



The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire

By Cynthia Enloe



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In this collection of lively essays, Cynthia Enloe makes better sense of globalization and international politics by taking a deep and personal look into the daily realities in a range of women's lives. She proposes a distinctively feminist curiosity that begins with taking women seriously, especially during this era of unprecedented American influence. This means listening carefully, digging deep, challenging assumptions, and welcoming surprises. Listening to women in Asian sneaker factories, Enloe reveals, enables us to bring down to earth the often abstract discussions of the global economy. Paying close attention to Iraqi women's organizing efforts under military occupation exposes the false global promises made by officials. Enloe also turns the beam of her inquiry inward. In a series of four candid interviews and a new set of autobiographical pieces, she reflects on the gradual development of her own feminist curiosity. Describing her wartime suburban girlhood and her years at Berkeley, she maps the everyday obstacles placed on the path to feminist consciousness—and suggests how those obstacles can be identified and overcome.

The Curious Feminist shows how taking women seriously also challenges the common assumption that masculinities are trivial factors in today's international affairs. Enloe explores the workings of masculinity inside organizations as diverse as the American military, a Serbian militia, the UN, and Oxfam. A feminist curiosity finds all women worth thinking about, Enloe claims. She suggests that we pay thoughtful attention to women who appear complicit in violence or in the oppression of others, or too cozily wrapped up in their relative privilege to inspire praise or compassion. Enloe's vitality, passion, and incisive wit illuminate each essay. *The Curious Feminist* is an original and timely invitation to look at global politics in an entirely different way.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In her collection of essays on international politics, militarism and globalization, Enloe (author of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*) exhibits an open-minded curiosity about how a gendered investigation reveals critical dimensions of these topics. With her logical, unadorned style, she makes the argument that the U.S. is a militarized nation where "'commander in chief' is the essence of the U.S. presidency" and "manipulations of manliness often shape foreign policy decision-making." This preoccupation with asserting masculinity, she contends, plays a role not only in U.S. foreign policy, but in economic strategies of American companies: she points to a period between the 1960s and the mid-1980s when Nike, Reebok and various other sneaker companies depended on Korean women's espousal of Confucian philosophy, which "measured a woman's morality by her willingness to work hard for her family's well-being and to acquiesce to her father's and husband's dictates," to motivate them to work for unfairly low wages in U.S.-owned factories. In addition to these essays, the collection includes several transcripts of conversations with Enloe, which offer a glimpse into her opinions on how the subjects of gender and international relations are approached in academia, where she sees students increasingly becoming aware that "leaving out the serious asking of the gender question probably will mean that their theorizing about international politics will be not just incomplete. It will be unreliable." Her insightful and accessible explorations of the ethnic conflict in Bosnia, the emerging U.S. "empire" in Afghanistan and Iraq, and other global issues should appeal not only to feminists, but to anyone interested in politics and how it relates to gender. 9 b&w photos.

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Review

"With an unwavering gender optic Cynthia Enloe examines a number of themes and issues bearing on what a feminist curiosity can show you in international relations and political studies. Throughout this collection of essays, Enloe both articulates and exemplifies her philosophy that knowledge comes out of ordinary people's experiences and that it's important to pay attention to what the marginal and silent can tell us." - Cynthia Cockburn, author of *The Space Between Us*; "The book is a sensitive gendered analysis of interlocking developments from globalized economic markets to war and post-conflict dynamics. Enloe convincingly shows the links between and importance of women's everyday lives." - Carolyn Nordstrom, author of *Shadows of War*"

From the Inside Flap

"The book is a sensitive gendered analysis of interlocking developments from globalized economic markets to war and post-conflict dynamics. While Enloe's book brings out the complexities of women's positions in a very immediate way as they play out in large scale platforms of power, survival, politics, and profit, she also convincingly shows the links between and importance of women's everyday lives."—Carolyn Nordstrom, author of *Shadows of War: Violence, War, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*

"With an unwavering gender optic Cynthia Enloe examines a number of themes and issues bearing on what a feminist curiosity can show you in international relations and political studies. Throughout this collection of essays, Enloe both articulates and exemplifies her philosophy that knowledge comes out of ordinary people's experiences, and that it's important to pay attention to what the marginal and silent can tell us."—Cynthia Cockburn, author of *The Space Between Us: Negotiating Gender and National Identities in Conflict*

"Enloe's knack of laying out simply the tangled webs of connection that link the poor and the rich, the marginal and the privileged, masculine enterprise and female exploitation, is unsurpassed. This is feminist scholarship at its very, very best: fresh, lively, uncompromising and tremendously readable."—Philippa Levine, author of *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*

"Brilliant, funny, and energizing, these essays take us on a whirlwind and solidarity-building tour of the world of women today. En route, Enloe reveals the intellectual and political benefits of being relentlessly curious, open-minded, and humble. The confidence of the powerful and the naturalness of a world with men in charge will not seem the same after reading this book."—Catherine Lutz, author of *Homefront: A Military City and the American 20th Century*

"At the heart of this book is a challenge to patriarchal systems that privilege masculinity and marginalize critical feminist voices. Enloe encourages all of us to consider not just what we study, but how we study the world in this new age of empire and to pay attention to not just the powerful, but to 'the bottom rungs'."—Steven Lamy, Director, School of International Relations, University of Southern California

Users Review

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Gabriel Reyes:

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