

People, nations and leaders must learn to work together to foster a more open and global economy, system of criminal justice and idea of ethics if we are to survive. This is the idea that is espoused in Peter Singer in his book, “One World: The Ethics of Globalization”. This insightful book is full of ideas on how the world could be better served by nations letting go of the idea of one-nation sovereignty and working together to create a global government and economy.

The author starts off the book right away by giving evidence of how certain events going on in our current world prove that we are blind to the fact that we live in a world where there are very few boundaries and that our state sovereignty is hurting us, rather than helping us. He states that the bombing of the World Trade Center shows us that terror can reach anyone despite security and that American’s gas guzzling SUV’s affect a global atmosphere that must shelter not only us but all other nations on the planet.

After this introduction Singer argues one of the main points of his book which is that world leaders must look beyond their own borders and that their actions must benefit not only their own citizens, but all of the citizens of the world. He ponders, “To what extent should political leaders see their role narrowly, in terms of promoting the interests of their citizens, and to what extend should they be concerned with the welfare of people everywhere?” (Singer, 2004). His argument is backed up with some strong statements about how the United States actions against Afghanistan following 9/11 were very similar to the actions of Germany against the Serbs at the beginning of the First World War. He states that “there is no world political community” (Singer, 2004), and that because of this we do not intervene in humanitarian matters when we need to and punish whole countries for the crimes of a few political dissidents. Singer then argues that a “sound global system of criminal justice” (Singer, 2004), would deprive this

type of dissident the support that they need as well as allowing all countries to behave ethically in matters where humanitarian issues and genocide are being committed.

Singer then moves on to the topic of global climate change. He notes that even with all of the changes that have been made many of the industrialized countries continue to hem and haw about changing their usages because it is bad for the economy. Singer argues that this is a very narrow view because we increasingly deal with a global economy. In addition to that fact the industrialized nations are still the biggest polluters and that affects the whole world including smaller, less industrialized nations well being and economies.

Singer then focuses a lot of attention on the World Trade Organization and how it is not helping the advent of global ethics or a global world view. Singer states that he thinks that the UN is in need of reform and is undemocratic because of the power that is given to the “permanent members” which are ultimately all wealthy industrialized nations. In order for there to be a true global democracy he argues that there needs to be a fair majority vote available to all nations. He also debates forming a global justice system to deal with issues of genocide and humanitarian injustices. He argues that there should be universal jurisdiction for those crimes that have been defined by the UN Security Council as crimes against humanity. That in order for there to be a global law that those laws should be enforceable despite the laws in the country at the time and that any country should be able to try a person for crimes against humanity. This way if a person responsible for war crimes is captured in a country other than their own then they could be tried there without having to worry about jurisdictional problems. The author also states that. He offers an opinion that the U.S. could be responsible for helping to build up the United Nations into a more powerful organization and work towards a more global justice force and organization.

The last, and most powerful, point that Singer makes in his book is that every individual is in charge of helping to create a worldwide community. He notes that even though there was an outpouring of aid from American citizens for those who dealt with the tragedy of 9/11 that the amount of aid, especially given to other countries in need is still negligible every year. He argues that we draw the line at helping others in other countries because “Charity begins at home” (Singer, 2004). Even though many Americans “unquestioningly support declarations proclaiming all humans have certain rights, and that all human life is of equal worth” (Singer, 2004), we still ignore the data that shows there is an average of “30,000 children” (Singer, 2004) a day that die from simple things that could be cured by the donation of time or money on the part of individuals in our country. Singer spends some time pointing out that in order for us to truly understand what it is to live in “One World” that we need to look at the world from the standpoint of everyone being equal no matter of their status, race, creed, religion or national status. Singer has a good point, that we should help those in need, no matter where they are in the world or what their beliefs are.

The author’s ideal of how the world could be is a very intriguing and possible one, but it is certainly not the world we live in today. He gives very solid reasons why he thinks the world’s ideas and ethics should be changing and specific ways in which it would help America and other industrialized nations to take on this world view. However, like he stated, it seems that the changes that the author is looking for are going to have to start in each individual. In order for our nation to view the world differently its people need to view the world differently. Singer makes some very good points in his book and gives us a good goal to strive for in the coming decades, but the change, if it happens, will be slow.

References

Singer, Peter. (2004). *One World: the ethics of globalization*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.