The preference of a type of partner in a PTAs then becomes an empirical question. Do South-South PTAs promote trade and industrial development among their members? The empirical literature overall reports positive effects of PTAs on the trade of member countries, but with considerable heterogeneity on the estimation coefficients. For example, a meta-analysis of research papers on the effects of PTAs on member trade, encompassing 85 papers and 1827 estimates, finds an average of 0.59 (an 80% increase in trade), with a median of 0.38 (a 46% increase in trade), a wide range of coefficient estimates (-9.01 to 15.41), and only 312 out of 1827 estimates reported as negative (Cipollina and Salvatici, 2010). Furthermore, a survey of the empirical research on the effect of economic integration agreements on international trade flows, as well as using the most modern econometric techniques to address biases, found an increase of 50% on international trade, but with significant variation in the effects of specific agreements (Kohl, 2014). However, much of the empirical research is focused on the effects of PTAs on or including the most advanced economies. Empirical research focused exclusively on the effects of South-South PTAs or comparing them to the effects of North-North or North-South PTAs, is much less prevalent in the literature. However, several research papers do control for the type of agreement (North-South or South-South) and have found positive and significant effects of South-South PTAs (Medvedev, 2006; Mayda and Steinberg, 2007; Dahi and Demir, 2013; Deme and Ndrianasy, 2017), but these articles tend to be limited in their scope, sample size or only focus on trade volumes.

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