



TALKING POINTS

- U.S. militarism led to the creation of police SWAT teams that disproportionately affect minority communities.
- In 2013, half a billion worth of military weapons and equipment was given to U.S. police departments.
- SWAT team usage has risen from 3,000 deployments in the 1980s, to presently 80,000
- Nearly 70% of drug raids are conducted against minorities even though drug use and sales are similar across racial groups.

Political Violence in Post-9/11 Wars

Source | Mikulaschek, C., & Shapiro, J. N. (2016). Lessons on political violence from America's post-9/11 Wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Key words

conflict onset
conflict escalation
Iraq
Afghanistan
9/11
war



Continued Reading:

New Wars, Old Strategies

by David Cortright

[\(https://peacepolicy.nd.edu/2012/12/10/new-wars-old-strategies/\)](https://peacepolicy.nd.edu/2012/12/10/new-wars-old-strategies/)

10 Years Of 9/11 Wars is Enough. Media Caution and Skepticism Are in Short Supply

by Peter Hart

[\(http://otherwords.org/10_years_of_911_wars_is_enough/\)](http://otherwords.org/10_years_of_911_wars_is_enough/)

A byproduct of the United States' post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is the vast amount of attention these conflicts have gained from the world's academic communities. The authors count over 275 published articles and 80 books on the subject since 2002. To help put this new information into perspective, the authors review and summarize what was learned about political violence from the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, and then discuss how these conflicts are unique and what they mean for future conflict research.

The authors separate 15 years' worth of Afghanistan and Iraq conflict research into two categories: 1) what have we learned about the factors that influence state and non-state actors to enter conflicts? 2) What have we learned about factors influencing the intensity of a conflict once it has started? These two categories are important choices because they best capture most research conducted on the post-9/11 wars and they provide future researchers with an extensive summary of the two most investigated topics.

The author's review of research studying conflict onset determined the political leaders of all parties to the conflict held beliefs, and made decisions, that went against the information available to them at the time. Research also found that the leaders behaved in ways that showed a large disconnect between the costs of going to war for their nation, and the personal costs to the leaders making the decision to bring their countries into war. Regarding research on the factors influencing conflict intensity, the authors determined that the flow of information between civilians was the key factor in measuring local conflict intensity—once a force with superior capabilities (like Afghan or Iraqi governments working with the U.S.) faces off with an insurgency, the civilian population's willingness to share information with the government forces determines the effectiveness of the insurgency. This was particularly true when cell phone use was available, giving civilians an easier way to pass information to the military which in turn decreased violence in the area.

There are several reasons the post-9/11 conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are unique. Most obvious was the inequality of combat power between the

combatants. The U.S. backed government forces could target any area controlled by the insurgency at any time with multiple options of attack. More than any conflict in recent memory, the fighting capabilities, technology, and financial resources heavily favored the counterinsurgency forces. This asymmetry proved that the insurgents of this conflict were especially tied to their control over information. If civilians informed government troops of insurgent positions, the government could use their superior fighting capability to immediately respond to civilian tip-offs using drones, artillery, special forces and airpower. Another unique quality of these conflicts was the presence of tens of thousands of foreign troops which dramatically altered the bargaining power of local parties. In both countries, bargaining chips were taken off the table due to the veto power of foreign governments who, with their occupying troops, heavily influenced any possible negotiations.

Research on the Afghanistan and Iraq wars give us new information on both why conflicts start and what determines the intensity at a particular place and time. More important though is the potential of post 9/11 research that has yet to be analyzed. Much of the research conducted in the 15 years since 9/11 have been long-term surveys and experiments that are just now coming to fruition. In the upcoming decades, even if these conflicts are resolved, we can expect to learn even more about the causes of conflict and reasons for escalation.

Political Violence is used to describe violence by state or non-state actors to achieve political goals.



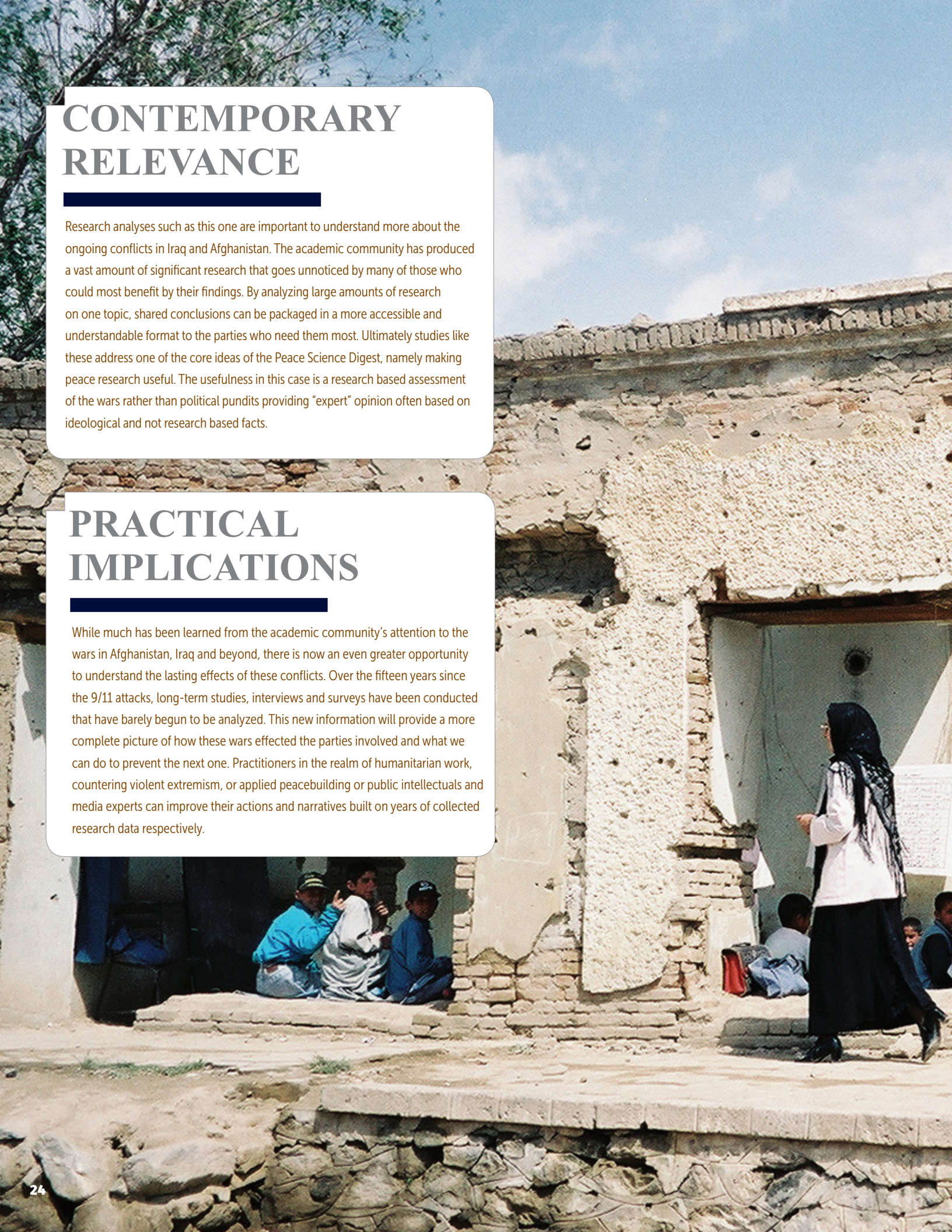
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CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Research analyses such as this one are important to understand more about the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The academic community has produced a vast amount of significant research that goes unnoticed by many of those who could most benefit by their findings. By analyzing large amounts of research on one topic, shared conclusions can be packaged in a more accessible and understandable format to the parties who need them most. Ultimately studies like these address one of the core ideas of the Peace Science Digest, namely making peace research useful. The usefulness in this case is a research based assessment of the wars rather than political pundits providing “expert” opinion often based on ideological and not research based facts.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

While much has been learned from the academic community’s attention to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond, there is now an even greater opportunity to understand the lasting effects of these conflicts. Over the fifteen years since the 9/11 attacks, long-term studies, interviews and surveys have been conducted that have barely begun to be analyzed. This new information will provide a more complete picture of how these wars effected the parties involved and what we can do to prevent the next one. Practitioners in the realm of humanitarian work, countering violent extremism, or applied peacebuilding or public intellectuals and media experts can improve their actions and narratives built on years of collected research data respectively.



TALKING POINTS

- In the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, leaders held beliefs and made decisions that went against the information available
- In Iraq, areas with cell phone coverage were less violent because of the ease of pro-government informants to provide information on insurgents.
- In Iraq, access to anti-United States news coverage emboldened the insurgency by convincing uncommitted civilians the counterinsurgency was failing.

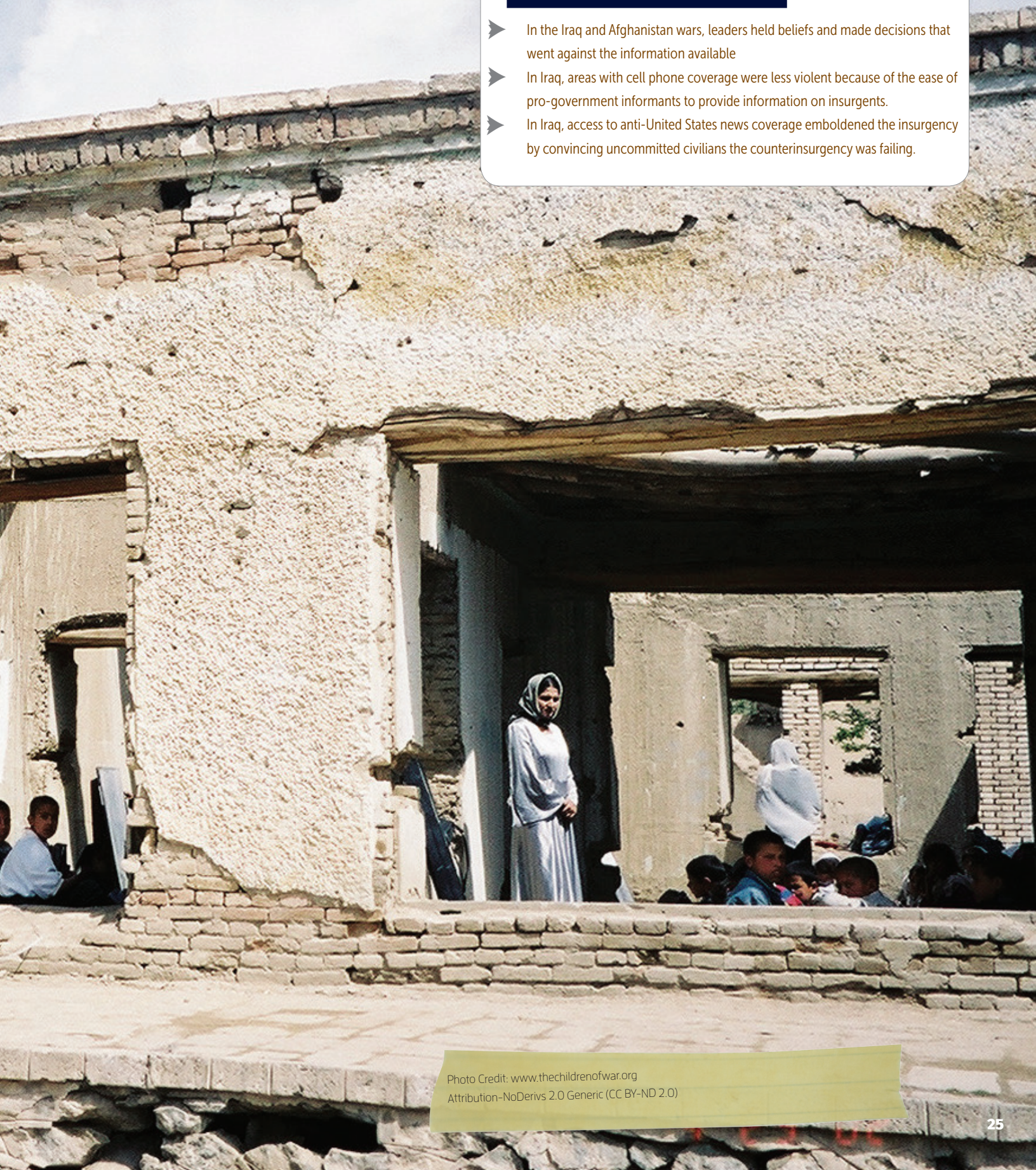


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