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Review of control strategies used in modern railway vehicles

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ABSTRACT
Control systems are being developed in the railway industry to maintain good steering, stability and comfort. Although these systems are in operational, there are prospects of fully implementing mechatronic principles through an integrated control system. This paper is intended to provide various aspects of control system technology that are incorporated in modern railway vehicles and to give illustrative examples of where particular control objectives have been met. Its main contribution is to identify opportunities for further research in this field.

INTRODUCTION
The use of railway vehicles worldwide has increased and thus, more and more trains are being produced. This trend is unlikely to change anytime soon. Therefore, there is a need to develop trains that provide safe and comfortable transportation, and at the same time have minimal impact on the environment. The challenge is to develop vehicles that can satisfy these conflicting requirements. One of the steps in achieving this is the use of mechatronic subsystems that employ sensors, actuators and control systems. There are several control strategies which have been developed to automate various operations within the railway vehicle. Only the ones that are well established will be reviewed.

CONTROL STRATEGIES
1. Tilt control
- Enables trains to curve at higher speeds.
- Maximizes the use of poor running conditions.

2. Active lateral suspension control
- Improves the ride quality.
- Improves curve abilities and stability at high speeds.

3. Active primary suspension control
- Improves the use of mechatronic subsystems.
- Maximizes the use of poor running conditions.

4. Wheel slip control
- Maximizes the use of poor running conditions.

CONTROL SCHEMES USED IN RAILWAY VEHICLES

CHALLENGES
- The level of integration of various aspects (traction, braking, suspension) is high, thereby more sophistication in designing a controller.
- The use of the contact patch between the wheel and rail for the designing of an integrated control scheme.
- The difficulty in accommodating all of the dynamical features.

CONCLUSIONS
- The benefits of incorporating such systems in an ‘asset’ (railway vehicles) has been remarkable. One of the key contributions is the increased dynamic performance which was scarce when trains had only passive elements.
- It is clear that the electromechanical control systems within the railway industry is well developed and will continue to do so as more opportunities arises especially in the field of mechatronic systems.
- Most of these control systems are designed individually but there is a possibility of an optimal controller.
- Suspension, braking, propulsion and guidance force acting on the railway vehicle are related by the wheel and rail contact point. This is one of the avenues for further research in establishing if it is feasible.

REFERENCES