Securing a Shared Neighbourhood:
The European Union and India as Partners for Security in Africa

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Summary

The strategic partnership between the European Union (EU) and India has been reignited in recent years, partly due to geopolitical shifts, such as the rise of China. However, in one area in particular – security cooperation – the EU and India are yet to become true partners. This brief examines the potential for deeper security cooperation on Africa, which is a "shared neighbourhood" of the EU and India. It outlines three broad areas of mutual concern: peace support operations, security on and off the coasts, and cybersecurity. The brief argues that while some factors impede deeper cooperation, there are also several opportunities for close collaboration. The brief makes recommendations in this regard. Capacity building is identified as a potential area for cooperation that would fit the agendas of the EU and India, as well as African partners. Working together at operational level would, in turn, feed into political cooperation and strengthen the wider EU-India strategic partnership. A close dialogue, flexibility and a readiness to shed some inhibitions will be key to progress.

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Introduction

The European Union (EU) and India have in recent years reignited their strategic partnership. Having had a largely dormant relationship for several years, there has been clear political momentum since 2016, involving summits, various joint documents and initiatives, and a new "EU strategy for India".[1] Both sides are now committed to working more closely together.

A key reason for the rediscovered interest in the EU-India partnership is ongoing geopolitical shifts. China is expanding its global activities, and its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative stretches from Asia to Africa, Europe and Latin America. This development has coincided with the United States stepping back from its global leadership role in several of its aspects, and the current US administration often makes a point of not wanting to be bound by multilateral agreements. At the same time, tensions between global powers are increasing and the rules-based international order and multilateralism are being challenged.

There is a strong underlying logic behind the EU and India becoming closer partners. Although different in many respects, both powers share important fundamentals. They are the world's largest democratic polities underpinned by common values with regard to human rights, an open society and a rules-based international order. Both the EU and India have ambitions to play a global role. Both actors share concerns about the rise of China but are also closely linked to its economy. In addition, they share common neighbourhoods – Central and West Asia/the Middle East, Africa and the Indian Ocean – which face many security challenges with global implications.

Despite the underlying logic of mutually beneficial cooperation, however, the partnership has not lived up to its potential. This is especially true in the field of security cooperation. More has materialized in the economic sphere. Although negotiations on a Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement have thus far been unsuccessful, several concrete initiatives have been launched in the economic, research and energy spheres.[2] However, in the security realm, there has been very little tangible cooperation. There are several reasons for this. While India has a growing security and defence partnership with France, an EU member state, it does not currently view the EU as a capable security actor. The EU, for its part, has also had some misgivings about India as a security partner, such as a wariness of India's defence materiel partnership with Russia. Until recently, the EU has also been reluctant to fully acknowledge the challenges of a rising China.

What role can the EU-India strategic partnership play in these times of geopolitical tension? This partnership has an expressed ambition to support the wider goals of a rules-based international order and contribute to global peace and stability. However, can the EU and India be security partners? Can their strategic partnership contribute to global goods and to peace and security? This brief examines the potential for EU-India security cooperation in one of the above-mentioned shared neighbourhoods: Africa. The brief examines potential areas for collaboration that are not only of importance to African peace and

security, but also closely linked to global geopolitical developments.[3]

Partnering in and with Africa

Africa is of interest to the EU and India for a number of reasons. India and the EU both have similar fundamental interests and priorities there: improved security, sustainable development, and trade with and investment in a market that has great potential. These interests, and the values of the EU and India, are all closely interlinked in Africa. There are multiple security challenges on the continent and off its coasts, as well as fragile democracies and a huge unmet need for investment.

Importantly, Africa is a part of the world where the EU can rightly be said to be a major security actor. The EU is the largest donor in support of the security agenda of the African Union (AU) and African regional bodies, which includes AU missions across the continent such as the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). The EU currently deploys nine missions of its own, from West Africa to the Indian Ocean. The EU also uses a vast array of civilian tools such as support to mediation efforts, political dialogue and sanctions regimes, as well as to support to civilian security capacity building. There is also bilateral engagement by EU member states, especially France which has substantial military capabilities on the continent.

India is for its part increasing its investments in its partnership with Africa. As a security actor in Africa, India has traditionally focused on its large troop contributions to UN Missions. (India has so far contributed 200 000 peacekeepers globally, many of them to missions in Africa.) India is also building bilateral security partnerships throughout the continent, as well as with the AU. In 2019, for example, India held its first joint military field training exercise with 17 African states ("AFINDEX 19"). India has initiated security, cybersecurity and counterterrorism dialogues with several states on the continent. The Indian Navy has acted as a first responder to crisis situations in the Indian Ocean. Politically, India has signalled greater attention to Africa in recent years, including re-energizing the India-Africa Summit process, and will open 18 new embassies in Africa by 2021.

Africa is also very much a part of today's geopolitical developments. Several commentators describe increased competition among external powers for political influence, natural resources and trading relationships on the continent. In many ways, all this revolves around China. China is not a new actor in Africa, but its current fast-expanding engagement is said to prompt concern among Western powers and India. China is fast increasing its trade and investment, and deepening its ties with African governments. While the main focus remains economic relations, China is also expanding security cooperation. It recently opened its first overseas military base (in Djibouti in 2017), it has performed joint drills with African states and is increasing its troop contributions to UN peace missions. In 2018, China hosted the first China-Africa Defence and Security Forum, where comprehensive support was promised to African states in areas such as anti-piracy and counterterrorism efforts. While Chinese investment is largely welcome on the continent, Chinese lending to African states has sparked fears of "debt-trap diplomacy", as some governments have taken on unsustainable debt in opaque

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[3] For another perspective on EU-India security cooperation, see:

https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/prospects-eu-india-security-cooperation

arrangements.[4] China is also sharing its technology and its experience of citizen surveillance and suppressing dissent, which is raising concerns in many African societies.

From the perspective of African governments, regional organizations and civil societies, these developments offer both opportunities and challenges. The investment and cooperation that could come out of heightened interest on the part of major powers is welcome. Competition among external actors could force them to improve the partnerships they offer Africa. The threat of being sidelined by China in Africa seems in part to have motivated new initiatives by the EU (the Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs), the USA (the BUILD Act, albeit not Africa-specific), and Japan and India in cooperation (the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor). If external partners compete to attract African partnerships, African actors should be able to improve their negotiation positions, if they act effectively. At the same time, it is not in the interests of African countries to be pushed into choosing sides when they have a legitimate interest in working with several partners, for example, in the development of 5G mobile networks.

Possible areas of EU-India security cooperation in Africa

Tensions among external powers have in the past been one of the drivers of devastating conflicts in Africa. The security challenges in Africa remain considerable and while cooperation can mitigate risks, geopolitical tensions can exacerbate them. African actors must navigate these developments but the degree to which external partners contribute positively to African security will be important. If, for

example, competition for partnerships among external powers leads them to increase support for building African capacity to deal with security challenges, there could be benefits for Africa.

Peace support operations and capacity building

While there have been positive developments in the past decade, many parts of Africa are still mired in conflict. According to the Stockholm International Peace and Research Institute (SIPRI), 11 African states had active armed conflicts on their territories in 2018. The number of peace support operations is declining in other parts of the world, but they are likely to continue to play an important role in African security. There are several UN, AU and EU military missions active on the continent, as well as efforts by individual states and various civilian peace- and security-related missions.

Since the 1990s, African states through the AU and the African regional organizations have been engaged in promoting "African solutions to African problems". An important aspect of this has been the build-up of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which comprises mechanisms, institutions and field missions under the aegis of the AU. A number of African peacekeeping missions have been deployed by the AU and regional bodies such as ECOWAS. African leaders also aim to wean the AU away from its dependency on foreign donors. Despite some progress, however, there is still a need for external support – both financial and non-financial.

Since 2002, the EU has operated 19 military and civilian missions in Africa of various types. Some, such as Operation ARTEMIS in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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[4] For a sceptical view, see:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrQEe6Sk1Ys

(DRC), have been short term to stabilize a situation ahead of a larger UN deployment. Others focused on training African military peacekeepers. Some, like EUCAP Sahel, were civilian and had a broader focus on providing expert advice to civilian and non-civilian African security actors. As a donor, the EU funds the peace and security work of the AU and the African regional organizations. The main financial vehicle has been the African Peace Facility (APF), which since 2004 has had a total budget of €2.7 billion. The APF has financed major African peace support operations, such as AMISOM and the G5 Sahel Joint Force (a joint force of five West African states that combats terrorism and violent extremism), as well as mediation efforts, fact-finding missions, human-rights observers and electoral violence prevention in a host of African states.

India has also made an important contribution to peace and security in Africa throughout the years, not least through its major troop contributions to UN Peacekeeping Missions. India currently has peacekeepers in eight UN missions in Africa, and an Indian general commands the UN mission in South Sudan. India has also deployed police missions, including a ground-breaking all-women deployment to Liberia in 2007. Politically, India has been a strong supporter of the AU's peace and security work, and has provided – albeit relatively small – financial contributions to AU missions such as AMISOM. Another important strand of work has been training, where India has long experience of training military officers from Africa at institutions such as the Indian Military Academy, the National Defence College and the Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi.

There are potential gains to be made from the EU and India coordinating and working together in the broad area of peace support operations in Africa. The EU and India complement each other: both having extensive but different types of experience. Pooling resources could make it possible to achieve more in terms of both quality and quantity, such as on capacity building. The EU has access to financing, which could make projects happen that otherwise would not. Closer operational cooperation would also help build common understanding at both the operational and the political levels. This would in turn contribute to improved EU-India dialogue on peace support issues, as well as African regional security issues more generally, in forums such as the UN.

Several strands of cooperation of varying depth and scope could be envisaged. Among the low hanging fruit would be trilateral cooperation around the training of African military officers for peacekeeping and other tasks. This is already mentioned in the EU strategy for India.[5] In addition, India is already working with the USA on training African UN peacekeepers through the UNCPAP III initiative[6]. While US-Indian cooperation focuses on the UN setting, however, the EU and India should consider working directly with the AU and Africa's regional organizations. This could be a way of supporting African efforts to increase capacity, and thus provide added value. In such trilateral cooperation, training efforts would draw on the respective perspectives of all sides, not least India's vast experience.

The financial resources available to the EU for military and security cooperation are about to increase. In the context of discussions on the next multi-year EU budget, a new €10.5 billion European Peace Facility (EPF) has been proposed, which

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[5] https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/54057/joint-communication-elements-eu-strategy-india_en

[6] The UN Peacekeeping Course for African Partners. See: https://www.state.gov/u-s-india-joint-training-further-strengthens-peacekeeping-missions-in-africa/

would replace the African Peace Facility and other instruments. If adopted, the EPF would broaden the scope for possible EU military and defence cooperation with external partners in areas such as capacity building, training, facilities, and equipment. The proposal also opens up the possibility of financing international partners' efforts, including those of individual countries. The proposed EPF therefore brings a range of possibilities for EU-India cooperation, such as supporting Indian efforts in Africa and Indo-African collaboration. While India is perhaps unlikely to deploy its own missions outside of the UN framework, it is possible to envisage India responding to a range of non-combat needs in areas such as training, capacity building and the provision of intelligence and military advisers.

Another option would be for India to participate in EU missions in Africa. The formalized way of doing this would be through a Framework Participation Agreement with the EU. These agreements have been signed with a number of non-EU countries, most recently with Vietnam. An FPA is flexible in the sense that it does not oblige a partner country to take any specific action. This might still be too big a political step for India, given its strong preference for autonomy and non-alignment, and the fact that India by convention does not participate in military operations led by other sovereign states. If that is the case, the two sides could explore contributions such as secondments and exchange programmes, possibly starting with missions of a capacity building and/or civilian nature.

Recommendations:

- Explore joint, coordinated and/or trilateral projects on capacity building with African partners, including the AU, in the area of peace support operations

- Explore the opportunities arising from the proposed European Peace Facility to support Indo-African security cooperation

- Initiate a dialogue on a possible FPA between the EU and India and/or explore personnel exchanges between EU and Indian services as well as possible Indian participation in EU military and/or civilian missions in Africa

Security on and off the coasts of Africa

The western Indian Ocean and its littoral have long been affected by both human and natural security threats. These include piracy and natural disasters, the latter which are likely to be exacerbated by climate change. At the same time, the region is home to key international sea lines of communication, which contributes to a build-up of geopolitical competition in which China, the USA, the EU and its members states, Russia, the Gulf powers, Turkey, Japan and India are all involved. China has increased its security ties with many of the littoral states, including through its naval base in Djibouti, and is perceived by some to have a long-term strategy of increasing its influence in the Indian Ocean.

These circumstances demonstrate the need for international cooperation. The littoral states need to build the capacity to be able to deal with many of these security challenges. Building the capacity of the African littoral states would improve security across the region. Multilateral solutions are also needed to governance issues. The involvement of various major powers in the region risks relief efforts becoming politicized, so cooperation is also vital in that field. The EU and India are both positioned to take on important roles.

The EU is engaged militarily through EU NAVFOR Somalia, a naval mission which performs anti-piracy operations and escorts humanitarian shipments. The EU is also involved in various missions and projects to improve capacity among states in the region. These interventions include EUCAP SOMALIA, which works to strengthen civilian maritime security in Somalia; the CRIMARIO project, which works to improve maritime domain awareness; and the MASE programme, which promotes regional maritime security through capacity building in cooperation with African regional organizations. The EU is also a major supporter of multilateral cooperation in the region – such as with the Indian Ocean Commission, a regional body of five African Indian Ocean states – and the world's largest humanitarian assistance provider. The main focus is on humanitarian aid through UN and humanitarian organizations but the EU also has the capacity to coordinate its own relief operations through its Emergency Response Coordination Centre. These interventions have been activated in diverse locations from the DRC to Nepal and West Africa.

India has longstanding relations with the African littoral states and has increased its emphasis on the region in recent years. The Indian Navy contributes to anti-piracy efforts. India has bilateral security ties with South Africa, Kenya and Mozambique, and has struck agreements on marine bases with the Seychelles and Mauritius. Cooperation also includes capacity building schemes, such as training naval officers from the littoral states at the Indian National Defence College. In the multilateral arena, India is a leading member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, an intergovernmental regional organization with 22 member states; and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, a regional forum for the navies of the Indian

Ocean littoral states. India has taken several new initiatives, such as establishing an 'information fusion centre' to monitor traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the region. India also signed naval logistics agreements with the USA and France in 2016 and 2018, respectively.

India's involvement in humanitarian assistance is also growing. While its financial aid is comparatively small, India has been increasingly active in relief operations. Indian agencies, not least its navy and armed forces, have wide experience of disaster relief operations. This experience is mostly on the Indian subcontinent, but India has also assisted efforts abroad, including more recently in Africa. India acted as a first responder in the aftermath of cyclone Idai, which hit Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi in March 2019. The Indian Navy performed Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in Mozambique and patrolled the Mozambique Channel. India has also evacuated both its own and other nation's citizens from crisis situations on several occasions, such as in Yemen in 2015.

There are several reasons why the EU and India might want to combine efforts in these fields. At the political level, if the EU and India are coordinated, their collective weight in discussions on the region would be significant. The EU and India should use the next EU-India Summit as an opportunity to align their often parallel engagements by formulating a joint vision for the Indian Ocean. This vision could, among other things, provide an outline for multilateral governance in the region, promote cooperation on anti-piracy efforts, promote cooperation around the blue economy, and underline such principles as freedom of navigation and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Such a document could in turn be informed by African perspectives

such as the AU's Integrated Maritime Strategy, and discussed with African partners. There is also inspiration to be found in the Indo-French strategic vison, which was agreed in 2018.

At the operational level, the two sides also bring a set of complementary capabilities and experiences that if pooled, combined or coordinated could bring added value, not least to African partners in capacity building efforts. In addition to its specific benefits on the ground (or at sea), operational cooperation would improve common understanding of the security challenges of the region and feed back into the political dialogue, thereby enabling closer political coordination. Ramping up joint anti-piracy patrols and other forms of capacity sharing makes sense from a pooling perspective, while also building ties between the respective naval forces. There is a start to build on, since in 2018 the EU ATALANTA mission and the Indian Navy jointly escorted World Food Programme shipments for the first time. Intelligence sharing and maritime domain awareness cooperation – both bilaterally with African partners and in relevant multilateral organizations – is another strand of collaboration that could be further explored. Capacity building is also a promising avenue, pooling resources – both financial and technical – for trilateral or coordinated efforts. There are a number of areas, such as supplying training for naval officers, customs officials, coastguards and fisheries agencies, where such efforts could assist African partners to take greater responsibility for security in the region.

Finally, India has the potential to be an important security provider when it comes to humanitarian aid and relief operations in the region, and the EU has an interest in supporting such a development. Building Indian capacity to respond to natural disasters and other crises could be explored as a way of increasing human security in the region.

Recommendations:

- Agree on a high-level joint vision for the Indian Ocean

- Increase joint anti-piracy cooperation

- Explore joint, coordinated or trilateral capacity building schemes with African partners in areas relevant to maritime security

- Explore ways to strengthen Indian capacity to act as a first responder to humanitarian crises and in relief operations in the Indian Ocean littoral states, such as an exchange of experts and expanded training opportunities in humanitarian aid and relief operations

For the latter, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism's Exchange of Experts Programme could perhaps be used. India would need to be made eligible, however, as the programme is currently only open to EU member states and neighbourhood countries.

Cybersecurity

There are many opportunities in Africa for business to harness digital solutions, and advantages for development and governance in doing so, but cybersecurity is a widespread concern. Cybercrime emanating from Africa affects both African states and the outside world. Terrorist organizations use digital communications for various purposes. Incitement to violence and hate speech are continuing scourges. Interference in or tampering with electoral processes are also legitimate concerns. Disinformation, a worldwide challenge, has

proved to be a security threat in Africa. During the 2018 Ebola outbreak in the DRC, for example, disinformation online caused major problems for health officials trying to combat the disease. A lack of security also prevents African states from availing themselves of the opportunities presented by the digital economy. For example, international banks often treat transactions from Africa as inherently risky, thereby harming legitimate businesses. There are also indications that geopolitical tensions play out in African networks. The *New York Times* has written about how Russia has been accused of mounting a large online disinformation campaign aimed at Africa, with the underlying aim of testing its machinery for the 2020 US presidential election.

Reports, such as a 2016 joint report by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the cybersecurity firm Symantec, highlight a generally low level of security provision, a lack of capacity and technical know-how, and a lack of the necessary legal frameworks and institutions. Many African states are characterized by weak regulatory regimes that provide fertile ground for cybercrime. African governments are looking for partnerships and assistance with capacity building. They are increasingly turning to China for support, which is expanding the "Digital Silk Road". China offers a wide array of cooperation from fibre optic cables and eventually 5G, to training in the technology for deep digital surveillance, which has caused concern about privacy and freedom of expression in some states.

The EU and India each have an interest in providing alternatives. While they differ on some issues, such as EU criticism of India's frequent internet shutdowns, in broad terms India and the EU share a commitment to free, open, peaceful and secure cyberspace and to the multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance. Both

sides have also been affected in various ways by the problems that arise from the cybersecurity challenges in Africa.

The EU has invested in strengthening the cyber capacities of third countries, either working directly with those states or through international organizations, such as through the Council of Europe's GLACY+ Project which is funded by the EU. The EU is also setting up its own Cyber Capacity Building Network that will bring together the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and member states' cyber authorities as well as other EU bodies and agencies. This could be an important tool for supporting third countries. In addition, the EU is leading the way on regulations on privacy and data protection through its General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The GDPR does not just regulate how European businesses and organizations treat personal data. It also regulates how companies outside the EU that want to do business in the Single Market treat European data. This makes it influential, and the GDPR has already inspired legislators elsewhere, including in African states such as Kenya and Nigeria. In addition, the EU has learned valuable lessons about disinformation in its efforts to respond to Russian campaigns, and taken measures at both the EU and the member state level for this purpose, on which experiences could be shared.

India, on the other hand, has unique experience of dealing with the challenges of the internet and social media in a developing country setting, which is more applicable to African contexts, but also within the framework of a democratic, open society. The Government of India has been working on a National Cybersecurity Strategy, which is due to be launched in the spring of 2020, and experiences of its formulation and implementation could be shared. India also has a strong IT and

telecom industry with a large presence in Africa. Its experience could be utilized for capacity building. India has signalled its interest in working with African states on these issues, having already signed a memorandum of understanding and joint statement with African states such as South Africa and Kenya.

Working together could benefit all sides. Again, capacity building should be an area where the EU and India working together could make a difference. They both possess capabilities and experiences that if combined, could make a positive contribution. Access to financing from the EU's development budget could mean that projects that would otherwise be stalled could make progress. Cooperation could include capacity building projects to support relevant African institutions, developing national cybersecurity strategies, setting up national Computer Emergency Response Teams and sharing know-how on how to build resilience into critical infrastructure. Another strand of collaboration would be trilateral dialogues with the AU and other key African actors on key policy issues such as the privacy rights/security nexus, disinformation and hate speech online, and international internet governance issues. Cybersecurity and the exchange of expertise are mentioned as priorities in the EU strategy on India. Having concrete projects together with actors in Africa could strengthen ties between EU and Indian officials, and improve their dialogue on important multilateral discussions about cyberspace.

Recommendations

- The EU and India, together with African partners, should explore joint or coordinated training and capacity building schemes on cybersecurity

- The EU could explore trilateral dialogues with the AU and key states on key policy issues related to cybersecurity

Future challenges and opportunities

While there are common interests, an expressed will to cooperate and a number of interesting opportunities, there are also obstacles to building a closer EU-India security partnership that need to be acknowledged. These include limited political bandwidth and administrative capacity on both sides, and a mutual lack of understanding of each other's politics and organization. India has a strong tradition of non-alignment and non-interference. The EU's inability to act coherently and decisively on matters of concern to India could also be a hindrance. All of the above would certainly apply to any efforts at cooperation in Africa.

In addition, there is the political sensibility attached to India working with what is often perceived in the global South as a union of former colonial powers. This is especially true where the legacy of Indo-African cooperation is focused on anti-colonialism. This could make being dependent on EU financing, which would be likely in many joint initiatives, a sensitive issue. To address such sensitivities, the EU side would probably have to show flexibility, and sometimes allow Indian and African partners wide latitude to design and implement joint efforts. Sometimes working together under a multilateral umbrella such as the UN could be the best way forward.

The recent renewal of engagement at the highest level indicates that the two sides at least recognize the potential for partnership, not least in the field of peace and security. India has also in many ways

begun to shed some of its inhibitions. It is working with Japan on trade and investment in Africa, working with the USA on training peacekeepers, working more closely with France on security, and also working with the EU on a minor scale.

Political will and dialogue will be key to moving the EU-India strategic partnership forward. The partnership has in the past suffered both from a lack of engagement at the political level, and an inability to deal with disagreement constructively. There are bound to be differences over time, and these obviously need to be discussed. Both sides, however, and perhaps especially the EU, will need to show that commitment to the partnership supersedes temporary tensions. The underlying rationale for why these two large democratic actors should work together remains very strong.

A more persistent dialogue will be needed to explore and coordinate cooperation on security matters. One step below the summit level, it would start at the level of the EU High Representative/Vice-President and the Indian Minister of External Affairs. Africa should be on the agenda here. Dialogue on maritime security and cybersecurity would be key to advancing ideas on security cooperation, including in Africa.

Another line of engagement would be to initiate trilateral dialogue with the AU and/or key African states around the African Peace and Security Architecture. Track 1.5 and track 2.0 dialogues, and think tank collaborations could also be encouraged. Both the EU and India should consider encouraging their missions in third countries to meet regularly and seek views. The best and most feasible collaborations often arise from perspectives on the ground.

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