

Volume 13 Number (2019): 62-64
<http://www.infactispax.org/journal>

ISSN 2578-6857

Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link by Cynthia Enloe.

2ed. New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2016, ix + 216pp., \$99.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-4422-6543-1.

By Maxwell Adjei, *Kent State University, Kent, OH, USA.*

While they may seem loosely related on the first look, Cynthia Enloe's careful and nuanced analysis reveals how globalization and militarism are deeply intertwined processes, which collectively (re)produce gendered ideas about how men and women, boys and girls, should think and go about their daily activities. Enloe's accessible style of writing and methodological attention to readers who may not be expertly familiar with the critical feminist literature makes her book very relevant for interdisciplinary studies and for a broad range of social policymakers and practitioners. She begins her analysis with a series of conceptual clarifications where she defines some of the key terms – e.g. masculinities, feminization, militarization, etc. – she will be using throughout the book. She follows this, in chapter two, with a discussion on, perhaps, what sets the stage for every other chapter in the remaining parts of the book – “feminist curiosity”. Here, Enloe argues that developing “curiosity” is essential to “explore, question – [and] refuse to take something for granted” (p.15); and that “every issue has become an issue only because people stopped taking it for granted, developed a new curiosity about it [...]” (p.24). As an analytical framework, “feminist curiosity” therefore involves constantly asking questions about how certain roles, expectations, and behaviors come to be seen as “normal” for women, while challenging often ignored assumptions that confine women to stereotypical gender roles.

In chapter three, Enloe uses examples from countries such as Malaysia, South Korea, Indonesia, Liberia, Chile, etc. to show how global corporations such as Nike and Adidas come to rely on national militaries to make women's labor “cheap”, less risky, and more profitable for their business. In the context of

“national security,” Enloe argues that governments have narrowed security interests to the strength of military institutions, which themselves are extremely patriarchal institutions within which women (especially spouses of uniformed soldiers) are urged to give up their “ability to think and act as full-fledged citizens [as well as their “femininity”]” in the interest of “national security” (p.70). Enloe’s analysis is important for two main reasons: first, by focusing on how women (and girls) are impacted by globalization and militarism, she draws critical attention to a group that has often been ignored in international relations (IR). Thus, whereas dominant traditional and contemporary theories of IR such as realism, liberalism, and even constructivism tend to put little emphasis on gender and on the general existence of women in international relations, Enloe places them at the center. Discussions within the dominant IR frameworks – lacking feminist “curiosity” – frequently assume that both women and men, girls and boys, are impacted the same way by the global manifestation of capitalism (globalization) and militarism, significantly limiting what we can learn about the two processes (p.53). I would argue, as does Enloe, that overcoming these blind spots for women’s existence and peculiarity in the global system would require a “gender-curious” analytical framework that decenters past theories and approaches issues – both at the domestic and international levels – from the perspectives and experiences of women and gender-equality conscious men.

Second, Enloe’s analysis provides useful guidance on how contentious concepts such as “national security” can be deconstructed to become more inclusive and representative of societies. While Enloe, like other critical scholars, recognizes that redefining “national security” to include women and gender may not be enough to address the layers of (in)security concerns in various societies, it will be an important step toward a broader interpretation of what “national security” should really entail. Thus, it will help to promote a shift in focus from state borders, “terrorism”, police, military, etc. as the sole and primary concerns of “national security” to broader considerations of security (e.g. “human security”) which address issues such as poverty, gender inequality, employment, healthcare, etc. as essential components of national security. Enloe shows us the importance of exercising our own curiosity as we go about our daily activities and making judgements on *why* and *how* certain roles – social, economic, political, or cultural – become “best suited” for men and women. She argues in chapter six, for instance, that making use of feminist curiosity can help one to fully understand the tortures perpetrated by members of the US military at the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo prisons, among others. Thus, being feminist curious would prompt one to ask questions about why military officers use feminization to intimidate and humiliate their male prisoners while taking into account how the military institution has become highly masculinized in ways that privilege certain forms of masculinity and trivialize most forms of femininity (p.115). More importantly, it would help us to

understand why, following the leakage of pictures of the prison abuse, the public and the media seemed very concerned and shocked by the involvement of women soldiers in the activities while appearing to be less interested in – or startled by – the role of the male military officers (p.121). In many ways, this unequal public reaction reflected how gendered expectations of men and women have become deeply rooted in society – *men expected to be aggressive, violent and independent, while women being passive, emotional and dependent.*

While discussing the increasing number of women soldiers in the 21st century as reminiscent of an early globalized image of the modern woman – the “New Woman” – in the 1910s and 1920s, Enloe cautions against the tendency to homogenize the experiences of all women soldiers. She argues that just like how the paths of the “New Woman” turned out differently in each country, once they join the military, women may have different experiences and challenges; for one, training opportunities and promotions may not be equally distributed among women of all backgrounds (p.82). With this argument, Enloe acknowledges an important connection between “feminist curiosity” and intersectionality as analytical frameworks, while demonstrating her awareness of the interlocking nature of social identities despite foregrounding gender in most of her analysis. Essentially, she shows that “being feminist curious requires [one to be simultaneously] concerned about the inter-workings of gender with those of class, race, and ethnicity” (p82).

Overall, this book provides an exceptionally useful tool for making sense of the world around us. Applying “feminist curiosity” to the arguments being churned out by “experts” in the media, to (inter)national policies laid out in legislative/executive councils, and to national “emergency” declarations on presidential twitter handles will help individuals, governments, and INGOs to ask probing questions about why certain activities, jobs, and positions are considered “normal” for women and less “normal” – and even demeaning – for men.