The implications for political missions and peacemaking activities are clear: the proceeds of crime can fuel political corruption, undermine political institutions and processes, further delegitimize weak justice and security institutions and support armed actors. The organization of violence becomes less contingent on local political support, and more contingent on transnational funding and social networks. In this regard, purely “political” peace deals “may no longer provide a comprehensive solution to large-scale violence, since economic motives – often hidden or downright criminal – may also be major factors in determining conflict-termination outcomes.”

In both countries emerging from conflict and countries with weak accountability institutions and mechanisms, politics can be altered by illicit funding and transnational illegal activity, weakening the legitimacy of political processes and institutions.

As a rule, the threat to stability posed by the intertwining of TNTs and political, economic and social dynamics is more clearly recognized and addressed by the international community in countries that already figure prominently on the strategic radar of major powers (e.g., Afghanistan, Somalia, southeastern Europe) than those that figure less prominently (e.g., Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Guatemala, Haiti). The WDR 2011 highlights that the resulting unsystematic approach poses a number of risks for peacemaking, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding in the sense that “the international system has not been adjusted to keep pace with the emerging analysis of conflict – in particular, recognition of the repetitive and interlinked nature of organized crime and trafficking.”

At the same time, the proliferation in international assistance has led to “overlaps and discontinuities” between different mechanisms and initiatives spanning the humanitarian, development, security and political realms.

Notwithstanding, there are signs that policymakers are increasingly recognizing the need to better equip the international system to address the multidimensional nature of TNTs and their impact on national dynamics, particularly political stability – however, policy intent appears to significantly outpace well-resourced operational responses at present. On 24 February 2010, the UN Security Council issued a Presidential Statement registering its “growing concern” that drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, cybercrime, arms trafficking...