

## 51. Foreign Policy: Nixon Vs. Carter (1970s)

Two leaders, Jimmy and Richard, discuss their different perspectives on how the US should direct its foreign policy during the tumultuous 1970s.



- Jimmy: Richard, I think it is time to change the way the United States deals with nations around the world.
- Richard: Oh really? What did you have in mind?
- Jimmy: Well, I believe that our foreign policy should be dedicated to humanitarian issues.
- Richard: What does that even mean?
- Jimmy: It means that there are millions of people who are suffering all over the globe. There are countless people that are starving, being ravaged by deadly diseases such as AIDS, and who lack clean drinking water. Civil wars and conflict have forced people into cramped refugee camps and into slavery. Drug trafficking, religious persecution, and genocide are robbing people of their way of life. All around the world, people are denied basic rights that we as Americans take for granted.
- Richard: That is horrible, but what does that have to do with the United States?
- Jimmy: Everything! We live in a global society, and as a superpower, the United States has an obligation to help those in need. All people, no matter where they are from, should have the same rights that Americans have secured in their Bill of Rights. How can we enjoy these rights at home while turning a blind eye to those in need? We have the means and ability as the most powerful nation in the world to make it a better place.
- Richard: That sounds beautiful, but what's in it for us?
- Jimmy: *(shaking his head)* You mean besides making the world a better place? Well, there actually are tangible benefits for us. By supporting democracy and human rights abroad, we eliminate ruthless dictators and tyrants who don't share our values. Supporting American values overseas could also help create allies and friendships with other nations that could be beneficial in the long run.
- Richard: Well, it sounds like you've got it all figured out, but I have to say I think you've got it all wrong.

Jimmy: Oh really? Well what do you suggest?

Richard: Well, when it basically comes down to it, the United States has to look out for number one. (*pointing to himself*)

Jimmy: What a selfish attitude!

Richard: Is it? Listen, the United States has just finished fighting a long and horrible war in Vietnam to try to make it a better place. It cost tens of thousands of lives, millions of dollars, and a lot of our prestige and support abroad. We don't have unlimited resources to help every person or every country in need. If we did that, we would be drained of all money and resources.

Jimmy: So, you are saying we should just leave everyone hang out to dry except us?

Richard: Not necessarily. I think the policy that we should look to is something called realpolitik?

Jimmy: Gesundheit!

Richard: Good one. Realpolitik basically means that our foreign policy cannot be guided by morals alone. If it is in our best interest to jump into a conflict, then we do it. If we decide that is not in the United States' best interest, then we don't.

Jimmy: What about all of these corrupt dictators that the US has been supporting the last couple of decades? Especially the ones that the CIA has helped put into power! How do you justify supporting these leaders that treat their own people so poorly?

Richard: Well, again, it may not be the best situation, but if it is what is best for the United States, then we have to run with it. Remember, that the biggest threat to us at this time is not Iran or Cuba, but the Soviet Union. We need leaders across the globe that are against the Soviets and against communism. If they fit that description, then that is good enough for me.

Jimmy: Aren't you worried that supporting such atrocious leaders might have long term consequences? It could lead to anti-American attitudes and revolutions that could seriously hurt our nation's prestige and credibility?

Richard: Like I said, winning the Cold War against the Soviets is priority number one. If America ends up on top, that will create a more prosperous nation for our citizens. Those are the people that we are responsible for, after all. I'm not going to lie man, I think your ideas are a little out there..

Jimmy: (*under his breath*) You're not going to lie? That would be a first....

Richard: What was that, peanut farmer?

Jimmy: Oh nothing...