



## Book Reviews

***Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War.* By Cynthia Enloe. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2010. 336 pp. \$60.00 cloth, \$26.95 paper.**

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In her book, Cynthia Enloe invites the reader into a remarkably original and deeply compelling exploration of the gender dimensions of war. She takes as her starting point vignettes of eight women who lived through it — four Iraqi and four American. Through the eyes of Nimo, Maha, Safah, Shatha, Emma, Danielle, Kim, and Charlene, Enloe weaves a masterful tapestry of *one* war from the distinct, yet interconnected, realities of a handful of women who have each confronted their own front line. The resulting narrative is gripping. It tells the story of the unsparing shadow that war casts over communities, whether at home, in the beauty parlor turned war zone, or in the arena where soldiers carry out their duties. The narrative takes the reader into the gritty reality of torn limbs, lives, and families, and the struggles to survive, cope, and recover.

*Nimo's War, Emma's War* is organized into nine chapters and a conclusion. In Chapter 1, Enloe maps out the conceptual terrain for a finely tuned approach to studying the history of the gendered contexts of war. Her point of departure is to call for understanding the distinctly gendered *phases* of war, including the gendered *politics* of war as they shift from the early to late stages of violence and its aftermath, and also their *variations* over time from one country to another in the same war. These comprise one set of profound observations that drive the feminist analysis throughout the book. They shed light on the militarization of beauty parlors, women's bodies, and high schools, or the struggle for gender equality, for example. A second key observation concerns how

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gendered analysis expands our understanding of war and opens up new insights where previously there were silences, like those that suppressed the postwar accounting of sexual violence in World War II. Identifying the ways in which prior gendered beliefs, structures, and practices shape the way war is fought, justified, and remembered is a third element that drives the author's analysis of the war stories of these eight women.

In the chapters that follow the introduction, Enloe pulls the reader into the lives of each of the protagonists by adding layers of gendered analysis and context. The stories of the four Iraqi women give her a starting point for raising questions and looking into the many gendered corners of war that have escaped most chroniclers' accounts. She begins this task with the story of Nimo in Baghdad, who owns and operates a beauty parlor that comes under attack in a second gendered phase of the conflict when the control of beauty and women's bodies becomes one of the militarized objects of war. Recognizing that in most war stories, beauty salons are "notoriously trivialized sites," Enloe systematically unpacks long-guarded assumptions embedded in narratives that emanate from privileged masculine sites (like smoked-filled bars and town councils). Such narratives "shrink" the politics of war (thus missing the connections between electricity, water, jobs, marriage, and commercialization of sex); fail to capture the insecurity it generates (overlooking the rape, kidnapping, prostitution, and trafficking of women and girls); and minimize its real costs (ignoring impoverishment, especially of women on whose shoulders family responsibilities most heavily fall).

In Chapter 3, the story of Maha opens the front door on an Iraqi home to explore war's impact on marriage itself, including the tearing apart of mixed marriages, the identity struggles of their children, and the pervasive effects of domestic violence in war zones and refugee camps alike. In this chapter, Enloe also brings into focus one group of war's most forgotten victims, the widows and especially the "half-widows" who exist in a suspended reality, often without access to any support, much less confirmation that their missing husband is alive or dead. Chapter 4 takes the reader beyond superficial accounts of "collateral damage" to unpack the gendered reality of war in children's lives. In this case, the analysis unfolds from the perspective of Safah, the 13-year-old girl who was the sole survivor of the massacre of 24 Iraqi civilians (19 inside two houses) at Haditha by U.S. Marines. The first half of the book ends in Chapter 5 with the story of Shatha's pursuit of public office during the Iraq war. Her struggle provides the opportunity for Enloe to situate the historical and

contemporary context of the Iraqi women's movement, including its accomplishments and setbacks in the search for equality, while also reframing (gendered) assumptions and biases prevalent in Western media and U.S. policymaking.

In the second half of the book, Chapters 6 to 9 gender the stories of the Iraq war from the American context, starting with Emma's tale of her adolescent son Jacob, whom military recruiters repeatedly attempted to sign up. This story offers a window into the militarization of U.S. society through advertising campaigns, especially of programs like the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC), and through military recruiters' access to high school students under the "No Child Left Behind" law. Emma's story also reveals the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in the American military, as well as its shifting emphases across the long run of the Iraq war and the plummeting U.S. economy in 2008 (rising unemployment led to an enlistment boon).

Enloe's sensitive delving into the stories of Danielle in Chapter 7, Kim in Chapter 8, and Charlene in Chapter 9 also unearths the uncalculated costs of war on the home front — whether borne by the wives and families of national guardsmen deployed to Iraq or obscured in the long-term care for wounded veterans. These stories also reveal the economic and emotional burdens that families have shouldered, including those for support activities not factored into Pentagon budgets. They are a sobering reminder of sacrifice and courage, and of depression and determination to overcome obstacles and rebuild shattered lives.

The author's concluding chapter urges us to count the costs of war through its aftermath, too, which often is defined as much by officially sanctioned memories as by the silences that echo for generations to come. Her book especially challenges the silences that simplify and diminish an understanding of war, whether Iraq or others. Indeed, as Enloe concludes, "If we do not try to make feminist sense of wars, we are unlikely to make reliable sense of any war" (p. 218). *Nimo's War, Emma's War* provides a broad audience with an engaging set of gendered tools of analysis that will doubtless inspire scholars, practitioners, and students alike to dig deeper.

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