

# Levels of analysis



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International affairs can be examined at many levels, including transnational networks, relations between states, regional dynamics, foreign policy and the many links between local events in different countries. But there is a difference between assessing policies and activities on the ground – focusing on what happens – and analyzing the undercurrents, the unconscious assumptions and the causal relationships that can explain why things happen. It would be nice to be able to cover it all at once, but such multilayered analysis is beyond the scope of a magazine like this.

A lot of editorial time and energy goes into thinking about the angle from which to look at an issue. For example, this issue's special report is the result of deliberations about current peacekeeping operations, what used to be called 'humanitarian intervention' – the meaning of which has been changed so much by the US invasion of Iraq that the term should probably be avoided. In the special report, two well-known scholars in the field of conflict studies – Mary Kaldor and Stathis Kalyvas – reflect on the nature of contemporary violent conflict. The way that policy makers analyze and theorize about such complex events as wars determines to a great extent how they approach resolving them. It might be the case that recent international conflicts like those in Iraq and Afghanistan were interpreted in such a way that the wrong policy emerged. If you think of current wars as being fought state against state, your approach to conflict will be to buy the latest jet fighter for your air force. If you think terrorists threaten international stability and cause conflict, you will deploy heavily armed commandos and try in the meantime to win the hearts and minds of the local citizens.

But if 'the enemy' is less clearly identifiable, you may have to look for other solutions. These can be of a high-tech nature – think of hackers breaking into defence or financial systems. Mary Kaldor states in her contribution to the special report that many current conflicts are characterized by a blurring of types of 'enemies' typical of Clausewitzian warfare. Violent conflicts are fought by state and non-state actors, such as militias, warlords, private security companies, rebel groups and so on; political, economic, criminal and ethnic motivations are blurring; and the difference between local civilians and combatants becomes harder to define, and can change over time.

The special report does not focus on solutions, but rather gives two distinct visions of the causal relations of current conflicts. In contrast, Andy Sumner's article in this issue focuses on the policy level, with regard to developing countries that are not deeply engaged in violent conflicts. In these countries we are still trying to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. That date may sound far off, but is it time to start thinking about what we should do after it passes? Sumner suggests three possible ways forward: continue with more of the same, try something a bit more radical or combine the MDGs with something new. With

this article, *The Broker* is starting a debate about post-2015 international development policies. It is also one of the issues to be addressed at a High Level Policy Forum in Brussels, After 2015: Promoting Pro-poor Policy after the Millennium Development Goals, which *The Broker* will be covering.

The debate will take place mainly on *The Broker* website, which extends beyond the print edition of the magazine to take advantage of the possibilities the Internet offers. For example, *The Broker* is launching two new blogs, one by Thea Hilhorst of Wageningen University, the Netherlands, and the other by me. And keep an eye on the website for news on some of the conferences *The Broker* is going to be covering – more about that on page 4. *The Broker* is also introducing a new section of the print edition that summarizes debates among researchers that are taking place on blogs and other online forums. In this issue, Romesh Vaitilingam provides an overview of arguments by economists debating the financial crisis. You can read the overview and then go to the website, where you will find links to the blogs Vaitilingam mentions. You can, of course, also comment on our blogs. And, finally, you can read the comments of both Mary Kaldor and Stathis Kalyvas in response to each other's articles, as well as reactions from other experts.

This is only the beginning of a longer process. We want to create an online presence that can help us achieve the central goals of *The Broker*: to connect and combine different disciplines, to link them to policy and practice, and to improve understanding of the complexity inherent in the different levels of reality. The dynamic nature of a website itself and of the Internet creates many opportunities for understanding all the levels of an issue. It is, however, still nice to hold the print edition in your hands. Have a good read! ■