

# UN, EU, and NATO Approaches to the Protection of Civilians: Policies, Implementation, and Comparative Advantages

JOACHIM A. KOOPS AND CHRISTIAN PATZ



**Cover Photo:** German tank engineers from the Tank Engineers Company (*Panzerpionierekompanie*) 550 teach Malian soldiers how to construct a barricade as part of the EU Training Mission in Mali at the Koulikoro Training Center on April 30, 2013. Bundeswehr/Andrea Bienert.

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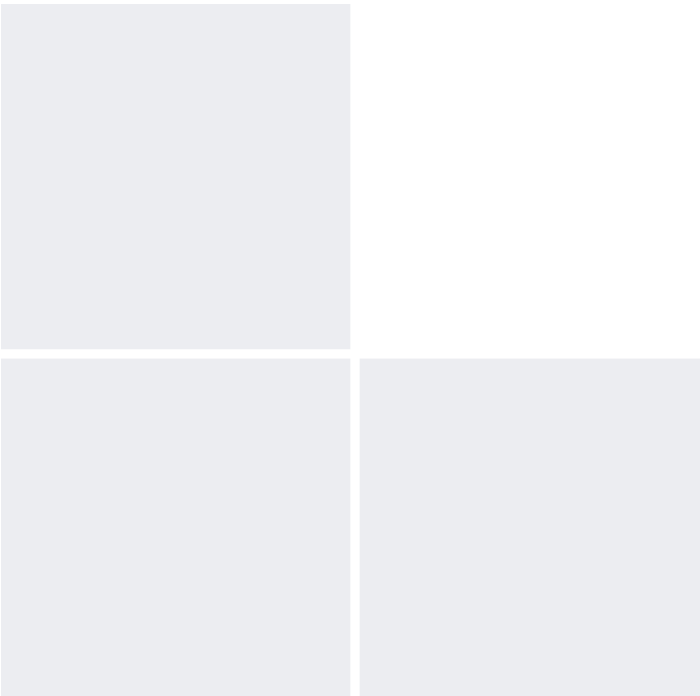
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## ABBREVIATIONS

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AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DFS	UN Department of Field Support (now DOS)
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (now DPO)
DPO	UN Department of Peace Operations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
EU	European Union
EUFOR Tchad/RCA	EU Military Operation in Chad and the Central African Republic
EUFOR RD Congo	EU Military Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
EUTM Mali	EU Training Mission in Mali
EUTM Mozambique	EU Training Mission in Mozambique
EUTM Somalia	EU Training Mission in Somalia
FIB	Force Intervention Brigade
FINCENT	Finnish Defence Forces International Centre
HRDDP	Human Rights Due Diligence Policy
IFOR	Implementation Force (Operation Joint Endeavour)
IHL	International humanitarian law
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ITS	Integrated Training Service
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MINURCAT	UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad
MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

MISCA	African-Led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic
MONUC	UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
POC	Protection of civilians
SFOR	Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina
T/PCCs	Troop- and police-contributing countries
UNAMA	UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
UNMIK	UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNMISS	UN Mission in South Sudan
UNPROFOR	UN Protection Force



## Executive Summary

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The protection of civilians (POC) in armed conflict has become a core strategic objective for the United Nations system and for UN peace operations in particular. The UN, however, is not the sole actor engaged in POC. The European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), among other regional actors, have been developing their own policies and approaches to POC. While the significant overlap in these organizations' member states and interorganizational developments create an opportunity to coordinate and synergize their POC policies, their approaches to POC differ—in some cases substantially.

The UN reevaluated its approach to POC in the wake of its peacekeeping failures in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the late 1990s. As the first organization to develop a POC policy, the UN remains the standard-bearer and has advanced the most comprehensive and ambitious definition of POC. The UN is also the organization with the most field experience implementing and innovating on POC, having deployed sixteen missions with POC mandates since 1999.

The EU's approach to POC also emerged from failures in the former Yugoslavia and was directly influenced by the UN. As a result, the EU's POC policies include nearly all elements of the UN's approach. In practice, however, EU military operations with POC mandates have tended to be shorter-term and to have smaller footprints than UN missions. Their main goal has been to support UN missions during critical moments, in line with the EU's emphasis on interorganizational cooperation on POC. More recently, the EU's shift from direct military missions to military training missions has caused the EU's approach to POC to more strongly emphasize capacity building.

Unlike the UN and the EU, NATO's approach to POC has been mostly shaped by its experience in Afghanistan. Moreover, because NATO is fundamentally a military alliance, it has a different rationale for POC than the UN or EU. NATO envisages POC as an operational rather than a strategic necessity. As a result, NATO's focus has

been on mitigating harm to civilians caused by NATO operations, though recent initiatives have also emphasized an approach that includes protecting civilians from third parties.

Despite these differences, interorganizational policy convergences could allow the UN, the EU, and NATO to pursue greater cooperation on POC while retaining their distinct conceptual and operational approaches. To this end, they could consider the following recommendations:

- **Adapt POC to new operational realities:** All three organizations would benefit from a systematic exchange of lessons on POC practices and future innovations as they adapt to a new era of operations and confront new and old threats and challenges.
- **Revitalize discussions on POC within and between the organizations:** Member states and “POC champions” must take the lead to ensure that POC does not slip off the agenda in each organization and should build on emerging synergies to pursue interorganizational collaboration on POC. They should also increase awareness and knowledge of differences, similarities, and potential synergies between UN, EU, and NATO approaches to POC.
- **Improve POC training, preparedness, and institutionalization:** The UN, the EU, and NATO should reinforce interorganizational training networks, promote POC preparedness among their troop- and police-contributing countries, and foster a POC mindset. They should also invest more in staff and dedicated POC units.
- **Focus on the implementation of both passive (harm mitigation) and active approaches to POC:** For all three organizations, POC should start with—but go beyond—the prevention of human rights abuses and civilian casualties caused by UN, EU, and NATO troops. All three organizations, and NATO in particular, should consider how they could more actively protect civilians, including in the context of urban warfare and in the cyber domain.





## Introduction

Since the end of the 1990s, the protection of civilians (POC) in armed conflict has become a core strategic objective for the United Nations system and for UN peace operations in particular. The UN, however, is not the sole actor engaged in POC. Since the early 2000s, regional organizations and alliances such as the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have been developing their own policies and approaches to POC.

This provides both opportunities and risks for the advancement of the POC agenda. On the one hand, the significant overlap in states that are members of the UN, the EU, and NATO and the three organizations' track record of formal and informal exchanges on POC offer the opportunity to coordinate and synergize the development and implementation of their POC policies and to reinforce the POC agenda overall. On the other hand, these organizations have different mandates and strategic priorities, meaning their approaches to POC differ—in some cases substantially—with implications for their ability and capacity to protect.

As the EU and NATO are both in the process of reassessing their strategic direction against the backdrop of new conflict scenarios, there is a need to reflect on the differences and similarities between these three organizations' approaches to POC, their comparative advantages, and the future direction of the POC agenda. At a time when international peace operations and protection efforts are under intense political and operational pressure, such an understanding could also lay the foundation for more informed and effective interorganizational cooperation on POC.

This policy paper focuses on the UN, the EU, and NATO's policies on and implementation of POC.<sup>1</sup> The first section examines the historical and policy

contexts. The second section lays out the core policies and approaches of the three organizations, including differences, similarities, and instances of cross-fertilization. The third section examines the organizations' approaches to implementing these POC policies in the field, outlining the strengths, limitations, and comparative advantages of each. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for enhancing and mutually reinforcing POC efforts in the UN, the EU, and NATO.<sup>2</sup>

## Background and Context of POC Developments in the UN, the EU, and NATO

Broadly speaking, the protection of civilians norm can be traced to the origins of international humanitarian law (IHL) and the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross as well as the development of theories of just war.<sup>3</sup> The UN, the EU, and NATO, however, developed their individual POC policies in reaction to different developments on the ground at different times. As a result, differences have emerged in the conceptualization, implementation, and prioritization of each organization's POC policy.

### Origins of POC in the United Nations

The UN's peacekeeping failures in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia led it to reevaluate and reinforce the protection of civilians in peacekeeping operations. Following thorough and self-critical inquiries into these failures, two major reports highlighted the significance of POC to the UN's credibility and effectiveness. The 1999 report on the Rwandan genocide underlined that the failure to protect civilians resulted in not only a severe loss of life but also a loss of trust in the UN and its peacekeepers.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the secretary-general's report on the fall of Srebrenica underlined

1 Other actors involved in POC include the African Union at the regional level and individual countries at the national level (e.g., Australia, Switzerland, and the UK).

2 An extensive overview of the organizations' definitions and understanding of POC and the development of interorganizational convergences (and divergences) can be found in the Annex.

3 See: Ralph Mamiya, "A History and Conceptual Development of the Protection of Civilians," in *Protection of Civilians*, Haidi Willmot, Ralph Mamiya, Scott Sheeran, and Marc Weller, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 65; and Maja Spanu, "Civilian Protection: Some Thoughts on the Historical Origins of the Norm," European University Institute, July 11, 2016.

4 UN Security Council, *Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Actions of the United Nations during the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*, UN Doc. S/1999/1257, December 16, 1999.

Table 1. Comparative overview of mandates, approaches, and political priorities

	UN	EU	NATO
<b>Organizational Mandate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global mandate for peace, security, development, and human rights</li> <li>• Collective security for all members states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal and external integrative approach to single market</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• “Effective multilateralism”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional collective defense</li> </ul>
<b>General Operational Approach as Related to POC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated approach through various agencies, funds, and programs</li> <li>• Peace operations highly visible as part of UN’s operational activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civilian and military missions and operations under Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)</li> <li>• Commission-driven approaches (such as comprehensive trade, development, and humanitarian aid policies)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective defense</li> <li>• Cooperative security</li> <li>• Tackling threats to allies, including with “military crisis management”</li> </ul>
<b>Political Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance of international peace and security</li> <li>• Human rights</li> <li>• Sustainable Development Goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal and external dimensions of single market</li> <li>• Global and internal-external security nexus, diplomacy, peace and security, human rights, and development</li> <li>• Management of migration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collective defense</li> <li>• Hybrid threats</li> <li>• Resurgent Russia, rising China, other “emerging challenges”</li> <li>• Human security</li> </ul>
<b>Relative Importance of POC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• POC highly important as an end in itself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• POC included as element of CSDP and humanitarian approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on harm mitigation aspect of POC</li> <li>• POC treated as means to an end (collective defense)</li> </ul>

doctrinal and institutional shortcomings that contributed to the UN’s failure to keep the peace and protect civilians from armed conflict.<sup>5</sup>

In the wake of these reports, the Security Council changed the language it used in official documents: while the council had previously focused narrowly on humanitarian assistance, it began signaling its

willingness to improve the legal and physical protection of civilians in conflict.<sup>6</sup> With the creation of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 1999, for the first time the Security Council mandated a UN peacekeeping mission to use force to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.<sup>7</sup> The mandate’s language served as a template for future POC mandates.<sup>8</sup> It

5 The report references attempts by the secretary-general to include explicit POC wording and tasks in a revised mandate for the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in 1994, a reminder that awareness of the urgent need for protection mandates predated the first explicit protection mandate in 1999. UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 53/35—The Fall of Srebrenica*, UN Doc. A/54/549, November 15, 1999, p. 111.

6 UN Security Council Resolution 1265 (September 17, 1999), UN Doc. S/RES/1265.

7 UN Security Council Resolution 1270 (October 22, 1999), UN Doc. S/RES/1270.

8 Beyond UNAMSIL, these missions include MONUC (1999–2010), the UN Mission in Liberia (2003–2018), the UN Operation in Burundi (2004–2006), the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (2004–2017), the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (2004–2017), the UN Mission in Sudan (2005–2011), the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (2006–), and the AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (2007–2020).

was also in 1999 that the Security Council held its inaugural open debate on POC and requested the secretary-general to issue a report on POC (which has since become annual).

Yet it took another decade for the UN to respond to calls for more institutional and doctrinal development around POC. Building on experiences and innovations in the field, an independent study on POC in 2009,<sup>9</sup> and Security Council Resolution 1894,<sup>10</sup> the UN adopted its first operational concept on POC in 2010.<sup>11</sup> This document established the “three tiers” of POC (“protection through dialogue and engagement,” “provision of physical protection,” and “establishment of a protective environment”). These three tiers have subsequently been referenced in more recent UN POC documents, including the 2015 POC policy, the revised 2019 POC policy, and the 2020 POC handbook (see Annex 1).

The significant overlap in states that are members of the UN, the EU, and NATO offers these organizations the opportunity to coordinate and synergize the development and implementation of their POC policies.

## Origins of POC in the European Union

For the EU and its member states, their involvement in the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the former Yugoslavia, as well as the EU’s own policy failures in the region, influenced the development of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP, renamed the Common Security and Defence Policy, or CSDP, in 2009). Adopted in the wake of the Balkan wars and on the eve of the Kosovo war in 1999, this policy provided the EU with its own institutions to manage civilian and military crises.

After launching its first missions under the ESDP in 2003, the European Council published draft

guidelines on POC within EU crisis-management operations.<sup>12</sup> The document was developed by the body responsible for civilian crisis-management operations rather than by the EU’s Military Committee. As a result, the guidelines were rooted in IHL, human rights norms, and issues such as children and armed conflict, protection of displaced persons, gender and security, and humanitarian action (see Appendix). This emphasis also resulted from the EU’s consultations with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which was itself responsible for drafting the UN’s initial aide-mémoire on POC in 2002.<sup>13</sup> In fact, a close look at both documents reveals significant overlap, reflecting convergence between the two organizations’ thinking on POC.

Between the publication of its POC guidelines in 2003 and revised guidelines in 2010, the EU launched five additional military operations and one military training/capacity-building mission. Out of those five operations, three were launched in direct support of and in close coordination with UN peace operations. Most notably, in 2008, the EU launched its first operation with an explicit POC mandate in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR).

The EU’s revised POC guidelines, published in 2010, were even more directly influenced by the UN.<sup>14</sup> EU officials closely followed discussions in the UN General Assembly’s Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (where EU member states form an influential bloc), in the Security Council, and in the Secretariat, and they aligned the guidelines with the UN’s draft POC concepts. When drafting the Concept on POC in EU-Led

<sup>9</sup> Victoria Holt, Glyn Taylor, and Max Kelly, “Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Setbacks and Remaining Challenges,” UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2009.

<sup>10</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1894 stresses “the need for comprehensive operational guidance on peacekeeping missions’ tasks and responsibilities in the implementation of protection of civilians mandates and requests the Secretary-General to develop in close consultation with Member States including troop and police contributing countries and other relevant actors, an operational concept for the protection of civilians, and to report back on progress made.” UN Security Council Resolution 1894 (November 11, 2009), UN Doc. S/RES/1894, para. 22.

<sup>11</sup> UN DPKO and UN Department of Field Support (DFS), “Draft DPKO/DFS Operational Concept on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations,” 2010.

<sup>12</sup> These were the EU police mission in Bosnia and military mission in Macedonia.

<sup>13</sup> See: UN Security Council, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/PRST/2002/6, March 15, 2002, Annex, pp. 2–8.

<sup>14</sup> The concept of “effective multilateralism” was first coined by the European Commission and the European Council in 2002 and 2003, respectively. At its core, this concept promoted a rules-based international order through close EU cooperation and coordination with major multilateral organizations such as the UN and NATO.

Military Operations in 2015, the EU Military Staff also integrated scenarios and language used by NATO.<sup>15</sup>

## Origins of POC in NATO

NATO has been developing concepts and competencies related to POC since its operations in Bosnia during the 1990s. NATO's 2001 Allied Joint Doctrine on Peace Support Operations noted that "collateral damage should be minimized and reasonable measures taken to avoid civilian casualties," foreshadowing the focus on harm mitigation embedded in its approach to POC.<sup>16</sup> In addition, it discussed the tensions behind the decision to use force "in circumstances of widespread violations of basic human rights and ethnic cleansing": while using force risks causing civilian casualties, failing to use force to stop these violations risks undermining the credibility of NATO peace support operations.<sup>17</sup> Based on lessons from Bosnia, this doctrine also stressed the importance of civil-military coordination.

Before NATO developed an official POC policy in 2016, its activities related to POC largely fell under its work on contributing to the creation of a "safe and secure environment" (SASE), which has been a task for NATO since its operation in Bosnia in 1996. In line with this approach, NATO's 2001 doctrine on peace support operations integrated the "protection of human rights" into the "creation of a secure environment."<sup>18</sup> The task of creating a safe and secure environment was also enshrined in the 2015 Allied Joint Doctrine on Stabilization and Reconstruction, which explicitly included "the protection of civilians" as a "strategic priority for

[stabilization and reconstruction]."<sup>19</sup>

Because of this framing, among senior and mid-level NATO military personnel, POC has often been reduced to, or confused with, "a task we have always been doing since the Bosnian wars—establishing a safe and secure environment."<sup>20</sup> Similarly, NATO-trained military commanders often view POC as being restricted to respecting IHL and harm-mitigation norms, the latter usually interpreted narrowly to mean the reduction of harm to civilians resulting from NATO's own actions.<sup>21</sup>

Despite originating in the Balkans, NATO's approach to and perspective on POC have been almost exclusively influenced by the lessons and experiences of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup> The main driver for NATO to formalize its POC policies and structures was the increase in civilian casualties resulting from the operations of ISAF beginning in 2007 and the ensuing public debates and media attention.<sup>23</sup> In 2008, ISAF created a civilian casualty tracking cell to collect data on civilian casualties and to inform new tactical guidelines for mitigating civilian harm.<sup>24</sup> And in 2010, NATO created a small unit for POC at its Brussels headquarters, which also focused on the mitigation of civilian casualties during NATO operations. NATO's POC approach was thus linked to two primary goals: (1) reducing civilian casualties as a result of NATO operations; and (2) minimizing international and local backlash against ISAF and NATO's legitimacy more generally.

To some extent, NATO's intervention in Libya

15 This is perhaps less an indication that the EU as a whole was moving away from UN approaches than that the military bodies in charge of drafting the POC concept have traditionally followed the mindset and approaches of NATO.

16 NATO, "Peace Support Operations—[Allied Joint Publication] AJP 3.4.1," July 2001, para. 0320. See also: Annex 4B of the same document, which stresses that "when military force is used, every effort should be taken to minimise the risk of civilian casualties." Ibid., Annex 4B, para. 4B6.

17 Ibid., para. 0322.

18 Ibid., para. 0625 (e).

19 According to AJP 3.4.5, "In a SASE, the population has the freedom to pursue daily activities without fear of persistent or large-scale violence. Such an environment is characterized by a local norm of public order, physical security, territorial security, a state monopoly on violence and protection of civilians. A SASE allows other S&R activities to proceed" (emphasis added). See: NATO, "Allied Joint Publication-3.4.5 (AJP 3.4.5)—Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Stabilization and Reconstruction," December 2015, paras. 0203, 0205 (c). Other doctrine included the "protection of Non-Combatants" as a potential tactical priority in military operations. NATO, "Allied Land Tactics—[Allied Tactical Publication] ATP-3.2.1," November 2009, para. 0210.

20 Interviews with German military commanders, February 15, 2020 and February 17, 2020.

21 Interview with NATO official, March 24, 2021.

22 Steven Hill and Andreea Manea, "Protection of Civilians: A NATO Perspective," *Utrecht Journal of International and European Law* 34, no. 2 (2018), p. 147.

23 Human Rights Watch, "Troops in Contact: Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan," September 2008.

24 See: Center for Civilians in Conflict and Oxford Research Group Every Casualty program, "Examining Civilian Harm Tracking and Casualty Recording in Afghanistan," 2019.



reinforced this focus on harm mitigation, as reports about civilian casualties and the destruction of core civilian infrastructure by NATO's bombing campaign reignited debates about the harm its operations cause to civilians.<sup>25</sup> But at the same time, because NATO's operation in Libya had an explicit mandate to "protect civilians," as outlined in Security Council Resolution 1973, NATO planners had to actively protect civilians from harm inflicted by third parties.<sup>26</sup>

Arguably, NATO's limitations in implementing both passive and active POC approaches sparked some soul-searching on how the alliance could develop a more comprehensive and systematic approach to POC. Thus, civilian harm mitigation and active protection from third parties both remained focuses of NATO's POC policy.<sup>27</sup> Between 2016 and 2021, NATO developed a military concept on POC, a POC action plan, and a POC handbook.<sup>28</sup> Extensive cooperation and exchanges between the UN Secretariat and NATO drafters took place in this period. This laid the groundwork for a more systematic, interorganizational approach to the implementation of POC and some convergence between NATO and the UN on their understanding of POC.

At the same time, Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014 and the broader invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 have led to the "slippage" and deprioritization of POC on NATO's agenda as it reorients toward the threat of inter-state conflict and geopolitical rivalry. But these developments have also revealed the need for thinking more broadly about POC-related tasks related to urban warfare, preparedness, and the protection of critical infrastructure, both physically and in the

cyber domain.<sup>29</sup> More recently, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the fall of Kabul to the Taliban have shown how questions over responsibility for the protection of civilians remain relevant to the organization's credibility even after its missions formally end.

## Definition and Scope of UN, EU, and NATO Policies on and Approaches to POC

The UN, the EU, and NATO have each been pursuing a distinct approach to POC with a different scope. Throughout the last decade, however, there has been a gradual convergence between the three organizations on matters related to the POC agenda. This was in part the result of extensive consultations between EU and NATO officials and their UN counterparts.

### United Nations POC Policies

The UN—particularly the Department of Peace Operations (DPO)—remains in many ways the standard-bearer for POC and the driving force for revisions and reforms of POC doctrine. The UN has advanced the most comprehensive and ambitious definition of POC of any of the three organizations (see Annex 1). In both the 2019 policy and the 2020 handbook, all POC activities are organized around three tiers: (1) "protection through dialogue and engagement"; (2) "provision of physical protection"; and (3) "establishment of a protective environment."<sup>30</sup> These three tiers now represent the conceptual core of the UN's understanding of POC.<sup>31</sup> The 2020 POC handbook

Although the UN remains the standard-bearer for POC, there has been a gradual convergence between the UN, EU, and NATO on matters related to the POC agenda over the last decade.

25 See, for example: Center for Civilians in Conflict, "NATO's Time Drawing to a Close, But Protection Work Unfinished," October 27, 2011.

26 Security Council Resolution 1973 authorized member states "to take all necessary measures... to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya." UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (March 17, 2011), UN Doc. S/RES/1973, para. 4.

27 See: NATO, "NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians," July 9, 2016.

28 See: NATO, "Protection of Civilians: [Allied Command Operations] ACO Handbook," March 11, 2021.

29 Interview with NATO POC official, April 19, 2021. On NATO thinking on urban warfare, see: David Kilcullen and Gordon Pendleton, "Future Urban Conflict, Technology, and the Protection of Civilians: Real-World Challenges for NATO and Coalition Missions," Stimson Center, June 2021.

30 UN DPKO and DFS, "The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping DPKO/DFS Policy," UN Doc. 2015.07, April 1, 2015.

31 See: UN DPKO and DFS, "DPKO/DFS Lessons Learned Note on the Protection of Civilians in UN Peacekeeping Operations: Dilemmas, Emerging Practices and Lessons," January 2010; and UN DPKO and DFS, "Draft DPKO/DFS Operational Concept on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," February 2013.

serves as a consolidated reference for all POC-related matters.<sup>32</sup>

While the 2019 revision of the UN POC policy did not represent a major shift from the original 2015 policy, it made a series of subtle changes. First, it places greater emphasis on the primary responsibility of the host state to protect its civilian population. Nonetheless, it still authorizes missions with POC mandates to use all necessary means to protect civilians from “all hostile acts or situations that are likely to lead to death or serious bodily injury, regardless of the source of the threat,” including both state and non-state actors. It also explicitly mandates peacekeepers to take on the “active duty to protect” where the host state is “unable or unwilling to protect civilians, or where government forces themselves pose such a threat to civilians.”<sup>33</sup>

Second, it reiterates the importance of an integrated and comprehensive approach to POC, expecting all mission components—civilian, military, and police—to contribute to all three tiers of POC. It also underlines the importance of protection instruments and tasks beyond physical protection (tier two), with a strong emphasis on the political dimension (tier one) and the relevance of civilian harm mitigation.

Third, the policy de-emphasizes the idea of operational “phases,” instead emphasizing the nonsequential nature of prevention, preemption, response, and consolidation in the context of POC operations.<sup>34</sup> Fourth, it highlights the importance of the performance and accountability of senior mission leadership and of effective command and control to POC.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, it includes the “do-no-harm” principle to reduce the risk of civilians experiencing harm as a result of their interaction with peacekeepers,

revealing parallels with the harm-mitigation focus of NATO’s approach to POC. This also reflects how POC is not only a fundamental end in itself for the UN but is also critical for the UN to maintain its legitimacy—another similarity with NATO and the EU.

While the policy and handbook constitute DPO’s central guidance on POC, the protection of civilians by UN peace operations is only “one facet of the wider POC agenda at the UN.”<sup>36</sup> The UN also has other protection mandates that indirectly or directly affect the protection activities of peacekeepers under the UN’s POC policy, including human rights, children and armed conflict, conflict-related sexual violence, and the rule of law.<sup>37</sup> This means that peace operations need to coordinate and cooperate with other UN actors in planning for and executing their POC mandates.<sup>38</sup>

While the UN cannot be faulted for lack of nuance, innovation, or guidance on POC, the sheer scope of its approach to POC creates the risk of overload. A recent report identified 704 POC-relevant tasks in the 2019 POC policy that the German armed forces and relevant German ministries should address and implement, many of them already covered by NATO doctrine on international crisis-management operations.<sup>39</sup> The training materials on POC developed by the UN’s Integrated Training Service (ITS) run into the thousands of pages. In addition, other UN bodies such as OCHA have developed their own protection approaches. Thus, what was criticized two decades ago as a glaring gap has now been filled. What is more, the secretary-general’s efforts to develop a system-wide agenda for protection might push the UN toward an even more comprehensive understanding of POC.

This poses a challenge for new senior personnel or peacekeepers seeking to quickly familiarize

32 See: UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO), “The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook,” 2020.

33 UN DPO, “The Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Policy,” UN Doc. 2019.17, November 1, 2019, p. 19.

34 Interview with UN DPO staff, November 2019.

35 The 2019 policy contains an annex detailing the roles and responsibilities of the leadership of the civilian, military, and policy components of missions. See: UN DPO, “Protection of Civilians Policy,” Annex (“Roles and Responsibilities”).

36 UN DPO, “POC Handbook,” p. 2.

37 According to the DPO’s POC handbook, the UN POC agenda includes: “engaging duty bearers under international human rights law and international humanitarian law; developing and promoting compliance, monitoring and accountability mechanisms; and using the range of tools available in the UN system to support and promote the protection of civilians. The POC agenda also sits alongside complementary programs and mandates such as the promotion and protection of human rights, children and armed conflict, and women, peace and security, including conflict-related sexual violence.” Ibid.

38 Ibid., p. 14.

39 German Ministry of Defence, “Implementing the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations,” internal report (on file with authors), October 2020.

themselves with POC for UN peace operations. As one former special representative of the secretary-general remarked, “Despite the good senior leadership training and preparation, I must admit that I found it extremely difficult to find my way through the jungle of POC documents and requirements.”<sup>40</sup>

This challenge is not something for DPO or ITS to solve; instead, it is the primary responsibility of troop- and police-contributing countries (T/PCCs) and other member states to implement targeted trainings and develop clear and prioritized frameworks to prepare peacekeepers to implement POC mandates. In the absence of nationally tailored POC policies, peacekeeping operations run the risk of receiving military leaders from T/PCCs who interpret POC according to their past experiences, personal understandings, and different organizational contexts (i.e., deployments to past NATO or EU operations), if they choose to prioritize it at all.

## European Union POC Policies

The EU has laid out the scope and definition of its approach to POC in three main documents: the 2003 revised guidelines on POC in its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); the 2010 revised guidelines on POC in CSDP missions and operations; and the 2015 concept on POC in EU-led military operations.

The 2003 guidelines established a norm- and human rights-based approach, mostly with nonmilitary operations in mind. The revised 2010 guidelines retain this approach, but they were explicitly drafted with a view to EU-UN cooperation on both military and nonmilitary missions. The 2010 guidelines make clear that the EU is to undertake POC in cooperation and coordination with or in support of the UN and other international organizations, reflecting the EU’s approach of deploying CSDP missions for limited durations

and in support of UN peace operations. The guidelines welcome the UN’s definition of POC (including the three tiers), consider lessons from other international organizations, and underline the need to “clarify roles and responsibilities and take note of the differences between organisations involved in the PoC.”<sup>41</sup> The document argues that the EU is well-placed to conduct “robust peacekeeping” and to develop a “coordinated approach to the PoC in its broadest sense.”<sup>42</sup> In addition, the document emphasizes the role of EU special representatives and heads of delegation in advancing POC in the field and includes provisions for training, planning, early warning, and lessons-learned processes related to POC.

In 2015, the EU’s External Action Service supplemented the 2010 guidelines with a concept on POC in EU-led military operations “where PoC is either

Despite the EU’s emphasis on interorganizational coordination, its efforts to enhance and institutionalize the POC agenda have remained modest.

a mandated task or the objective irrespective of whether or not IHL applies.”<sup>43</sup> The concept is detailed and ambitious. It defines POC to include both the UN understanding of active protection from third parties

and NATO’s focus on harm mitigation. Notably, the document adopts NATO’s language linking POC to the establishment of a safe and secure environment through military and nonmilitary tools. Furthermore, it stresses the moral, political, and strategic implications of POC and the potential impact of a failure to protect civilians on the credibility of the CSDP and the EU. It calls on missions to address POC as an integrated task encompassing “the whole spectrum of military activities,” including training, planning, reviewing and lessons learned, civil-military cooperation, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and monitoring and evaluation.<sup>44</sup> The concept also stresses that “Resources and Capabilities must match the Mandate’s level of Ambition for effective PoC,” including quick-reaction forces when the mission’s main aim is POC.<sup>45</sup>

40 Interview with former special representative of the secretary-general (SRSG), February 2, 2021.

41 Council of the European Union, “Draft Revised Guidelines on POC in CSDP Missions and Operations,” 2010, pp. 5–6.

42 Ibid., p. 6.

43 Council of the European Union, “Concept on PoC in EU-Led Military Operations,” p. 7.

44 Ibid., pp. 6–7.

45 Ibid., p. 11.



Taken together, the 2003, 2010, and 2015 documents form the basis for the EU's comprehensive approach to POC. This approach includes nearly all elements of the UN's approach to POC, including comprehensive links between military, political, and humanitarian tools and institutions, and is based on military concepts and approaches that stem from NATO doctrine. By repeatedly stressing the importance of interorganizational coordination, cooperation, and lessons learned, the EU's approach—if implemented to the letter—could reinforce the POC efforts of other organizations.

Yet despite the EU's emphasis on interorganizational coordination, its efforts to enhance and institutionalize the POC agenda have remained modest. There has been only one person in charge of POC, often alongside other tasks such as gender and human rights. Moreover, since the adoption of the 2015 military concept, large-scale EU military operations have declined. Instead, most of the EU's military activities under the CSDP now focus on capacity building and training, such as the EU's training missions in Somalia, Mali, and, most recently, Mozambique. Nevertheless, as the reference to the importance of POC in the EU's 2021 Strategic Compass document highlights, EU politicians and policymakers still view the topic as important.<sup>46</sup>

While NATO's military concept for POC focuses mostly on harm mitigation, it has aspects comparable to that of the UN.

## NATO POC Policies

In 2016, NATO's heads of state and government adopted a POC policy that would apply to all NATO operations, missions, and other mandated activities. While NATO does not deploy peace operations like the UN, the policy was drafted in anticipation of NATO operations deployed before, during, or following a UN presence. Rather than creating new legal obligations, the policy articulates POC within existing obligations under IHL and provides a framework to guide its implementa-

tion.<sup>47</sup> The definition adopted in the policy (and repeated in the 2021 handbook) encompasses the protection of civilian persons, objects, and governmental and public services, making it broader than both the UN and EU definitions (see Annex 1).<sup>48</sup>

As a follow-up, NATO developed a POC action plan in 2017 to operationalize the policy, including by integrating POC into trainings, doctrine, education, and exercises, as well as the planning and conduct of operations. The first line in the action plan is a military concept for POC, which serves as the basis for POC operations. While this concept is mostly focused on harm mitigation, it has aspects comparable to that of the UN. Under this concept, the objective of POC is to understand the human environment to inform military planning and the conduct of operations through

three lenses: mitigating harm (including harm resulting from NATO operations); facilitating access to basic needs; and contributing to establishing a safe and secure

environment. This broadens NATO's traditional approach to include not only passive protection from its own operations but also active protection from third parties. Similar to the UN concept of the "establishment of a protective environment," NATO's approach includes assistance to local authorities and governmental institutions. In addition, it goes beyond physical protection to also cover prevention and response efforts in collaboration with other protection actors.

One of the fundamental differences between NATO's approach to POC and those of the UN and EU is the rationale. NATO envisages POC as an operational rather than a strategic necessity—as something it needs to do to conduct its operations, including population-centric approaches such as stabilization and counterinsurgency, as well as to "win over" local populations. As a consequence, within NATO, POC is often considered as not being central to the main strategic goals of a

<sup>46</sup> The draft document stresses that "we remain strongly committed to promoting the respect of and the compliance with International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and the protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, in all conflict situations, as well as to further developing the EU due diligence policy in this regard. We are also committed to strengthening our strategic approach to women, youth, peace and security." Council of the European Union, "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence—For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," November 9, 2021.

<sup>47</sup> Hill and Manea, "Protection of Civilians: A NATO Perspective."

<sup>48</sup> NATO, "NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians."

military campaign, which often relate to the defeat of an enemy. In stark contrast, POC is one of the main strategic goals of UN peace operations. The UN approach to POC is also more integrated and multidimensional because UN operations draw on military, police, and civilian components. The EU's approach falls between these two: it has more in common with that of the UN in that it is integrated and multidimensional, whereas its military dimension (including language related to a safe and secure environment) overlaps with that of NATO.

In March 2021, NATO published its own handbook on POC.<sup>49</sup> Although this handbook is less detailed and ambitious than the UN POC handbook, it clarifies the scope of the POC policy and provides additional tools and inputs. Importantly, the handbook recognizes that military force alone is insufficient to protect civilians and calls for NATO to coordinate with other actors, particularly UN entities and protection clusters.<sup>50</sup> A key feature of the handbook is its inclusion of a threat-based POC assessment to mitigate harm from third-party actions based on eight threat scenarios.<sup>51</sup> While not yet a distinctive feature of NATO's operational planning, this threat-based approach has been taught as part of an interorganizational NATO/UN POC course at the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre (FINCENT), indicating its usefulness to operational planning.

After strong political momentum between 2016 and 2020, discussions on POC within NATO have slowed down. This is in part because of efforts to subsume POC within the conceptual umbrella of "human security," along with women, peace and security; cultural property protection; and children and armed conflict. This conceptual shift risks muddying the

distinction between POC and related tasks and diluting NATO's focus on POC.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, like the EU, NATO maintains only a small number of POC personnel in its Human Security Unit.

The March 2021 meeting of the North Atlantic Council added to the perception that discussions on POC have lost momentum within NATO.<sup>53</sup> No decision was reached on a previously contemplated update of the POC action plan. A white paper on POC prepared by NATO's Human Security Unit ahead of the meeting contained no substantive elements for a meaningful discussion.<sup>54</sup> The NATO summit of June 2021 was also a missed opportunity both for clarifying and operationalizing the "catch-all" concept of human security and for firmly putting POC back on the agenda. In the end, only a

brief reference to the harm-mitigation dimension of the NATO POC policy made it into the final quarter of the communiqué, with no mention of active protection from third

parties.<sup>55</sup> While it might be understandable that NATO was focused on other threats during the summit, it could have linked POC and human security policies to these broader threats as part of a more innovative and future-oriented way of thinking about POC.<sup>56</sup>

## From Concept to Implementation: Operational Experiences and Tools

After a decade of extensive conceptualization, recent public debates on the protection of civilians have focused on implementation.<sup>57</sup> As a former force commander and high-ranking military expert

After strong political momentum between 2016 and 2020, discussions on POC within NATO have slowed down.

49 NATO, "Protection of Civilians: ACO Handbook."

50 Ibid., p. 15.

51 Ibid., p. 68.

52 Interviews with high-ranking NATO representatives, May 10, 2021.

53 Interview with officials of the permanent representations of three allies, May 3, 2021 and May 6, 2021.

54 On file with authors.

55 See: NATO, "Brussels Summit Communiqué," June 14, 2021, available at [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_185000.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm).

56 The focus was on threats from China and Russia, as well as a range of classical security themes (e.g., terrorism; arms control, disarmament, and nonproliferation; Afghanistan; deterrence) and newer threats (e.g., climate change, cybersecurity, pandemics, disinformation, resilience, space security, use of unmanned aerial vehicles by non-state actors).

57 The UN secretary-general's 2019 report on POC in armed conflict highlights the need to translate conceptual and normative developments into "tangible improvements in the protection of civilians on the ground." See: UN Security Council, *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict—Report of the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2019/373, May 7, 2019.

stressed, “We do not need yet another handbook or guidelines, but we must focus now on how we can effectively implement POC in the field.”<sup>58</sup> But what does implementation of POC look like in practice? This section discusses how the UN, the EU, and NATO have implemented POC operations, activities, and tools in the field as well as their efforts to improve training and preparedness and develop a POC mindset among troops and other mission components.

## The United Nations’ Implementation of POC

The UN has not only been a front-runner in the conceptual and policy realm but is also the organization with the most field experience implementing and innovating on POC. Since the launch of UNAMSIL in 1999, the UN has deployed sixteen operations with POC mandates. Without institutionalized policies and guidelines, the early efforts of DPO (and its predecessor, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, or DPKO) consisted of “learning by doing” as peace operations innovated in reaction to changing conditions on the ground. These innovations have included community engagement and early-warning tools such as community alert networks and community liaison assistants; information and coordination instruments such as joint protection teams, protection working groups, and senior management groups on protection; and the ad hoc creation of POC sites.<sup>59</sup>

The UN’s first peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is a hallmark of this on-the-ground evolution and can be seen as a “laboratory for POC.”<sup>60</sup> While MONUC was initially mandated as a small observer mission in 1999, its mandate evolved to include UNAMSIL-style POC language, and its

troop and staffing levels were increased. In 2003, after large-scale massacres in Ituri in the eastern part of the country and increasing pressures on MONUC, the EU launched a French-led Interim Emergency Multinational Force (IEMF), also known as Operation Artemis. Despite some shortcomings, Artemis was credited with protecting civilians in its area of operation, including through lethal force against militia leaders.<sup>61</sup> This was the first of many POC-related collaborations between the UN and EU and had a direct impact on MONUC’s subsequent military approaches to POC.

The Ituri crisis and the need for more robust responses to protect civilians created “a sea change in the mission’s approach to civilian protection.”<sup>62</sup> After Artemis’s departure, MONUC established an Ituri brigade closely modeled on Artemis, but this brigade quickly reached its limits.<sup>63</sup> A similar Kivu brigade tarnished MONUC’s reputation further by disobeying protection orders, forcing the mission’s political leadership to override its military leadership. Further problems arose in 2008 and 2009 when MONUC supported and carried out robust operations alongside the Congolese armed forces, which were subsequently accused of committing severe human rights abuses against the civilian populations they were meant to protect.

MONUC and DPKO drew lessons from these experiences that led to a major overhaul in POC operations. In 2011, DPKO and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) adopted the landmark Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP), which provides guidance on preventing human rights abuses by non-UN security forces that UN forces are cooperating with or training.<sup>64</sup> MONUC and MONUSCO also drew on these lessons to pioneer several innovative POC tools. Many of these were civilian

58 Patrick Cammaert, “The Challenges of Training for Security,” remarks at PAX event on “Contributing to Human Security through Training: A Mission Impossible?” The Hague, Netherlands, December 3, 2019. See also: Jenna Russo and Evan Cinq-Mars, “POC20: Twenty Years of the Protection of Civilians—Challenges, Progress, and Priorities for the Future,” Center for Civilians in Conflict, September 2019.

59 Alexandra Novosseloff et al., “Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Missions in the DRC (MONUC–MONUSCO),” Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, April 26, 2019; Harley Henigson, “Community Engagement in UN Peacekeeping Operations: A People-Centered Approach to Protecting Civilians,” International Peace Institute, November 2020.

60 Interview with POC adviser, March 4, 2021.

61 Victoria K. Holt and Tobias C. Berkman, “The Impossible Mandate? Military Preparedness, the Responsibility to Protect and Modern Peace Operations,” Stimson Center, September 2006, p. 157.

62 Quote from senior MONUC military official. Ibid., p. 162.

63 See: “Interview with Brig-Gen Jan Isberg, Acting Ituri Brigade Commander,” *The New Humanitarian*, September 3, 2003.

tools, including:

- Joint protection teams, which brought together staff from the civil affairs, human rights, and child protection divisions with military officers to liaise with local populations and civil society to develop protection assessments;
- Protection matrices to identify the highest-priority protection responses;
- Community liaison assistants;
- Community alert networks; and
- Joint humanitarian missions<sup>65</sup>

In addition, in 2013 the Security Council authorized the first use of unmanned aerial vehicles in MONUC's successor mission, MONUSCO, to improve its situational awareness. That same year, MONUSCO created its Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), which is authorized to use all means necessary to "neutralize and disarm" militias. And in 2015, MONUSCO was the first mission to use female engagement teams to improve gendered community engagement.<sup>66</sup>

These innovations did not emerge without challenges, especially as the mission's POC strategy oscillated between a focus on civilian and military responses. Discussions around the FIB in particular centered on the risk of the UN becoming a party to the conflict and a legitimate target for attack.<sup>67</sup> In addition, lethal FIB operations resulting in civilian deaths highlighted the mission's lack of harm-mitigation measures.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, MONUC and MONUSCO's innovations have served as important building blocks for almost all UN-led POC operations since 2010. Many of these civilian and military tools have even been directly copied by subsequent peace

operations with more prescriptive and detailed POC mandates that go beyond the delivery of physical protection. For example, in addition to MONUSCO, the other three largest peacekeeping operations have all used joint protection teams, community liaison assistants, and female engagement teams, and the mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) introduced a quick-reaction force similar to MONUSCO's FIB.<sup>69</sup> Tools such as child protection advisers and women's protection advisers have also spread to all four of the largest missions. In addition, several missions have pioneered their own innovative POC tools:

- In the wake of large-scale violence in 2013, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) opened its base to tens of thousands of civilians fleeing deadly violence, unintentionally creating the first "POC sites."<sup>70</sup>
- MINUSCA is credited with using its existing civilian capabilities to broker local peace agreements. The mission's POC coordination mechanism has also been highlighted by the UN as an example of how to coordinate POC planning and operations between senior mission leadership, host-state security forces, local authorities, civil society and community leaders, armed groups, and judicial authorities.<sup>71</sup>
- The UN mission in Mali (MINUSMA) created the All Sources Intelligence Fusion Unit, making it the first UN peace operation to employ a dedicated intelligence system aimed at identifying and monitoring threats, including threats to civilians.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to these innovations at the level of individual missions, the UN has made significant

64 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces*, UN Doc. A/67/775-S/2013/110, Annex, pp. 3–9. For further information on the HRDDP and MONUSCO, see: UN DPO, "POC Handbook," pp. 127–128.

65 UN Security Council Resolution 1925 (May 28, 2010), UN Doc. S/RES/1925, para. 12.

66 Gretchen Baldwin, "From Female Engagement Teams to Engagement Platoons: The Evolution of Gendered Community Engagement in UN Peace Operations," International Peace Institute, November 2021.

67 See: Fiona Blyth and Patrick Cammaert, "The UN Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," International Peace Institute, July 2013.

68 See: Adam Day and Charles T. Hunt, "Distractions, Distortions and Dilemmas: The Externalities of Protecting Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping," *Civil Wars* (2021).

69 See: Lise Howard, "Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Mission in the Central African Republic," *IPI Global Observatory*, November 21, 2019.

70 See: Hilde F. Johnson, "Capacity to Protect Civilians: Rhetoric or Reality?" International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations, December 2015. The concept of "POC sites" found its way into the 2019 DPO POC policy.

71 UN DPO, "POC Handbook," p. 68.

72 Namie Di Razza, "Protecting Civilians in the Context of Violent Extremism: The Dilemmas of UN Peacekeeping in Mali," International Peace Institute, October 2018. On the challenges of intelligence in UN peacekeeping, see also: Sarah-Myriam Martin-Brûlé, "Finding the UN Way on Peacekeeping-Intelligence," International Peace Institute, April 2020.



advances in POC training for both military and police units at the operational and tactical levels.<sup>73</sup>

Despite this progress, the UN has faced difficulties and setbacks in implementing POC—many of which are recurring and persistent challenges for UN peacekeeping more generally. These include inadequate resources, training, and preparedness to carry out tasks like community engagement in the face of disintegrating state structures, as well as the lack of the right mindset for POC. Recent calls for more accountability and better monitoring and evaluation of the impact of POC efforts also indicate that, despite many advances, there is still little knowledge of what does and does not work to protect civilians from harm.<sup>74</sup>

These challenges are exacerbated by the simultaneous increase in POC tasks and decrease in peacekeeping budgets. For example, budgetary pressure since 2017 has forced MONUSCO to close bases and draw down troops, shifting toward a “protection through projection approach.”<sup>75</sup> This approach entails deploying more flexible mobile units and rapidly deployable joint protection teams across large geographic areas. As Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix stressed, “We are never able to put peacekeepers in every village, in every location, in every place where civilians are under threat... but by being deployed, we create and raise expectations to a level that is very difficult to meet in practice.”<sup>76</sup> This mismatch between expectations and resources is a problem that lies at the heart of peacekeeping.

Another challenge is that the prioritization of POC has sometimes had a “gravitational pull” on missions’ other mandated activities. The focus on

POC can distract from other mission priorities and produce instances of “POC-rebranding” whereby other mission activities are framed as contributing to POC to benefit from the attention of mission leadership and additional resources.<sup>77</sup>

Interorganizational dynamics have influenced the trajectory of the UN’s approach to POC. For example, the modeling of MONUC’s Ituri brigade on Operation Artemis highlighted the EU’s direct influence on the UN’s approach to POC, albeit with mixed results. The deployment of short-term, comparatively restricted EU missions alongside UN operations between 2003 and 2015 has also spurred various initiatives for more formal UN-EU coordination and collaboration.<sup>78</sup>

Collaboration on POC between UN missions and parallel bilateral operations can also be interpreted as a cautionary tale, as seen in Côte d’Ivoire (the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire and Operation Licorne), Mali (MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane), and CAR (MINUSCA and Operation Sangaris). These “parallel operations” can provide robust reinforcements to UN missions and information-gathering advantages. For example, one observer noted that MINUSCA was most effective in protecting civilians during the parallel deployment of the French military’s 3,000-strong Operation Sangaris.<sup>79</sup> However, parallel operations also present risks that might undermine UN peace operations’ impartiality, support from the local population, and harm-mitigation measures.<sup>80</sup> These lessons from UN cooperation with more robust parallel national or multinational operations, including the risk of overreach and the need for a clear division of labor, should be transferred to the UN’s cooperation with other organizations on POC.

73 POC is featured in the UN’s Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials. It is also included in the UN’s specialized pre-deployment training materials, including on POC and response to conflict-related sexual violence and in tactical mission-specific training modules on POC. In addition, POC is featured in the in-mission integrated induction training and the Senior Leadership Programme, though often only as a one-hour unit.

74 See also: Aditi Gorur, “The Need for Monitoring and Evaluation in Advancing Protection of Civilians,” *IPI Global Observatory*, October 2, 2019.

75 Lauren Spink, “Protection with Less Presence: How the Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo Is Attempting to Deliver Protection with Fewer Resources,” Center for Civilians in Conflict, January 10, 2018.

76 Jean-Pierre Lacroix, remarks at the policy forum “Twenty Years of Protecting Civilians through UN Peacekeeping Operations: Successes, Challenges, and New Frontiers,” New York, US, May 22, 2019, available at [www.ipinst.org/2019/05/twenty-years-of-poc-successes-challenges#10](http://www.ipinst.org/2019/05/twenty-years-of-poc-successes-challenges#10).

77 Day and Hunt, “Distractions, Distortions and Dilemmas.”

78 MONUC/MONUSCO, MINURCAT, and MINUSCA were all cases of UN missions operating in parallel to short-term EU operations.

79 Howard, “Assessing the Effectiveness of the UN Mission in the Central African Republic.”

80 See: Alexandra Novosseloff and Lisa Sharland, “Partners and Competitors: Forces Operating in Parallel to UN Peace Operations,” International Peace Institute, November 2019.

## The European Union's Implementation of POC

The EU has often been criticized for failing to translate its “ambitious intentions [for POC] into actual operations.”<sup>81</sup> However, a closer look at the EU’s track record reveals a more complex picture. The EU has contributed to POC in close cooperation with the UN through military operations conducted under its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).<sup>82</sup>

As discussed above, the French-led Operation Artemis—the EU’s first autonomously launched military operation and the first EU operation in Africa—was deployed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for three months in 2003.<sup>83</sup> It was mandated by the Security Council to

contribute to the stabilization of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Bunia, to ensure the protection of the airport, the internally displaced persons in the camps in Bunia and, if the situation requires it, to contribute to the safety of the civilian population, United Nations personnel and the humanitarian presence in the town.<sup>84</sup>

Artemis was a robust operation and has been described as “the EU operation with characteristics most resembling war fighting.”<sup>85</sup> It was considered by some observers to be a successful protection mission at the time and was credited with quickly reestablishing security in the town of Bunia, resulting in the return of thousands of civilians who

had been displaced by fighting.<sup>86</sup> Artemis served as an impetus for MONUSCO’s subsequent formation of its own intervention brigades and set the standard for EU cooperation with UN peace operations.<sup>87</sup>

Nevertheless, Artemis was criticized for its temporal and geographic limitations and for not re-hatting some of its troops directly to MONUC.<sup>88</sup> Yet, it should also be stressed that EU and French officials underlined at the beginning of the operation that “the main thing for us is to set objectives that are realistic and in keeping with the means we have.”<sup>89</sup> In this context, the mindset behind the EU’s operations relates to the wider question of matching POC ambitions with POC capacities. EU missions face a dilemma like the UN: overcommitting to protect large areas with overstretched resources and thereby risking inadequate responses, on the one hand, or focusing on a manageable area and tasks and thereby foregoing the protection of civilians in other places or simply pushing aggressors into uncovered territory, on the other hand.

Artemis also faced criticism related to human rights. In 2008, French soldiers in Artemis were accused of human rights abuses of Congolese civilians by Swedish soldiers who served alongside them.<sup>90</sup> This incident highlights the importance of applying the HRDDP not only to the troops that EU forces might train but also to EU forces themselves in order to hold them accountable and sanction them for their own human rights violations.

In 2006, the EU launched a second military

81 Stian Kjeksrud et al., “Protecting Civilians: Comparing Organizational Approaches,” in *Protection of Civilians*, Haidi Willmot, Ralph Mamiya, Scott Sheeran, and Marc Weller, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

82 At the time of these operations, the framework was still referred to as the European Security and Defence Policy. The ups and downs of EU-UN relations on peace operations have been amply discussed elsewhere. See, for example: Alexandra Novosseloff, “United Nations-European Union Cooperation in the Field of Peacekeeping: Challenges and Prospects,” Global Governance Institute, June 2012; Joachim Koops and Thierry Tardy, “The United Nations’ Inter-organizational Relations in Peacekeeping,” in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, Joachim A. Koops, Thierry Tardy, Norrie MacQueen, and Paul D. Williams, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Thierry Tardy, “The European Union and UN Peace Operations: What Global-Regional Peace and Security Partnership?” in *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, Cedric de Coning and Mateja Peter, eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

83 Ståle Ulriksen, Catriona Gourlay, and Catriona Mace, “Operation Artemis: The Shape of Things to Come?” *International Peacekeeping* 11, no. 3 (2004).

84 UN Security Council Resolution 1484 (May 30, 2003), UN Doc. S/RES/1484.

85 Tommi Koivula, *The European Union and the Use of Military Force: Uncovering the Myths* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 80–81.

86 Holt and Berkman, “The Impossible Mandate?” p. 162.

87 The mission was deployed for three months only and was limited to a sixty-mile radius in Bunia.

88 The ups and downs of EU-UN relations in peace operations have been amply discussed elsewhere. See, for example: Novosseloff, “UN-EU Cooperation in the Field of Peacekeeping: Challenges and Prospects”; Koops and Tardy, “The United Nations’ Inter-organizational Relations in Peacekeeping”; and Tardy, “The European Union and UN Peace Operations: What Global-Regional Peace Partnership?”

89 French Defense Ministry spokesman, cited in Holt and Berkman, “The Impossible Mandate?” p. 162.

90 See: Dirk Eckert, “EU Soldiers Accused of Torturing Civilians in Congo,” *Deutsche Welle*, March 29, 2008.

operation in the DRC (EUFOR RD Congo) following a request by the UN. The Security Council mandated the operation “to contribute to the protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence in the areas of its deployment, and without prejudice to the responsibility of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.”<sup>91</sup> The operation was deployed for four months to reinforce MONUC in case election disputes led to violence. While critics have questioned the value of this short-term deployment and whether it was advanced primarily as a “confidence-building step” for the EU’s security role, it did contribute to creating a safe and secure environment during a politically tense period.<sup>92</sup>

The EU’s third military operation (EUFOR Tchad/RCA) was deployed to Chad and CAR for less than two months in 2009. Intended as a bridging mission to prepare the ground for the UN mission in CAR and Chad (MINURCAT), the operation was mandated to “contribute to protecting civilians in danger, particularly refugees and displaced persons” and to improve security in its area of operation.<sup>93</sup> Despite its limited mandate, the mission adopted a proactive protection strategy and quickly established security in its area of operation, leading it to be considered a success in terms of POC.<sup>94</sup> In its assessment of the operation, the European Council found that “throughout its mandate, EUFOR [Tchad/RCA] has made a tangible contribution towards protecting civilians in danger, and in particular refugees and displaced persons who have been profoundly affected by the neighboring crisis in Darfur.”<sup>95</sup> However, the mission was criticized for not re-hatting its forces under the

As with the conceptual development of its POC policies, the EU’s implementation of its POC policies was heavily influenced by the UN.

banner of MINURCAT.

The EU deployed a fourth military operation in 2014, again to CAR (EUFOR RCA), initially envisaged as a transition operation for MINUSCA. The EU authorized this military force to “provide temporary support, for a period of up to six months, to help to achieve a secure environment in the Bangui area” and to “contribute, within its area of operations, to international and regional efforts to protect the populations most at risk and [to] contribute to the free movement of civilians.”<sup>96</sup> As with the previous EU military missions, the operation was French-led, had a mandate from the Security Council, and was short-term. It was deployed shortly after the African-led International Support Mission in CAR (MISCA), which was mandated to contribute to POC with support from French forces. EUFOR RCA had a broad and abstract mandate.<sup>97</sup>

As with the conceptual development of its POC policies, the EU’s implementation of its POC policies in these missions was heavily influenced by the UN. Artemis, EUFOR RD Congo, and EUFOR Tchad/RCA all supported UN operations and were accompanied by a foreign policy discourse around “effective multilateralism” in peace and security. However, these forces were also motivated by the EU’s goal of demonstrating its autonomy as a security actor, increasing its visibility, and strengthening the UN presence without placing its troops directly under UN command and control.<sup>98</sup> Notably, all these operations were largely dependent on French initiative, leadership, and capabilities.<sup>99</sup>

91 See: UN Security Council Resolution 1671 (April 25, 2006), UN Doc. S/RES/1671.

92 See, for example: Alexander Mattelaer, “EUFOR RDC and the Development of the ESDP,” *Studia Diplomatica* 60, no. 3 (2007), p. 89.

93 Archived mission website available at [https://web.archive.org/web/20071224094519/http://consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showPage.asp?lang=en&id=1366&mode=g&name=](https://web.archive.org/web/20071224094519/http://consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?lang=en&id=1366&mode=g&name=).

94 Cristina Churrua, “EUFOR Chad/CAR Mission on the Protection of Civilians: A Distinctive EU Way to Peace Operations,” in *Managing Crises, Making Peace: Towards a Strategic EU Vision for Security and Defense*, Maria G. Galantino and Maria R. Freire, eds. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

95 European Union External Action Service (EEAS), “Mission Description: EUFOR Tchad/RCA,” January 1, 2015, available at [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-tchad-rca/mission-description/index\\_en.htm](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/csdp/missions-and-operations/eufor-tchad-rca/mission-description/index_en.htm).

96 Council of the European Union, “Council Conclusions on the Central African Republic,” January 20, 2014.

97 UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 25 February 2014 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2014/45, February 26, 2014.

98 Thierry Tardy, “EU-UN Cooperation in Peacekeeping: A Promising Relationship in a Constrained Environment,” in “The European Union and the United Nations: Partners in Effective Multilateralism,” Martin Ortega, ed., Institute for Security Studies, June 2005, pp. 57–58.

99 See: Joachim A. Koops, *The European Union as an Integrative Power? Assessing the EU’s Effective Multilateralism towards NATO and the United Nations* (Brussels: VUBPress, 2011).



More recently, the EU has shifted away from large, military CSDP missions and focused instead more on training missions and capacity building. In the context of MINUSMA and several other missions, European countries have deployed more troops directly to UN-led operations. Such contributions have provided UN missions important strategic enablers, resources, and capacities, though their overall impact on POC remains limited.<sup>100</sup>

The EU itself has shifted toward missions with non-executive mandates and training missions. As a result, the EU's POC efforts have changed from being direct and proactive to indirect and focused on capacity building. For example, the EU training mission in Mali (EUTM Mali), deployed in 2013, was initially mandated to provide training on POC, IHL, and human rights.<sup>101</sup> While POC training is not a core task, the mission has conducted exercises for Malian forces on gender-sensitive POC scenarios and developed a "train-the-trainer" manual on international human rights and humanitarian law.<sup>102</sup> However, reports regarding increasing civilian casualties caused by Malian security forces highlight the need for a stronger POC focus within training activities and the development of an EU HRDDP. Moreover, the current political situation in Mali is also prompting a strategic re-evaluation of the EU's approach to capacity building in an environment where there is an unreliable host nation.

In contrast to EUTM Mali, the EU's training mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia), deployed in 2010, does not have an explicit POC mandate. Nonetheless, a recent independent evaluation noted that the mission "had small, indirect [and] positive impacts on the protection of civilians, the human rights environment and preventing

conflict-related sexual violence" through courses provided to the Somali armed forces on international human rights and humanitarian law, preventing sexual violence, and civil-military cooperation.<sup>103</sup>

The most recent EU training mission, deployed to Mozambique in 2021 (EUTM Mozambique), highlights the ongoing shift from large-scale military operations to training missions. It is also the first EU training mission to train special forces. As noted in the mission's press release, "The aim of the mission is to *train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population* and [to restore] safety and security in the Cabo Delgado province" (emphasis added).<sup>104</sup> This is relatively novel phrasing, as it suggests training specifically on the implementation of POC activities and strategies. Yet the mandate itself uses the same phrasing as that of EUTM Mali, indicating that the mission could cover POC as one of many subjects in courses on international human rights and humanitarian law.<sup>105</sup>

In addition to these external training missions, the EU has advanced POC training for its own member states. The EU's 2015 concept on POC calls for the "integration of POC in CSDP education and training," though it also stresses that—as with the UN and NATO—training is the primary responsibility of member states.<sup>106</sup> In 2012, Austria launched a comprehensive EU POC training course that was certified by the UN's ITS in 2014 and updated in 2018. It has since been included in the curriculum of the European Security and Defence College.<sup>107</sup> In 2019, Germany launched a one-week pilot course on POC at the tactical level with a focus on scenario-based training and civil-military cooperation.<sup>108</sup> As mentioned, FINCENT

100 See: John Karlsrud and Alexandra Novosseloff, "Doing Less with More? The Difficult 'Return' of Western Troop Contributing Countries to United Nations Peacekeeping," Global Governance Institute, February 2020.

101 Council of the European Union Decision 2013/34/CFSP (January 17, 2013), EU Doc. 2013/34/CFSP, art. 1, para. 2 (b). On later amendments, see: Council of the European Union Decisions 2014/220/CFSP (April 15, 2014), EU Doc. 2014/220/CFSP; 2016/446/CFSP (March 23, 2016), EU Doc. 2016/446/CFSP; and 2018/716/CFSP (May 14, 2018), EU Doc. 2018/716/CFSP.

102 Council of the European Union, "EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2019," EU Doc. 8580/20, June 9, 2020, p. 104.

103 Paul D. Williams and Hussein Yusuf Ali, "The European Union Training Mission in Somalia: An Assessment," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, p. 13.

104 European Council and Council of the European Union, "Mozambique: EU Sets up a Military Training Mission to Help Address the Crisis in Cabo Delgado," press release, July 12, 2021.

105 Council of the European Union Decision 2021/1143 (July 12, 2021), EU Doc. 2021/1143, art. 1.3 (a).

106 See: Council of the European Union, "Concept on PoC in EU-Led Military Operations," pp. 9–10.

107 See: EU External Action Service, "Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (POC)—A Key Task for Peace Operations," March 2, 2018, available at [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/40678/protection-civilians-armed-conflict-poc-%E2%80%93-key-task-peace-operations\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/40678/protection-civilians-armed-conflict-poc-%E2%80%93-key-task-peace-operations_en).

108 The course was organized by the German Armed Forces UN Training Centre in Hammelburg.

has developed a POC training course that focuses on NATO and UN approaches to POC but not on the EU's approaches.<sup>109</sup>

Overall, the EU's POC activities have quieted down during the last few years despite the existing conceptual framework and early successes. This does not mean that POC is any less relevant. Rather, it reflects the lack of new CSDP operations and the pivot toward non-executive missions focused on training and capacity building. Furthermore, the EU lacks a strong network of "POC champions" among its member states to politically elevate the concept within the EU and push for its operationalization by EU training missions.

## NATO's Implementation of POC

While NATO has made significant strides in its POC policy and doctrine, its track record of implementation is far more complex. Many UN and humanitarian officials remain skeptical of NATO's future role as a POC actor, in part because it is at its heart a military alliance and in part because of the high number of civilian casualties caused by its air and ground campaigns. Thus, as former NATO legal adviser Steven Hill has stressed, while NATO should not underestimate its influence and potential in the field of POC, it should "avoid overselling NATO's work to date in implementing the Policy."<sup>110</sup>

Prior to Afghanistan, NATO's deployments in Bosnia and Kosovo confronted the alliance with several tasks and challenges related to protection. NATO's first peace support operation, the Implementation Force (IFOR) in Bosnia, was deployed from 1995 to 1996 and was tasked with implementing the military provisions of the Dayton Agreement. IFOR was mandated to "help create secure conditions for the conduct by others

of other tasks associated with the peace settlement," to cooperate with other international organizations and humanitarian actors, and "to observe and prevent interference with the movement of civilian populations, refugees, and displaced persons, and to respond appropriately to deliberate violence to life and person" (emphasis added).<sup>111</sup> Thus, NATO's mandate in Bosnia could be interpreted as an active protection mandate.

Shortcomings quickly emerged in the operationalization of NATO's POC mandate in Bosnia due to its lack of experience with such missions and environments. Disputes between IFOR and the UN's International Police Task Force over who should intervene to stop violence and threats to civilians hindered NATO-UN cooperation. Similar disputes emerged over responsibility for human rights investigations. In addition, IFOR had a steep learning curve on understanding the importance of civil-military cooperation for stabilization, as NATO had little prior knowledge of and appreciation for the role of humanitarian actors.<sup>112</sup>

Operation Allied Force, NATO's 1999 air campaign in Yugoslavia, raised new tensions as the alliance tried to balance between intervening to stop ethnic cleansing, on the one hand, and causing civilian deaths through airstrikes, on the other. While NATO used precision-guided missiles and supposedly engaged in civilian harm-mitigation planning, Allied Force caused between 400 and 600 civilian casualties, including from cluster bombs.<sup>113</sup> Thus, while NATO's operation contributed to ending "more than a decade of human rights violations perpetrated by the [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] authorities against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo," it also caused civilian deaths. NATO was also accused of not doing enough to investigate and compensate for these incidents.<sup>114</sup> The normative impact of the operation—which was carried out without a Security Council resolution—sparked a

109 Adding a third dimension on the EU would create the risk of overloading such a course.

110 Steven Hill, "Two Suggestions for Future NATO Work on Protection of Civilians," in "Protecting Civilians: A Humanitarian Obligation: Essay Series on the Protection of Civilians, Children and Armed Conflict and Cultural Property Protection," NATO Office of the Secretary General Human Security Unit, 2020, pp. 21–23.

111 IFOR, "General Framework Agreement," annex 1A, art. VI, 3 (d).

112 See: Larry Wentz, "Lessons from Bosnia: The IFOR Experience," Institute for National Strategic Studies, January 1998, pp. 420–421.

113 See: Amnesty International, "NATO/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: 'Collateral Damage' or Unlawful Killings? Violations of the Laws of War by NATO during Operation Allied Force," June 5, 2000.

114 Amnesty International, "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo): Setting the Standard? UNMIK and KFOR's Response To the Violence in Mitrovica," March 13, 2000.

wider debate on “legitimate versus legal” interventions that eventually led to the development of the UN’s norm on the responsibility to protect.<sup>115</sup> The operation also created friction between the UN and NATO, foreshadowing similar friction during NATO’s air strikes in Libya in 2011.

NATO gained further experience with POC in the context of its Kosovo Force (KFOR), deployed in 1999, whose mandate included the objective of “establishing and maintaining a secure environment, including responsibility for public safety and order.” The force cooperated with the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and local police forces and combined military tasks (such as deterring renewed hostilities, establishing a secure environment, ensuring public safety and order, and demilitarizing the Kosovo Liberation Army) with support for the international humanitarian effort.<sup>116</sup> However, the UN and NATO failed to adequately coordinate, and several units did not intervene to protect civilians, including during large-scale violence by ethnic Albanians against Serbian and other ethnic minorities in the spring of 2004.<sup>117</sup> A damning Human Rights Watch report stressed that “the failure—almost collapse—of the security institutions in Kosovo during the March 2004 violence is beyond dispute.”<sup>118</sup>

NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, deployed in 2001, was the main driver of the alliance’s evolving thinking around POC. As discussed above, this thinking primarily focused on civilian harm mitigation. Due to high numbers of civilian casualties, ISAF put in

place several measures to track and reduce civilian casualties. Nonetheless, in 2019, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded more civilian deaths caused by NATO and pro-government forces than by the Taliban or other anti-government forces, and civilian casualties remained one of NATO’s core challenges until the departure of its forces in 2021.<sup>119</sup>

Beyond civilian harm mitigation, NATO’s experience in Afghanistan has also sparked debate on the differences and similarities between protection activities carried out by counterinsurgency operations and UN peacekeeping operations. Despite marked differences, particularly at the strategic level, there are points of convergence and

Beyond civilian harm mitigation, NATO’s experience in Afghanistan has also sparked debate on the differences and similarities between protection activities carried out by counterinsurgency operations and UN peacekeeping operations.

potential for cross-organizational learning. For example, NATO’s focus on population-centric counterinsurgency increasingly included protecting civilians in order to reinforce the legitimacy and credibility of ISAF and the Afghan government it was supporting.<sup>120</sup> The introduc-

tion of provincial reconstruction teams in 2002 sought to advance more focused civil-military approaches. The introduction of female engagement teams in 2008 aimed to increase information gathering from and improve relations with local women as part of NATO’s “population engagement strategy,” serving as a precursor to the UN’s female engagement teams, first introduced in 2015.<sup>121</sup> In addition, by 2010 ISAF had developed “village stability operations” to maintain close engagement with village leaders and local populations, which have some parallels with the UN’s civilian community liaison assistants.<sup>122</sup>

115 The responsibility to protect has been covered extensively elsewhere. See, for example: Nico Krisch, “Review Essay: Legality, Morality and the Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention after Kosovo,” *European Journal of International Law* 13, no. 1 (February 2002); and Anthea Roberts, “Legality vs Legitimacy: Can Uses of Force Be Illegal but Justified?” in *Human Rights, Intervention, and the Use of Force*, Philip Alston and Euan Macdonald, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

116 See: KFOR, “NATO’s Role in Kosovo,” NATO, available at [www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_48818.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm).

117 International Crisis Group, “Collapse in Kosovo,” April 22, 2004, p. i.

118 Peter Bouckaert, “Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo, March 2004,” Human Rights Watch, July 25, 2004, pp. 20–25.

119 See: UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), “UN Urges Parties to Heed Call from Afghans: Zero Civilian Casualties,” news release, July 30, 2019.

120 For the extensive debate on the differences and similarities between counterinsurgency and peacekeeping, see, for example: Karsten Friis, “Peacekeeping and Counter-Insurgency—Two of a Kind?” *International Peacekeeping* 17, no. 1 (2010). For a critical view, see: Lise Howard, “Peacekeeping is Not Counterinsurgency,” *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 5 (2019).

121 Stephanie K. Erwin, “The Veil of Kevlar: An Analysis of the Female Engagement Teams in Afghanistan,” (Master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, March 2012); Baldwin, “From Female Engagement Teams to Engagement Platoons.”

122 Mark Moyar, “Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police,” Joint Special Operations University, October 2014.

NATO's most recent air operation, its 2011 Operation Unified Protector in Libya, was both a political and an operational watershed for the alliance: it was the first time NATO had to plan for and implement an explicit POC and responsibility-to-protect mandate from the UN Security Council. The Libya crisis could have provided an opportunity for NATO, the UN, and the EU to work together in implementing this mandate. However, divisions in the Security Council, the EU's decision not to launch its own military operation in Libya, and the high level of civilian casualties and infrastructure destruction caused by NATO air strikes marked a missed opportunity for operationalizing POC across the three organizations. It also left a bitter legacy for NATO, which was again criticized not only for killing civilians but also for its lack of investigation and accountability.<sup>123</sup> Ultimately, NATO's operation in Libya could have undermined the credibility of and support for its POC efforts in the long term.

Despite its spotty record on implementing POC mandates, NATO has a long tradition of education and training to foster its members' interoperability, preparedness, and defense posture, including on

POC.<sup>124</sup> Committed individuals in NATO's International Military Staff and Allied Command Transformation have advanced innovative approaches to POC training, including the use of "table-top" exercises and virtual-reality simulations.<sup>125</sup> NATO and UN officials also cooperated with POC experts in setting up a NATO-UN POC training course run by FINCENT in 2018.<sup>126</sup> Such initiatives highlight NATO's growing recognition of the importance of POC and offer the potential for building interorganizational understanding and insights.

NATO's POC policy has also been used as a template for drafting national POC strategies, including in Ukraine. In October 2020, the Ukrainian government adopted a national strategy for POC in armed conflicts that "incorporated many of the best international standards, reflecting both by content and structure the NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians."<sup>127</sup> Thus, developments on POC within NATO can also have an impact outside the alliance. Yet at the national level, there is still room to comprehensively map and connect allies' varying approaches and policies related to POC.

123 See, for example: Oliver Imhof, "Ten Years after the Libyan Revolution, Victims Wait for Justice," *Airwars*, March 18, 2021.

124 For a concise overview, see: NATO, "Education and Training," August 23, 2021, available at [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49206.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49206.htm).

125 Tony Icyan, speech on NATO's POC policy at the workshop "Protection of Civilians in the Context of Peace Operations: Translating UN Policies into National Frameworks," New York, US, November 12, 2019.

126 See: Finnish National Defence University, "Thoughts about Protection of Civilians—Course," April 11, 2019, available at <https://maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu.fi/en/-/thoughts-about-protection-of-civilians-course>.

127 Beatrice Godefroy and Suleiman Mamutov, "Ukraine Must Do More to Protect Civilians Living Close to the Conflict Contact Line," *Atlantic Council*, August 12, 2021. For an in-depth review of the impact of NATO's POC policy on Ukraine's national POC strategy, see: Beatrice Godefroy, Liza Baran, and Suleiman Mamutov, "Building Bridges, Reinforcing Protection: How NATO's Protection of Civilians Framework Influenced Ukraine's Approach," *Stimson Center*, July 29, 2021.

Table 2. Summary of comparative advantages and weaknesses of UN, EU, and NATO approaches to POC

	UN	EU	NATO
<b>Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes three tiers of protection: (1) dialogue and engagement; (2) provision of physical protection; and (3) establishment of a protective environment</li> <li>• Is designed to be integrated and comprehensive</li> <li>• Expects all mission components (civilian, police, and military) to contribute to POC across the three tiers</li> <li>• Involves an “active duty to protect” where host-state governments prove unwilling or unable to protect civilians</li> <li>• De-emphasizes operational phases</li> <li>• Underlines the nonsequential nature of prevention, preemption, response, and consolidation phases of POC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims to reduce all effects of armed conflicts on civilian populations, including harm mitigation and active protection by EU militaries</li> <li>• Includes providing physical protection, protecting human rights, securing access to essential services and resources, and establishing a secure, stable, and just environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily defines POC as harm mitigation</li> <li>• Lays the groundwork for a broader POC mandate aimed at protecting civilians from conflict-related physical violence or threats of violence by a third party</li> </ul>
<b>Missions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has deployed sixteen operations with POC mandates since 1999</li> <li>• Uses diverse sets of tools such as joint protection teams, protection matrices, community liaison assistants, community alert networks, and joint assessment missions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has contributed to POC through three military operations alongside UN operations</li> <li>• Has recently shifted toward capacity-building and training missions that include POC as one among several areas of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributed indirectly to POC through the establishment of a safe and secure environment through NATO operations in the Balkans</li> <li>• Implemented population-centric approaches in Afghanistan with some similarities to POC (as well as key differences)</li> <li>• Was formally given a POC mandate in Libya</li> </ul>



	UN	EU	NATO
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has produced extensive training materials on POC for military and police at the operational and tactical levels</li> <li>• Twenty-eight POC training courses are offered by member states around the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• POC training course is offered as part of the curriculum of the European Security and Defence College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NATO/UN POC training course is offered through FINCENT</li> </ul>
<b>Comparative Advantages and Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides most ambitious definition and broadest scope of POC</li> <li>• Understands POC as an end in itself</li> <li>• Has acquired far more lessons than NATO and EU from having to rapidly innovate and respond to POC challenges in the field</li> <li>• Has experimented with community engagement and early-warning, information-gathering, and coordination tools</li> <li>• Has had mixed results implementing a truly integrated, comprehensive, multidimensional approach to POC</li> <li>• Amount of POC tasks, tools, and trainings creates the risk of overload</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operations have worked as a stop gap to temporarily reinforce the UN</li> <li>• Has shifted away from a direct focus on POC, with training missions often including POC as part of generic IHL training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possesses the military capabilities and capacity to effectively implement physical protection measures</li> <li>• Provides for threat-based assessments in POC handbook that could be duplicated or adapted by other organizations</li> <li>• Lacks the mindset for the full range of capabilities for nonmilitary POC activities (e.g., Tier 1 POC activities)</li> <li>• Focuses more on POC as harm mitigation and as a means to an end (part of the conduct of its military operations) rather than an end in itself</li> </ul>

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite differences in mandates, tools, and strategic prioritizations, the UN, the EU, and NATO have all dedicated substantial time, resources, and operations to the protection of civilians. The UN, through the ambitious definition in its comprehensive POC policy and the wide-ranging civilian tools laid out in its POC handbook, understands POC as an end in itself for peace operations. This understanding is largely compatible with the EU, which originally conceptualized POC with a view to close cooperation with the UN. However, it stands in contrast to the strategic rationale of NATO, which has implemented POC as a means to an end, whether to support its population-centric approach to counterinsurgency or to protect its legitimacy by mitigating the harm caused by military operations.

Despite these differences, the three organizations could pursue greater cooperation while retaining their distinct conceptual and operational approaches in order to reinvigorate and advance the broader POC agenda. The UN and NATO have already developed important interorganizational frameworks for cooperation during the last two decades. These include the 2008 and 2018 UN-NATO joint declarations on cooperation, the latter of which explicitly references cooperation on POC,<sup>128</sup> as well as the 2020 UN-NATO agreement to enhance capacity building for UN peacekeeping.<sup>129</sup>

Similarly, the UN and the EU already have in place frameworks for cooperation on peacekeeping. These include a series of declarations on UN-EU cooperation on peace operations and crisis management dating back to 2003;<sup>130</sup> a 2020 framework agreement on mutual support for field

missions and operations, including through systems for collating and reviewing information gathered from local POC networks;<sup>131</sup> and regular meetings and exchanges through the UN-EU Steering Committee.

For their part, NATO and the EU have had a track record of extensive cooperation and coordination since their joint cooperation agreement in 2016 with annual progress reports and wide-ranging joint initiatives. But while “human security” made it into the most recent progress report, these have not focused specifically on cooperation on POC matters.<sup>132</sup>

All three organizations should build on these existing frameworks to foster exchanges on best practices and lessons learned and increase operational coordination on POC. They should also promote direct links between their respective POC structures, including NATO’s Human Security Unit, the EU’s POC/gender adviser, and the UN’s Department of Peace Operations.

Beyond coordination at the institutional level, strong political leadership is needed to advance interorganizational cooperation on POC. This leadership could come from a coalition of POC champions such as the UN’s “Group of Friends on POC” (half of which are members of the EU and NATO) and NATO’s “POC Tiger Team” formed by Austria and Norway (both of which are also active within the UN system). Yet political leadership across all three organizations also needs to come from “heavyweight” member states such as Germany, the UK, and the US.

Political leadership on POC is also needed within each organization, particularly in the EU and NATO. In the EU, the POC agenda risks normative and political stagnation, and the EU’s last POC

The three organizations could pursue greater cooperation while retaining their distinct conceptual and operational approaches in order to reinvigorate and advance the broader POC agenda.

128 The original joint declaration was issued in 2008. See: NATO and UN, “Updated Joint Declaration on UN-NATO Secretariat Cooperation,” October 30, 2018.

129 NATO, “NATO Strengthens Support for United Nations Peacekeepers,” April 8, 2020.

130 The first declaration was issued in 2003. These have also included multiyear agreements on priorities. See: UN and EU, “Reinforcing the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management: Priorities 2019–2021,” September 25, 2018.

131 EU and UN, “Framework Agreement between the European Union and the United Nations for the Provision of Mutual Support in the Context of Their Respective Missions and Operations in the Field,” September 29, 2020.

132 See: NATO, “Sixth Progress Report on the Implementation of the Common Set of Proposals Endorsed by EU and NATO Councils on 6 December 2016 and 5 December 2017,” June 3, 2021.



document is already six years old. This highlights the need for political initiative by member states, particularly as it often only requires a push by one influential member state to initiate a revision process in the EU's Political and Security Committee.<sup>133</sup> Likewise, in NATO, the POC agenda is at risk of de-prioritization. Austria, Belgium, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway are all well-placed to advance the POC agenda within NATO and across the three organizations.<sup>134</sup> Given the new pressing security realities in Europe, military and security plans also need to take into consideration effective POC policies in urban warfare settings and in the cyber domain.

Opportunities for collaboration also exist in the realm of POC training. The UN has created a dense landscape of peace operations training courses through ITS in cooperation with T/PCCs, including numerous POC-specific offerings. There are also two training courses that advance UN-NATO and UN-EU perspectives on POC, offered by FINCENT and Austria, respectively (though they both focus on physical protection and the role of the military). Both trainings could be strengthened by being linked, including through the use of multi-organizational scenarios that highlight the similarities and differences between the organizations' POC approaches. In addition, the EU's increasing focus on training missions could allow it to further integrate POC into tactical trainings for host-state security forces beyond generic training on IHL. Training synergies should also be pursued at the national level. For example, Germany and Austria, which have developed their own tactical-level POC trainings, could join forces to offer these trainings to other member states and to include UN, EU, and NATO perspectives on POC.<sup>135</sup> Such training courses could also help share lessons learned and innovations on POC, not only advancing interorganizational dialogue but also building a stronger POC community.

To advance an interorganizational approach to POC policy and implementation, the UN, EU, NATO, and their member states could consider the

following recommendations:

#### **Adapt POC to new operational realities.**

- **Share lessons to adapt POC to a new era of operations.** All three organizations are entering a new era of operations: the EU has pivoted away from executive military operations in favor of training missions; the UN is shifting from large-scale, multidimensional peacekeeping operations toward smaller special political missions; NATO has withdrawn from Afghanistan; and Russia has invaded Ukraine, marking the return of large-scale military conduct in Europe. These shifts will entail far-reaching reorientations and increase the importance of partnerships. To adapt, all three organizations would benefit from a systematic exchange of lessons on POC and POC-related practices and innovations with a view to also develop unarmed approaches to POC and POC mediation capacities and to respond to broader shifts in the strategic environment.
- **Apply POC approaches when responding to new threats and challenges.** All three organizations confront changing conflict dynamics, including emerging challenges such as cyber operations and urban warfare. These challenges could present an opportunity to pay more attention to POC and to broaden their understanding of POC beyond conflict and crisis management.

#### **Revitalize discussions on POC within and between the organizations.**

- **Identify national and cross-organizational champions to advance the POC agenda.** Member states within all three organizations should work together to promote POC, both within each organization and between them. Given the overlap in membership between the three organizations, major European contributors to UN peacekeeping missions, NATO operations, and EU training missions are well

<sup>133</sup> Interview with former EU POC officer, March 11, 2021.

<sup>134</sup> Austria in particular has invested heavily in advancing POC, including by seconding a national expert on POC to NATO's Human Security Unit, and remains interested in advancing the POC training agenda. Italy and Belgium are interested in more specific aspects of the human security agenda (cultural protection and children and armed conflict, respectively).

<sup>135</sup> In the case of Germany, this included a week-long, scenario-based training with more than 200 actors playing a diverse range of POC scenarios at the tactical level. Interview with German TACPOC course director, Hammelburg, Germany, October 10, 2019.

positioned to push all three organizations to take a mutually reinforcing—though still distinct—approach to POC. In addition, member states in all three organizations can develop national frameworks for POC to anchor the concept at the national level.

- **Increase awareness and knowledge of differences, similarities, and potential synergies between UN, EU, and NATO approaches to POC.** During the last two decades, the three organizations have institutionalized exchanges and cooperation in the field of peace and security more broadly. These existing channels and fora should be used for focused discussions on the differences, similarities, comparative advantages, and potential interorganizational synergies specifically in the field of POC.
- **Advance pragmatic interorganizational coordination.** Even if member states are not interested in pursuing *formal* interorganizational collaboration on POC, they could identify possible synergies. For example, a joint assessment of lessons from NATO for UN POC operations, and vice versa, could provide important insights and reinforce the broader POC agenda.<sup>136</sup>

#### **Improve POC training, preparedness, and institutionalization.**

- **Reinforce training networks between the three organizations.** All three organizations should follow the example of existing training courses that teach more than one organizational approach to POC and teach lessons learned and best practices from all three organizations (as well as the African Union). This will be particularly important for EU or NATO members that contribute troops to UN missions.
- **Promote POC preparedness.** All three organizations should require T/PCCs that contribute to missions with POC mandates to adequately prepare their personnel by developing national POC policies, operational concepts, and planning tools and providing adequate training and capabilities. They should also develop systems to assess the POC preparedness of T/PCCs.

- **Foster a POC mindset.** POC risks being misused as a tool for “public diplomacy” with a focus on reputation management. T/PCCs should ensure that their personnel develop a people-centric “POC mindset” that prioritizes POC as an end in itself rather than a means to an end, even if this shift is hard to operationalize, measure, and evaluate.
- **Invest in the staffing and institutionalization of POC units, particularly for the EU and NATO.** While the UN has reinforced its institutional capacity for POC within the Secretariat, additional investment in staffing and dedicated POC units is needed to guide and follow up on an ambitious POC agenda in all three organizations. Particularly in NATO and the EU, this would help the organizations move beyond one-person POC units.

#### **Focus on both passive and active approaches to POC.**

- **Ensure POC starts with the prevention of human rights abuses and civilian casualties caused by UN, EU, and NATO troops.** All three organizations have struggled to ensure that their own military forces comply with international human rights and humanitarian law to guarantee the safety of the civilians they are mandated to protect. Toward this end, they should share best practices and ensure troops receive training on how to mitigate harm to civilians.
- **Develop a Human Rights Due Diligence Policy for the EU and NATO.** Drawing on lessons from the UN experience, the EU and NATO should develop their own version of the HRDDP to ensure they are not indirectly harming civilians through support to national militaries.
- **Further develop a more active POC approach by NATO.** NATO should continue moving beyond harm mitigation in its approach to POC and strengthen its active approach to protecting civilians from third-party threats. A more active POC approach for NATO could focus on protection in the context of urban warfare and in the cyber domain.

<sup>136</sup> Indeed, a recent study on POC for the German Ministry of Defence analyzed similarities between NATO doctrine related to POC and UN guidance and policy documents and found significant overlaps. “Implementing the Protection of Civilians in UN Peace Operations” (on file with authors).

## Annex 1. Definitions and conceptualizations of POC in the UN, the EU, and NATO

<b>United Nations</b>	<p><b>POC Policy (2019) and POC Handbook (2020)</b></p> <p>“Without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the host state, integrated and coordinated activities by all civilian and uniformed mission components to prevent, deter or respond to threats of physical violence against civilians within the mission’s capabilities and areas of deployment through the use of all necessary means, up to and including deadly force.”<sup>137</sup> This definition includes the three tiers of POC: (1) dialogue and engagement; (2) physical protection; and (3) establishment of a protective environment.</p>
<b>European Union</b>	<p><b>Draft Guidelines on the Protection of Civilians in EU-Led Crisis Management Operations (2003)</b></p> <p>“All appropriate steps will be taken, in co-operation with the UN and other international organisations where relevant, to help create a secure environment for civilians endangered by a conflict to which an EU-led crisis-management operation relates, and to facilitate, to the greatest extent possible, safe and unhindered access by humanitarian personnel to civilians.... The EU will, in co-ordination with the UN and other relevant international organisations, take all appropriate measures to facilitate, including through co-ordinated support and assistance, respect of international norms for the protection of civilians....</p> <p>Where an EU-led crisis management operation is deployed, all possible measures will be taken to ensure respect for the rights as well as the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict. To this end, particular attention will be paid to the rights and protection of those persons who, on grounds of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, religion or faith, descent, national or social origin, suffer from discrimination.”<sup>138</sup></p>
	<p><b>Draft Revised Guidelines on the Protection of Civilians in CSDP Missions and Operations (2010)</b></p> <p>“The EU has welcomed the UN DPKO/DFS Operational concept on the PoC in UN peacekeeping operations and the Lessons learned note on the same subject. The operational concept is organised around a three-tiered approach to protecting civilians: Tier 1 Protection through political process; Tier 2 Providing protection from physical violence: Tier 3 Establishing a protective environment.”<sup>139</sup></p> <p>The revisions of the 2003 document take into consideration developments related to POC at the UN and adopt the definition and three tiers of the UN’s POC concept. Yet the document stresses that “it is also important to clarify roles and responsibilities and take note of the differences between organisations involved in the POC. Civilians will gain if distinction between actor is kept clear and the tasks are carried out complementarily. For example, ‘robust peacekeeping’ has been less of a contentious issue for EU missions and operations than for the UN. With the combination of the EU’s civil and military resources, as well as considering the EU’s possibility to provide humanitarian and long-term support in terms of development</p>

<sup>137</sup> UN DPO, “Protection of Civilians Policy,” p. 6; UN DPO, “Protection of Civilians Handbook.”

<sup>138</sup> Council of the European Union, “Draft Guidelines on Protection of Civilians in EU-Led Crisis Management Operations,” November 13, 2003, pp. 2–3.

<sup>139</sup> Council of the European Union, “Draft Revised Guidelines on the Protection of Civilians in CSDP Missions and Operations,” August 31, 2010, p. 5.

European Union (continued)	co-operation, the EU should be well placed for developing a coordinated approach to the PoC in its broadest sense.” <sup>140</sup>
	<p><b>Concept on Protection of Civilians (PoC) in EU-Led Military Operations (2015)</b></p> <p>“PoC [includes] all efforts to reduce the effects of armed conflicts on civilian populations, namely by mitigating negative effects of the conduct of military operations and to actively protect civilians from threat of violence by others.... For executive missions, the concept of PoC is relevant to the planning and conduct of military operations as this should be undertaken in a way that avoids harm to civilian populations. For pro-actively protecting civilians, PoC is primarily focused on the range of situations where military forces are mandated to provide protection from (imminent) threat of physical violence to civilian populations [i.e., in (executive) EU military operations].... PoC is inevitably a long-term effort across a broad front, usually requiring the need to: protect civilians from physical violence, protect human rights, contribute to securing the rights of access to essential services and resources, and contribute to a secure, stable and just environment as well as contribution in all areas of life.”<sup>141</sup></p>
	<p><b>European Union Military Committee (EUMC) Glossary of Acronyms and Definitions (2019)</b></p> <p>“[PoC is] a long-term effort across a broad front, usually requiring the need to: protect civilians from physical violence, protect human rights, contribute to securing the rights of access to essential services and resources, and contribute to a secure, stable and just environment as well as contribution in all areas of life.”<sup>142</sup></p>
NATO	<p><b>POC Policy (2016)</b></p> <p>“All efforts taken to avoid, minimize and mitigate the negative effects that might arise from NATO and NATO-led military operations on the civilian population and, when applicable, to protect civilians from conflict-related physical violence or threats of physical violence by other actors, including through the establishment of a safe and secure environment.”<sup>143</sup></p>
	<p><b>POC Handbook (2021)</b></p> <p>“Includes all efforts taken to avoid, minimise and mitigate the negative effects that might arise from NATO and NATO-led military operations on the civilian population and, when applicable, to protect civilians from conflict-related physical violence or threats of physical violence by other actors, including through the establishment of a safe and secure environment. Thus, PoC includes not only persons, but also all civilian objects, with particular attention paid to those of importance to the population, such as items of religious and cultural heritage, the natural environment, as well as necessary public services linked to civilian critical infrastructure.... Additionally, PoC includes both military and non-military activities, where the military leads certain activities while playing an enabling and/or supporting role on others, to prevent, deter, pre-empt, and respond to situations in which civilians suffer physical violence or are under the threat of physical violence.”<sup>144</sup></p>

140 Ibid., p. 6.

141 Council of the European Union, “Concept on Protection of Civilians (PoC) in EU-Led Military Operations,” March 2, 2015, pp. 6–7.

142 Council of the European Union, “EUMC Glossary of Acronyms and Definitions—Revision 2018,” February 22, 2019, p. 94.

143 NATO, “NATO Policy for the Protection of Civilians.”

144 NATO, “Protection of Civilians: ACO Handbook,” p. 7.

## Annex 2. Timeline of UN, EU, and NATO POC Milestones and Their Interorganizational Implications

Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secretary-general's attempt to add explicit protection language to UNPROFOR mandate is rejected by Security Council<sup>145</sup></li> <li>UNPROFOR's Nordic battalion causes civilian casualties, sparking debate on UN's lethal use of force</li> <li>UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda fails to protect Rwandans from genocide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Council focuses on diplomacy and humanitarian aid in Bosnia</li> <li>EU issues few formal policies in response to Rwandan genocide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operations Sky Monitor and Deny Flight enforce no-fly zone over Bosnia</li> <li>NATO does not adopt its own policy on Rwanda, adopting United States' restrictive approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UN and NATO begin cooperating on POC, but "dual-key" arrangements make partnership difficult</li> <li>Division of labor on POC between IFOR and UN International Police Task Force is often unclear</li> </ul>
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Srebrenica genocide marks failure of UN "safe areas"</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operation Deliberate Force lays the groundwork for IFOR but leads to civilian deaths</li> </ul>	
1996			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IFOR deploys to act against "violence to life and person" in Bosnia but is reluctant to do active POC work<sup>146</sup></li> </ul>	
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report of independent inquiry into UN actions during Rwandan genocide includes section on failure to protect civilians<sup>147</sup></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operation Allied Force causes more than 500 civilian casualties, sparking debate on "legal vs. legitimate" intervention to protect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNMIK and KFOR share responsibilities for contributing to safe and secure environment in Kosovo</li> </ul>

<sup>145</sup> UN Doc. A/54/549, p. 39, paras. 150–152.

<sup>146</sup> IFOR, "General Framework Agreement," annex 1A, art. VI, 3 (d).

<sup>147</sup> UN Doc. S/1999/1257, pp. 45–46.



Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secretary-general publishes report on fall of Srebrenica<sup>148</sup></li> <li>• Canada initiates first Security Council open debate on POC</li> <li>• Security Council gives UNAMSIL first mandate to use force for protection of civilians under imminent threat of physical violence</li> <li>• Security Council mandates UNMIK and tasks it with “protecting and promoting human rights”<sup>149</sup></li> </ul>		<p>civilians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KFOR deploys with a broad mandate to promote a “safe and secure environment”</li> </ul>	
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brahimi Report stresses that “operations given a broad and explicit mandate for civilian protection must be given the specific resources needed to carry out that mandate”<sup>150</sup></li> <li>• Millennium Declaration calls for “protection of the vulnerable” in genocides and complex emergencies<sup>151</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Security and Defence Policy structures are institutionalized (e.g., EU Military Committee and EU Military Staff)</li> <li>• European Parliament adopts resolution on “participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution” with language on protection and training<sup>152</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KFOR fails to prevent violence against civilians in Mitrovica, Kosovo</li> <li>• French KFOR soldiers are shot and injured; their response draws criticism, including for allegedly violating the human rights of detainees<sup>153</sup></li> </ul>	

148 UN Doc. A/54/549.

149 UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (June 10, 1999), UN Doc. S/RES/1244.

150 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations*, UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000, p. x. On POC and the growing expectations of peacekeepers to protect civilians as well as the need for proper resources, see also: *Ibid.*, pp. 9–47.

151 UN General Assembly Resolution 55/2 (September 18, 2000), UN Doc. A/RES/55/2, p. 7.

152 European Parliament Resolution A5-0308/2000 (November 30, 2000), EU Doc. A5-0308/2000.

153 Amnesty International, “Setting the Standard? UNMIK and KFOR’s Response to the Violence in Mitrovica.”

Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Security Council requests secretary-general to prepare aide-mémoire on POC concepts and policies<sup>154</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At Gothenburg summit, European Council establishes four priority areas for EU civilian crisis management, including civil protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allied joint publication on peace support operations discusses use of force in response to human rights abuses</li> <li>Operation Essential Harvest is launched to disarm Albanian armed groups in Macedonia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gothenburg summit stresses EU-UN cooperation on conflict prevention and crisis management</li> <li>EU and NATO make progress on their partnership</li> </ul>
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UN publishes first aide-mémoire on POC<sup>155</sup></li> <li>Kisangani massacre undermines MONUC's credibility on POC</li> </ul>			
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MONUC's Ituri brigade is equipped with helicopters and heavy weaponry and adopts aggressive stance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU deploys Operation Artemis to support MONUC in protecting civilians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NATO takes over command of ISAF in Afghanistan and creates civilian-military provincial reconstruction teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU's Operation Artemis influences MONUC's creation of Ituri brigade</li> <li>There is little cooperation between NATO provincial reconstruction teams and UNAMA</li> <li>Joint Declaration on EU-UN Cooperation in Military Crisis Management does not mention POC</li> </ul>
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bukavu crisis further undermines MONUC's credibility on POC, leading Security Council to authorize more troops and first ever divisional headquarters in Kisangani<sup>156</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operation Althea takes over from NATO's SFOR with a mandate to contribute to a safe and secure environment in Bosnia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KFOR fails to protect civilians during outburst of violence<sup>157</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU cooperates with NATO in contributing to safe and security environment in Bosnia</li> <li>UN and NATO both miss the opportunity to draw lessons from</li> </ul>

154 UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 21 June 2001 from the President of the Security Council Addressed to the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2001/614, June 21, 2001.

155 UN Doc. S/PRST/2002/6, Annex: Aide Memoire.

156 UN Security Council Resolution 1565 (October 1, 2004), UN Doc. S/RES/1565. For a detailed assessment of the importance of the Eastern Division headquarters, see: Patrick C. Cammaert, "Learning to Use Force on the Hoof in Peacekeeping: Reflections on the Experience of MONUC's Eastern Division," Institute for Security Studies, April 3, 2007.

157 See: Bouckaert, "Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo."



Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change stresses POC<sup>158</sup></li> <li>• UNMIK police fail to protect civilians during violence in Kosovo<sup>159</sup></li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• their failure to protect minorities in Kosovo</li> <li>• EU-NATO Berlin Plus agreement on military cooperation in the field refers to safe and secure environment but does not explicitly mention POC</li> </ul>
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Mission in Sudan is launched with POC mandate<sup>160</sup></li> <li>• Several missions create civilian protection officer positions (later called POC advisers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU begins providing logistical support to AU Mission in Sudan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NATO begins providing logistical support to AU Mission in Sudan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU and NATO experience tensions over their support to AU Mission in Sudan</li> </ul>
2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUFOR RD Congo is launched to support MONUC with a preventive POC mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US counter-insurgency field manual mentions that welfare of the population is vital to an operation's success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU and UN cooperate in DRC</li> </ul>
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secretary-general's report stresses that POC must become core focus of MONUC<sup>161</sup></li> <li>• New MONUC mandate prioritizes POC<sup>162</sup></li> <li>• Switzerland establishes Group of Friends of POC</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UNAMA and ISAF develop difficult relationship due to uneven resources, capabilities, visibility, and political weight vis-à-vis Afghan government</li> <li>• Joint Statement on UN-EU Cooperation in Crisis Management reiterates cooperation on</li> </ul>

158 UN General Assembly, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility—Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*, UN Doc. A/59/565, December 2, 2004, paras. 231–238.

159 International Crisis Group, “Collapse in Kosovo,” p. i; Bouckaert, “Failure to Protect: Anti-Minority Violence in Kosovo.”

160 UN Security Council Resolution 1590 (March 24, 2005), UN Doc. S/RES/1590.

161 UN Security Council, *Twenty-Third Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, UN Doc. S/2007/156, March 20, 2007.

162 UN Security Council Resolution 1756 (May 15, 2007), UN Doc. S/RES/1756.

Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2007				<p>peacekeeping but does not mention POC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 50 percent of Group of Friends of POC are EU and/or NATO members</li> </ul>
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MONUC starts developing community liaison assistants and joint protection teams in response to Kiwanja massacre</li> <li>• UN Mission in Sudan fails to protect civilians in Abyei</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUFOR Tchad/RCA is launched with explicit mandate to “contribute to protect civilians”</li> <li>• EU General Secretariat Document Compilation of 2008 includes section on POC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISAF deploys first female engagement teams in Afghanistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint Declaration on UN-NATO Secretariat Cooperation stresses cooperation on peace and security but does not mention POC</li> </ul>
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK establishes and chairs informal Security Council expert group on POC</li> <li>• Security Council mandates MINURCAT with specific POC tasks<sup>163</sup></li> <li>• NGO reports of human rights violations against civilians by Congolese armed forces prompt discussions on Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP)</li> <li>• Security Council supports creation of women’s protection advisers<sup>164</sup></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New ISAF commander stresses “avoiding civilian casualties at all costs” and issues air-strike directive</li> <li>• UK publishes joint doctrine publication on security and stability, stressing the importance of “human security”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With MINURCAT, EU deploys a mission alongside a UN operation for the third time in three years, allowing the organizations to work out their divisions of labor and areas of complementarity</li> </ul>

<sup>163</sup> UN Doc. S/RES/1778.

<sup>164</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1888 (September 30, 2009), UN Doc. S/RES/1888; UN News Centre, “Building Capacity of Women’s Protection Advisers,” April 1, 2015.

Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MONUSCO pilots community alert networks in response to mass-rape incidents in Luvungi<sup>165</sup></li> <li>• MONUSCO creates small combat deployments to enhance POC<sup>166</sup></li> <li>• DPKO/DFS Operational Concept on POC in peacekeeping operations establishes the three-tier approach to POC</li> <li>• DPKO/DFS publish lessons-learned note on POC in armed conflict</li> <li>• DPKO/DFS create draft framework for mission-wide POC strategies in peacekeeping operations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EUTM Somalia is launched with no explicit POC mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NATO Strategic Concept does not explicitly mention POC</li> <li>• ISAF adopts population-centric US counterinsurgency doctrine in Afghanistan, and special forces begin “village stability operations”</li> <li>• First dedicated unit on POC is established in Operations Division</li> </ul>	
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security Council Resolution 1973 on Libya authorizes “all necessary measures ... to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack”<sup>167</sup></li> <li>• ITS publishes specialized training materials on POC and response to conflict-related sexual violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans for EUFOR Libya humanitarian operation do not materialize</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NATO launches Operation Unified Protector in Libya to implement Resolutions 1970 and 1973</li> <li>• Allied joint doctrine on counterinsurgency includes some elements akin to POC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Libya crisis provides opportunity for UN, EU, and NATO to implement and operationalize POC, but divisions in Security Council, non-launch of EU mission, and high level of civilian casualties leave bitter legacy</li> <li>• EU adopts document on actions to enhance CSDP support to UN peacekeeping without explicitly referencing POC</li> </ul>

165 Namie Di Razza, “Reframing the Protection of Civilians Paradigm for UN Peace Operations,” International Peace Institute, November 2017.

166 MONUSCO, “DR Congo: MONUSCO to Carry On with Operation ‘Shop Window’ in North Kivu,” press release, September 9, 2010.

167 UN Doc. S/RES/1973, p. 3.

Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DPKO/DFS create POC Resource and Capability Matrix for Implementation of UN Peacekeeping Operations with POC Mandates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Austria launches EU POC Training Course, which becomes UN-certified in 2014 and is updated in 2018</li> </ul>		
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In reaction to large-scale violence, UNMISS creates “POC sites”<sup>168</sup></li> <li>DPKO and OHCHR adopt HRDDP<sup>169</sup></li> <li>Security Council authorizes Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) for MONUSCO<sup>170</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EUTM Mali is launched with mandate to provide training on IHL, POC, and human rights<sup>171</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Austria and Norway create and lead POC “Tiger Group”</li> <li>Austria drafts “food-for-thought” paper, forming conceptual backbone for 2016 NATO POC policy<sup>172</sup></li> </ul>	
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MINUSMA creates All Sources Intelligence Fusion Unit, whose work is used for POC-related preventive analysis<sup>173</sup></li> <li>Women’s protection advisers start to deploy to missions</li> <li>UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) publishes evaluation of POC in peacekeeping operations<sup>174</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EUFOR RCA is launched with mandate to provide a safe and secure environment around Bangui</li> <li>European Council stresses that EUFOR RCA shall contribute to POC<sup>175</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allied joint doctrine on military contribution to peace support references UN’s three-tier approach to POC<sup>176</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NATO’s conceptualization of POC moves toward alignment with that of the UN</li> </ul>

168 See: Johnson, “Capacity to Protect Civilians: Rhetoric or Reality?” The POC sites were more recently transitioned to “conventional” IDP camps. See: Francesca Mold, “UN Protection of Civilians Sites Begin Transitioning to Conventional Displacement Camps,” UNMISS, September 4, 2020.

169 UN Doc. A/67/775–S/2013/110, Annex: “Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations Support to Non-United Nations Security Forces.”

170 UN Security Council Resolution 2098 (March 28, 2013), UN Doc. S/RES/2098.

171 EU Doc. 2013/34/CFSP, Article 1, 2 (b).

172 Hill and Manea, “Protection of Civilians: A NATO Perspective,” footnote 8.

173 David Nordli and Morten Lindboe, “Intelligence in United Nations Peace Operations: A Case Study of the All Sources Information Fusion Unit in MINUSMA,” Norwegian Defence Research Establishment and Norwegian Defence International Centre, 2017, p. 9.

174 UN General Assembly, *Evaluation of the Implementation and Results of Protection of Civilians Mandates in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations—Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services*, UN Doc. A/68/787, March 7, 2014.

175 Council of the European Union, “Council Conclusions on the Central African Republic,” p. 2.

176 NATO, “AJP 3.4.1: Allied Joint Doctrine for the Military Contribution to Peace Support (Edition A, Version 1),” December 2014, p. 11.

Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DPKO/DFS release UN POC policy</li> <li>• Group of member states sign Kigali Principles on POC</li> <li>• DPKO/DFS publish guidelines on POC for military components of missions<sup>177</sup></li> <li>• High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report stresses that POC is “a core obligation of the UN, but expectations and capabilities must converge”<sup>178</sup></li> <li>• MINUSCA is one of the first UN operations to deploy a female engagement team<sup>179</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept on POC in EU-led military operations is released</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allied joint publication on military contribution to stabilization and reconstruction includes POC as part of safe and secure environment</li> <li>• Exercise Trident Juncture includes POC and children in armed conflict scenarios</li> <li>• Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Center publishes report on civilian harm mitigation, feeding into NATO POC policy</li> <li>• “POC Tiger Group” pushes for POC policy<sup>180</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU-UN cooperation priorities document does not explicitly refer to POC</li> </ul>
2016		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Global Strategy emphasizes POC as part of “integrated approach to conflicts and crises”<sup>181</sup></li> <li>• EUTM RCA is launched without POC mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• POC policy is published and endorsed by member states at Warsaw Summit</li> </ul>	
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MONUSCO develops “protection through projection” approach<sup>182</sup></li> <li>• DPKO/DFS publish guideline on role of UN police in POC<sup>183</sup></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Austria finances POC officer position in Human Security Unit</li> </ul>	

177 UN DPKO and DFS, “Protection of Civilians: Implementing Guidelines for Military Components of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions,” February 2015.

178 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, *Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People*, UN Doc. A/70/95–S/2015/446, June 17, 2015, p. 11.

179 Lauren Spink, “‘We Have to Try to Break the Silence Somehow’: Preventing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence through UN Peacekeeping,” Center for Civilians in Conflict, October 2020.

180 Kathleen Dock, Victoria K. Holt, and Marla Keenan, eds., “Origins, Progress, and Unfinished Business: NATO’s Protection of Civilians Policy,” Stimson Center, March 18, 2021, p. 7.

181 EU External Action Service, “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe—A Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy,” June 2016.

182 Spink, “Protection with Less Presence.”

183 UN DPKO and DFS, “Guidelines: The Role of United Nations Police in Protection of Civilians,” August 2017.



Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ITS publishes new Comprehensive POC Training Materials</li> </ul>			
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OIOS publishes report on missions' operational responses to POC-related incidents<sup>184</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU begins preparatory work on HRDDP for EU training missions following recommendation by OHCHR and UNSMIL<sup>185</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NATO adopts POC action</li> <li>NATO adopts POC military concept to operationalize 2016 POC policy</li> <li>NATO document on allied land tactics references POC as part of safe and secure environment</li> <li>Allied joint doctrine on civil-military cooperation identifies POC as cross-cutting theme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updated Joint Declaration on UN-NATO Secretariat Cooperation explicitly refers to cooperation on POC</li> <li>UN-EU 2019–2021 strategic priorities for partnership on peace operations and crisis management mention POC in context of G5 Sahel Force's compliance with human rights<sup>186</sup></li> <li>NATO further acknowledges UN definition of POC</li> <li>Discussion on EU equivalent of HRDDP open possibilities for EU-UN cooperation</li> <li>FINCENT launches first pilot training on NATO-UN approaches to POC</li> </ul>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DPO releases revised POC policy</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>London Meeting stresses human security</li> <li>Germany develops large-scale, tactical-level POC training course</li> <li>Centre of Excellence develops handbook on civil-military cooperation,</li> </ul>	

184 UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, "Inspection of the Performance of Missions' Operational Responses to Protection of Civilians (POC) Related Incidents," Report No. IED-18-010, July 2018.

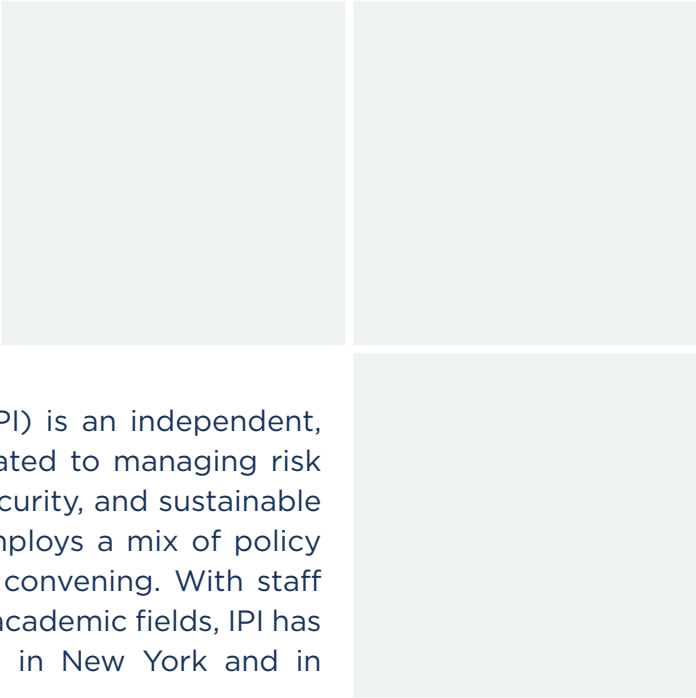
185 Carla Ferstman, "Human Rights Due Diligence Policies Applied to Extraterritorial Cooperation to Prevent 'Irregular' Migration: European Union and United Kingdom Support to Libya," *German Law Journal* 21 (2020).

186 Council of the European Union, *Reinforcing the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management: Priorities 2019–2021*, EU Doc. EEAS(2018) 718, July 11, 2018.

Year	UN	EU	NATO	Interorganizational Developments
2019			including section on POC that refers to UN definition	
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DPO releases POC handbook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020–2024 reaffirms aim to draft an EU HRDDP</li> <li>Operation Irini is launched, shifting emphasis from rescue missions to “human trafficking/smuggling”</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NATO foreign ministers agree to Defence and Capacity Building Package to support UN peace operations, including on POC<sup>187</sup></li> <li>UN and EU sign framework agreement for “mutual support” in missions and field operations</li> </ul>
2021		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Council approves EUTM Mozambique with mandate to train special forces on POC</li> <li>EU Draft Strategic Compass includes section on POC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NATO releases POC handbook</li> <li>NATO summit communiqué references human security and POC policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU pledges to “support UN actions in response to conflicts that cause harm to civilians and threaten global security and stability”<sup>188</sup></li> <li>Third iteration of FINCENT UN-NATO POC course is digitized</li> </ul>

187 NATO, “NATO Strengthens Support for United Nations Peacekeepers.”

188 Council of the European Union, *EU Priorities at the United Nations during the 76th United Nations General Assembly, September 2021–September 2022*, EU Doc. 10393/21, July 12, 2021, p. 9.



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