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## Kaura-Zaria Railway: A Desertion of Contemporary Potent Economic Contingencies

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### **Abstract:**

*Transportation is a prominent infrastructure for sustaining economic momentum especially in areas of diversification of production base, valuable trade expansion network and intimating resources and markets into a coherent and cohesive economy. Nigerian economic diversification is centrally focused on resuscitation of minerals, agriculture and manufacturing development. This quest is securable with development of rail transportation which is precursor for regional productivity by integrating different regions resulting in increased mobility of labor forces, nominal and economical exchange of commodities and enterprises and productive interaction among the national industries. Furthermore, railway transportation system is esteemed to be the key component in business efficiency in the level of proficiency and accessibility it provides to the customers, markets, labor and materials by providing effective information about the capacity of existing transportation infrastructure in enhancing economic momentum. Railroad abandonment is economically disastrous due to its undesirable consequences on the region which lose such services and such deprivation can lead to an adverse effect on economic and social prominence of the region and utterly inhibit the economic expansion and development of a nation. This paper highlights the deterioration of economic activities of geographical north-western states of Nigeria due to abandonment of Zaria-Kaura Namoda railroad terminal as one of the significant infrastructural systems in the country.*

**Keywords:** Kaura namoda, railway terminals, economic development, transportation infrastructure

### **1. Introduction**

Zaria-Kaura Namoda Terminal is an existing structure economically linking five states and Niger republic. This terminal requires consequential input to make the desired and significant contribution to the development of Nigeria in all ramifications. It is an axiom that all developing countries in the world, including Nigeria, prioritize Agriculture as source of foreign exchange and gross economic survival, and undoubtedly North-West Zone of Nigeria remain an agrarian domain with potential of feeding West Africa if the potentials are vehemently harnessed. Crop production, specifically Rice, Maize, Guinea Corn, Millet, Beans, Soya beans, Groundnut among several, dominates the agricultural activities of this agriculturally remarkable productive Zone. Since this geographical zone has significant agricultural potentials especially in aforementioned commodities, most of the commodities produced are shipped to the desired part of the country to enhance food security and improve socio-economic activities of the nation.

The success of any economic stride is contingent upon a provision of efficient mode of transportation especially railroad which is considered the most important factor in regional, economic and social development <sup>(1)</sup>. Transportation plays a pivotal role in increasing production, employment, advance accessibility, over and above reduces regional disparities and enhances competitiveness of regions by trade facilitation, functional movement of scale economies and labor and thus translates to socio-economic development of the country.

Traditionally, farm produces are moved by rail from Kaura Namoda enroute Gusau-funtua and Zaria to several destinations throughout the Country. Since 1900, rail transportation has accounted for 75% of agricultural commodities produced in north-west geographical Zone to other part of the country (REF) in addition to safest acquisition of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, machineries, pesticide and herbicides to the farming population. In an era of economic and social turbulence, especially as it affects the global food and human security, rail access can be a primary component in the country's capacity to attract an investment in manufacturing and agro processing facilities.

Accordingly, the aforementioned economies and agro dependent ventures and the affected communities are immensely concerned about exclusion of this rail line in country's overhauling of rail services in spite of the region's undeniable potent economic realities and the remarkable huge political, economic and social values to this nation. The loss of rail service has adversely affected the Socio-economic and industrial sustenance of this country which ultimately influences both social and economic sectors of the nation. This paper assesses the economic impact of abandonment of Zaria-Kaura Namoda Terminal Rail services in the ongoing revamping of Nigerian Railway system.

In spite of the present administration quest for diversification with Agriculture as productive target, the zone, with high potentials capable of catalyzing the remarkable achievement of this goal, is not considered which could have tripartite economic effects of subduing the drive for venturing in Agriculture, massive decrease in economic activities i.e the deceleration of exchange of commodities among the geographical zone and to crown it hampers social cohesion among citizens which is detrimental to our pluralism as world's most populous black nation.

## 2. The Objective of the Study

The comprehensive objective of the study is to assess the socio-economic impacts of abandonment of Zaria-Kaura Namoda Railway line in the President Muhammadu Buhari administration's quest for overhauling the Nigerian railway system.

## 3. Significance of the Study

Economic diversification is an effective strategy of enhancing economic growth in any developing nation. Nigeria government has since considered this strategic goal in most economic sectors such as Agriculture, Manufacturing and Service industries such as transportation. The development of these sectors has led to significant demand for transportation infrastructure, a provision esteemed an economic necessity. The development of transportation system is embedded within the scale and context in which they take place, from the local to the global and from environmental, historical, technological, and economic perspectives (Dr. Jean-pauletal, 2020). The development of transportation is a socio-economic phenomenon while development policies and strategies focus on physical and human capital development. Irrespective of the relative significance and relevance, infrastructure is only effective economically if it is operational and functional. The transportation affects most of the Nigerian economic activities as most ventures either use or rely on transportation as a means of service delivery. More so, transportation affects regional development by connecting with other regions to enhance social and economic interactions esteemed to be a key component of business efficiency in the overall level of access to commodities, customers, markets, and to crown it all workforces required for effectively. Therefore, to provide information for indelible capacity of the existing Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail services to contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of Nigeria, it is imperative to identify and evaluate the prominence and the potentials in including this existing infrastructure in the administration's quest for rehabilitation and modernization of Nigerian railway system.

## 4. Railway System in Nigeria

Nigerian is the largest economic nation in Africa, 27<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world and 24<sup>th</sup> largest in terms of purchasing power parity (World Bank, 2020). But the country with area of 923,768 km<sup>2</sup> has an insignificant railway network of 3,505 km of 3 ft. 6 in (1,067 mm) gauge lines and 479 km of standard gauge lines. Track condition limited trains to a speed of 35 km/h and services were unreliable; however, successive governments, since then, have upgraded and modernized some of the countries' rail infrastructure.

### 4.1. Projects Completed

In July 2016 the Itakpe – Ajaokuta – Warri Railway Standard Gauge project, which was first conceived thirty-two years ago, was completed.

Abuja (Idu) to Kaduna (Rigasa) Standard Gauge project completed. Lagos-Ibadan completed and commissioned in June 2021.

Other undergoing rehabilitations of the existing narrow gauge lines include:

- Lagos – Jebba 480 km line
- Jebba – Kano 624 km line
- Port Harcourt – Aba – Enugu – Makurdi 468 km line
- Kuru – Bauchi – Gombe – Maiduguri 640 km line
- Makurdi – Kafanchan – Kaduna Junction – Kuru line

Upgrade and modernization of key railway components and equipment, procurement of Rolling Stock (wagons, coaches) and an assortment of parts for operational use.

The Enterprise Resource Program (ERP) was installed to promote efficiency and the upgrade and modernization of the antiquated communication and signaling system of the entire rail system.

Introduction of the Transport Sector Reform Bill, which includes the Nigerian Railways Authority (NRA) Bill, designed to open up the sector for the first time, to private sector participation.

### 4.2. Projects Underway

A 156.5 km double track standard gauge line between Lagos –Ibadan has almost been completed (flagged off for use in December 2019). It has a design capacity for a 150 km/hour speed. It is part of the planned, longer Lagos – Kano line 284 km, Kano – Katsina – Makurdi Standard Gauge line.

### 4.3. Further Planned Projects

- The 2163 km Port Harcourt – Maiduguri single-track standard gauge rail-line that would traverse major industrial cities along the Eastern corridor, South-South, South-East and the North-Eastern geo-political zones of the country. It is due to be completed in three years' time (2022).

- The Coastal Railway Project proposed for Nigeria's coastal states corridor that spans from Lagos to Calabar and cuts through most states in the South East and South. The high speed rail would have the capability of cutting travelling time of 11 hours from Lagos to Calabar by road to less than 3 hours by bullet train.
- The cable news also reported, 'The federal government has approved lines from Kano to Daura, Portharcourt to Maiduguri, Makurdi to Jos, Gombe to Yobe to Borno and Jigawa to Niger Republic.'
- Ironically, Zaria-Kaura Namoda Railway System is 'NOT CONSIDERED'. In spite of the agricultural and human potentials that if harnessed can productively affect the economic growth of this nation.

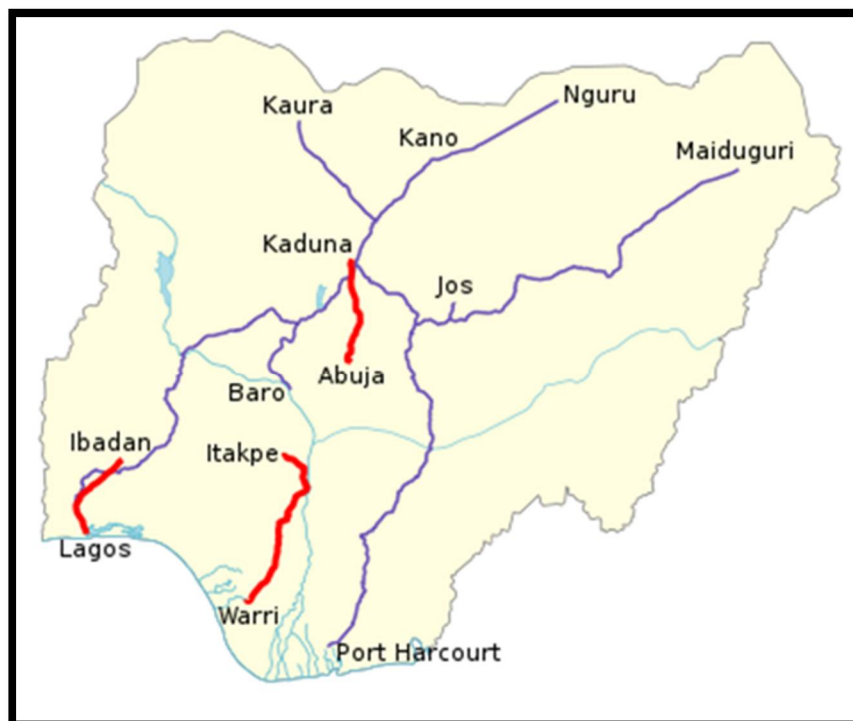


Figure 1

#### 4.4. Zaria-Kaura Namoda Rail Line

Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line is productive infrastructure with magnitude of 245 km (152mi) introduced around 1926 over 95 years ago. The rail line connects the agriculturally blessed Northwestern states and western line of the national railway network. This branch lines with terminus in Funtua and Gusau are considered the economic hubs of Katsina and Zamfara state with a direct correlation and positive effect to the unconnected states like Sokoto, Kebbi and Jigawa states as farm produce from these states are transported to Kaura Namoda terminal for onward loading to other parts of the country.

Ostensibly, the railway serves as easiest means to transverse commodities such as cargo loads of fame, exponential riches, social cohesion and cultural diversity. In the early 60s, this transport line had provided a congenial ground for seamless business transaction and effective social interaction among the citizens. Farm produce were brought from as far as Niger republic to be loaded onto trains for transportation to other part of the country and beyond. In return, goods available in those regions were freighted back to the aforementioned states via the trail line which had accounted for significant growth of economic momentum in the region in addition to social interaction among citizens.

Products such as groundnut which saw erection of renowned groundnut pyramids, millet and guinea corns for breweries, maize for substantive and commercial feeds of poultry products, Soya beans for industrial uses, beans, livestock, vegetables and leguminous products among several agro products were largely produced and transported from this region. An activity which appreciated both substantive and commercial farming in the region and to crown it all contributed largely to food and gross economic security. For Nigeria to attain food and human security, Zaria Kaura Namoda railway needs to be effectively integrated into the Muhammadu Buhari administration's quest for overhauling the railway system on the ground that it is an existing infrastructure which requires little for full resurrection.

Transactional records showed that effective railway services on this geographical axis emphatically stood at 3M Dollars per month in the year 1990 (\$1=N7.9) a figure according to the offices that fluctuates depending on the availability of the trains and seasons.

#### 5. The Rail Line Abandonment Effects

The abandonment of rail service along Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line had impacted negatively on the professed economic contribution of the region to the national development esteeming the disposable potentials the region is remarkably endowed with. The desertion had not only set off Economic retrogression but condensed social cohesion among citizens which is a desirable factor for a nation desperately in need of sustainable integration. As reminisce to what is obtainable globally when an economic and productive rail line is forsaken, the impacts of this neglect have led to:

- Increased transportation costs to Nigerians
- Detrimental diminution in economic productivity.
- Adverse reduction of economic opportunities.
- Diminution of revenue generation.
- Employment implications on human capital development.

### 5.1. Abandonment and Transportation Effect

Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line connects Kaduna, Katsina, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara states and largely southern part of Niger republic. The aforementioned states are all in north-west geographical zone of the country, a region with portfolio of producing almost all the agro allied products and with capacity of feeding the entire African continent. The region is classified by the World Bank as a staple crops processing zone. This is affirmation of the potential of these Sudan savannah states as primary targets of agro-investment, because their vast grassy landscapes are ideal livestock rearing and yet potent enough to produce commercial quantities of Maize, Millet and several grains, onions, fruits, sugar canes and Groundnut respectively (Pius Abeshi, 2018).

Field-scale experiment and survey shows that an average of (10) ten trailers transverse diverse agricultural products and livestock in each of the states to southern part of the country weekly which ultimately means the connected states cumulatively convey about (60) sixty trailers weekly to other regions of the country via land road network, a figure that can triple with frugality of conveyance medium.

The field experiments conducted only take cognizance of transportation from state capitals and commercial towns to Abuja being the capital territory and Lagos, of course, the economic hub of the nation. The survey only shows the aforementioned interaction but it is pertinent to know such interaction with other parts of the country remains effective and incessant.

Road Network	Cost Via Land N'000	Cost Via Train N'000	Differential N'000
Kebbi-Abuja	450	150	300
Kebbi-Lagos	350	250	100
Sokoto-Abuja	300	250	50
Sokoto-Lagos	350	250	100
Zaria -Lagos	400	200	200
Zamfara-Abuja	350	250	100
Zamfara-Lagos	550	300	150
Zaria Abuja	300	150	150

Table 1

#### 5.1.1. Livestock

Road Network	Cost Via Land N'000	Cost Via Train N'000	Differential N'000
Kebbi-Abuja	450	150	300
Kebbi-Lagos	350	250	100
Sokoto-Abuja	300	250	50
Sokoto-Lagos	350	250	100
Zaria -Lagos	400	200	200
Zamfara-Abuja	350	250	100
Zamfara-Lagos	550	300	150
Zaria Abuja	300	150	150

Table 2

Most of the financial burdens of increased transportation are shifted to the customers, an attribute leading to high cost of commodity produced internally and basically one of the reasons why sometimes citizens seek foreign goods over locally produced.

Loss due to transportation on perishable commodities, most of the farm produce like tomato, cucumber, watermelon, cashew, spinach, carrots are transported to other parts of the country by road which proved to be very laborious as the trucks, sometimes, take three days to reach destinations due to exorbitance of the road which inevitably leads to destruction of huge volumes of these commodities. Investigations have shown that farmers/suppliers lose hundreds of millions of Naira due to decomposition of these perishable products which can be averted if rail line is restored in this region and millions of Naira being lost on avoidable ground can be significantly invested to enhance production of the products that could be channeled for exportation.

As reminisce to what's obtainable on perishable goods, survey conducted showed that about two to ten animals die in the course of transportation weekly from Zamfara to Lagos (Sarkin Zangon Zamfara, 2021) and on average two per week to Abuja of goats and cows being the most affected due to inconveniences in the course of transportation. Further surveys showed the same intricacies though with varying degrees relative to destinations in Sokoto and Kebbi respectively. Concisely, road transportation of live stocks has emphatically led to loss of animals which means loss of funds

to Nigerians due to luxury inconveniences, road exorbitances and to crown it all road security. Revitalization of Zaria-Kaura Namoda Railway will further enhance economic recovery of saving hundreds of millions of Naira as rail transportation proved to be secured and safer, effective and comfortable for these commodities.

Transporters of foods and livestock have become targets of annihilation in an event of social unrest in this country. The recent ENDSARS protests have once again exhibited the danger these law abiding citizens undergo as many people were innocently killed and properties worth millions were destroyed. The story would have been more favorable if these services are facilitated via rail line.

More So, on average about 20-50 livestock dies weekly in the course of transversion from the area under consideration to other parts of the country mostly due to inconveniences and rarely accident, a tragedy avertable if the train service is restored effectively. So Nigerians lost hundreds of Millions annually due to this tribulation.

Perishable items such as tomatoes, relevant products as well as vegetables are destroyed in large quantity in the course of transportation. A survey around the three states of Sokoto Kebbi Zamfara showed vehement loss by the farmers. According to stakeholders, a development that discourages most farmers as in every trailer about fifty thousand Naira N50,000.00 worth products are destroyed with by estimated analysis of number of trailers moving products weekly, another reasonable millions are destroyed in addition to setback in the diversification drive as farmers resort to other means due to the challenges associated with land transportation. Revitalizing the rail line along this axis will certainly spur economic progress in the area and effectively promote the desire for farming a drive that can aggressively enhance diversification.

### *5.2. Effects on Local Employment*

Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line in full operations have over 200 skilled workers and over 300 artisans engaged with thousands benefiting from pre shipments of goods from farming, processing, packaging, loading and to crown it all transportation from point of production to the rail station, its pertinent to note that Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line have two productive stations along the branch viz; Funtua and Gusau rail stations respectively.

The trucking industry's capacity is insufficient and significantly unable to absorb the productive demand of transportation of goods across the nation as obtainable via rail line services. The trucking industry is more expensive, more hazardous and to crown it incoherent with little contribution to employment as acquirable via railway system. Abandonment of rail service in this region made thousands of citizens redundant which inevitably advance social vices in the society. Thus, the abandonment of this branch line has significant effect on Nigeria's employment statistical data. Analysis has shown that over 1000 inclusive artisans lost jobs due to abandonment of rail services between Zaria, funtua, Gusau and Kaura Namoda terminal station. As the country focuses on employment and lifting people out of poverty, Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line revitalization will significantly be tool in achieving the feat.

Revitalization of Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail operation has tendency of creating direct and indirect jobs that could reach Ten thousand (10,000), a figure that will certainly improve our inclusive growth in addition to gross effect on the national GDP.

## **6. Impacts on Highway Infrastructure**

Rail abandonments divert rail traffic onto local highways and roads. In considerable areas, the local highway infrastructure usually consists of light duty, low-volume roads not designed to sustain a ceaseless heavy traffic. Enhanced truck traffic accelerates roads' infrastructural deterioration. The increased dilapidation caused by increased truck traffic can be measured as resurfacing or reconstruction costs. These costs are potentials highway advancements that may be implemented to fix damaged roads. These costs represent an annual measure of incremental damage (not expenditure to fix) to local roads and highway resulting from rail abandonment.

Federal road maintenance agency budgeted 38 Billion Naira in 2021 budget; a figure Nigerian Senate under the chairman committee on FERMA, Senator Gershom Basseyy insisted won't be enough considering the dilapidated state of Nigeria road which was majorly resulted from transportation of goods across the country. The lawmaker observed that about 80% Nigerian goods are transported via roads using heavy trucks which stressed Nigerian roads with attendants' loss of lives and goods in the process (Ignatius Okorocho, 2020). These infrastructural challenges are as a result of non functional railways lines and the abandonment of agrarian states especially those linked by Zaria Kaura Namoda railways contributed significantly. As rightly observed, over Sixty (60) trailers transport goods from this region to other parts of the country thus stressed the road network and contribute heavily to the deterioration of the road infrastructure which is largely a function of abandonment of the aforementioned rail line. Revitalization of Zaria Kaura Namoda rail line will significantly minimize the number of heavy trucks on our highway and could help save Nigeria more than 20Billion Naira of road maintenance annually.

Sustainable development in any context requires human and capital pillars to thrive; heavy trucks on the country's road network are virtually responsible for most of the accidents in the country. Federal road safety corporation of Nigeria reported cases of 1,1229 accidents which claimed almost 4,918 persons in 2020, a figure exclusive of unreported cases and those who later died from injuries sustained from crashes (Clifford Ndujihe, 2021). It is pertinent to note that an increasing number of road accidents mean not only considerable loss of human lives but also huge economic costs to our nation. Revitalization and resurrection of rail lines especially in northwest Nigeria of Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line will save thousands of lives and spur sustainable economic development of the country.

Revitalization will save thousands of lives and economic assets in addition saving the nation's billions of Naira budgeted due to road dilapidation majorly caused by heavy trucks conveying freight and other heavy equipment across the geo-political zone.

### 6.1. Effects on Revenue Generation Drive

The attractiveness and profitability of business on the Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail line is reduced/nonexistent due to rail abandonment, which subsequently translates to reduced property values, particularly for those using the rail and those adjacent to the rail line system, while the railway activities are regulated unlike highway.

Field search shows that, in full capacity, Federal government and the states connected via this rail line can generate millions of dollars in revenue from the rail business activities. Thus, at this crucial moment of the need for revenue generation emphatic drive, revitalization of Kaura Namoda-Zaria rail will positively enhance revenue drive which facilitates economic growth.

The Nigeria railway corporation generated N2.21BN in the second half of this year as Naira metric reported a figure that will certainly appreciate to more than 3BN if the Zaria-Kaura Namoda rail services are to be fully active as massive agro commodities of freight will be transported across the country. More so with the records citing 7M dollars transaction in 1990, this rail services will have potentials of recording \$20M monthly in this century as population has astronomically increased so also knowledge in the area of agricultural activities and access to more implements than before which emphatically means these full activities via this rail line can boost the economy with about \$240M annually.

### 7. Contraction of Economic Development Contingencies

The attractiveness of a local community for some businesses and industries is reduced by a loss of rail services (Babcock *et al.* 1992). The abandonment of Zaria Kaura Namoda rail service has significantly diminished the economic activities of the affected northwestern states. Many farmers, due to utility challenges, have resorted to subsistence farming activities rather than commercial. Foreigners, who trooped into the region for investment in agro allied, textiles and some key real sector developments, have deserted the region. Significant industries/investments require the shipment of large and heavy duty equipment and bulky materials such as coal and grains are reliant on rail services. Many people postulated that that extinction of textile industry (which is a large employer of labor) in Nigeria is due to the abandonment of rail services. A panacea to social and economic development in this affected area is inevitably the revitalization of this rail services.

It is axiomatic to say farming in this area of consideration has significantly reduced and most farmers that are into commercial farming, have resorted to subsistence farming due to lack of utilities of transporting commodities to the deficit area for promotion of socio economic development of the nation.

### 8. Conclusion

The development of transportation framework promotes economic development of any nation, including Nigeria. Therefore, proper development of rail network not only reduces the cost of transportation both in Money and time, but ultimately plays a significant role in integration of various regions within the country and better understanding of neighboring countries and international partners. The transportation infrastructures in Nigeria had massively contributed to the development of the country by bringing in direct benefits from its role in development of tradable sectors such as agriculture, industry and commerce. As Nigeria strives toward economic diversification, transportation can play a significant role in mining and the minerals sector which is widely esteemed to be the future economic strategy. Conventionally, this contribution to the transport infrastructure in minerals sector may be considered as a progressive government policy to assist the tradable sectors to diversify away from the hydrocarbon sector.

Revitalization of Kaura-Zaria rail line services will economically save the country billions of Naira, save many lives being lost daily via road accidents, enhance socio-economic integration and unification spirit and to crown it all generate employment as many people postulated that the increasing rate of banditry in the area is due to unemployment. All alternatives need to be explicitly evaluated from the continuous use of Kaura-Zaria rail line.

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