



Reopened Chinese-Built Railways Link Coastal Angola with the Interior of Africa

OE Watch Commentary: A newly reopened railway is now transporting goods from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) across Angola to the port of Lobito. The 1,344 km Benguela railway, built by the China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC), China's largest rail company, cost \$1.8 billion. The accompanying excerpted article from *The People's Daily Online* provides some details on this project. The project began in 2007 and saw its first trial run in 2015. According to CRCC statistics, the project employed roughly 100,000 local workers. The fastest rail in Angola's history, the project will quickly move passengers and cargo across the breadth of Angola and the railway is likely to be a major boon to the Angolan and DRC economies. UN trade data indicates that over 80 percent of DRC exports consist of minerals and metals and because of the railway, DRC copper and manganese now have a more efficient route to the Atlantic. Angola, while far wealthier than its neighbor to the east, is even more reliant on mineral wealth, with over 90 percent of its exports coming from oil.

China and Angola enjoy a close trade relationship, and in 2016, Angola for the first time beat out Russia to become China's top source of oil imports. CRCC is heavily invested in Angola, and in addition to the railway has built an airport in Angola's Cabinda Province, an exclave separated from Angola proper by part of the DRC.

Chinese firms are making major inroads in Africa through construction projects. While the details of many deals are murky and reports of spying devices planted in a new, Chinese-built African Union building have raised concerns, many infrastructure projects appear to have real traction with local governments. In east Africa, for example, a railway corridor linking the port city of Djibouti with Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa and Nairobi, Kenya is opening up whole new avenues of trade. There are plans to link the Benguela Railway with other projects, such as the trans-Tanzania-Zambian TAZARA Railway, linking both coasts of the African continent. China's efforts to link these underdeveloped, but geographically important axes of trade will likely change patterns of trade in Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

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Source: “中企承建铁路助力安哥拉重启铁路国际贸易 (Chinese Enterprises Contracted to Help Reopen Railways, Resume International Trade),” *People's Daily Online*, 8 March 2018. <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0308/c1002-29856853.html>

The Benguela Railway is an important route for DRC and Zambian copper, manganese, and other mineral resources, but due to the Angolan Civil War transportation totally prevented, forcing exports to Europe to be transported through South Africa or Tanzania, resulting in a sharp increase in costs.

