


10-12-2016

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Recommended Citation

K., Ntende Edward (2016) "African Inter-City Railway Connection System," *Young African Leaders Journal of Development*: Vol. 1 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/yajod/vol1/iss1/12>

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AFRICAN INTER-CITY RAILWAY CONNECTION SYSTEM

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INTRODUCTION

African countries are limited in unifying themselves due to the boundaries and various requirements which hinder their free and perfect mobility, manifested in visa requirement, multi-currencies, different leadership, insecurity, unemployment, poor resource utilisation and poor production. Leadership, perfect mobility and industrialisation are the major sectors to Africa's unification and prosperity. There is always the thinking that perhaps the means used by the imperialists to exploit Africa's minerals and partitioning, that in return led to Europe's industrialisation, could be the very means to Africa's unification, industrialisation and becoming a first world continent.

The effort to find a possible means of providing sustainable development and unification in Africa informed the decision to write this article. It is about the history, uses, effects, benefits and description of the railway system.

Today, Africa is facing a lot of political leadership problems and corruption mainly because the resources which were abundantly endowed to Africa were plundered through the railway development. Partitioning of Africa was also another tool deployed to make it impossible for Africans to relate and defend what belonged to them. This article intends to show how the railway is Africa's greatest tool to radical development and unification.

HISTORY OF THE RAILWAY

According to Wikipedia, rolling stock in railway transport systems generally suffers lower frictional resistance than road vehicles, and the passenger and freight cars (carriages and wagons) can be coupled into longer trains. The operation is carried out by a railway company, providing transport between train stations or freight customer facilities. Power is provided by locomotives which either draw electric power from a railway electrification system or produce their own power, usually by diesel engines. Most tracks are accompanied by a signalling system. Railways are a safe land transport system when compared to other forms of transport. Railway transport is capable of high levels of passenger and cargo utilization and energy efficiency, but is often less flexible and more capital-intensive than road transport, when lower traffic levels are considered.

The oldest, man-hauled railways date back to the 6th century BC, with Periander, one of the Seven Sages of Greece, credited with its invention. Rail transport blossomed after the British development of the steam locomotive as a viable source of its power in the 18th and 19th centuries. With steam engines, one could construct mainline railways, which were a key component of the Industrial Revolution. Also, railways reduced the costs of shipping, and allowed for fewer lost goods, compared with water transport, which faced occasional sinking of ships. The change from canals to railways allowed for "national markets" in which prices varied very little from city to city. The invention and development of the railway in Europe was one of the most important

technological inventions of the 19th century. In the United States, it is estimated that without railway system, GDP would have been lower by 7% in 1890.

BACKGROUND OF RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

During the 1870s, Africa was under imperialism. A lot of tools were used such as health centres, railway, religion, gifts, guns and political arms to exploit Africa's minerals. When we analyse critically, they were used to facilitate the exploitation of minerals in the whole of Africa. And silently the railway played the major role since it was used to directly link the mines to the Africa's coasts.

Very little information is known about the impact of railway contributions during the exploitation of Africa's minerals by the western world. Except the slave commodity which was self-transporting, commodities like gold, copper, coffee, cotton, limestone, silver and many others were efficiently plundered by the use of the transportation means of a railway. Tonnes of minerals were delivered at different coasts by the railway and this led to the industrialisation of Europe, India and Britain. This is one of the major reasons behind their transformation into "first world" relying on cheap transportation means and the presence of cheap raw materials from Africa. After the successful plunder of Africa's minerals, it was left and abandoned. It is believed in some quarters that some of the raw materials that were mined from Africa are still in treasuries and stores abroad. It is no wonder that Europe, Britain and America prefer and consume mostly pure and quality products up to date. They set high standards because they have pure inputs.

This railway had unique advantages over other forms of transport such as the cheapest transport fares, maintenance and breakdowns costs compared to cars, aircraft, and animals. In terms of haulage capacity, it was or is the best for moving bulky goods in large quantities. In terms of accidents they were not expected and in any case, few injuries or damages were experienced due to their low speed. They were secure and very reliable in terms of safety and deliveries. They were not hindered by stops, traffic or weather.

Most, if not all countries in Africa, are connected by roads which are affected by traffic and associated with robbery terror, accidents causing extra payments, delays, loss of loved ones and valuable belongings. Airfreight, which is safer compared to road transport and timely is very expensive to maintain and afford since Africa is still underdeveloped with a huge population that has a low income to spend even on basic needs. It is said that majority of the people in Africa spend less than a dollar each day.

USES AND EFFECTS OF AFRICAN INTER-CITY RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT

Currently in Africa, our rail system is facing low development and receiving inadequate attention in terms of improvements that can promote perfect mobility in Africa. Not enough attention is being paid to its possibilities and the outcomes of its deployment. This system should be developed so as to improve the lives and unity of people. This article will attempt to show how this system will assist people living in Africa in a number of ways. Fully developing the railway system will lead to efficiency and effectiveness which will increase resource utilisation and reduce unemployment on the African continent. The system will also stimulate specialisation and quality output since systems and sectors (countries) will be linked by railway.

Developing the railway system will improve the health of many people by connecting them to quality services. For instance, South Africa has one of the best health care services in Africa but accessing it by other nationalities is very expensive when the cost of transportation is factored into the total cost of treatment. If the transport cost were to be lower from the recipient nation to South Africa then the medication may be more affordable.

Africa has developing countries which suffer from poor services like health care, take the example of Uganda. In situations like health emergencies, childbirth, transplants and even snake bites, people lose their lives to poor medical attention. The public structure is limited with lack of equipment leading to the loss of very many lives. Doctors are not well paid and this hinders their efficiency and increases the occurrence of strike actions. The country's healthcare system also faces the problem of few technical personnel, so that even when equipment is available, there are only very few people skilled enough to operate them. In Uganda's case, people have a poor attitude towards work so trying to improve any system calls for the importation of skilled labour which is expensive. The development of railway will assist Ugandans and other nationalities to access quality health services in South Africa. This will reduce the death rate and gear development in Africa.

Besides health, another critical sector that will be improved is the agricultural sector. Still using Uganda as a case study, the country's GDP relies heavily on agriculture. The main products of subsistence agriculture in Uganda include maize, Irish potato, orange, coffee, tomato, banana. These products are perishable and sensitive to changes in weather. If the railway system is developed it would assist Uganda to profit greatly from easier sourced and cheaper inputs like fertilizer. Time will also be reduced to transport perishable crops to Sudan and other regions (it would normally take 1-2 weeks to reach the Sudanese market travelling by road, during which time many of the crops would have become damaged or rotten). The risk of accidents, breakdowns and insecurity inherent in road transport will also be reduced. Crops can be sold at their normal prices when they are not rotten, damaged, or adversely affected by weather conditions like extreme heat common with road transport. Sellers can thus make a decent profit and increase in GDP can be assured.

Unlike in Uganda, Sudan and other East African countries, the film and entertainment industry is enjoying faster development in West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana. The film and entertainment industry can be used to boost tourism. Developing a functional railway network across Africa will further promote this industry because its players would have easier and more affordable access to different locations, cultures and people. This will stimulate creativity, create jobs, as well as promote and market the different African cultures, trends and fashion. It will help to project Africa in a positive light and improve the amount and quality of information available on the continent's unique features and desires. It will also help to increase the appreciation for African civilisation, thereby reducing the influence of western civilisation on the lives of young Africans.

Education in Africa is another sector that will be positively affected by inter-city railway system in Africa. Uganda for example has one of the best educational systems but is faced with a number of issues such as strikes and delayed salaries of teachers. Once there is perfect mobility, teachers and other workers would be able to offer their services to countries where there is better remuneration and better working conditions. Students would have a broader choice of where to receive formal

education and academic materials will easily be delivered and accessed.

An inter-city railway system can serve as an instrument in the unification of African countries. Infrastructures like an interconnected railway network will be affordable, fast, reliable and sustainable, allowing Africans to move conveniently from one country to another. Unfortunately, such infrastructure is still underdeveloped, a major manifestation of poor governance, under-utilisation of resources, increased unemployment among others.

It is recommended that Africa develop an inter-country railway infrastructure. The system currently available on the continent was developed on a closed system basis, for example, nationally. Unifying all the African countries through railways would be quite hard if the system is not opened up through inter-country infrastructure development.

In addition to the above, insecurity and conflicts between and among Africans such as xenophobia in South Africa, recent conflicts between Zambians and Kenyans, terrorism in Kenya and Uganda by Africans are all due to boundaries and fear of insecurity as Africans.

In the developed countries of the Western world, infrastructural developments that can further propagate industrialisation are given first priority. For Africa, to be fully unified, a railway system connecting all the major cities and towns must be developed. This will reduce the bottlenecks created by national boundaries and it will promote industrialisation with resultant effects like increased resource utilisation, job creation and massive reduction in unemployment rate in the whole of Africa.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTER-CITY RAILWAY SYSTEM

An inter-city railway system will aim at connecting all the major towns and cities in Africa. It will be developed with upgraded technology which will make it very fast and reliable, enabling quick access to different cities and nations. It will have fixed schedules and huge capacity, enabling it to transport large numbers of people per lift. The system's lanes will be designed to have 4x4 matrixes such that there is transport in different directions (West, East, South and North) simultaneously. This will assist the system to access and cover every part of Africa in a fraction of the time that other systems might take. It will also be operated in a way that allows it to be an effective and efficient transport system in Africa.

OBJECTIVES

1. To improve the transportation and movements of people on the African continent.
2. To increase resource utilisation on the continent.
3. To lead to industrialisation of the African continent.
4. To empower different sectors in Africa to interlink and expand.
5. To avail information to decision makers and other parties.

BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES OF RAILWAY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

1. It is a cheap means of transport that can accommodate the movement of low income earners from one country to another.
2. It is easy to maintain.
3. It will interlink all the African countries which will lead to Africa's unification.

4. It will lead to increased resource utilisation which increases jobs, output and profits.
5. It will assist thousands to access quality services like healthcare, tourism and entertainment.
6. It will also help to improve governance in Africa.
7. Transportation in Africa will be enhanced.
8. Tourism and adventure will be promoted and improved.
9. It will lead to better utilization of time and resources in Africa.

In conclusion, the development of the African Inter-city Railway Connection System will be a big instrument to Africa's unification and prosperity.

REFERENCE

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