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Nimo's War, Emma's War: making feminist sense of the war in Iraq

Cynthia Enloe, University of California Press, 2010, \$24.95, ISBN: 0520260783 (Pbk); \$60.00, ISBN: 0520260775 (Hbk); Kindle ASIN B003T0FMD8, \$9.99

Cynthia Enloe's work has consistently revealed previously unseen gendered dynamics in war, militarism, diplomacy, international trade and tourism, in pursuit of the question 'where are the women?' (see, e.g., Enloe, 1990, 1993, 2000, 2004), but *Nimo's War, Emma's War* represents a new level of innovation and theoretical importance.

Through the stories of eight very different women – four Iraqis and four Americans – soldiers, widows, refugees, prostitutes, caretakers, workers, politicians and sometimes many of those at once, Enloe leads the reader through literally hundreds of ways that the war in Iraq is misunderstood if scholars, students and media personnel do not look for its gendered operations, gendered impacts and gendered silences.

Some of the gendered lessons feminist scholars of security have heard before (yet many scholars in the 'mainstream' of the discipline and more practitioners in positions of power in the security sector ignore) recur in this book, but also come to life in it. For example, feminists have long talked about defining security differently, more broadly, and more carefully to account for the realities of women's lives (e.g., Tickner, 1988; Grant and Newland, 1991; Peterson, 1992). Enloe 'tells' this story through the gut-wrenching tales of increasing insecurity for and sexual violence against Iraqi women, who classify themselves now as less secure than they were in 2006 though dominant accounts of the 'progress' of the war tell us how much more security Iraqis have now. But Enloe also 'tells' this story in terms of increasing violence in United States military marriages, the psychological and physical risks of post-traumatic stress disorder to not only soldiers, but also families left to do care work, and the gendered complex of financial strains that relate to decisions to join the United States military and deployments within the military. Similarly, feminists have been attuned to the pervasiveness of sexual violence in war (e.g., Card, 1996; Hansen, 2001), but Enloe brings the discussion to life as she links male soldiers' aggression towards their wives, with the startling statistic that 41 per cent of United States female soldiers were sexually assaulted while deployed in Iraq and 29 per cent were raped, the correlation between sectarian and sexual violence in Iraq, and men's terrible experiences of (the) war.

Enloe also presents ways in which feminist analysis can see the Iraq War that are less commonly known or considered, in (even feminist) theorizing in international relations (IR). She maps out a Baghdad beauty parlour as a political space in the early days of the United States' invasion, productive and reflective of Iraqi hopes, fears, struggles and successes, as well as interactions and reactions to the war. She pays attention to masculinization – the *decrease* of women's presence and women's influence – in a number of key spheres in the war, including the Iraqi economy (particularly the formal employment sector), the Iraqi police forces and the United States military. As Enloe explains, this masculinization affirms and replicates the ideals of masculinized culture, including its established rituals, its accepted criteria for wielding influence and the skills deemed valuable for rising in its ranks. Enloe also reveals 'democratization' to be a hybridized and problematic process for Iraqi women, interwoven with millennia of Islamic history, centuries of colonial history, decades of complex history of the Ba'ath regime and even more complex international interventions; a process which therefore cannot be understood lightly as 'a success' or 'a failure'.

Instead, Enloe encourages us to see the war(s) in Iraq as fought through, on, and in the lives of ordinary people, and to understand that those people are positioned radically differently on the basis of sex. The Iraq War is indeed being fought in trucks and tanks in Baghdad, and in the 'hearts and minds' (or some other ridiculous phrase) of Iraqis. But it is also being fought, in Enloe's terms, in Nimo's beauty parlour, in Maha's life as a displaced person and in the home she used to occupy, in Safah's decision to play dead as her family was killed in the Haditha massacre and in her struggles to deal with that tragedy as she grew up, in Shatha's wartime endorsement of Shar'ia law as a woman member of the Iraqi parliament, at Emma's dining room table as she did not support military recruiters' efforts to attract her son, in Danielle's struggle to heal from serious injuries she incurred in her 'non-combat' position as a gunner on a Baghdad rooftop, in the emotional and financial costs for Kim to support other civilian wives of part-time soldiers sent to Iraq, and in Charline's living room as the female head of household who tried to maintain the family's only source of income with her job while providing care labour that the United States military took for granted to her injured soldier son.

In these stories, Enloe does not just 'make feminist sense of' the Iraqi war, she makes sense of the Iraq War – one which could not be accounted for without intricate, interlaced webs of gendered assumptions and hierarchies. In so doing, Enloe demonstrates the poverty of conventional accounts of war in political science and IR, which account for war primarily at the level of the international system (e.g., Waltz, 2000) or of the state government (e.g., Russett and Oneal, 2001), and often ignore 'people' generally and gender specifically (see Sjoberg, 2009). As she shows that it is only possible to make sense of the Iraq War by

taking these previously neglected concerns seriously, Enloe provides a roadmap to making sense of war more generally – a feat which cannot be accomplished without serious, feminist analysis like this.

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