u Srbiji, Kosovu, Crnoj Gori i Albaniji, gdje je dodano nekoliko novih ogranaka koridora: dijelovi tzv. Ibarske magistrale (i njezina veza do-

Tab. 1 Pan-European transport corridors and Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) corridors traversing Croatia and the Western Balkans
Tab. 1. Paneuropski prometni koridori i koridori Transeuropske prometne mreže (TEN-T) koji prolaze kroz Hrvatsku i zapadni Balkan

Pan-European transport corridors / Paneuropski prometni koridori	TEN-T corridors / TEN-T koridori
V – Venice / Venecija – Trieste / Trst / Kopar – Ljubljana – Maribor – Budapest / Budimpešta – Uzhhorod – Lviv –Kiev / Kijev Branch B / Ogranak B: Rijeka – Zagreb – Budapest /Budimpešta Branch C / Ogranak C: Ploče – Sarajevo – Osijek – Budapest / Budimpešta	Baltic Sea – Adriatic Sea Corridor / Koridor Baltičko more – Jadransko more
VII – Danube River / Rijeka Dunav	Rhein-Danube Corridor / Koridor Rajna – Dunav (Sjeverno more – Crno more)
VIII – Durres / Drač – Elbasan – Skopje – Sofia /Sofija – Plovdiv – Burgas – Varna	Mediterranean Corridor / Sredozemni koridor
X – Salzburg – Ljubljana – Zagreb – Beograd – Niš – Skopje – Veles – Thessaloniki/Solun Branch A / Ogranak A: Graz – Maribor – Zagreb Branch B / Ogranak B: Budapest/Budimpešta – Novi Sad – Beograd Branch C / Ogranak C: Niš – Sofia/Sofija – Plovdiv – Dimitrovgrad – Istanbul Branch D / Ogranak D: Veles – Prilep – Bitola – Florina – Igoumenitsa	Western Balkans-Eastern Mediterranean Corridor / Koridor Zapadni Balkan – Istočno Sredozemlje

Geopolitics and the development of transport corridors: a comparative analysis of the Western Balkans and Croatia

Geopolitika i razvoj prometnih koridora: komparativna analiza Zapadnog Balkana i Hrvatske

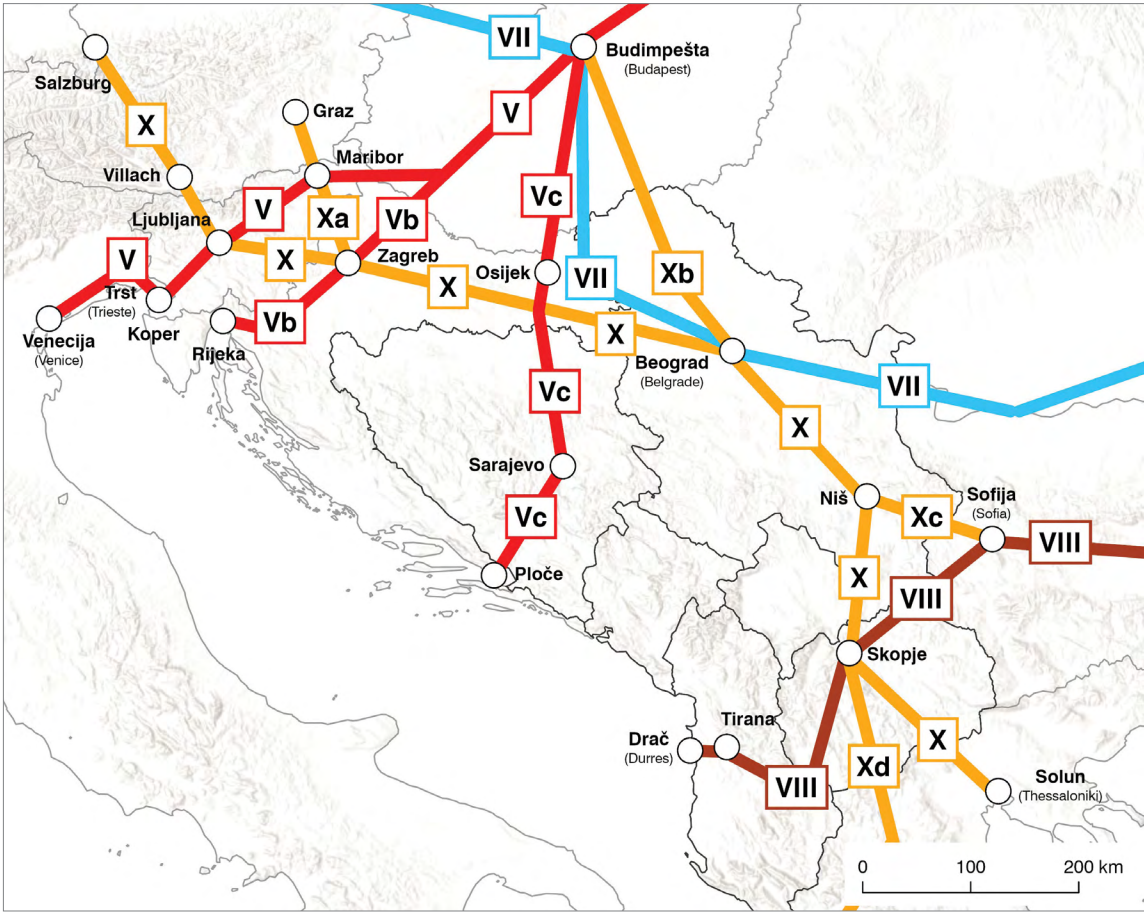


Fig. 1 Pan-European Transport Corridors traversing the Western Balkans and Croatia
Sl. 1. Paneuropski prometni koridori koji prolaze Zapadnim Balkanom i Hrvatskom

Source: Map devised by the author
Izvor: vlastita izrada autora

magistrala (and its connection through the valley of Zapadna Morava with Corridor X), as well the Belgrade-Bar railway line (and the future highway), reaffirming the importance of geostrategic/geotrafic position of Serbia as a centrally located state in the Balkans. Additionally, the TEN-T network has included Kosovo and Montenegro into the network of European corridors.

Geopolitical conditions influence the development and modernisation of transport corridors in Serbia, and are a product of a country’s geopolitical orientation, as a self-proclaimed neutral state. This orientation is visible in the development, although also with delays (*Vreme.com*) of the B branch of Corridor X, as a part of the connection between Piraeus and Budapest, concurrently hindering the necessary modernisation

linom Zapadne Morave s X. koridorom) te željeznička pruga Beograd – Bar (i buduća autocesta), čime se još jednom potvrđuje važnost geostrateškoga/geoprometnoga položaja Srbije kao centralno smještene države na Balkanu. Dodatno, mreža TEN-T uključila je Kosovo i Crnu Goru u mrežu europskih koridora.

Geopolitičko promišljanje utječe na razvoj i modernizaciju prometnih koridora u Srbiji, a rezultat je trenutne geopolitičke orijentacije zemlje kao samoproglašene neutralne države. Ta je orijentacija vidljiva u razvoju, iako i s kašnjenjem (*Vreme.com*) B ogranka X. koridora, kao dijela veze između Pireja i Budimpešte, istovremeno otežavajući potrebnu modernizaciju željezničke pruge od Beograda do Šida, kao dijela X. koridora do grani-

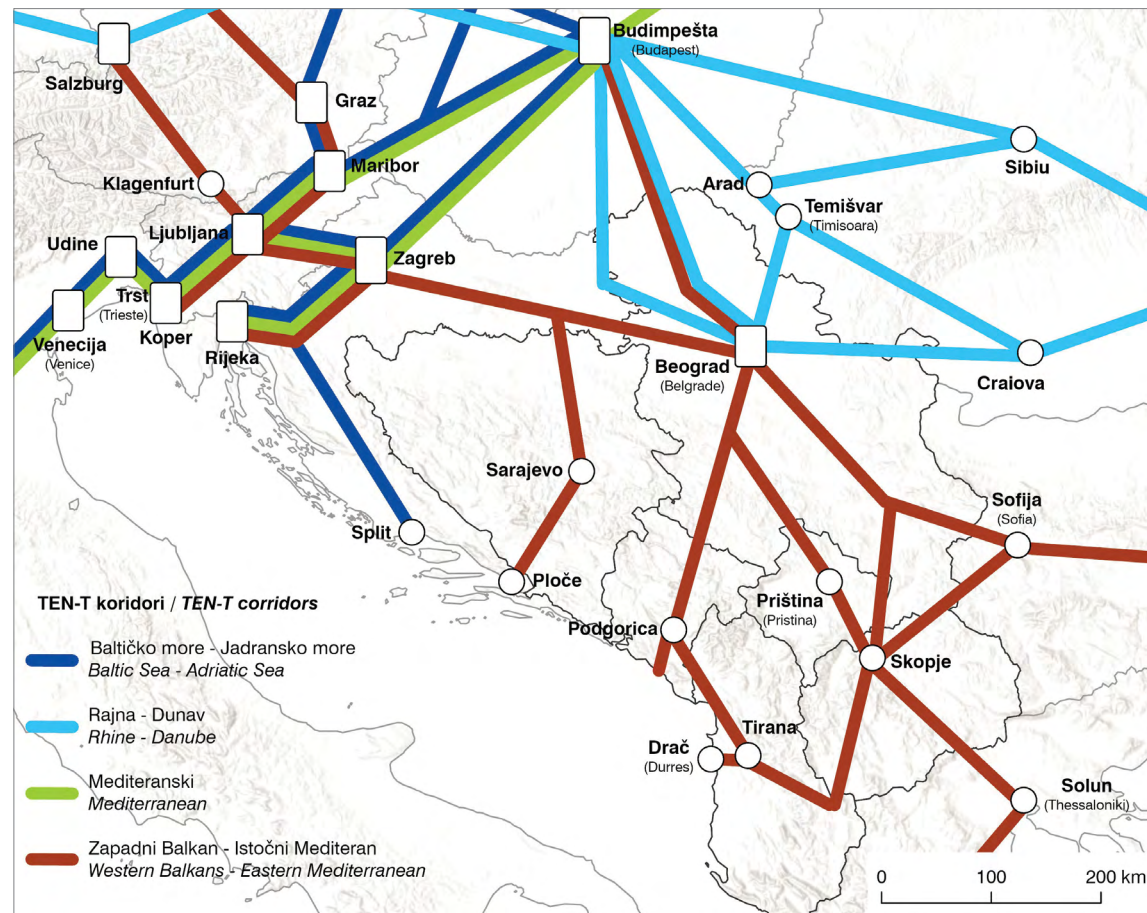


Fig. 2 TEN-T corridors traversing the Western Balkans and Croatia
Sl. 2. TEN-T koridori koji prolaze preko Zapadnog Balkana i Hrvatske

Source: Map devised by the author
Izvor: vlastita izrada autora

of the railway line from Belgrade to Šid, as a part of the Corridor X to the border with Croatia. Corridor X and its branches B and C pass through Serbia, which has given most emphasis to the B branch of the Corridor X, connecting Budapest and Belgrade. Hence a modern highway already exists on this route, a modern railway line for speeds up to 200kph was built from Belgrade to Novi Sad by Chinese and Russian state-owned companies, with a continuation to Subotica and the border with Hungary. China also has a strategic interest in connecting Piraeus and Budapest, as part of its Belt and Road initiative.

The current geopolitical orientation of Serbia, together with the history that still burdens Serbia-Croatia relations, is the main reason for shifting efforts and traffic towards the B branch of Corridor X. Historical

ce s Hrvatskom. X. koridor i njegovi ogranci B i C prolaze kroz Srbiju, koja je počela stavljati najveći naglasak na B ogranak X. koridora, koji povezuje Budimpeštu i Beograd. Naime, na toj trasi već postoji moderna autocesta, izgrađena je moderna željeznička pruga za brzine do 200 km/h od Beograda do Novog Sada, koju grade kineske i ruske državne tvrtke, s nastavkom do Subotice te granice s Mađarskom. Kina također ima strateški interes za povezivanje Pireja i Budimpešte, kao dijela svoje inicijative Pojas i put.

Trenutna geopolitička orijentacija Srbije, zajedno s prošlošću, koja još uvijek opterećuje odnose Srbije i Hrvatske, glavni je razlog preusmjerenja napora i prometa prema B ogranku X. koridora. Toj stvarnosti pridonose i povijesne činjenice: Hr-

facts contribute to this reality: Croatia and Serbia are no longer the two largest federative units of a single state, Belgrade and Zagreb are no longer the two largest cities of a unified state, the border of Hungary is no longer de facto closed for goods passing to and from “the West”, as “the Eastern bloc” ceased to exist more than three decades ago. The fact that Corridor X was closed during half of the 1990s diverted traffic flows. Other efforts on the part of Serbia in developing international transport corridors also include the modernisation of the railway line Niš-Dimitrovgrad (on the border with Bulgaria), with the highway at the same route already finished in 2019, part of the C branch of Pan European Corridor X, which then links with Corridor IV, connecting Sofia and Istanbul with Serbia and consequently, Central Europe.

Geopolitical conditions in developing transport corridors are also visible in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is mainly seen in the internal organization of the state and its internal relations. This fact is expressed in the opposed priorities of two entities when it comes to developing and modernising transport corridors. The Serb-governed entity has been developing a west-east oriented highway, and aims to connect Banja Luka with the border of Serbia (*Granice Doboja*) while concurrently showing a lack of interest for the development of Corridor Vc. It is also interested in constructing a highway connection with Croatia, from Banja Luka to Okučani, where this highway would connect with Corridor X. The Bosniak and Croat governed entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is interested in and supports the completion of the Vc Corridor highway (a part of the TEN-T Corridor Western Balkans-Eastern Mediterranean) that passes through the valleys of the Bosna and Neretva rivers and would end at the Adriatic Sea coast, also connecting the most eastern and most southern parts of Croatia via Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Vc Corridor railway line, from Šamac via Sarajevo to Ploče (a Croatian port and the main transit sea port of Bosnia-Herzegovina) exists, but it needs modernisation and reconstruction, which was delayed after the Jablanica tragedy (*Klik Ploče*). This railway corridor also needs more modernisation and electrification in Croatia, from the border with Hungary via Beli Manastir and Osijek to Strizivojna-Vrpolje, where the connection with Corridor X is achieved, to Šamac, the border station with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to all the

vatska i Srbija više nisu dvije najveće federalne jedinice jedne države, Beograd i Zagreb više nisu dva najveća grada jedinstvene države, granica Mađarske više nije *de facto* zatvorena za robe koje prolaze sa Zapada i na Zapad jer je Istočni blok prestao postojati prije više od tri desetljeća. Činjenica da je X. koridor bio zatvoren tijekom polovice 1990-ih preusmjerila je prometne tokove. Ostali naponi Srbije u razvoju međunarodnih prometnih koridora također uključuju modernizaciju željezničke pruge Niš – Dimitrovgrad (granica s Bugarskom), pri čemu je autocesta na istoj trasi već završena 2019. godine i dio je ogranka C paneuropskoga X. koridora, koji se potom spaja s IV. koridorom, povezujući Sofiju i Istanbul sa Srbijom i posljedično srednjom Europom.

Geopolitičko promišljanje u razvoju prometnih koridora vidljivo je i u Bosni i Hercegovini i uglavnom odražava unutarnje uređenje države i njezine unutarnje odnose. Ova činjenica dolazi do izražaja u suprotstavljenim prioritetima dvaju entiteta kada su u pitanju razvoj i modernizacija prometnih koridora. Entitet pod vlašću bosanskih Srba razvija autocestu orijentiranu zapad-istok te ima za cilj spojiti Banju Luku s granicom Srbije (granice Doboja), istovremeno pokazujući nezainteresiranost za razvoj koridora Vc. Također su zainteresirani za izgradnju moderne cestovne veze s Hrvatskom, od Banje Luke do Okučana, gdje bi se ova autocesta spojila s X. koridorom. Nesrpski entitet u BiH, Federacija BiH, zainteresirana je i podržava dovršetak autoceste na koridoru Vc (dio TEN-T koridora Zapadni Balkan – Istočno Sredozemlje), koja prolazi kroz doline rijeka Bosne i Neretve, a završavala bi na obali Jadranskog mora, povezujući također najistočnije i najjužnije dijelove Hrvatske preko susjedne države. Željeznička pruga koridora Vc, od Šamca preko Sarajeva do Ploča (koja se nalazi u Hrvatskoj i glavna je tranzitna luka Bosne i Hercegovine) postoji, ali joj je potrebna modernizacija i rekonstrukcija, dodatno usporena nakon tragedije u Jablanici (*Klik Ploče*). I ovom željezničkom koridoru potrebna je dodatna modernizacija i elektrifikacija u Hrvatskoj, od granice s Mađarskom preko Belog Manastira i Osijeka do Strizivojne-Vrpolja, gdje se povezuje s X. koridorom, do Šamca, graničnoga kolodvora s Bosnom i Hercegovinom. Zbog svih naslijeđenih

inherited problems of Bosnia and Herzegovina, only about 40% of the highway on the Vc Transport Corridor within this country has been built. Namely, only about 130 out of total 336 km that traverse Bosnia and Herzegovina (about 285 km should pass through the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 51 km through Republika Srpska, once it will be completed). The sections from the border with Croatia at Svilaj to Odžak, from (approximately) Zenica to the south of Sarajevo, and from Mostar to the border with Croatia, connected with the Croatian highway A1, are the only sections that have been constructed so far (*Autoceste BiH*). The motorway route, divided into four sections, passes through geo-morphologically demanding terrain, requiring construction of tunnels (70 km) and bridges (30 km). Several limitations are also connected with Vc Corridor development as important industrial centres and transport hubs (Banja Luka, Prijedor, Bihać, Bijeljina, Tuzla, Zvornik, Trebinje, etc.) remain excluded from the direct impact of the Corridor (Kos et al., 2018, 471–472). The Serb-governed entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not vitally interested in building this highway nor it is particularly interested in modernising the Vc Corridor railway line, and it has its own geopolitical priorities expressed via highways that it considers vital, although there has been some construction around the city of Doboj, where the corridor traverses the Republic of Srpska.

Geopolitical conditions, reflecting the “new reality”, also influence the decision-makers in Kosovo when pursuing the development of transport corridors, as well the influence of external actors, such as the USA. Kosovo is connected with the railway and road network of Serbia, by the so-called *Ibarska magistrala* (part of the TEN-T Corridor) and by the railway line and road Niš–Priština. Due to geopolitical conditions and the fact Serbia does not recognize its independence, Kosovo is more interested in developing road connections with Albania. The highway connection (66 kilometres on the territory of Kosovo) with North Macedonia, from Priština to Skopje, has already been built by the US-Turkish consortium Bechtel-ENKA. Nevertheless, on the Macedonian side, with only 12 kilometres to be built, the construction is very slow, and still not finished (*Al-Jazeera*). The railway connection on the same route already exists and connects the core of Kosovo to Corridor X in Skopje. Both are parts of the more recently established TEN-T corridor

problema Bosne i Hercegovine autocesta na prometnom koridoru Vc unutar ove zemlje izgrađena je tek oko 40 %. Naime, izgrađeno je svega oko 130 od ukupno 336 km, koliko prolazi kroz Bosnu i Hercegovinu. Oko 285 km bi, jednom kad bi autocesta bila gotova, prolazilo kroz Federaciju BiH, a 51 km kroz Republiku Srpsku. Dionice od granice s Hrvatskom kod Svilaja do Odžaka, od (otprilike) Zenice do južno od Sarajeva te od Mostara do granice s Hrvatskom povezane s hrvatskom autocestom A1 jedine su do sada izgrađene (Autoceste BiH). Trasa autoceste, podijeljena u četiri dionice, prolazi kroz geomorfološki zahtjevne terene koji zahtijevaju izgradnju tunela (70 km) i mostova (30 km). Nekoliko ograničenja također je povezano s razvojem koridora Vc jer važni industrijski centri i prometna čvorišta (Banja Luka, Prijedor, Bihać, Bijeljina, Tuzla, Zvornik, Trebinje itd.) ostaju isključeni iz izravnoga utjecaja koridora (Kos i sur., 2018, 471–472). Bosanskohercegovački entitet pod srpskom upravom nije vitalno zainteresiran za izgradnju ove autoceste niti je posebno zainteresiran za modernizaciju željezničke pruge koridora Vc, stoga ima svoje geopolitičke prioritete izražene kroz autoceste koje smatra vitalnim za entitet iako se nešto gradilo oko grada Doboja, gdje koridor prolazi kroz Republiku Srpsku.

Geopolitičko promišljanje, odražavajući „novu stvarnost”, također utječe na donositelje odluka na Kosovu kad se radi o razvoju prometnih koridora, kao i utjecaj vanjskih aktera poput SAD-a. Kosovo je povezano sa željezničkom i cestovnom mrežom Srbije, tzv. Ibarskom magistralom (dio TEN-T koridora) te željezničkom prugom i cestom Niš – Priština. Zbog geopolitičkih razloga i činjenice da Srbija ne priznaje njegovu neovisnost Kosovo je više zainteresirano za cestovno povezivanje s Albanijom. Modernu cestovnu vezu, autocestom (66 kilometara na teritoriju Kosova), sa Sjevernom Makedonijom, od Prištine do Skopja, već je izgradio američko-turski konzorcij Bechtel-ENKA. Ipak, s makedonske strane, sa samo 12 kilometara koje treba izgraditi, gradnja je vrlo spora i još uvijek nije završena (*Al-Jazeera*). Željeznička veza na istoj ruti već postoji i povezuje jezgru Kosova s X. koridorom u Skopju. Oba su dijelovi nedavno uspostavljene mreže TEN-T koridora. Ovaj koridor također je vezan uz geopolitičku sudbinu Kosova.

network. This corridor is also ‘connected with the geopolitical fate of Kosovo, also when it comes to transport corridors is the already mentioned Preševo valley, located on the edge of the ethnic Albanian area, but the fact that the Corridor X passes through it gives great geopolitical significance to Kosovo, Albania, and to ethnic Albanian areas in Serbia and North Macedonia’ (Ejupi and Stiperski, 2018, 230). Kosovo is currently trying to build a highway that would connect its north-eastern (border with Serbia and Merdare, also a railway border crossing on the Niš–Priština–Kosovo Polje railway line) and southwestern parts (with a border crossing near Kukës) with a connection to Albania to the important Albanian sea port of Durrës, thereby connecting itself to the Pan European Corridor VIII and lowering the dependence on transit transport through North Macedonia to seaports in Greece.

In *Montenegro*, geopolitical conditions have heavily influenced the development of transport corridors, mainly due to Serbia. Montenegro has been historically and traditionally connected to and geopolitically oriented (sometimes willingly and sometimes by force) towards Serbia, and achieved its contemporary political independence only in 2006. Since then, the country has managed to join NATO (2017) and is currently in accession negotiations with the EU. Regarding the transport corridors, the country is heavily dependent on the Belgrade–Bar railway line (the only one connecting it with the European railway network), which has been included in the TEN-T. The railway line from Podgorica to Tuzi, connecting Montenegro and Albania has also been included in the TEN-T. A modern highway was built by a Chinese state-owned company from the capital city of Podgorica to Kolašin, almost bankrupting the country (*Biznis Ba*), due to its higher than expected costs, with a loan provided by China, thereby exposing the country to the Chinese geopolitical influence. Consequently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) saved Montenegro from falling into a Chinese debt-trap. As for the land connections with the EU, there is only one principal road connection with Croatia (*Jadranska magistrala*). The country, in terms of transportation-geographical corridors and connections therefore stays dependent on Serbia.

North Macedonia, a land-locked country, participates in Pan European corridors X and VIII, and in the TEN-T corridor Western Balkans–Eastern Med-

Naime, kada je riječ o prometnim koridorima, spomenuta Preševska dolina, koja se nalazi na rubu etničko albanskog područja, ima veliki geopolitički značaj, jer kroz nju prolazi X. koridor. Spomenuta dolina ujedno daje veliki geopolitički značaj Kosovu, Albaniji i etnički albanskim područjima u Srbiji i Sjevernoj Makedoniji (Ejupi i Stiperski, 2018, 230). Kosovo trenutno pokušava izgraditi autocestu koja bi povezala njegov sjeveroistočni (granica sa Srbijom i Merdare, također željeznički granični prijelaz na pruzi Niš – Priština – Kosovo Polje) i jugozapadni dio (s graničnim prijelazom kod Kukeša) s vezom prema Albaniji, s najvažnijom albanskom morskom lukom Drač, čime bi se (osim Skopja) na suvremeni način povezalos VIII. paneuropskim koridorom i snizila ovisnost o tranzitnom prijevozu kroz Sjevernu Makedoniju do morskih luka u Grčkoj.

I u Crnoj Gori geopolitičko je promišljanje utjecalo i još uvijek utječe na razvoj prometnih koridora, uglavnom pod utjecajem Srbije. Država je povijesno i tradicionalno povezana i geopolitički orijentirana, dijelom svojevoljno, dijelom silom, prema Srbiji, a svoju suvremenu političku neovisnost postigla je tek 2006. godine. Od tada je zemlja uspjela ući u NATO (2017.) i trenutno vodi pristupne pregovore s EU-om. Što se tiče prometnih koridora, zemlja je uvelike ovisna o željezničkoj pruzi Beograd – Bar (jedinoj koja je povezuje s europskom željezničkom mrežom), koja je uključena u TEN-T. U TEN-T je uključena i željeznička pruga od Podgorice do Tuzija, koja povezuje Crnu Goru i Albaniju. Modernu autocestu, financiranu kineskim kreditom, kineska državna tvrtka izgradila je od glavnoga grada Podgorice do Kolašina, izloživši zemlju kineskom geopolitičkom utjecaju i gotovo dovевši zemlju u bankrot (Biznis Ba) zbog troškova koji su bili veći od očekivanih. Stoga je Međunarodni monetarni fond (MMF) spasio Crnu Goru od upadanja u kinesku dužničku zamku. Što se tiče kopnenih veza s EU, postoji samo jedna glavna cestovna veza s Hrvatskom („Jadranska magistrala”). Ta zemlja u smislu prometno-geografskih koridora i povezanosti stoga ostaje bitno ovisna o Srbiji.

Sjeverna Makedonija, zemlja bez izlaza na more, sudjeluje u X. i VIII. paneuropskom korido-

iterranean. The country’s main international transport interest is the connection along the Vardar river and a free access to sea ports in Thessaloniki and Piraeus, meaning that the D branch of Corridor X (Veles-Igoumenitsa) is of lesser value and is not developed as the other branches, i.e. there is neither a modern highway nor a modern, electrified railway line. There are also significant transit revenue opportunities for North Macedonia on the corridor from Piraeus to Budapest. The Pan-European Corridor VIII (in a general east-west orientation, with a connection to Corridor X in the Skopje region) also passes through North Macedonia, connecting it with the sea port of Durres. It would be much more difficult, due to topography, and more expensive to develop. Its economic importance cannot be compared with Corridor X. Railway lines that would make up this corridor in its full form exist mostly only in Bulgaria. Although railroads exist in Albania (from Durres to Tirana and Elbasan in Albania), and from Kumanovo to Skopje, as well as from Skopje to Tetovo, Gostivar and Kičevo in North Macedonia, there is still no railway connection between Bulgaria and North Macedonia, as well as between North Macedonia and Albania. Modern highways on this corridor exist mostly in Bulgaria and also from Kumanovo to Skopje (part of Corridor X and TEN-T), and from Skopje to Tetovo. Nevertheless, new sections on Corridor VIII (Tetovo-Gostivar, Gostivar-Bukojčani, Struga-Kafasan), as well as the connection from the Vardar valley to Bitola (Branch D of Corridor X) are planned (Veles-Prilep-Bitola) (*Kosovo Online*).

Albania, the only non post-Yugoslav Western Balkans state, participates in the Pan European Corridor VIII (Hackaj and Georgiev, 2022) as well as in the TEN-T. Historically isolated for decades and completely disconnected from the European traffic network, since its opening in the 1990ies, it has experienced immense difficulties in development and adjusting to contemporary economic relations. Nevertheless, Albania has managed to use its coastline on two seas, its border with one EU member state (Greece) and proximity to Italy to explore its development opportunities, in which the role of its very large diaspora is crucial. Albania’s geopolitical motivations in developing transport corridors are oriented toward developing a modern highway connection

ru te u TEN-T koridoru Zapadni Balkan – Istočno Sredozemlje. Glavni je međunarodni prometni interes države veza duž rijeke Vardar i slobodan pristup morskim lukama u Solunu i Pireju, stoga je D ogranak X. koridora (Veles – Igoumenitsa) manje vrijedan i nije razvijen kao ostali ogranci, tj. nema ni moderne autoceste ni moderne, elektrificirane željezničke pruge. Postoje i značajne mogućnosti zarade od tranzitnoga prijevoza za Sjevernu Makedoniju, na koridoru od Pireja do Budimpešte. Paneuropski koridor VIII. (općenito u smjeru istok-zapad, s vezom na X. koridor u regiji Skopja) također prolazi kroz Sjevernu Makedoniju, povezujući je s morskom lukom Drač. Bilo bi ga, zbog nepovoljna reljefa, puno teže i skuplje razviti. Njegov gospodarski značaj ne može se usporediti s X. koridorom. Željezničke linije koje bi činile ovaj koridor u punom obliku postoje uglavnom samo u Bugarskoj. Iako u Albaniji postoje željeznice (od Drača do Tirane i Elbasana) te u Sjevernoj Makedoniji (od Kumanova do Skopja, kao i od Skopja do Tetova, Gostivara i Kičeva), još uvijek ne postoji željeznička veza između Bugarske i Sjeverne Makedonije kao ni između Sjeverne Makedonije i Albanije. Moderne autoceste na ovom koridoru postoje uglavnom u Bugarskoj te također od Kumanova do Skopja (dio X. koridora i TEN-T) i od Skopja do Tetova. Ipak, u planu su nove dionice na VIII. koridoru (Tetovo – Gostivar, Gostivar – Bukojčani, Struga – Kafasan) te veza od doline Vardara do Bitole (D ogranak X. koridora, Veles – Prilep – Bitola) (*Kosovo Online*).

Albanija, jedina država Zapadnog Balkana koja nije proizašla iz bivše Jugoslavije, sudjeluje u VIII. paneuropskom koridoru (Hackaj i Georgiev, 2022) te u TEN-T-u. Desetljećima povijesno izolirana i potpuno isključena iz europske prometne mreže, od svog otvaranja 1990-ih godina doživljavala je goleme poteškoće u razvoju i prilagodbi suvremenim gospodarskim odnosima. Ipak, Albanija je uspjela iskoristiti činjenicu da izlazi na dva mora, da ima granicu s jednom državom članicom EU-a (Grčkom) i da je blizu Italije da istraži svoje razvojne mogućnosti, u čemu je ključna uloga njezine vrlo brojne dijaspare. Geopolitičko promišljanje Albanije u razvoju prometnih koridora

with Kosovo, thereby also opening its less developed, more remote and isolated north-eastern area. A railway connection (TEN-T corridor) exists with Montenegro, but has so far been of lesser value for Albania. Its general traffic and historical isolation from the European core and remoteness even in the region of the Western Balkans, as well as topography-imposed difficulties in constructing modern roads and railways, impose an orientation towards sea transport (and the development of seaports in Durres and Vlore), where the connection with Italy, namely sea ports in Bari and Brindisi, is by far the most important one. Regarding the development of Corridor VIII, Albania’s geopolitical interests might point in the direction of developing a more modern connection between itself and the north-western parts of North Macedonia and to Skopje, as this part of North Macedonia is populated by an Albanian ethnic majority.

CROATIA'S GEOTRAFFIC POSITION IN
EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR NETWORKS

Geopolitical changes that happened in the western part of the Balkans and its nearest surroundings in the early 1990s, e.g. the breakup of Yugoslavia and the wars that followed, forcibly closed Corridor X between Croatia and Serbia, and also, for a long period during the war in Croatia, the section near Okučani. Consequently, the most favourable (topographically) and most important transport corridor was closed, and for a long period after the war ended and the relations between Croatia and Serbia “normalized” it was left in limbo.

Regarding the railway connections between the Croatian core area, around Zagreb, and its main sea port in Rijeka, as part of Corridor Vb, connecting Croatia with Hungary as well, the situation is far from satisfactory, with a modern railway line still being built between Zagreb and the border with Hungary. However, the most challenging part, due to the very unfavourable topography between Ogulin and Rijeka, is still the one-track railway line that was built more than 150 years ago (opened in 1873), with steep ascents and very sharp curvature. So even with modern railway vehicle (electric locomotives) technology, the railway line is still severely limited in terms of the number of trains, as well as their length and load ca-

usmjereno je na razvoj moderne cestovne veze s Kosovom, čime se otvara i njegov manje razvijeni, udaljeniji i izoliraniji sjeveroistočni dio. Željeznička veza (TEN-T koridor) postoji s Crnom Gorom, ali je do sada imala manju vrijednost za Albaniju. Opća prometna i povijesna izoliranost od europske jezgre i udaljenost čak i u regiji Zapadnog Balkana, kao i reljefom nametnute poteškoće u izgradnji modernih cesta i željeznica, nameću Albaniji više pomorsku prometnu orijentaciju (i razvoj morskih luka u Draču i Vlari), gdje je veza s Italijom, s morskim lukama u Bariju i Brindisiu, daleko najvažnija. Što se tiče razvoja VIII. koridora, geopolitičko promišljanje Albanije moglo bi upućivati k smjeru razvoja modernije veze između nje i sjeverozapadnih dijelova Sjeverne Makedonije i Skopja jer je taj dio naseljen albanskom etničkom većinom.

GEOPROMETNI POLOŽAJ HRVATSKE U
MREŽAMA EUROPSKIH PROMETNIH KORIDORA

Geopolitičke promjene koje su se dogodile u zapadnom dijelu Balkana i njegovu najbližem okruženju početkom 1990-ih godina, npr. raspad Jugoslavije i ratovi koji su ga pratili, nasilno su zatvorili X. koridor na dijelu između Hrvatske i Srbije, a na duže vrijeme tijekom rata u Hrvatskoj i na njegovu dijelu kod mjesta Okučani. Time je najpovoljniji (topografski) i najvažniji prometni koridor zatvoren, a dugo vremena nakon završetka rata i „normalizacije” odnosa između Hrvatske i Srbije ostavljen u određenom zaboravu.

Što se tiče željezničke povezanosti hrvatske jezgre oko Zagreba i njegove glavne morske luke u Rijeci, u sklopu koridora Vb, koji povezuje Hrvatsku i s Mađarskom, situacija je daleko od zadovoljavajuće, a još uvijek se gradi moderna željeznička pruga između Zagreba i granice s Mađarskom. No, najizazovniji dio, zbog vrlo nepovoljne topografije, između Ogulina i Rijeke predstavlja jednokolosiječna pruga izgrađena prije više od 150 godina (puštena u promet 1873. g.), strmih uspona i vrlo oštih zavoja. Dakle, čak i uz modernu tehnologiju željezničkih vozila (električne lokomotive) željeznička pruga još uvijek ozbiljno ograničava broj, duljinu i nosivost vlakova koji mogu proći

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capacity, that can pass through this segment in a given period of time. In that sense, the seaport of Rijeka is in an unfavourable position compared to the seaport of Koper, and especially to the port of Trieste. Namely, Koper has a more modern railway line, and the second track on this line, between Divača and Koper, is currently under construction. Slovenia has also built a modern railway line that enables a direct connection with Hungarian railway network (at Hodoš), thereby giving the port of Koper a direct access to Hungary, completely on the territory of Slovenia.

The second railway branch of the Vb Corridor, from Oštarije and Ogulin to Split (the so-called “Lika railway line”, with further branches to Zadar and Šibenik, respectively) is a rather outdated, and a non-electrified railway line, with the section from Knin to Split (the so-called “Dalmatian railway line”) being especially difficult due to topography and the fact that the line was completed in 1877 (Split to Siverić) and 1888 (Siverić to Knin), respectively, and its route, full of sharp ascents and tight curves, has since not been improved significantly in the intervening years.

After the 1990s war and in the immediate post-war period, in which no real railway development was to be expected, quite understandably, a political decision was made to give priority in infrastructure development to highways, and to build a modern highway network, connecting Croatia’s core area with north and middle parts of the Adriatic coast of Croatia (Zagreb-Rijeka and Zagreb-Split highways, with the section from Zagreb to Bosiljevo representing a joint route). This decision was, among other reasons, influenced by the fact that Croatia is a recipient tourist country, and that most tourists are arriving to Croatia by individual means of road transport (about 70%), followed by air transport (about 20%), and buses (6%).

Nevertheless, after a time, during which the railways were mostly ignored and left to decline, a political decision was made, again, this time, to start the new investment cycle in railways and to develop Pan-European/TEN-T corridors traversing Croatian territory. This decision was mostly concurrent with Croatia’s accession to the EU, and the new opportunity to use EU’s structural funds to build railway infrastructure on Pan-European corridors. However, all of this has been moving slowly, and the renovating railway lines according to contemporary

ovim segmentom u određenom vremenu. Riječka luka je u tom smislu u nepovoljnijem položaju u odnosu na luku Kopar, a posebno u odnosu na luku Trst. Naime, Kopar ima moderniju željezničku prugu, a upravo je u izgradnji drugi kolosijek na toj pruži, između Divače i Kopra. Slovenija je izgradila i modernu željezničku prugu koja omogućuje izravnu vezu s mađarskom željezničkom mrežom (kod Hodoša), čime je luka Kopar dobila izravan pristup Mađarskoj, potpuno na teritoriju Slovenije.

Drugi željeznički ogranak koridora Vb, od Oštarija i Ogulina do Splita (tzv. „lička pruga”, s daljnjim ograncima prema Zadru, odnosno Šibeniku) prilično je zastarjela i neelektrificirana željeznička pruga, pri čemu je dionica od Knina do Splita, tzv. „dalmatinska pruga” posebno teška zbog topografije i činjenice da je pruga dovršena 1877. g. (Split – Siverić) i 1888. g. od Siverića do Knina, a njezina trasa, puna oštarih uspona i uskih zavoja, od tada nije bitno poboljšana.

Nakon rata 1990-ih godina i u neposrednom poratnom razdoblju, u kojemu se sasvim razumljivo nije mogao očekivati pravi razvoj željeznice, donesena je politička odluka da se prednost u razvoju infrastrukture da autocestama te da se izgradi moderna mreža autocesta, povezujući jezgru Hrvatske sa sjevernim i srednjim dijelovima jadranske obale Hrvatske (autoceste Zagreb – Rijeka i Zagreb – Split, s dionicom od Zagreba do Bosiljeva koja čini zajedničku rutu). Na ovu je odluku, među ostalim, utjecala i činjenica da je Hrvatska turistička primateljica te da većina turista u Hrvatsku dolazi osobnim cestovnim prijevozom (oko 70 %), zatim zračnim (oko 20 %) te autobusima (6 %).

Međutim, nakon razdoblja u kojem su željeznice bile uglavnom ignorirane i prepuštene propadanju ponovno je donesena politička odluka da se započne novi investicijski ciklus u željeznice i da se razviju paneuropski/TEN-T koridori koji prolaze hrvatskim teritorijem. Ova odluka uglavnom je uslijedila usporedno s ulaskom Hrvatske u EU i mogućnošću koja se otvorila da se iz strukturnih fondova EU-a izgradi željeznička infrastruktura na paneuropskim koridorima. No, svi ti procesi teku vrlo sporo, a tempo obnove željezničkih pru-

standards, even in the Pannonian parts of Croatia, which have favourable topography, e.g. Zagreb-Koprivnica (Žabec, 2023) and Dobova-Novska, have been going on for a decade or so. Croatia’s national interest lies in building a modern railway line to the port of Rijeka, a landmark project that would finally made Rijeka competitive with other large ports in the region. Namely, trade has been diverted from Rijeka and other Croatian seaports for more than 30 years, as Koper and Trieste are in a more favourable position than Rijeka (Bohutinski, 2018), with modern railway infrastructure in the case of Port of Rijeka lacking (Glavan, 2024). This trade diversion has in the last decade become two-fold, and Serbia and Hungary have a common interest of developing a modern railway line at the B branch of Corridor X (Belgrade-Budapest), thereby connecting Hungary through Serbia and North Macedonia with the Greek port of Piraeus (owned by China), as a part of the Belt and Road initiative. This development affects the port of Rijeka in a lesser manner than the further development of the port of Koper. Nevertheless, it still affects it negatively and it also affects the Croatian part of the European Corridor X, diverting traffic from Belgrade north to Budapest, bypassing Croatia entirely. For Croatia, it is certainly very positive that it was included in two more TEN-T corridors (*Izmjena TEN-T mreže*). However, larger investments, mostly in the aforementioned railways corridors, are needed in order to try to keep the pace with neighbouring EU member states.

CONCLUSION

The main concluding arguments can be summarized as follows:

- We are witnessing the revival of transport geopolitics, with geopolitical influences becoming more powerful when it comes to developing transport corridors, and the Western Balkans region is by no means the exception. Transport geopolitics enables us to study geopolitical influences behind the development of transport corridors, and shows us how overcoming the distance via the means of transport also means more effective control of a given territory.

ga prema suvremenim standardima, čak i u panonskim dijelovima Hrvatske, koji imaju povoljnu topografiju, npr. Zagreb – Koprivnica (Žabec, 2023) i Dobova – Novska, traju već desetak godina. Nacionalni je interes Hrvatske izgradnja moderne željezničke pruge do riječke luke, što je značajan projekt koji bi Rijeku konačno učinio konkurentnom ostalim velikim lukama u regiji. Naime, preusmjeravanje trgovine iz riječke i drugih hrvatskih morskih luka traje više od 30 godina te je dovelo Kopar i Trst u povoljniji položaj od Rijeke (Bohutinski, 2018), a u slučaju Luke Rijeka nedostaje suvremena željeznička infrastruktura (Glavan, 2024). Ovo je trgovinsko preusmjeravanje u posljednjem desetljeću postalo dvostruko, stoga Srbija i Mađarska imaju zajednički interes da razviju modernu željezničku liniju na B ogranku X. koridora (Beograd – Budimpešta), povezujući tako Mađarsku preko Srbije i Sjeverne Makedonije s grčkom lukom Pirej (u vlasništvu Kine), kao dio inicijative Pojas i put. Ovaj razvoj događaja negativno utječe na riječku luku, premda u manjoj mjeri nego daljnji razvoj luke Kopar. Utječe također na hrvatski dio X. paneuropskoga koridora, odvajajući promet od Beograda sjeverno do Budimpešte i tako zaobilazeći Hrvatsku. Za Hrvatsku je svakako vrlo pozitivno što je uključena u još dva TEN-T koridora (Izmjena TEN-T mreže). Međutim, da bi se pokušalo uhvatiti korak sa susjednim članicama EU-a, potrebna su veća ulaganja, ponajviše u spomenute željezničke koridore.

ZAKLJUČAK

Glavni zaključni argumenti mogu se sažeti na sljedeći način:

- Svjedoci smo oživljavanja prometne geopolitike, pri čemu geopolitički utjecaji postaju sve snažniji kad je u pitanju razvoj prometnih koridora, a ni regija Zapadnog Balkana nije iznimka. Prometna geopolitika omogućuje nam proučavanje geopolitičkih utjecaja koji stoje iza razvoja prometnih koridora te nam pokazuje kako svladavanje udaljenosti prometnim sredstvima znači i učinkovitiju kontrolu određenoga teritorija.

- The transport corridors in the region of Western Balkans and in Croatia, railway lines in particular, still reflect the fact that all states included, except Albania, were throughout most of the 20th century a part of two unified states, while Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (from 1878) were also a part of a joint state, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, until 1918.
- After the break-up of the second Yugoslav state, the states (mainly Croatia and Serbia) have, after the end of the 1990ies wars and a gradual normalization of relations (reflected mainly in the re-opening of transport Corridor X) started to pursue their own geopolitical and economic agendas, reflected in the construction of highways in Croatia and slow but steady development of railway lines on the Vb corridor. In the case of Serbia, its own geopolitical agenda is reflected in the development of the branch B of Corridor X and a highway connecting it with Montenegro.
- After the 1990s, the development of modern highways and the reconstruction of railway lines started significantly earlier in Croatia than in the Western Balkans region.
- The development of a several Pan European (B branch of Corridor X, as well as economically poorly feasible Pan European Corridor VIII) and several non-European transport corridors (e.g. Highway in Republika Srpska, planned highways in Kosovo with connections to Albania), show that transport corridor development, especially favouring certain economically rational corridors instead of some others, is still influenced by geopolitics in the Western Balkans.
- Geopolitics has become once again more important in developing transport corridors, especially due to Serbia's increasing reliance on Russia and China and via partnership with Hungary, Croatia's accession to the EU and the construction of the LNG terminal in Omišalj (at the island of Krk), as well as Serbia's revived aspirations towards Montenegro and the Serb-governed entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Consequently, smaller and weaker states in the region, such as Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, are either directly or indirectly influenced by the geopolitical tendencies of Serbia, when it comes to the modernisation and development of transport corridors.

- Prometni koridori u regiji Zapadnog Balkana i u Hrvatskoj, posebno sa željezničkim linijama, još uvijek odražavaju činjenicu da su sve uključene države, osim Albanije, kroz veći dio 20. stoljeća bile u sastavu dviju jedinstvenih država, dok su Hrvatska, Slovenija i Bosna i Hercegovina (od 1878. g.) također bile dio zajedničke države Austro-Ugarske do 1918. g.
- Nakon raspada druge jugoslavenske države Hrvatska i Srbija su, nakon završetka ratova 1990-ih godina i postupne normalizacije odnosa, koja se ogleda uglavnom u ponovnom otvaranju X. prometnog koridora, počele slijediti vlastite geopolitičke i gospodarske programe, što se ogleda u izgradnji autocesta u Hrvatskoj i daljnjem, sporom, ali postojanom, razvoju željezničkih linija na Vb koridoru. U slučaju Srbije, njezina vlastita geopolitička agenda ogleda se u razvoju B ogranka X. koridora i autoceste koja je povezuje s Crnom Gorom.
- Nakon 1990-ih razvoj modernih autocesta i rekonstrukcija željezničkih pruga u Hrvatskoj započeli su znatno ranije nego u regiji Zapadnog Balkana.
- Razvoj nekoliko paneuropskih (B ogranak X. koridora te ekonomski slabo izvediv VIII. koridor) i nekoliko neeuropskih prometnih koridora (npr. autoput u Republici Srpskoj, planirane autoceste na Kosovu sa spojevima prema Albaniji) pokazuju da je razvoj prometnih koridora, a posebno favoriziranje određenih, iako ne ekonomski najracionalnijih koridora umjesto nekih drugih na Zapadnom Balkanu još uvijek pod utjecajem geopolitike.
- Geopolitika je ponovno postala važnija u razvoju prometnih koridora, posebice nakon sve većega oslanjanja Srbije na Rusiju i Kinu, a kroz partnerstvo s Mađarskom, ulaskom Hrvatske u EU i izgradnjom LNG terminala u Omišlju (na otoku Krku), kao i ponovno oživljenim aspiracijama Srbije prema Crnoj Gori i entitetu pod srpskom upravom u Bosni i Hercegovini. Posljedično, manje i slabije države u regiji, poput Kosova, Crne Gore i Sjeverne Makedonije, izravno ili neizravno pod utjecajem su geopolitičkih tendencija Srbije kad je riječ o modernizaciji i razvoju prometnih koridora.

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