

The Asia, Gulf and Africa trade corridor

Where the volume is, which way it flows, and what is hard to see

Key findings

China-Africa trade reached \$348 billion in 2025, up 17.7% on 2024.

The flow is growing faster in one direction. Chinese exports to Africa rose 25.8% to \$225 billion. Chinese imports from Africa rose 5.4% to \$123 billion.

The Gulf is one of the largest goods traders in the world. GCC trade in goods was about \$1.5 trillion in 2023, sixth globally. Trade between the six member states is a small part of it.

Africa is building a single market. The AfCFTA Secretariat projects \$6.7 trillion in consumer and business spending by 2030.

\$348B China-Africa trade, 2025	\$225B Chinese exports to Africa, up 25.8%	\$123B Chinese imports from Africa, up 5.4%	\$1.5T GCC goods trade, 2023
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1 Scale

Chinese customs data, as reported by the China-Global South Project, put total trade between China and Africa at \$348 billion in 2025, a 17.7% increase on 2024. That is a record year in the data we reviewed.

2 Direction

Chinese exports to Africa were \$225 billion in 2025 (up 25.8%). Chinese imports from Africa were \$123 billion (up 5.4%). The difference, about \$102 billion in China's favour, is our calculation from those two figures.

Our reading: African demand for Asian goods is growing about five times faster than African sales into China. For a buyer in Lagos or Nairobi, finding and checking suppliers in Guangzhou or Shanghai is the daily problem. For a supplier, the question is who is buying and under what rules.

3 The Gulf position

GCC-Stat reports total GCC goods trade of about \$1.5 trillion in 2023: \$823.1 billion in exports and \$659.3 billion in imports, ranking the bloc sixth in the world by trade in goods. At an October 2025

meeting, a GCC official put trade between member states at around \$146 billion for 2024, roughly a tenth of the total.

Gulf ports and trading houses also handle goods that originate in Asia and end up in Africa. This brief does not size that transit trade, because we could not find a consistent public figure for it.

4 What is hard to see

The data for this corridor sits in customs records, port statistics and exchange reports, published in Arabic, French, English and Chinese. No single source covers the three regions together, and much of it arrives months after the trade took place.

Our view: this gap is why ANWAI exists. We are early. Our first products are trade insights in three languages and a supplier connection service for Asian manufacturers and African and Middle East buyers.

What to watch

- China customs monthly releases on trade with Africa, for early signs of change in direction.
- AfCFTA tariff schedules and rules of origin, which decide how fast intra-African trade grows.
- The GCC-Stat annual foreign trade report, for the Gulf side of the corridor.

About ANWAI (أنواء). AI-powered trade intelligence for the Asia, Gulf and Africa corridor. Participant, Harvard Business School Foundry. Member, NVIDIA Inception. Contact: cheibani@anwai.ai · anwai.ai

Sources and notes

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2. NTU Centre for African Studies, "China-Africa trade hits record US\$348bn as deficit balloons". ntu.edu.sg/cas/news-events/news/detail/china-africa-trade-hits-record-us-348bn-as-deficit-balloons
3. GCC-Stat, GCC Foreign Trade Report 2023, as reported by WAM and Gulf Today, 25 January 2025. gulftoday.ae/business/2025/01/25/gcc-ranks-6th-globally-in-goods-trade-volume
4. Arab News, 16 October 2025, remarks by the GCC General Secretariat on intra-GCC trade of about \$146 billion in 2024. arabnews.com/node/2619094
5. South African Government News Agency, remarks by AfCFTA Secretary General Wamkele Mene on \$6.7 trillion by 2030. sanews.gov.za/south-africa/afcfta-agreement-presents-economic-opportunities-investors

Figures are as reported by the sources above and have not been independently audited. Dollar figures are US dollars. The \$102 billion difference is ANWAI's calculation. Statements marked "our reading" or "our view" are ANWAI's opinion.