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Donna Seto, *No Place for a War Baby: The Global Politics of Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. Pp. x, 216. ISBN 978-1-4094-4923-2.

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In *No Place for a War Baby*, Donna Seto (Australian Nat'l. Univ.) seeks to demonstrate the invisibility of children born of wartime rape in both International Relations (IR) theorizing and global children's rights regimes. After providing information about the ubiquity of children of rape in twentieth-century conflicts, Seto maintains that feminist IR theory can furnish tools to increase the visibility of such children and to help us better understand their plight. She draws on the literature on wartime sexual violence to highlight the gendered nature of sex-specific atrocities and to show the value of various feminist perspectives on the subject.

Because they are so commonly absent from analysis, policy-making, and jurisprudence,

Children born of wartime sexual violence represent a unique category of war-affected children. As recent research concerning war has illustrated, children as a group have been exposed to conflict in different ways. The changing development of conflict means that children are no longer innocent bystanders of politics. Some children are seen to participate as soldiers, porters, or laborers... [But] unlike other groups of war-affected children, the suffering of children born of war often occurs after the conflict has formally ended. (14)

The special circumstances of these children make them a ripe subject for study. Seto finds that there is “no place” in current social and legal theory and practice for the suffering of children produced by rape in time of war. Her book accounts for this in part by the constraints of current interpretations of childhood, gender, war, and conflict, and in part by the abjection of victims of war rape. Building on the work of Julia Kristeva,<sup>1</sup> Judith Butler,<sup>2</sup> and Giorgio Agamben,<sup>3</sup> Seto argues that recognition of war rape does not always yield gender-emancipatory policies, because its victims—both women and children—are reduced to the level of “bare life,” with a consequent neglect of their needs. As a result, war babies often suffer health problems (17), abandonment (20), abuse, and discrimination (19). These children are unique in international politics, deserving of scholarly analysis and the attention of political leaders: “At the heart of this project has been the question of where children born of wartime sexual violence are located within the study of international politics. Upon asking this, researchers are confronted with a series of further questions concerning the numbers of children who are born of wartime sexual violence; their location; the nature of their experiences; and the manner in which they are treated in the post-conflict community” (171).

Seto leverages feminist IR theory to discover policy solutions to the problems of these children. She stresses the need to redefine the categories of inquiry (173), use gender as a framework (174), and expose the shortcomings of the existing children's rights network (177). Her final chapter, “Humanitarian Organizations and the Representation of War-affected Children,” identifies useful theoretical alignments for addressing the predicament of children of wartime rape: first, “a gendered framework concentrat[ing] on issues that have traditionally been associated with the private sphere” (175), such as the treatment of children in households, social groups, and even schools; and, second, gender analysis to explain “how masculinity is structured in war” (175) and what motivates not only war rape but forced impregnation. Appreciating the role of masculinity in war, Seto writes, is key to comprehending the alienation of babies born of war rape in post-conflict situations.

1. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. L.S. Roudiez (NY: Columbia U Pr, 1982; orig. 1980).

2. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (NY: Verso, 2009).

3. *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience* (NY: Verso, 1993; rev. 2007).

Seto's conversance with the scholarship of both feminist IR and children's human rights allows her to disclose and begin to dispel the invisibility of children of wartime rape and the abuse they must endure. Yet, she admits, "the discussion of children born of war rape presented here has provided more problems than solutions" (177). While her book makes clear the systematic exclusion of these children from the theory and practice of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, it does not offer interested readers much guidance in improving children's welfare in a postwar environment.

Though there has been previous work on these topics, some of it quite specific,<sup>4</sup> Seto adds a feminist IR perspective on the "conditions of possibility" of the abuse of war babies and the "conditions of impossibility" of recognizing them within existing legal, advocacy, and analytical frameworks. Her book exposes the tragic existence and tragic treatment of children from Germany to East Timor. These victims of war, in their hundreds of thousands, are too often forgotten or, even worse, blamed for the circumstances of their birth (15–16), given names associated with bad memories (18), or eliminated through infanticide (19). Seto looks at unspeakable horrors with an unflinching eye in hopes of spotlighting and redressing injustices in the global political arena.

If the book has a shortcoming, it lies in its overextended, sometimes labored theoretical discussion of feminist IR, wartime sexual violence, and the meaning and content of childhood; this at the expense of space that might have been reserved for Seto's own original analyses of her subject. Moreover, some of the explanations of theory (particularly poststructural feminism) are not clear enough to enable a nonspecialist audience to grasp the analyses later in the book. In short, much here will be too elementary for scholars in the field, yet inaccessible to an audience of practitioners (social workers, medical personnel, etc.).

Still, more than most books on gender and international relations, this one will well serve a broad readership. For scholars, it will fill a gap in IR analysis generally and feminist IR work (where it will be most relevant) specifically. It outlines critical conceptual, theoretical, and empirical problems, while alerting scholars that traditional accounts of global politics routinely overlook children born of war rape. For policy makers, the book's careful revelation of problems in children's rights policy provides a good basis for reevaluating gender inequities in conflict mitigation and post-conflict reconstruction. The book's penultimate chapter, "Children Born of Wartime Sexual Violence and the Convention of the Rights of the Child," will help a policy audience understand how children born of war rape come to be targets of discrimination and abuse. As mentioned, the last chapter envisions, if only preliminarily, ways to overcome deficiencies in current policy frameworks.

*No Place for a War Baby* should be required reading in courses on international human rights law and/or the laws of war, on gender and international relations, and on the civilian consequences of war and conflict, as well as in the field training of people desiring to rectify human rights violations in war and its aftermath. Wars have "gender histories,"<sup>5</sup> featuring gender tropes, gendered power, and gender subordination as they promote violence and shape social orders. Donna Seto reminds us that women are not the only victims of wartime rape and that the forgotten children of sexual violence deserve attention, compassion, and a place in our histories.

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4. E.g., Charli Carpenter, *Forgetting Children Born of War: Setting the Human Rights Agenda in Bosnia and Beyond* (NY: Columbia U Pr, 2010).

5 Cf. Cynthia Enloe, *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War* (Berkeley: U Calif Pr, 2010) 4: "Any war takes place at a particular moment in the history of gender—that is, in the history of women's organizing, in the history of women's relationships to the state, in the history of contested masculinities, in the history of patriarchy's rationalization and reach."