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China-Africa and India-Africa trade in the years 2000-2014

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Abstract

The paper presents merchandise trade between China and Africa and between India and Africa over the period from 2000 to 2014. The analysis is based on the data retrieved from the UN Comtrade Database. Both, China and India have significantly increased their trade in goods with 54 African countries since the beginning of the 21st century. In the analysed period, China's bilateral trade with Africa increased 21 times while India's about 13 times. The Asian countries increased their merchandise trade with Africa mainly due to the development of South-South cooperation and diplomatic relations with the region, and combining trade with development assistance. So far the winner of the Sino-Indian trade competition in Africa is China. The value of China's total trade with Africa surpassed India's nearly 3 times in the years 2000-2014.

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Keywords: merchandise trade; development assistance; South-South cooperation.

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Sino-Indian trade competition in Africa has been observed. Both, Asian giants have been intensively developing trade relations with African countries. Their fast economic growth and constantly increasing demand for natural resources, food, and new markets caused that resource-rich Africa became very important partner for them. China and India compete in Africa not only for strategic space but also for ensuring support on the international arena.

The aim of the paper is to show the scale and trends in merchandise trade of China and India with 54 African countries in the years from 2000 to 2014. The analysis is based on the data retrieved from the UN Comtrade

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Database. Trade data for South Sudan are available from 2012 so in the study they are combined with data for Sudan and both countries are considered as one called Former Sudan.

There are many studies on trade between two Asian giants and Africa in the 21st century. The expansion of China-Africa trade and its impact on African economies was analyzed by Large (2008), Balamoune-Lutz (2011), Montinari and Prodi (2011), Obuah (2012), He (2013), and Kummer-Noormamode (2014). Trade between India and Africa was studied by Geda and Meskel (2008), Broadman (2008) and Roy (2014). Besides, theoretical framework of China-Africa relations was presented by Lee et al. (2007). In turn, Beri (2003) and Taylor (2012) focus on India-Africa relations.

The main contribution of this paper to the discussion on China-Africa and India-Africa trade in the 21st century is a comparison of scale and trends in trade of both Asian countries with Africa in the years, from 2000 to 2014.

2. Development of China-Africa and India-Africa commercial relations

China-Africa trade relation dates back to two thousand years ago. Chinese silk and bronze pots were reaching Egypt through the Silk Road. On the other hand, elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns from Africa were transported to China (Gao, 1984). At the time of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Chinese products were directly shipped to Africa. The famous Chinese admiral Zeng He (1371-1433) sailed to Somalia and Kenya. He exchanged gold, silver, silk, and porcelains for African local products (Gao, 1984). The development of China-Africa trade was stopped during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) due to the adoption of a closed-door policy with regard to foreign relations. Until the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the relations between China and Africa were negligible.

In the 1950s and 1960s, China's interest in Africa was mainly of political and ideological nature. Initially, China supported independence movements in Africa. After the Sino-Soviet split, it competed with the Soviet Union for influence in newly independent African countries. In order to achieve its objectives, China provided foreign assistance to Africa. The first beneficiary of China's aid was Egypt in 1956. In the 1960s, China offered aid to Guinea, Mali, Central African Republic, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, and Congo (Nowak, 2015a).

Merchandise trade between China and Africa was low up to the beginning of the 1970s and limited to countries that recognized the People's Republic of China¹. In the 1980s, China focused on domestic economy and its trade with Africa noticeably declined. Sino-African trade in goods began to improve in the late 1990s. It increased by 700% comparing to the 1980s. China revived its bilateral relations with Africa based on commercial cooperation rather than ideological coalitions (Ebner, 2015). A huge rise in China-Africa trade has been observed since the middle of the first decade of the 21st century.

The recent surge in trade between China and Africa is due to changes in China's policy. Since the late 1980s, Chinese government encouraged and supported domestic entrepreneurs to trade and doing business abroad. In 1994, the *Grand Plan of Trade and Economic Cooperation* was launched by Wu Yi, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, and the Export-Import Bank of China (EXIM Bank of China) was set up (Nowak, 2015a). The EXIM Bank of China provided concessional loans to support the development of China's foreign trade. In the late 1990s, the Chinese government launched "going-out" strategy in order to accelerate overseas expansion of Chinese companies. Since the beginning of the 21st century, China has been successfully combined investments, trade and foreign aid. Besides, it has been developing and strengthening its cooperation with other countries during high-level visits.

In the development of trade relations between China and Africa the key dates were 2000, 2003, and 2006. In 2000, China established the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) at the ministerial conference in Beijing. Besides, it cancelled of RMB 10 billion of debts of heavily indebted poor countries and least developed countries (LDCs) in Africa. During the 2nd Ministerial Conference of FOCAC in 2003, China announced further increase in assistance for Africa and zero-tariff treatment to products exported to China from some Africa's LDCs. It also began

¹ At the beginning of the 1960s, China was recognised by 14 African countries (Scalapino, 1964). In the 1970s, China had diplomatic ties with 22 countries in Africa.

to build special economic zones in Africa to develop infrastructure, improve custom procedures and overcome obstacles to investment (Obuah, 2012). In 2006, on the 50th anniversary of establishing formal Sino-African diplomatic ties², China decided to establish and develop a new type of strategic partnership with Africa featuring political equality and mutual trust, win-win economic cooperation, and cultural exchange. Moreover, the China-Africa Development Fund was set up (<http://www.focac.org/eng/ltada/ltjj/t933522.htm>). At the end of 2006, Chinese leaders announced that the EXIM Bank of China would provide USD 2 billion in concessional loans and USD 3 billion in preferential export credits to African countries in the years 2007-2009 (Bräutigam, 2011). During the following two Ministerial Conferences of FOCAC in 2009 and 2013, China declared to provide USD 10 billion in concessional/preferential credits to Africa in the years 2010-2012 and USD 20 billion of credit line from 2013.

Generally, the basis for China-Africa economic cooperation are competitive political advantage, comparative economic advantage, and economic diplomacy and development assistance. China cooperates with African countries despite they are not democratic and do not respect human rights. Moreover, it does not interfere in domestic affairs of its partners. The comparative economic advantage stems from utilizing by China low-cost bidding strategy based on low skilled labour and managerial costs. The Chinese government diplomatically supports prestige projects in Africa and offers low-interest loans to China's trading partners (Alden, 2008).

India's trade with Eastern Africa dates back at least the days of the Silk Road (Broadman, 2008). Indian merchants exchanged cotton and glass beads for gold, elephant tusks, and gemstones. In the Middle Ages, trade between India and Africa intensified due to the development of trade routes between Asia and the Mediterranean through Arabia. India-Africa trading relations were further strengthened during the colonial period, when India and a large areas of Africa were included into the British Empire. Besides, in the 19th century, a number of Indians arrived to Africa as indentured workers (Oonk, 2007). The presence of Indians in Africa was conducive to an exchange of goods between the regions. Today, the largest Indian diaspora on the African continent is in the former colonies of the United Kingdom (South Africa, Mauritius, Kenya and Tanzania).

After India's independence in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundations for India's policy towards Africa. The first Prime Minister of India mainly focused on the support for struggle against colonization and apartheid, and the people of Indian origin in Africa. He intended to create friendly, cooperative, and mutually constructive relationships between India and African countries (Taylor, 2012). India's friendship with African countries was further developed by Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. Since the beginning of the 1960s, India-Africa relations were enhanced by Indian foreign aid. India supported selected African countries under Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme (SCAAP). Besides, it has been providing development assistance to Africa under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC). The ITEC focuses on technical training, project assistance, sharing of expertise, donations of equipment, and scholarships (<http://itec.mea.gov.in/>). In the 1970s and 1980s, India still supported liberation struggles in Africa. However, Indo-African economic relations were limited due to the poor state of Indian economy and constraints imposed by the Cold War. Since the 1990s, India's policy towards Africa has been based on five pillars: developing economic cooperation, engaging the people of Indian origin, preventing and combating terrorism, preserving peace, and assisting the African defence forces (Beri, 2003). In the late 2000s, economic and trade relations between India and Africa were strengthened during the India-Africa Forum Summits. The First Summit was held in 2008 in New Delhi, India. It was followed by the 2nd India-Africa Forum Summit in 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Third Summit was held in 2015, in New Delhi.

India, like China, uses foreign aid to develop its economic cooperation with Africa. In the 2000s, India extended lines of credit and grants for Africa. From 2004, African countries have been beneficiaries of Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS). Besides, India committed USD 5.4 billion at the First Summit, and USD 5 billion at the Second (Chakrabarti, Ghosh, 2014). In the years, from 2007 to 2013, India increased its assistance to Africa five times (Nowak, 2015b). During the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit, India promised to provide further USD 10.6 billion in concessional loans and grants to Africa.

² The first African country (Egypt) recognized China in 1956.

3. Main characteristics of China-Africa and India-Africa trade in goods

Trade in merchandise goods between China and Africa and between India and Africa grew significantly during the years from 2000 to 2014. The value of total trade in goods between China and Africa rose from USD 10.6 billion in 2000 to USD 107.1 billion in 2008, and USD 221.5 billion in 2014. In the years from 2000 to 2014, Chinese exports to Africa grew annually at 22.6% while African exports to China have been growing annually at 22.4%. The value of total trade between India and Africa increased from USD 5.6 billion in 2000 to USD 42.0 billion in 2008, and USD 74.9 billion in 2014. In the analysed period, Indian exports to Africa grew annually at 20.2% while African exports to India grew annually at 17.8%.

In the years 2000-2014, the value of China's exports in goods to Africa was approximately 3.0 times bigger than India's ones and the Chinese merchandise imports surpassed Indian about 2.5 times. However, from 2008 to 2014, China exported to Africa 3.2 and imported from Africa 2.6 times more than India. After the global financial crisis, China's trade with Africa slightly increased comparing to India's trade with the continent.

China's trade domination in Africa is more evident in the case of Africa's least developed countries³. In the years from 2000 to 2014, the value of China's bilateral trade in goods with 34 Africa's LDCs surpassed India's about 4.3 times.

During 15 years, Africa more than doubled its share in China's total trade. In 2000, Africa accounted for 2.0% of China's total exports and 2.5% of China's total imports while in 2014 it accounted for 4.5% of Chinese total exports and 5.9% of Chinese total imports. However, Africa seems to be more strategic trading partner for India than China. In 2000, African countries accounted for 5.2% of India's total exports and 6.5% of India's total imports. Those shares increased to 10.9% and 8.8% by 2014, respectively.

China imports commodities primarily from two African regions⁴. In the years 2000-2014, Central Africa accounted for nearly 44% of African exports to China and Southern Africa accounted for just above 31%. From 2008, China slightly increased imports from Southern Africa and decreased from Central Africa. Western Africa and Northern Africa were the largest regional markets for Chinese commodities with the share of 60%.

India also imports commodities mainly from two African regions. Western Africa was the biggest supplier for India with a share of 39%, while Indian imports from Southern Africa accounted for 23%. Eastern Africa and Western Africa were the main destinations for Indian commodities. India exported above 57% of its goods to those regions (Table 1).

Table 1. China's and India's trade with African regions

Region	China's trade with African regions				India's trade with African regions			
	2000-2014		2008-2014		2000-2014		2008-2014	
	China's exports	China's imports	China's exports	China's imports	India's exports	India's imports	India's exports	India's imports
Northern Africa	28.55%	14.91%	27.45%	13.92%	19.67%	17.68%	19.86%	16.90%
Western Africa	31.33%	5.34%	31.61%	5.36%	21.86%	39.42%	20.46%	41.53%
Central Africa	8.10%	43.84%	8.93%	41.86%	4.57%	16.51%	3.58%	16.62%
Eastern Africa	13.29%	4.62%	13.95%	4.87%	35.59%	3.49%	37.43%	3.49%

³ The following Africa's countries are classified as LDCs: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia (http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/ldc/ldc_list.pdf).

⁴ African countries are classified into the following regions: **Northern Africa** (6 countries): Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Former Sudan, Tunisia; **Western Africa** (16 countries): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo; **Central Africa** (9 countries): Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe; **Eastern Africa** (17 countries): Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, **Southern Africa** (5 countries): Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland.

Southern Africa	18.73%	31.29%	18.06%	33.98%	18.31%	22.89%	18.67%	21.46%
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Source: Own calculations based on data retrieved from <http://comtrade.un.org/data/>

There are similarities between Sino-African and Indo-African trade in goods. In the years 2000-2014, the top five importers from Africa accounted for 52% of total Chinese exports to the continent while the top five African exporters accounted for nearly 78% of China's imports from Africa. Similarly, 56% of Indian exports in goods were directed to five African countries while 78% of India's imports came from five African countries. Principally, China and India trade with 10 African countries. From 2008, China slightly diversified African markets for their goods. Both countries intensified their imports from selected African suppliers (Table 2).

Table 2. The share of top trading partners in China's and India's trade with Africa

Number of top trading partners	China				India			
	2000-2014		2008-2014		2000-2014		2008-2014	
	African importers	African exporters	African importers	African exporters	African importers	African exporters	African importers	African exporters
Five	51.6%	77.6%	51.2%	78.3%	55.6%	77.8%	58.0%	78.8%
Ten	70.3%	88.8%	69.9%	89.3%	73.0%	87.2%	75.5%	89.0%
Twenty	89.0%	97.0%	88.7%	97.2	88.3%	95.9%	89.9%	96.6%

Source: Own calculations based on data retrieved from <http://comtrade.un.org/data/>

China-Africa trade has been dominated by resource-rich African countries. According to the value of bilateral trade, in the years from 2000 to 2014, the most important China's trading partners were South Africa (24.7% of China-Africa total trade), Angola (18.2%), Nigeria (6.7%), Former Sudan (5.5%), Egypt (5.5%), Algeria (4.1%), Congo (3.3%), Libya (3.1%), Morocco (2.3%), and Ghana (2.2%). India traded mainly with Nigeria (23.4% of India-Africa total trade), South Africa (20.2%), Angola (8.2%), Egypt (7.9%), Kenya (4.8%), Tanzania (3.9%), Algeria (3.5%), Morocco (2.7%), Former Sudan (2.0%), and Mauritius (1.9%). Seven out of the top ten trading African partners are the same for both Asian countries. The ranking of top ten African importers from China and India and African exporters to those countries is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Top ten China's and India's African trading partners in the years 2000-2014 (USD billion)

Rank	African importers from				African exporters to			
	China		India		China		India	
	Country	Value	Country	Value	Country	Value	Country	Value
1	South Africa	113.4	South Africa	36.9	South Africa	225.0	Nigeria	96.8
2	Nigeria	79.8	Kenya	23.2	Angola	222.4	South Africa	65.1
3	Egypt	65.6	Nigeria	21.2	Former Sudan	54.4	Angola	37.1
4	Algeria	43.7	Egypt	20.4	Congo	40.1	Egypt	19.3
5	Angola	27.1	Tanzania	15.4	Libya	26.2	Morocco	10.2
6	Morocco	27.0	Mauritius	9.5	Equatorial Guinea	21.4	Algeria	10.0
7	Ghana	25.2	Algeria	7.4	Congo, Dem. Rep.	18.6	Libya	5.9
8	Benin	25.0	Mozambique	7.2	Zambia	17.2	Tanzania	4.0
9	Liberia	21.8	Ghana	6.4	Algeria	12.9	Former Sudan	3.7
10	Kenya	20.7	Former Sudan	6.3	Nigeria	12.1	Côte d'Ivoire	3.7

Source: Own calculations based on data retrieved from <http://comtrade.un.org/data/>

During the years 2008-2014, China mainly exported its commodities to South Africa (USD 88.0 billion), Nigeria (USD 64.9 billion), Egypt (USD 51.4 billion), Algeria (USD 35.2 billion), Angola (USD 24.1 billion), Ghana (USD 21.2 billion), Liberia (USD 19.9 billion), Morocco (USD 19.4 billion), Benin (USD 18.3 billion), and Kenya (USD 17.6 billion). From 2008, China imported primarily from two African countries: South Africa (USD 202.5 billion) and Angola (USD 181.4 billion). The Chinese imports from the other countries were much lower i.e. Former Sudan (USD 39.7 billion), Congo (USD 29.0 billion), Libya (USD 21.5 billion), Democratic Republic of Congo (USD 17.5 billion), Zambia (USD 16.0 billion), Equatorial Guinea (USD 13.1 billion), Algeria (USD 10.7 billion), and Nigeria (USD 9.5 billion).

In the years 2008-2014, Indian commodities were mainly exported to South Africa (USD 28.8 billion), Kenya (USD 19.1 billion), Egypt (USD 16.1 billion), Nigeria (USD 16.0 billion), Tanzania (USD 13.8 billion), Mauritius (USD 6.7 billion), Mozambique (USD 6.3 billion), Algeria (USD 6.1 billion), Former Sudan (USD 4.6 billion), and Ghana (USD 4.6 billion). India imported goods first of all from Nigeria (USD 83.0 billion), South Africa (USD 48.2 billion), Angola (USD 29.1 billion), Egypt (USD 15.0 billion), Morocco (USD 7.4 billion), Algeria (USD 6.5 billion), Libya (USD 4.7 billion), Gabon (USD 3.3 billion), Former Sudan (USD 3.3 billion), and Tanzania (USD 3.2 billion).

Over the period from 2000 to 2014, India exported more goods than China to 9 African countries (Mauritius, Kenya, Mozambique, Somalia, Seychelles, Malawi, Uganda, Swaziland, and Burkina Faso). After the beginning of the global crisis Indian exports surpassed Chinese in the case of 8 countries (except Burkina Faso). From 2000 to 2014, India imported more goods than China from 21 African countries (Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, Guinea, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Tunisia, Tanzania, Kenya, Togo, Botswana, Swaziland, Somalia, Mauritius, Comoros, Malawi, Djibouti, Benin, Cabo Verde, and Seychelles). In the years 2008-2014, Chinese merchandise imports from Botswana and Benin surpassed Indian ones but India imported more goods than China from São Tomé and Príncipe.

Trade relations between China and Africa, and India and Africa create and sustain the asymmetry between those Asian countries and the net-winner and net-loser African countries. During considered 15 years, China had a trade deficit with 16 African countries. From 2008, China imported more from 15 countries in the region than it exported. Correspondingly, India recorded a trade deficit with 17 African countries. After the beginning of global crisis, India's imports exceeded its exports in the case of 18 African countries.

Both, China and India mainly import mineral resources and raw materials from Africa. China supplies industrial machinery, electrical and electronic equipment to Africa. India exports refined petroleum, automobiles, textiles, and pharmaceuticals to the region.

4. Concluding remarks

China-Africa and India-Africa trade have a long history. However, a significant growth in trade between those Asian countries and Africa has been observed since the beginning of the 21st century. Over the period from 2000 to 2014, China's bilateral trade in goods with 54 African countries increased 21 times while India's about 13 times. China's total trade with Africa has been growing annually at 22.5% while India's one grew annually at 18.8%. From 2009, China has been the second trading partner for Africa, after the European Union. So far the winner of the Sino-Indian trade competition in Africa is China. The value of China's total trade with all African countries in the years 2000-2014 surpassed India's nearly 3 times, while Chinese merchandise trade with 34 LDCs was over 4 times bigger than Indian one.

China and India in order to increase merchandise trade with Africa intensively develop South-South cooperation with countries in the region. Besides, the Asian countries develop and strength their trade relations during high-level visits and official forums like FOCAC or the India-Africa Forum. Both, China and India use development assistance in the form of loans and grants to develop their bilateral trade relations with African countries. However, China is diplomatically more active and invests more in Africa than India. Moreover, China supports more intensively domestic companies which trade with Africa and provides more development assistance to African countries than India.

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