

Jonathan and Buhari Administration's Involvement of China in the Modernization of the Nigerian Railway

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803220S>

Received: 18 July 2024; Accepted: 24 July 2024; Published: 29 August 2024

ABSTRACT

The administration of Jonathan and Buhari respectively, explored the Sino- Nigeria relation to foster development of the Nigeria infrastructure. China over the years has been actively involved in the modernization of the Nigerian railway sector since 1995. China brought an absolute overhaul transformation to the Nigerian railway through the engagement of President Jonathan and Buhari. The paper identified the early intervention of China in the Nigerian railway; it also identified the crucial role of the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) as the key player in the modernization. The paper also examined how One Belt, One Road (OBOR) has effectively galvanized the engagement of China in developing railway partnership globally and how the two administrations maximized this policy. The two administrations successfully signed various projects with China and ensured the execution. Although there were major challenges identified by the administrations but the Buhari administration ensured to complete major railway projects that started during Jonathan's tenure. The purpose of this article is to investigate the extent of the contribution of the two Nigerian presidents to transform the railway through China's service. The paper adopted the historical analytical method to anal and present data. It concluded that the both administration's commitment to railway transformation was commendable and if other subsequent leaders in Nigeria would adopt their interest in infrastructure, railway in Nigeria in the coming years will become a global model.

Keyword: Nigerian railway, Administration, Modernization, Development, Engagement

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian railway system has been through many transitional epochs in history. Railway development is extremely capital intensive and requires consistent commitment of various administrations to facilitate its growth and expansion. The conception of the railway idea in Africa and Nigeria in particular was orchestrated by the colonial masters. Many scholars traced the need for the railway development by the colonial masters as the quest for commercial activities and engagements (Rodney, 1976). According to Rodney (1976), this was not an act of deliberate development in Africa but an incidental development whose primary aim was to favour the colonial masters but also coincidentally brought about some form of development to Africa. Indeed, the railway sector is known for connecting the hinterlands to the urban areas for easy mobility of both humans, goods and services. Railway fosters cultural interactions and various commercial activities that improve the economy of any nation. The commencement of railway system during the colonial days gave room for the exploration of the use of the railway as a means of transportation in Nigeria.

All over the world, railway transportation remains an important segment in overall logistics business. This is so because railway transport has obvious advantage over other means of transportation in the movement of goods and passengers overland. In many of these countries, rail transport has retained its pride of place as a

veritable source of economic development (Agbaeze and Onwuka, 2014). However, in Nigeria railway have not enjoyed so much attention and growth expected needless not to say that the railway has not experience certain and highly notable transformation. Despite the long years of colonial engagement in the railway sector, the sector has not enjoyed consistent interest of support from all administrations. The attention from the administrations has always been insufficient and non-continuous. Though, shortly after independence the sector witnessed such a high level of active services in overland freight movement which contributed to the nation's economy (Agbaeze and Onwuka, 2014).

Indeed, the diversification of the Nigerian economy from agrarian society to the discovery of oil gave gradual room to the decline of railway as a popular means of transportation. The continuous activity in the sector has been sustained by the Nigerian Railway Corporation through the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Transportation (FMOT). The Corporation which is still in existence till date has ensured that the railway sector in Nigeria does not totally collapse. It is the decline in the railway sector that led to the Gen. Abacha administration's engagement of China in the sector to revamp it. The administration noted the need for partnership in the railway sector to keep it alive and running (Yinkore, 2005). Various administrations have showed renewed effort to sustain the growth in the Nigeria railway system. Though the growth might be perceived slow but there has been a continuous improvement. Thus, the modernization of the railway system witnessed so far has been with the involvement of the Chinese investment and expertise.

Chinese Entry into the Nigeria Railway System (The Early Intervention of the Chinese)

China's involvement in Nigeria's railway sector can be traced back to a series of infrastructure development projects initiated by both countries. The collaboration between China and Nigeria in the railway sector has largely been driven by economic and diplomatic factors. Nigeria, like many African countries, has faced significant challenges in developing and maintaining its infrastructure, including its railway network. Chinese investment has provided the much-needed funds and expertise to upgrade and expand the railway system. However, poor transportation infrastructure in Nigeria has been a major economic bottleneck to the development of its industries and exports because high transport costs lower the competitiveness of its goods (Ogunrinu, 2017). China and Nigeria over the years have signed several bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) related to infrastructure development, including railways. These agreements laid the groundwork for Chinese investment and involvement in Nigeria's railway projects. China's earliest MOU with Nigeria dated back to 1995, when the administration of the late Gen. Sani Abacha heeded Maigoro's advice when it awarded a \$528m railway contract in 1995 to the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation for the rehabilitation of rail infrastructure, supply of 50 locomotives and other rolling stocks, as well as the training of critical NRC personnel (Yinkore, 2005). The involvement of China in the Nigeria railway sort to address three major needs; first, the infrastructural needs; secondly, the Financing and Loans by China's financial institutions, such as the China Exim Bank, which have been instrumental in providing loans and financing for Nigeria's railway projects and thirdly, Chinese companies and expertise, such as China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) and China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC), they bring technical expertise and experience in building modern railway systems. China has the largest network of standard gauge and high speed train system. Chinese companies are fully involved in railway infrastructure development in Israel, Arabian countries and Europe (Salawu M. personal communication, Dec 10 2021).

For the Federal Ministry of Transport (FMOT) to reposition the railways as an efficient provider of rail transport service to meet the social and economic needs of the people, it signed on behalf of the federal government a bilateral pact with the Chinese Government in 1995 for the complete rehabilitation of track routes and supply of locomotives, coaches and wagons to the Nigerian railway system (Yinkore, 2005). The perspective was for Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) to rehabilitate and revitalize all its existing infrastructural facilities, improve the number of available locomotives, replace the obsolete electrical signalling and communication equipment for modern equipment and increase the availability of rolling stock through additional supply. It entailed the realignment of sharp curves and easing out of high gradients with the hope of improving the existing train speed and enhancing the safety and comfort of rail users. Whereas, the second and final phase will be the linked up all newly developed industrial, commercial and high population density centres (Yinkore, 2005).

With this vision, the NRC had to bring about evolution in the Nigeria railway system, the need to seek foreign investment became inevitable because railway network is both capital intensive and labour intensive. Major General D. Gumel, initiated and midwife the NRC/CCECC rehabilitation project in 1995. Railway development projects involving China have become more common in various African countries in recent years, including Nigeria (Yinkore, 2005). These projects are typically part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to promote infrastructure development and trade connectivity between China and other nations.

The NRC/CCECC project is divided into 4 parts; the survey and design phase entails the general survey and design of the total main line track network available to the corporation, the rehabilitation phase entails the total overhaul of the entire network of the track route, the technical assistance phase which involves the use of 100 Chinese experts in every field of the railway industry to work in conjunction with NRC staff for 3 years. And lastly the procurement and provision of locomotive and rolling stock (Yinkore, 2005). Indeed the break-down of these experts show that 30 are for loco and the rolling stock, 30 for the management and operation, 35 for training schools especially in the area of signalling and communication. The Chinese rehabilitation programme of the Nigerian railway is considered the most ambitious attempt by any Nigerian government since the inception of railway in Nigeria (Salawu M. personal communication, Dec 10 2021).

For the purpose of maximizing the gains derivable from the rehabilitation and revitalization of the corporation, the contracts handled by CCECC remained high on the agenda of both the ministry of Transport and the railway as underpinning the corporation's capacity for improved productivity (Salawu M. personal communication, Dec 10 2021). One of the major factors that made the Nigerian government consider the Chinese is first, the advance level of technology in China which is believed to be emulated if given the chance. Secondly, the ability and, the flexibility of the Chinese in their service delivery to replicate the interest of the government. Their ability to work within stated budget even with lesser quality makes them a high player in the railway rehabilitation in Nigeria. A critical look at the railway system in China would convince anyone that China had the ability to deliver (Salawu M. personal communication, Dec 10 2021).

The CCECC project which as at 1999 record showed 87% completion which was said to have been supervised by the federal ministry of transport. The subcontracts were equally funded with federal government counterpart such as timber sleepers, track materials and construction of signal houses (Yinkore, 2005). The NRC civil engineering department was involved in the inspection of the signal house constructed by the CCECC. The measures taken by the Nigerian Railway Corporation to ensure the CCECC rehabilitation project was well implemented, monitoring committees were put in place. The existence of these technical co-ordinating committees comprised senior railway and CCECC officials with the objective of monitoring the rehabilitation programme on an on-going basis and sorting problems as they arise. The coordinating committees constitute the interface between NRC and the project teams both at headquarters and district levels- operations co-ordinating committee, civil engineering co-ordinating committee, the mechanical co-ordinating committee and the signal and telecommunication engineering coordinating committee deliver (Salawu M. personal communication, Dec 10 2021). China brought about the change from the wooden sleeper to the concrete slippers, with this ability, Chinese began to lobby for more contracts and was warming his way into Nigeria's railway sector as a permanent stakeholder. The upgrading of railway system in Nigeria has been charged with the mission or vision of connecting all cities but rail and of course it enquires a huge plan because of the geographical terrain of Nigeria and the capital needed to execute the projects deliver (Salawu M. personal communication, Dec 10 2021).

Chinese companies are able to influence access to China's Exin bank for loan which is guaranteed on condition that the project will be implemented by Chinese firms. The railway is a major Sino-African cooperation and a flagship project of Nigeria-China practical cooperation and bilateral relationship. It connects Lagos, African largest city with Ibadan, Nigerian industrial capital. The length of the railway main line is about 157 kilometers with an extension of about 7 kilometers, adopting modern railway standard with designed speed 150 km/h (Ogunrinu, 2017).

Key Player in the Railway System Upgrade in Nigeria

There are many Chinese key players in the upgrade of the Nigerian railway sector. Various initiatives have

also been put in place to ensure and secure China's interest in the Nigerian railway sector. One of such is the CCECC that has played prominent role since its first involvement in the Nigerian railway sector in 1995, it has worked on numerous railway projects in Nigeria. Another initiative that has enhanced China's upgrade of the Nigerian railway system is the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) or the One Belt, One Road (OBOR). The government of China has used this initiative to facilitate its infrastructural service delivery in Nigeria.

China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC)

CCECC through the parent company in China has been an organ of China's foreign aid in infrastructure with regional offices in 104 countries in all the continents of the world since it was established in 1979. Since entering Nigeria in 1981, CCECC has always adhered to the mission of providing Nigeria with quality infrastructure and services. CCECC's first involvement with the Nigerian railway sector was in 1995, in the process of her service to the country signed contracts on railway repair and renovation in Nigeria and the supply of rolling stock. That implies that CCECC has been working on railway projects in Nigeria for 28 years (Ogunrinu, 2017). The company is involved in getting construction contracts in the country. The company is into railway, housing, highway, bridges, housing, Miscellaneous. CCECC contracted the largest foreign aid project--Tanzania-Zambia railway (TAZARA), CCECC's business scope has expanded from international contracting for railway construction to project contracting, civil engineering design & consultancy, labor services cooperation, real estate development, and import & export trading as well. The business activities of CCECC have covered over 50 countries and regions in Asia, Africa, America, Europe and Oceania (Monson, 2011).

CCECC's involvement in these railway projects has been part of Nigeria's efforts to revitalize its railway system and enhance transportation connectivity within the country. The Chinese company's role includes design, construction Nigeria has been part of that larger focus and the CCECC Nigeria Limited, in its operation in the country, has been a trailblazer in that task, and sometimes operation and maintenance of these railway lines. CCECC's biggest railway upgrade in Nigeria is another the completion of the Lagos-Ibadan railway project that has also started operation (Ogunrinu, 2017). Most of the services China through state-owned agencies have rendered partner countries, especially the less advanced worlds have been in building infrastructure in such countries. They have been active, visible and very prominent in advancing Nigeria's infrastructure. CCECC alone has executed over 120 major infrastructure projects ranging from dams, roads, bridges, railways, schools, government buildings, airports, seaports, oil installations and many others (Ogunrinu, 2017).

The history of Nigeria's infrastructure development especially the railway cannot be completed without a recognition of the CCECC Nigeria Limited. Presently, CCECC Nigeria is handling railway projects such as the Lagos Rail Mass Transit Project (Blue Line) (LRMT), Lagos Rail Mass Transit Project (Red Line) LRMT and the Kaduna-Kano railway project. CCECC Nigeria has completed and handed over three major railway projects to add to the transport infrastructure of the country. They include the Abuja metro integrated project which extends to the 186km Abuja-Kaduna railway, the Ajaokuta-Itakpe-Warri 326km railway project and lastly the Lagos-Ibadan project (Emewu, 2021). Though the quality of the service rendered by CCECC remains a subject of debate, the modules of her engagement in Nigeria remains a key subject in the discuss of Chinese deal with Nigeria.

Belt Road Initiative (BRI) or One Belt, One Road (OBOR)

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, is a massive infrastructure and economic development project launched by the Chinese government in 2013. It is one of the most ambitious and far-reaching international development projects in modern history. The primary aim of the BRI is to enhance connectivity and cooperation among countries, primarily in Eurasia, but also reaching into Africa and other parts of the world. The Chinese Government also wants to use OBOR as a platform to address the country's chronic excess capacity (Hurley et al, 2018) It is more about migrating surplus factories than dumping excess products. One of the least understood aspects of OBOR is Beijing's desire to use this initiative to export China's technological and engineering standards. Chinese policymakers see it as crucial to upgrading the country's industry (Cai, 2017). The Belt and Road initiative aims to create economic incentives in

developing and underdeveloped axis by sponsoring infrastructural projects and investments outside China through loans (Quadri, 2020). OBOR initiative seeks to connect the world from Asia to Europe and Africa through its two mega projects by roadways, airways, and seaways. It intends to connect about 60 countries across Asia, Europe, and Africa. One of the significant objectives of China behind the OBOR initiative is to implement the Go West policy. The Chinese see the infrastructural laggardness of the African continent as an avenue to boost its dwindling economy. Therefore, the provision of loans for the sponsorship of infrastructure and investment is urgently needed in all African states. The dominant push factor of the OBOR initiative primarily rests on the urgency to boost the Chinese economy and encourage the acceptance of the Chinese standard in the world (Cai, 2017).

The core of the BRI involves the construction of a wide range of infrastructure projects, including roads, railways, ports, airports, pipelines, and telecommunications networks. These projects are intended to improve transportation and trade links between participating countries. Beyond infrastructure development, the BRI also seeks to foster economic cooperation and trade between China and participating countries. It aims to boost economic growth and development in these nations by promoting investment, trade, and industrial capacity cooperation. This is an initiative that has been welcomed largely by many African countries because of the lacuna in most African country's infrastructure. China has made significant inroads into Africa under the BRI. At a bilateral level, it has invested in 52 out of the 54 African countries and is poised to enter the 53rd market in Sao Tome and Principe. By November 2019, 137 countries including Nigeria and 26 European countries have signed the Belt and Road cooperation agreements with China (Johnson, 2016). According to China's official statistics, 49 of the 54 countries (i.e. over 90 percent) have already signed MoUs under BRI. Such projects include in Kenya's Nairobi-Mombasa standard gauge rail line, Ethiopia's Addis-Djibouti standard rail line and Tazara railway linking the port city of Dar el Salam in Tanzania to the town of Kapiri Mposhi in Zambia's central province (Johnson, 2016). The Export-Import bank of China (China Exim Bank), claims that it so far funded more than 87 billion dollar-project in more than 40 African countries that are mostly BRI partners.

Nigeria is not left behind, Nigeria joined the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2018 at a summit in Beijing, Nigeria has recorded tremendous success, resulting in being the Africa's largest economy and the most populous nation in Africa. Also, the declaration of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) 2018 in Beijing Summit and its 2019-2021 African Plan indicates that Africa is an important partner in the BRI cooperation. The year of 2019 is the first year that Nigeria formally joins the big family of the BRI since China and Nigeria signed a governmental MoU on the BRI in September 2018 during the FOCAC Beijing Summit. Nigeria attached great importance to the second BRF (Quadri, 2020). The then Minister of Finance, Madam Zainab Ahmed and the Minister of Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi led a delegation of more than 20 high-level officials to Beijing to participate the relevant thematic forums and reached important consensus on bilateral cooperation under the framework of BRI. The BRI has already become pacesetters in the building of a community of shared future for all mankind and the stable growth of cooperation between China and Africa, as some Nigerian scholars comment in the local media (Quadri, 2020).

Unarguably, infrastructure development by the Chinese in partnership through BRI with Nigerian government has been making impact in the lives of many Nigerians. For instance, the Kaduna to Abuja rail service that was inaugurated in 2016 has created major transportation channel from the capital city to the industrial and metropolitan Kaduna. Completed projects and ongoing ones in Nigeria include the popular Abuja-Kaduna standard gauge rail line, Abuja rail mass transit, new terminal at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, Lagos-Ibadan standard gauge rail line, Port Harcourt International Airport, Port Harcourt, Malam Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano, Lekki deep sea port project and Abuja township road project (Zhou, 2019). The ongoing construction of Zungeru Hydropower Plant as well as Lagos-Ibadan Railway and Lekki Deep Seaport, the booming Ogun Guandong and Lekki Free Trade Zones, the fruitful promotion of the "Made in Nigeria with China" initiative, the signing of China-Nigeria Currency Swap Deal, the port call of Frigate Yancheng to Lagos, among others (Zhou, 2019). By July 26th 2016, Abuja-Kaduna Railway Project officially started commercial operation, becoming the first modern railway in operation using China standard in Africa. Nigerian Railway Corporation is in Charge of Operations while the CCECC offers technical support, training service and assistance to the commercial operation (Bukola, 2019). NRC has 534 staff working on the Abuja-Kaduna Railway Project. CCECC has a technical team of 17 specialists providing technical support. Abuja

Rail Mass Transit Project (Phase 1) was signed by CCECC and the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) and began commercial operations on July 13th 2018. It is known as the first light rail in West Africa (Bukola, 2019). During construction of the rail an estimate of 20,000 local staff were employed. Since commencement of operations, this project has directly provided about 1000 jobs. During construction and operation, the project indirectly established an estimate of 200,000 jobs mostly in areas of material production, subcontracting works, equipment manufacturing and related services (Bukola, 2019). The Abuja-Kaduna standard gauge railway is the first part of Lagos-Kano standard metrics project, which will connect the business centers of Nigeria with the economic activity centers of the northwestern part of the country. The Lagos-Ibadan segment is completed, providing opportunities for Nigerians, while the other segments are being planned. Due to the vastness of the country, the railway will cover a lot of stations between Lagos and Kano state, linking the regions together (Bibi, 2020). The stations designed for ease of transportation are: Lagos, Agege, Agbado, Kajola, Ewekoro, Abeukuta, Oyo, Ido, Ibadan, Abuja, Kubwa, Jere, Rijana and kaduna. It continues from Kaduna to Kano observing other stations (Bibi, 2020). One other significant project of the belt and road initiative in Nigeria is the Lagos-Calabar coastal railway project, which covers areas from Lagos, Ijebu-ode, Benin-Ore, Warri-Sapele, Yenogua-Otuoke-Ughelli, Portharcourt, Aba, Uyo and Calabar (Bibi, 2020). The project was negotiated by Nigeria's Minister of transportation, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi in 2016, with China Civil Engineering Construction Company. The project as initially negotiated was \$11.917 billion. The contract was later renegotiated and came up with a cost of \$ 11.117 billion, from which Nigeria was able to have \$800 Million off. The China Exim Bank was deployed to provide funding for the project from among many financial institutions that finance the belt and road project.

Other belt and road projects that are up-coming to Nigeria were signed between the federal government of Nigeria and the People's Republic of China in 2018 at the forum on China-Africa cooperation summit. More than \$10 billion agreements were signed during the summit. Some of the projects are as follow: i. Funding for the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, Ajaokuta-kaduna-Kano (AKK) Gas Pipeline to cost about \$2.8 billion. ii. \$400 million investments across six Nigerian States by Nanni Good Fortune Heavy Industries and Cape gate Group. iii. National information and communication technology infrastructure backbone phase 11 (NICTIB 11), which costs \$328 million, to be financed by the Chinese Exim Bank (Ademole, 2018).

Over the years China have come up with the most daring and audacious infrastructural advancement any country could ever attempt, it is fascinating to note that the BRI was able to gain world attraction because it is galvanized by China's ability to replicate what has been done in her home country to any other country. China has developed an impressive reputation as the 'world's factory' over the last three decades. In recent years, however, its comparative advantages in manufacturing, such as low labour costs, have begun to disappear. For this reason, the Chinese leadership wants to capture the higher end of the global value chain. To do this, China will need to upgrade its industry. Indeed, this has become one of China's most important domestic economic goals. It is reflected in the so-called Made in China 2025 strategy (Cai, 2017).

Nigeria has the potential to benefit from China's BRI, particularly in terms of infrastructure development, trade, and economic growth. However, realizing these benefits requires careful planning, effective project management, and addressing potential challenges to ensure that the projects contribute positively to Nigeria's long-term development goals.

Rehabilitation of the Nigerian Railway System Under President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan

To most analysts, President Goodluck Jonathan's name will be written in gold for his administration's pragmatic efforts at reviving the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC). Goodluck Jonathan served as the President of Nigeria from 2010 to 2015. During his administration, there were several initiatives aimed at rehabilitating and modernizing the railway sector in Nigeria. The revitalization of the railway system was seen as crucial to improving transportation, stimulating economic growth, and reducing the strain on the country's road infrastructure. Efforts were made to modernize the railway system by introducing new and more modern rolling stock, such as locomotives and passenger coaches

During President Jonathan's administration, several policies were implemented to rehabilitate the Nigeria Railway. The government prioritized investment in infrastructure development, which included upgrading and

expanding railway networks across the country. The administration also forged partnerships with international organizations to leverage expertise and funding for railway rehabilitation projects. In addition, efforts were made to modernize railway systems by introducing new technologies and improving operational efficiency (Sani 2014). These initiatives had a direct impact on job creation and the economy, contributing to increased transportation efficiency and connectivity. However, the rehabilitation process faced challenges such as funding constraints, technical and operational issues, as well as political opposition and public perception. Overall, President Jonathan's policies had a positive impact on improving connectivity, stimulating economic growth, and enhancing the livelihoods of Nigerians.

President Jonathan's administration sought to rehabilitate the Nigeria Railway by forming strategic and collaborative partnerships with numerous prominent international organizations. These invaluable partnerships aimed to amplify and harness the extensive expertise, vast resources, and diverse capabilities of these esteemed organizations, thereby exponentially bolstering the rehabilitation efforts undertaken. By uniting forces with these global entities especially China, President Jonathan strategically intended to capitalize on their profound wisdom, extensive experience, and innovative approaches in railway development to effectively and comprehensively address the multifaceted challenges encountered during the resuscitation of the Nigeria Railway (Sani 2014). Through unwavering cooperation, unwavering synergies, and the seamless exchange of knowledge and best practices, these transformative collaborations propelled President Jonathan's administration towards the unprecedented and radical modernization of the entire railway system in Nigeria. By achieving this ambitious vision, the administration aimed to revolutionize connectivity within the country, seamlessly integrating diverse regions and communities while bolstering economic growth and fostering social cohesion. Moreover, this visionary endeavor aspired to enhance transportation efficiency to unparalleled heights, ushering in a new era of fluidity, punctuality, and reliability in Nigeria's transport landscape. Through these groundbreaking and inclusive collaborations, President Jonathan's administration forged an enduring legacy, leaving an indelible mark on the nation's transportation sector while etching its name in the annals of Nigeria's transformative history

The framework signed in early May 2014 between the Federal Ministry of Transport and China Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC) for the development and construction of a steel railway corridor connecting ten states Lagos- Shagamu-Ijebu- ode- Ore-Benin city- Sapele-Warri- Yenogua- Port-Harcourt-Ogwashu-Uku-Asaba- Onisha including onisha bridge was a way of sustaining the modernization of the programme (Railway Gazette, 2014).

Earlier in July 2011, contract for the rehabilitation of Apapa network and signal works made double track of 1.5km each awarded to CCECC which was successfully completed in November 2012 (NIIMP,2020). Also, successfully supervised and rehabilitated during this period was the Ebutte Metta Junction to Apapa Local Station on the western railway corridor. Further rehabilitation works completed during this period were those of the sidings and loop lines to enhance operational efficiency along the Western Railway Corridor. The 300km link between the Apapa complex and the main line including the spur line to the Kaduna power plant complex were during the same period, evaluated and awarded as addendum to NRC contracts 1 and contract 2 comprising track rehabilitation of sidings and loop lines from Lagos to Kano under the railway modernization (NIIMP,2020).

Other addendums that was added for rehabilitation under this period Apapa exchange (4 lines) for marshalling and stabling, Apapa station yard (16 lines) also for marshalling and stabling including key industrial area in Apapa such as flour mills, Oando, Mobil, Total. The lines that run between Lagos and Kano (which includes 74 stations) were also rehabilitated for moderate use (Nigeria Tribune, 2017).

The Jonathan administration therefore saw to the rehabilitation of track and signaling – Western line (Lagos-Jebba) and Lagos- Ibadan – Ilorin – Jebba covering 488km awarded to CCECC at a total contract of N12,293,390,000.00 (Nigeria Tribune, 2017). The Jonathan administration carried out the rehabilitation of Track the Eastern line which runs from Makurdi- Kuru,+ Jos- Kafanchan ; makurdi- lafia- kuru sour to Jos-Kafanchan and Kaduna covering 554km awarded to China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC). President Jonathan's government explored public-private partnerships (PPPs) to attract investment in the railway sector. This approach sought to leverage private sector resources and expertise to develop and operate rail

infrastructure. The rehabilitation of the Track- Eastern line which runs from Port-Harcourt to Maiduguri and Port- Harcourt – Umuhia- Enugu- Makurdi covering 463km was awarded to Messrs (A China Geo-Engineering Corporation) at the total sum of N19, 963,760,000.00 roughly 20billion Naira. In the same vein Messrs Lingo also handled the rehabilitation of Kuru- Bauchi- Gombe- Maiduguri covering 640km at the total sum of N23, 720,359,034.00. Track rehabilitation of the Zaria- Kaduna / Namoda & Zaria-Funtua-Gusau-Kaura covering 221km was awarded to Messrs at a total sum of N3, 200,000,000.00 (Nigeria Tribune, 2017).

Indeed during the period of 2012/2013 a number of other minor projects critical to the success of the rehabilitation works were successfully undertaken and completed at the running shed and adjoining offices at Kafanchan, Ibadan, Enugu, Port-Harcourt, Minna, Zaria, Bauchi, Maiduguri, Ebute Metta, Oshodi, Ikeja, Alagomeji, Oshogbo, Gwada, Iddo, Shakwata, Kurabaku, Guni, Gadani, Gombe, Zonkwa, Oturpko, Lafia, Nومه, Jebba, Eha Amufu. These rehabilitation was successfully carried out by the Jonathan Administration even through upgraded modernized standard gauge was not achieved. However, the rehabilitation needed to keep railway active in those routes were ensured (Sani 2014).

Based on the rehabilitation carried out during the Jonathan administration the Nigerian Railway Corporation recorded an appreciable performance within the year 2009-2014 which also doubled as the year when the first launch of the 25years vision of modernization was achieved. In 2014, the Nigerian railway under this administration and through the involvement of the Chinese company enhanced modernization in the area of policy, process and procedures put in place to improve the inter-modality of the Nigerian transport system. Also, 3 of the Seaports and at least 2 airports in Nigeria were programmed to be linked to the railways. As at the end of 2014, the Jonathan administration had already seen to the successful rehabilitation of the 1.5km double track rail lines within Lagos Apapa port and that of Port-Harcourt while the standard gauge rail line had equally been extended to link the Apapa ports while work was planned for the Tincan port (Sani 2014). On 18 July 2012, the Goodluck Jonathan government approved US\$1.49 billion for the Lagos-Ibadan double track railway line modernization project. Scheduled for completion in the second half of 2015, which was completed in June 2021 (Sani 2014).

Table 1 shows the tabular representation of 2009-2014 performance and how the rehabilitation brought about improved operation of the railway services during Jonathan administration. President Jonathan's administration allocated funds for the rehabilitation of existing railway lines. This involved upgrading tracks, stations, and rolling stock to improve the efficiency and safety of rail transport.

Table 1: Operational Performance 2009- 2014(In Naira)

Year	Pax	Revenue/N	Freight/N	Revenue/N	Total Revenue/N
2009	1,285,080	204,573,771	52,489	60,711,935	265,285,706
2010	1,514,215	205,241,800	138,533	81,822,955	287,064,755
2011	3,493,443	466,821,564	341,396	213,351,957	689,173,521
2012	4,155,988	736,966,548	182,465	197,069,755	934,036,303
2013	4,328,287	987,299,966	101,126	435,023,451	1,422,323,417
2014	3,520,766	1,042,555,495	210,646	604,438,676	1,646,994,171

Unpublished report O& C Dept cited in Yinkore (2020).

As the corporation consistently replaced and upgraded its infrastructure and facilities, the number of passengers carried by rail between 2009 and 2013 steadily improved and increased from 1.2m in 2009, to 1.5m in 2010, 3.4m in 2011 and up to about 4m in 2012/2013 with room to improve further in the years ahead

(Yinkore, 2020). The number of rail trips made during the period also improved from an ambitious target of 7,500 of which 5,377 was achieved due largely to the suspension of rail services to and within the North-Eastern states for security concerns. It is also modest but critical improvement made in train speed on the narrow gauge during the period arising from the rehabilitation and modernization works. Train speed improved from a base line of 34km/hr in 2011, to 43.375km/hr in 2012/13 surpassing the target of 40km/hr proposed in 2012 (TRB, 2015). These improvements led to an increased number of passengers, from 1.28 million a year to about 5 million in 2014/2015. In 2021, 2.71 million passengers used the trains and 3.21 million did in 2022 (TRB, 2015).

Jonathan's administration was more concerned in ensuring that the railway was in moderate shape to run its daily services, not much was done to make the train services sophisticated as such but the railway was more productive during his administration.

Rehabilitation of the Nigerian Railway System Under President Muhammad Buhari

President Muhammad Buhari came into office on the 29th of May 2015 with a lot of focus and drive for infrastructural development. It was based on this premise that he began an aggressive work to foster the rehabilitation and completion of railway projects in partnership with China.

The Nigerian railway system rehabilitation and modernization programme had indeed recorded acceptable measure of successes in its implementation drive as at the end of the last quarter in 2016. The achievements recorded in the implementation of the first and second phases of the programme for the Nigerian railway resuscitation, rehabilitation, extension, expansion, of the existing narrow gauge corridors covered signalling, track, bridges and culverts work in addition to procurement and refurbishment of locomotives, rolling stock and other fixed movable infrastructure (Yinkore, 2020):

- i. Refurbish 250 wagon and 120 coaches
- ii. Procurement and supply of 40 1800hp locomotive of China
- iii. Procurement and supply of 2 100tons telescopic cranes
- iv. Procurement and supply of 4 and 60 ton overhead cranes
- v. Procurement and supply of 3 wheel machine
- vi. Procurement and supply of 11 68-seater air conditioned coaches
- vii. Procurement and supply of 4 sets of diesel multiple units
- viii. Procurement and supply of 2 180hp CNR locomotives
- ix. Procurement and supply of 2 1800hp power cars
- x. Procurement and supply of 2 18 sitter rail buses and 18 rail cars with troileys
- xi. Procurement and supply of 2 standard gauge 3500hp locomotive with inbuilt power cars
- xii. Procurement and supply of 5 standard gauge air conditioned coaches
- xiii. Modernization of 60 flat bed wagons for movement of bonded containers.
- xiv. Modernization of 20 pen extra goods covered wagons for movement of bagged cement
- xv. Modernization of 40 covered hopper wagon for movement of wheat
- xvi. Modernization of 6 peer cars

- xvii. Modernization of micro-wave communication equipment for the narrow gauge with 72 repeater sites nationwide to provide a backbone for the Automatic Train Warrant signalling system which largely enable NRC monitor train movements from Ebutte Meta, intercom communication within railway network and passenger information, Close Circuit Television CCTV
- xviii. Procurement and supply of signalling and telecommunication component of Itakpe Ajaokuta – Warri standard gauge rail
- xix. Private –Public- Partnership (PPP) initiatives for three projects were put in place covering the remodelling and development of major railway stations to on corporate commercial outlets, supply and utilization of coaches and wagons and the warehousing development services. Railway station covered includes Iddo terminal station, Lagos, Ebutte –Metta Junction station, Kano Station, Enugu station, Port- Harcourt Station, Jos Station, Gombe station.
- xx. Development of standard gauge rail corridor under Public- Private Partnership (PPP) option which was a 5-7 years duration and it covers 8,139km.
- xxi. Increased capacity by the railway to haul cargo freight and human transportation and eventually create the expected boom in the economy and business activities.

Other success was also recorded in the enhancement capacity option in the Nigerian Railway modernization project were also in the area of feasibility studies (under President Buhari) such as the Lagos- Abuja (high speed 615km), Ajaokuta(Eganyi)- Obajana- Jakura- Baro-Abuja with additional line from Ajaokuta-Otukpo- to include Anyigba-Ejule-Idah-Adoru-Nssukaa-Adani- Omor- Anaku- Aguleri-Nsugbe-Onisha rail line (821km). Also,Zaria-kaura, Namoda-Sokoto-Illela-Birnin Konni (Niger Republic 520km), Benin –Agbor-Onisha-Nnewi-Owerri-Aba with Additional line from Onisha-Enugu-Abakaliki(500km) and Eganyi – Lokoja-Abaji – Abuja (280km) (Yinkore, 2020).

The Buhari administration gave some indication and assurance that work on critical railway corridor was fully effective during his administration. Under this administration the railway recorded such a tremendous overhaul which include speedy completion of phase 1, addendum 1, Abuja- Kaduna standard gauge rail line (187km). Between 2016-2019, NRC had procured additional standard gauge locomotives and coaches to better serve the Abuja- Kaduna Rail corridor as well as Warri-Itapke standard gauge rail line (Yinkore, 2020)

Between 2018 and 2020 some stations along the Lagos- Ibadan-Kano standard gauge corridor were remodelled and ready for commercial passenger and freight train services. Other logistics and ancillary services that were considered for concessioning under this policy instrument for a sustainable railway system in Nigeria include

- i. Ticketing services
- ii. Park & ride (for car parking)
- iii. Loading and offloading
- iv. Warehousing and provision of rolling stock.

This administration also liaised with the state government, local government, and private sector for effective participation and vision sustainability for the appropriate development of railway Nigeria.

Major achievement in railway under President Mohammed Buhari's administration According to the Cable report Buhari has one of the most outstanding contributions to the revitalization of the railway sector in Nigeria. His administration saddled the CCECC contractors in different gangs working simultaneously ensure not just the kick starting of the railway project across regions but to ensure it is completed and commissioned. The Buhari administration made use of the already existing route where railway lines were in existence, he used those corridors to lay new tracks to ensure easy execution of project (The Cable, 2019).

According to Bello, the Buhari government gave strict deadline to work with, with constant inspection and periodic report to ensure an effective delivery and most importantly within the agreed duration. Work was constantly going on whether night or day to ensure the completion of the project. The Lagos- Ibadan project was completed under strict monitoring because the president wanted to deliver on his infrastructural promise to the people. As President Muhammadu Buhari flagged off the Lagos-Ibadan 157 km railway, another promise was kept, nine years after the contract was awarded in 2012. Buhari government ensured the CCECC companies were on their toes to guarantee that the projects were completed during his tenure (Yakubu B. personal communication, June 16 2022).

His administration sort to give the railway service a brand new experience such as clean and modernized coaches, flashy, air conditioned, roomy and spacious so that the service can be highly commendable by the users. Before he left office the completed Lagos- Ibadan was jointly managed by the operators - jointly by the CCECC who provides the technical support, and the NRC that has the sole obligation of running the administration increased the number of trips from four to six daily. This increase in number of trips is due to the growing demand for the services. A visit to the Lagos terminal of the railway link at Ebute Meta gives you the impression of being at the Beijing Nan or Hongqiao stations in Beijing or Shanghai respectively. The CCECC Nigeria Limited, a subsidiary of the larger company from China is replicating the Chinese railway system wonders in Nigeria with every project executed.

Similar to this is the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the 1,443-kilometer (897-mile) Eastern Railway line that starts from the southeastern oil hub of Port Harcourt and terminates at the northeastern city of Maiduguri which was approved by the Federal Government to kick-start with the sum a \$3 billion (The Cable, 2021). The Federal Government is expected to provide about 15% of the \$3 billion rehabilitation and reconstruction cost, while the balance will be provided by a syndicate of Chinese financiers. At completion, it connects Rivers, Abia, Imo, Enugu, Ebonyi, Anambra, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe and Borno states (The Cable, 2021).

The Buhari administration also unveiled the Warri-Itakpe standards gauge railway 30 years after it started constructing the rail line designed to transport iron ore from Itakpe to Ajaokuta and Aladja Steel Rolling Mills in Delta (This Day, 2020). The apex government disclosed that the rail infrastructure was slated for completion within five years after construction started in 1987, though claimed that it was stalled for over 30 years due to paucity of funds. Slated for completion within five years, the federal government started the rail project in 1987 then under the administration of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida who left office on August 27, 1993. The project had suffered outright neglect under the regimes of late Gen. Sani Abacha and Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar. But the administration of former President Olusegun Obasanjo brought it back again, though could not implement it substantially. Also, no major progress was recorded on the implementation of the rail project under the administrations of the late President Umaru Yar' Adua and President Goodluck Jonathan. But it became the priority of President Muhammadu Buhari when he assumed office on May 29, 2015. The construction of Warri-Itakpe Railway was designed for the transportation of Iron Ore from Itakpe to Ajaokuta and Aladja Steel Rolling Mills in Delta. The first 198 kilometres of rail line constructed in Nigeria by the colonial government was from Lagos to Ibadan in 1898-1901 and was 1,067 mm narrow gauge classification (This Day, 2020).

The existing railway network nationwide covered 3, 505 kilometres of single-track routes of the 1,067 mm narrow gauge on the Western and Eastern lines. The rail line provides efficient services for high density flows of passengers, and cargo traffic over relatively long distances, including huge volumes of containerised cargoes or bulk freight. Development and modernisation of the railway system was a major focus of the federal government under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. It was one of the strategic aim of the Buhari administration to ensure that all critical infrastructure abandoned by the previous administration, particularly those that would benefit the citizenry, are completed and inaugurated. According to the boarding department of the Railway Corporation, reports available suggest that patronage on this route has increased by over 200 per cent since its commissioning and it is becoming a preferred means of transportation for communities along this route in Delta, Edo and Kogi States (NRC, 2021). The freight service enhanced more efficient, land-based and affordable mode for mass transit and freight services. One of the resultant effects of the railway service in this route is the creation of job.

Moving the pipeline through Nigerian roads was the only option before the return of railway infrastructure. By this laudable achievement of resuming freight service via railway, NNPC's global goal on health Safety and environment nicknamed Goal Zero incident and accident will be achieved. In March 2021, President Muhammadu Buhari performed the groundbreaking of the \$1.96 billion rail line project, saying it would stimulate economic activities in 14 states where it traverses (The Cable, 2021).

Major Setbacks Under the Buhari Administration

One of the key challenges of the Buhari administration to rehabilitate the railway as it was identified by is the inability to secure foreign loan as expected (Adebayo, 2022). The delay was due to the federal government's inability to secure foreign loans that will make 85 percent of the funds needed to execute for the project. For instance, the delivery of the Port Harcourt –Maiduguri was not feasible as promised by the Buhari administration. When the contract was approved, it was approved on the premise that 85 percent will be funded through foreign loan, while 15 percent will be the counterpart funding for the national budget (Adebayo, 2022). Since that approval, the government was not able to obtain that 85 percent foreign loan for the project, although the 15 percent funding from the national budget was possible by the federal government. Therefore, another challenge during his tenure was funding.

Another key challenge to enhancing the realization of the modernization of the railway sector during the Buhari administration was security. The Port Harcourt-Maiduguri rail line was suspended due to insecurity and vandalism of railway properties along the corridor. According to Lin Cheng, the increase insecurity in Nigeria hinders the agreed duration of the delivery of project. Oftentimes projects would be abandoned until the needed security detailed is given to ensure the safety of the workers and the various expatriate working on the project. He recall one of such incidence along Abia axis while a project was going on, there was attack on the workers handling the rehabilitation that led to abrupt halt of the project (Cheng, L. personal communication, June 15 2022).

Buhari's administration recorded tremendous success in the modernization of the Nigerian railway, to some his government would solely be remembered for bringing back rail services to life. Although, there is a lot of work that is still needed to be done to ensure the sustainability of the service.

CONCLUSION

The modernization of the Nigerian railway system has passed through different stages of growth and evolution. The administration of Jonathan and Buhari showed commitment to improving the railway sector in Nigeria. This was done through the signing of various deals that enhanced railway transformation. This two administrations unlike in the past, saw to the beginning and finishing of railway projects which today has contributed to economic and infrastructural development in Nigeria. They have displayed how continuous commitment from the Nigeria leaders can bring about transformation. The revitalization of the Nigerian railway sector can be attributed to dedication of the two presidents.

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