

Why America? It's their problem, not ours

The United States of America is the sole hegemon in our world system. No other nation can rival its economic and military might. In such a system, it is very easy to become complacent about the rest of the world. It is easy to forget the millions of people who lost the genetic lottery and were born somewhere besides the United States. It is easy to pretend that everyone is as lucky as Americans are in our access to clean drinking water, sanitation, food, health care, education, and security; we don't often see the way much of the world is forced to live.

So much of the world is not as privileged as Americans are. Millions of people lack the basic necessities of survival. This begs the question, though, of why this is America's problem. I begin with the premise that we are all human. We are all human with needs, emotions, goals, disappointments, desires, plans, preferences, hopes, dreams, and fantasies. A parent in America and a parent in Sudan want the same things for their children: safety, opportunity, and happiness.

Why is the rest of the world America's problem? With power comes responsibility. As a great power, America has a great responsibility. If America is the land of opportunity, and much of the world is missing basic necessities, then it is America's responsibility to share. It is America's job to do what it can to improve the lives of others — and thus the human condition — around the world.

This does not mean that America has to meddle unnecessarily in the affairs of other countries. It does not mean that everything that goes awry in the world is America's fault. It does not mean that America is expected to be a world policeman.

This does mean that America can choose to intercede in other nations' problems when judged necessary. It does mean that people are going to unjustly blame America for a lot of things that are not America's fault. It does mean that America should help humanity, regardless of nationality, when it can.

The most important aspect of America's role in the world is the fact that America does what it does by choice. No outside force can make America assist or stand by idly. The rest of the world is America's problem because the American people choose to make it that way. The American people, recognizing the shared humanity with the rest of the world, demand compassion of their leaders. By creating this compassion for the rest of the world, the American people reveal themselves as America's greatest strength in addressing the global community.