

# Images of the International System and the Cold War in *Star Trek*, 1966–1991

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## Introduction

Science fiction often poses bold questions about social values and processes. These questions rarely address future problems, which authors have no means of predicting. The point of reference of works of science fiction is their own era; they reflect contemporary dilemmas and worldviews. However, by locating the action in the future, creators are freer to comment on current affairs. This was also the case with the Cold War, the major international reality of its era. Culture, including popular culture and science fiction, has already become the subject of Cold War studies.<sup>1</sup>

This article discusses perceptions of the Cold War in the first two *Star Trek* series: *The Original Series (TOS)*, which ran from 1966 until 1969, and *The Next Generation (TNG)*, from 1987 until 1991. The motion pictures of 1979–1991, featuring the crew of the original series, are also discussed. Post-1991 episodes of *TNG* and the subsequent series of the *Star Trek* saga refer to Cold War memory but were not the products of a society experiencing a the Cold War and therefore are not included in this analysis. The article focuses on the episodes and films produced during the period when the Cold War was “the template for *Star Trek*’s galactic politics.”<sup>2</sup> These works shed light on public and official perceptions of their respective epochs. Their differences,

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1. See, among others, Nicholas J. Cull, “Reading, Viewing, and Tuning in to the Cold War,” in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, 3 Vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Vol. 3, pp. 438–458; Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam, eds., *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945–1960* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); and Tony Shaw, “The Politics of Cold War Culture,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Summer 2001), pp. 59–76. On film and television especially, see Tony Shaw, *Hollywood’s Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Tony Shaw and Denise J. Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010); and James Chapman and Nicholas J. Cull, *Projecting Tomorrow: Science Fiction in Popular Cinema* (London: IB Tauris, 2013).

2. Ina Rae Hark, *Star Trek* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008), p. 66.

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sometimes substantial, point to the changes that took place during the final twenty-five years of the Cold War in the United States, in other Western countries, and in the larger world.

The article builds on the existing literature on the depiction of international affairs in *Star Trek*. Scholars have established that the people who created the original series, especially Gene Roddenberry, wanted to educate the public and project a liberal understanding of the world.<sup>3</sup> The term ‘liberal’ refers here to the broad notion in political thought that all individuals should be free and equal. *Star Trek* also expresses wider notions—liberal democracy as the political organization of Western modernity. This liberal perspective is a pivotal element in the series. An integral characteristic of meliorist liberalism is the desire to change the world for the better, whereas science fiction tends to display “both patriotism and dissent.”<sup>4</sup> Roddenberry’s early guidelines to scriptwriters strongly emphasized that “[w]e must have an *optimistic* projection from Earth of today,” pointing to the important notions of evolution and progress.<sup>5</sup> Thus, *Star Trek* was not merely a passive “mirror” of popular perceptions about the Cold War; it was also a tool for shaping them.<sup>6</sup> Arguably, this contributed in making *Star Trek* “literary,” raising “enduring questions.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the historiography has not yet presented a comprehensive discussion of Cold War representations (and their evolution) in *Star Trek* from the mid-1960s until the end of that conflict. Some scholars have examined specific features of the *Star Trek* narrative from 1966 until the 1990s, or even the 2000s—for example, representations of diplomacy or the allegories of the Klingon Empire—thus transcending the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> Other scholars have

3. See, among others, Rick Worland, “From the New Frontier to the Final Frontier: *Star Trek* from Kennedy to Gorbachev,” *Film and History*, Vol. 24, Nos. 1–2 (Summer/Winter 1994), pp. 19–35; and Mike O’Connor, “Liberals in Space: The 1960s Politics of *Star Trek*,” *The Sixties*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 2012), pp. 185–203.

4. Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (London: Hurst, 1997), p. 3; and Cull, “Reading, Viewing, and Tuning In to the Cold War,” p. 453.

5. “Supplementary Pages: Writer-Director Information,” n.d. (1966), in University of California at Los Angeles, Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library (henceforth referred to as UCLA), Paul and Margaret Schneider Papers (Collection PASC 106), Box 10 (hereinafter referred to as the Schneider Collection, with appropriate box number); emphasis in the original. This document later evolved to become the writers’/directors’ guide.

6. Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture and the Image of U.S. Foreign Policy: The Perspective of the Original *Star Trek* Series,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Fall 2005), pp. 74–103.

7. Cass R. Sunstein, *The World According to Star Wars* (New York: HarperCollins, 2016), p. 82.

8. Iver B. Neumann, “‘Grab a Phaser, Ambassador’: Diplomacy in *Star Trek*,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (December 2001), pp. 603–624; and Lori McGuire, “The Final Reflection? A Mirrored Empire? Klingon History and American History,” in Nancy R. Reagan, ed.,

focused on Cold War representations, concentrating on the original series. They mostly have discussed perceptions of the Vietnam War and of U.S. interventions in the Third World, a major concern of U.S. society during that period.<sup>9</sup> This endeavor is also worthwhile but falls short of covering the full spectrum of issues the Cold War raised and focuses on a short period, the late 1960s. Most of these authors examined the end product—the episodes themselves—and did not make use of archival sources. The best discussion of Cold War representations is thus by Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, who based his article on Roddenberry's archive. Sarantakes extended his discussion to the 1991 motion picture, which came just after the end of the Cold War. However, he focused mostly on the 1960s and on issues such as the self-image of the United States, nuclear weapons, and Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

My analysis here discusses both series produced during the Cold War. It examines *Star Trek* as a “popular culture document of American social and political actions and attitudes.”<sup>11</sup> It is also based on research in two archives for each series: the papers of Roddenberry and scriptwriter Paul Schneider (*TOS*) and those of scriptwriters Ron Moore and Joe Menosky (*TNG*). The article points to continuities but also to interesting changes in perceptions during the final 25 years of the Cold War. Moreover, it comments on *Star Trek*'s negotiation of the wider nexus of power and ideology that determined the Cold War: the self-image of the United States; attitudes toward a powerful adversary; deterrence and the dilemmas of the use of force; and the impact of the search for détente (1960s), the renewed Cold War (early 1980s), and the end of the Cold War (1987–1991).

Tracing Cold War representations in a work of popular culture is a complicated endeavor for a variety of reasons. First, the episodes and archival material point to the attitudes and aims of the creators but do not necessarily reveal (at least in its entirety) the impact of the work on popular dispositions.

*Star Trek and History* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013), pp. 71–86. Moreover, one scholar assumes—erroneously, in my view—that *TNG* in its entirety represents *post-Cold War* situations, as if the “implosion” of the Soviet Union could have been taken for granted in 1987. Jutta Weldes, “Going Cultural: *Star Trek*, State Action, and Popular Culture,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (March 1999), pp. 117–134.

9. See Mark P. Lagon, “‘We Owe It to Them to Interfere’: *Star Trek* and U.S. Statecraft in the 1960s and the 1990s,” *Extrapolation*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Summer 1993), pp. 251–264; Rick Worland, “Captain Kirk: Cold Warrior,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 109–117; H. Bruce Franklin, “*Star Trek* in the Vietnam Era,” *Science-Fiction Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter 1994), pp. 24–34; and H. Bruce Franklin, “Vietnam, *Star Trek* and the Real Future,” in Reagin, ed., *Star Trek and History*, pp. 87–108.

10. Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture.”

11. Worland, “Captain Kirk,” pp. 116–117.

As often happens with cultural products, once they are presented to the public they acquire a life of their own, at least partly independent of the original intentions of the creators. Second, complications arise because the Cold War itself is a complicated notion. Since at least 1999, scholars have stressed that the Cold War involved not only a strategic dilemma but also ideology as well as social and political values and organization.<sup>12</sup>

*Star Trek* dealt with a variety of political, social, and moral dilemmas. The Cold War was not its major theme, although it did provide inspiration for many episodes. Nor was it the job of a popular television series to present a scholarly account of the East-West standoff. The guidelines to *TOS* authors expressly state: “We don’t need essays, however brilliant.”<sup>13</sup> Roddenberry reminded the scriptwriters that *Star Trek* needed to address “an enormous range of audiences,” and he advised against focusing on “philosophical conflicts,” although he also encouraged “underlying comment on man and society” that could appeal even to a “college professor.”<sup>14</sup> Discussion of *Star Trek* must take into account these peculiarities of a popular culture work.

### **The U.S./Western Self: On the Bridge of the *Enterprise***

The bridge of the U.S.S. *Enterprise* was a self-image of the liberal West—or, at least, of the creators’ ideal of what the West should be. Science played a major role and was a far more important element than even *Star Trek* fans’ enthusiasm for so-called technobabble might suggest. Access to high technology has been a major power indicator and a crucial legitimizing factor for the social systems of late modernity. *Star Trek* played this card for all it was worth. *TOS* was receiving scientific advice from an outside source, De Forest Research. With *TNG*, the emphasis on technology was even more pronounced.

12. See, among others, Mark Kramer, “Ideology and the Cold War,” *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (October 1999), pp. 539–576; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: the United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2007); Odd Arne Westad, “The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century,” in Leffler and Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 1, pp. 1–19; Robert Jervis, “Identity and the Cold War,” in Leffler and Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. 2, pp. 22–43; and Federico Romero, “Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 2014), pp. 685–703.

13. “*Star Trek* Writers/Directors Guide,” third revision, 17 April 1967, p. 5, [https://www.bu.edu/clarion/guides/Star\\_Trek\\_Writers\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.bu.edu/clarion/guides/Star_Trek_Writers_Guide.pdf).

14. “Supplementary Pages: Writer-Director Information,” n.d., in Schneider Collection, Box 10; and *Star Trek*, “Writer-Director Information,” 15 March 1966, p. 4, in Schneider Collection, Box 10.

De Forest Research continued to provide its services to the later series, but the production teams sought additional advice and eventually developed a separate writers' technical manual.<sup>15</sup> *Star Trek*, a NASA scientist notes, was "almost the only show that depicts scientists and engineers positively, as role models."<sup>16</sup> Both series thus reflected the American belief in science "as a progenitor of 'rational action.'"<sup>17</sup>

The original series projected a bold picture for its era. In the late 1960s U.S. society was in the midst of the Vietnam War, and U.S. authorities were dealing with the civil rights movement and internal social and political turmoil. The U.S. government also was trying to promote novel ideas about modernization and to shape relations with the Third World. These dilemmas were not always resolved successfully, as Vietnam vividly showed.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, after the 1957 flight of *Sputnik 1* and Yuri Gagarin's orbit of the earth in 1961, space exploration came to the forefront of public debate. These advances had major Cold War implications (especially for missile technology), and opinion polls show that rivalry with the Soviet Union was a major factor for those supporting the U.S. space program.<sup>19</sup> John F. Kennedy gave the issue much urgency, and by the mid-1960s the space race was in full swing.<sup>20</sup>

The creators of *TOS* worked in this wider context. The spaceship at the heart of the series—the *Enterprise*—had a dual mission: exploration and security.<sup>21</sup> The ship belonged to a state initially called United Earth and later the United Federation of Planets (UFP). The *TOS* writers' guide of April 1967 stressed that the crew was "[i]nternational in origin, completely multi-racial."<sup>22</sup> The bridge of the first *Enterprise* seemed close to a vision of the

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15. Rick Sternbach and Michael Okuda, *Star Trek: The Next Generation, Technical Manual* (New York: Pocket Books, 1991). The creative team was free to ignore the counsel of its De Forest Research advisers; the company had no veto powers over the production.

16. David Allen Batchelor, "The Science of Star Trek," 20 July 2016, [http://www.nasa.gov/topics/technology/features/star\\_trek.html](http://www.nasa.gov/topics/technology/features/star_trek.html).

17. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 8–38.

18. See, among others, Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

19. William Sims Bainbridge, "The Impact of Space Exploration on Public Opinions, Attitudes, and Beliefs," in Steven J. Dick, ed., *Historical Studies in the Societal Impact of Spaceflight* (Washington, DC: NASA, 2015), pp. 1–74.

20. John M. Logsdon, *John F. Kennedy and the Race to the Moon* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010).

21. On the importance of this dual mission, see Stephen Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), p. 203; "Star Trek Writers/Directors Guide" (1967), p. 27; and "Writer-Director Information" (1966), p. 13, in Schneider Collection, Box 10.

22. "Star Trek Writers/Directors Guide" (1967), p. 7.

Great Society.<sup>23</sup> Officers included a white Captain James T. Kirk and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Leonard “Bones” McCoy but also a black woman, Lt. Uhura, who was an African, not an African-American; Mr. Sulu, of Asian (Japanese) descent; the Russian Pavel Chekov (pointing to a future reconciliation with the Soviet Union); Montgomery Scott (“Scotty”); and Mr. Spock, half-Vulcan and half-Earthman. Thus, *TOS* was a call for a more inclusive attitude, for “unity despite difference.”<sup>24</sup> Crucially, all these diverse people (and the Federation they served) shared liberal values. The directions to writers highlighted this point: even the grumpy McCoy “is a great humanist under his sharp surface.”<sup>25</sup>

*TNG* of the late 1980s initially suffered from internal disagreements among the creative team. However, a careful, and ultimately successful, mixture of continuity and change eventually emerged. Set almost a century after Kirk’s era, the planetary federation of the *TNG* era has grown to include many more non-Terran worlds as full members: individuals from thirteen planets serve on the *Enterprise-D*.<sup>26</sup> On the starship’s bridge the tactical officer is Lieut. Worf, a Klingon who was raised by a Russian family (and played by an African-American actor: Michael Dorn). The chief engineer, Lieut.-Commander Geordi La Forge, is an African American. The widely respected and highly efficient La Forge is also blind; he sees thanks to a “visor.” Rounding out the senior officers are two women: the chief medical officer, Commander Beverly Crusher, and the counselor, Deanna Troi, who is half-Betazoid (and thus another extraterrestrial). Captain Jean-Luc Picard is of French descent. The claim for inclusiveness is much more pronounced: one

23. On the relevance of the notion of the Great Society, see Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” pp. 81–82.

24. See, among others, Hark, *Star Trek*, pp. 15–17. For a different view, see Daniel Leonard Bernardi, *Star Trek and History: Race-ing toward a White Future* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

25. Notes on meeting with Schneider, “Balance of Terror,” 25 May 1966, in UCLA, Gene Roddenberry Papers (Collection PASC 62), Box 3, Folder 3 (hereinafter referred to as the Roddenberry Collection, with appropriate box and folder numbers). See also “*Star Trek* Writers/Directors Guide” (1967), p. 12 (“The Doctor, like most cynics, is at heart a bleeding humanist.”); and Gene Roddenberry, “Finalized STAR TREK Running Characters,” 20 April 1966, in Schneider Collection, Box 10.

26. “Reunion,” *Star Trek: The Next Generation (ST:TNG)*, DVD, directed by Jonathan Frakes (1990; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002). The *TNG* writers’ guides expressly note that the series is set during a period when the Federation includes as many alien worlds as human. See Gene Roddenberry, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, “Writers/Directors Guide,” 8 September 1987, p. 39, in University of Southern California, USC Libraries, Cinematic Arts Library, Ron Moore Collection (No. 2297), Box 56, Folder 9 (hereinafter referred to as the Moore Collection, with appropriate box and folder numbers); and Gene Roddenberry, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, “Writers’/Directors’ Guide,” Fifth Season ed., April 1991, p. 55, in UCLA, Joe Menosky Papers (Collection 2250), Box 15 (hereinafter referred to as the Menosky Collection, with appropriate box number).

world, reflecting the idealism of the mature West of the 1980s. The show gives less emphasis to the martial element. Initially, in 1987, Roddenberry planned to downgrade substantially the military aspect of the *Enterprise's* missions. However, during the planning of the first episodes, writers had difficulty coming up with viable missions. At the suggestion of one of *Star Trek's* old hands, Dorothy C. Fontana, “defensive actions,” “crisis control,” and “military maneuvers” were finally included among the missions.<sup>27</sup> The April 1991 *TNG* guide, the last bearing Roddenberry's name, notes that “Starfleet is not *primarily* a military organization,” although its duties include “patrolling along marked or disputed boundaries,” defense, and crisis control.<sup>28</sup> Still, violence in *TNG* is a much less acceptable notion; the crew has to exercise it but then feels bad about it.<sup>29</sup> The downgrading has an interesting side effect: “The emotional stakes that were always so high for Kirk, Spock and McCoy . . . were absent.”<sup>30</sup> This unrealistic element of *TNG* points to a wider trend in popular culture. Scholars have noted that we expect warriors to be “men of integrity,” but “[t]he idea of the sensitive warrior, long a cliché of popular story-telling, is seldom one truthful to war itself.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, even this contradiction reflects popular dispositions of the late 1980s.

Leadership is crucial in both series, and the two captains personalize the liberal ideal of the leader in the two eras. The captain in *TOS*, Kirk, is a “hero” of the late 1960s. He is boyish, shining, athletic, and attractive. In one episode from 1966, a young woman describes him as a “brash young man.”<sup>32</sup> Although he often notes, somewhat melodramatically, the burdens of command, he is a close friend of his subordinates. He regularly jokes with them and is often addressed by McCoy and Spock as “Jim,” even in the presence

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27. Fontana to Roddenberry, 14 July 1987, “*Enterprise* Missions,” in Moore Collection, Box 54, Folder 34; and *ST:TNG*, “Writers/Directors Guide” (1987), in Moore Collection, Box 56, Folder 9.

28. *ST:TNG*, “Writers/Directors’ Guide” (1991), pp. 10, 56, in Menosky Collection, Box 15; emphasis added.

29. Clyde Wilcox, “To Boldly Return Where Others Have Gone Before: Cultural Change in the Old and New *Star Trek* Series,” *Extrapolation*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Winter 1992), pp. 88–100.

30. Hark, *Star Trek*, p. 3. The call for self-restraint has led some scholars to claim that *TNG* adopts a “neoconservative” attitude. See Steven F. Collins, “For the Greater Good: Trilateralism and Hegemony in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*,” in Taylor Harrison et al., eds., *Enterprise Zones: Critical Positions on Star Trek* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 137–156; and Kent A. Ono, “Domesticating Terrorism: A Neocolonial Economy of Différance,” in Harrison et al., eds., *Enterprise Zones*, 157–186.

31. Christopher Coker, *Men at War: What Fiction Tells Us about Conflict, from the Iliad to Catch-22* (London: Hurst, 2014), pp. 16, 44.

32. “The Conscience of the King,” *Star Trek* [original series, hereinafter referred to as *ST:TOS*], DVD, directed by Gerd Oswald (1966; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

of others. The “simple” man who is on democratic, first-name terms with his subordinates is the ideal of this era.

At the same time, Kirk is the commander of a naval vessel and has to impose discipline. Roddenberry sometimes expressed concern about the contradictory elements in Kirk as a leader: “We have often played him as too democratic and cordial with those around him. Here we have a good chance to have a Captain who is really a Captain.”<sup>33</sup> In another instance, he told producer Gene L. Coon, “lets [*sic*] let Kirk be a leader.”<sup>34</sup> The need to underline Kirk’s “toughness” occurs prominently in episodes with Cold War parallels, where the emphasis is on the heavy responsibilities of the leader. In these cases, Roddenberry and the producers decided that Kirk’s relationship with members of the crew should be more “businesslike”; he could “level with the ship’s doctor” and with Spock, a person of admirable intelligence, “against the hardness he must show on the bridge.”<sup>35</sup> Kirk’s character had to walk a fine line between youthfulness and leadership.

The captain of *Enterprise-D* is also attractive but in a different way. Picard is an older, almost bald, extremely remote, and self-disciplined lone wolf who takes on his shoulders the enormous burden of command but does not have to *speak* about it, realizing that everyone understands. His silences are surprisingly eloquent, and he often gives orders by a simple glance. A younger officer calls him “a great man,” and the super-being Q describes him as a “brash young man,” but this phrase refers here (unlike in the case of Kirk) only to Picard’s youth, not his years of command.<sup>36</sup> The 1987 *TNG* writers’ guide refers to an “unspoken but deep father-son relationship” between captain and crew, and throughout the series Picard is portrayed as a caring, if distant, father.<sup>37</sup> Even when friendship develops between Picard and his subordinates, distances are kept: Unlike Kirk, Picard does not “level” with his officers. Moreover, Picard is a cultured person with a love for classical music and literature (and for old books), a classical education, and a vivid, even scholarly, interest in archaeology. He represents a modernism conscious of cultural continuity

33. Roddenberry to Lucas, 1 April 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 22, Folder 13.

34. Roddenberry to Coon, 18 May 1967, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 13, Folder 1.

35. Notes on meeting with Schneider, “Balance of Terror,” 25 May 1966, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 3, Folder 3. See also Roddenberry to Freiburger, 22 July 1968 (“The Enterprise Incident”), in Roddenberry Collection, Box 21, Folder 7.

36. “The Best of Both Worlds,” pt. 1, *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Cliff Bole (1990; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002); and “Tapestry,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Les Landau (1993; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

37. *ST:TNG*, “Writers/Directors Guide” (1987), see note 27 *supra*.



and is “an exemplary figure of western humanism.”<sup>38</sup> The *TNG* captain is an updated model of the leader, arguably more convincing as such than Kirk. The actor who portrayed Picard throughout the series, Patrick Stewart, with his experience of classical British theater, helped enormously in projecting this image. Selected by producer Robert H. Justman, who had been a key figure in *Star Trek* since the 1960s, Stewart played a major role in boosting the socially sensitive message of the original creators.<sup>39</sup>

The first officers are also important figures. In *TNG*, Commander William T. Riker is an attractive male, an officer and a gentleman, immensely efficient, a friend to his colleagues, and half a head taller than Picard. In many respects, he strongly reminds the viewer of Kirk—only he is the second in command.<sup>40</sup> The most symbolic figure of all *Star Trek* worlds and the one who endures in popular memory is the *TOS* first officer and science officer, the half-Vulcan Spock. Acted by Leonard Nimoy, Spock is a member of a people who have suppressed emotions and follow pure logic. Roddenberry described him as a “half breed,” clearly distinct from the others, controlling the ship’s computer system and thus a crucial feature of its all-important technology.<sup>41</sup> Spock represents a series of pivotal questions for the peoples of the West of the 1960s: Is it perhaps preferable to be absolutely rational? Will this not lessen the danger of mistakes by miscalculation, so painfully realized during the recent Cuban missile crisis, only four years before the airing of *Star Trek* and reflected magnificently for all to see in Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove* in 1964? Spock suggests as much when he notes the Vulcan belief that where there is no emotion, there is no motive for violence.<sup>42</sup> Spock’s character and the resulting questions are echoed in *TNG* in the person of Lt. Commander Data, an android who aspires to acquire emotions and become human. The answer proffered by the two series is complicated: Humans must learn to handle emotion and integrate it into their responses. In Isaac Asimov’s words, a

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38. Roberta E. Pearson and Máire Messenger-Davies, “You’re Not Going to See That on TV: *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in Film and Television,” in Mark Jancovich and James Lyons, eds., *Quality Popular Television: Cult TV, the Industry and Fans* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003), pp. 103–117.

39. Patrick Stewart, interview, StarTrek.com, 4 October 2010, <http://www.startrek.com/article/sir-patrick-stewart-interview>.

40. The parallel between Riker and Kirk is expressly stated in *ST:TNG*, “Writers’/Directors’ Guide” (1991), p. 19, in Menosky Collection, Box 15.

41. Gene Roddenberry, “Character Analysis—Mister Spock,” 2 May 1966, in Schneider Collection, Box 10.

42. “Dagger of the Mind,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Vincent McEveety (1966; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

robot is “logical but not reasonable.”<sup>43</sup> The need to master logic and emotion reflects the point reached by the West in the late twentieth century. The aim is to be reasonable; logic is helpful but insufficient. In the 1991 motion picture, Spock himself gives the message: “Logic is the beginning of wisdom. Not the end.”<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, both series also warn about the possible dark sides of the UFP’s allegory of the West. For example, the 1967 episode “Mirror, Mirror” presents an alternative universe in which the *Enterprise* belongs to a repressive, violent, and cruel “empire” and acts as a villain.<sup>45</sup> In *TNG*, the greedy Ferengi serve as a warning against the possible excesses of the West itself. De Forest Research initially advised against the use of the name “Ferengi,” which comes from medieval Arabic and means “European/crusader.”<sup>46</sup> As Roddenberry noted during the planning of *TNG* in 1987:

[The Ferengi] are not bad guys in the way that Klingons are. Instead of being bullies, they are *connivers* and *manipulators*. . . . The Ferengi represent *capitalism* carried to an extreme. . . . The Ferengi, in other worlds, represent much of the worst in the audience’s world today. Not that 24th Century humanity has gone communistic or socialistic; it has simply become too rich for economics to matter at all—and the wonder of this is that basic human *goodness* (so hated by the Ferengi) has come to the fore and made possible all our dreams, including the dream of peaceful diversity in cultures, ideas and lifestyles—the key being that under such conditions, diversity doesn’t threaten anyone.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, despite the fascination with science, both series recurrently warn about an unthinking enslavement to technology, which may dehumanize society. Thus, *Star Trek* remained both representative and critical of the United States/West of its era. The UFP points to a bright future but one based on self-awareness and enlightened choice—another fundamental concept of the liberal West.

43. Isaac Asimov, *The Naked Sun* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), p. 232.

44. *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, directed by Nicholas Meyer (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1991).

45. “Mirror, Mirror,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Marc Daniels (1967; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004); and Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” pp. 82–84.

46. De Forest Research comments (“Encounter at Farpoint”), 6 May 1987, in Moore Collection, Box 53, Folder 22.

47. Roddenberry to “those concerned,” “The Ferengi,” 11 May 1987, in Moore Collection, Box 54, Folder 30; emphasis in the original. See also, in the same folder, Fontana to Roddenberry, 22 June 1987; and Wright to Roddenberry, 22 June 1987.

## Symbolisms

As a work of popular culture, *Star Trek* draws heavily on a set of symbols that allow its message to reach wider audiences. These symbols involve the Cold War itself, notions about the role of the United States in global affairs, and memories of the Second World War, which in the 1960s still shaped many individuals' worldviews. Over the years, *Star Trek* itself has become a symbol, turning up even in works of naval history. For example, a new edition of the biography of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance notes that “[h]is gods were logic and reason. The character of Mr. Spock in the popular science-fiction series *Star Trek* could easily have been patterned after Spruance.”<sup>48</sup> Another author comments:

Occasionally there is a ship known even in her own time to be special: sometimes there is a ship with a place in history that is assured because of some special act, whether for good or ill, for which she is known. . . . One thinks instinctively of such ships as . . . either, or both, of the *Enterprises*, but not the one with the pointed ears.<sup>49</sup>

The starship *Enterprise* is a celebrity in its own right. The 1979 motion picture, showing Kirk's arrival at the ship, devotes several minutes to presenting the symbolic vessel as a beloved place of return—not only for Kirk but also for the viewer.<sup>50</sup> The *TNG* writers' guides expressly noted that “a major character in *Star Trek* has always been the Starship *Enterprise* and its mission.”<sup>51</sup> It is no coincidence that the *Star Trek* vessel bears a name that meant a great deal to U.S. society of the late 1960s. The real-life USS *Enterprise* (nicknamed the “Big-E”) was a *Yorktown*-class aircraft carrier and the most successful U.S. warship of the Second World War, with a record extending from the Doolittle Raid to Leyte Gulf. During the decisive battle of Midway in 1942 the *Enterprise* launched the air strike that caught the Japanese with their aircraft on their carriers, deciding the course of the battle.<sup>52</sup> Roddenberry himself had served

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48. John B. Lundstrom, “Introduction,” in Thomas B. Buell, *The Quiet Warrior: A Biography of Admiral Raymond A. Spruance* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), p. viii. The first edition was published in 1974.

49. H. P. Willmott, *Battleship* (London: Cassell, 2002), p. 10.

50. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, directed by Robert Wise (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1979). See also Margaret A. Weitekamp, “Two Enterprises: *Star Trek*'s Iconic Starship as Studio Model and Celebrity,” *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Winter 2016), pp. 2–13.

51. *ST:TNG*, “Writers'/Directors' Guide” (1991), p. 9, in Menosky Collection, Box 15.

52. Edward P. Stafford, *The Big E: The Story of the U.S.S. Enterprise* (New York: Random, 1962); and George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890–1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 219–221.

as a pilot in the U.S. Army Air Forces in the Pacific during the Second World War and therefore was a veteran of the very theater of war whose fortunes were so dramatically turned by the Big-E.<sup>53</sup> In 1960, four years before the planning of *TOS* and six before it was aired, the name *Enterprise* was given to the first U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, a vessel that immediately became a symbol of U.S. technology and national prestige. The name was pivotal in awakening memories of duty, victory, and progress. In *TNG*, twenty years later, the creators needed to provide reminders for an audience that had fewer memories of the war years. In the first *TNG* episode, McCoy, now an old admiral, encourages the crew of the *Enterprise* (and the viewers) to remember the connotations of their ship's name: "Well, this is a new ship, but she's got the right name. . . . You treat her like a lady. And she'll always bring you home."<sup>54</sup> Facing a dangerous situation, Riker comments: "Fate protects fools, little children and ships named *Enterprise*."<sup>55</sup>

The name is not the only reference to the United States. The spaceships *Enterprise* are (star)ships, and the crew are naval officers, referring to the aeronautical nature of U.S. power, naval prowess long having been associated with open horizons, exploration, and forward attitudes (but also with imperialism, another U.S. dilemma). Moreover, the ship is the "USS" *Enterprise*, although this acronym stands for United Star Ship (not United States Ship). Although the names of the other UFP starships in *TOS* are associated with the United States, the fleet in *TNG* is more international and includes the USS *Hood*, *Repulse*, *Potemkin*, *Zhukov*, *Zapata*, *Cairo*, *Akagi*, and *Tian An Men*. The *Enterprise-D*'s sister ship is the *Yamato*, after the Japanese battleship of the Second World War (from a historical point of view, "USS *Yamato*" is a little ironic).<sup>56</sup> The use of these names is one of the ways *TNG* projects inclusiveness. That the *Star Trek* universe includes no *Graf Spee* or *Bismarck* is also instructive, mirroring a fundamental concept of the liberal West: Both extremes are bad, but fascism is qualitatively more repulsive than Communism. *Star Trek* expressly denounces fascism in many episodes, but the writers also found ways to convey their message through silences.

53. Marc Cushman (with Susan Osborn), *These Are the Voyages: TOS* (San Diego, CA: Jacobs/Brown Press, 2013), Vol. 1, pp. 4, 25.

54. "Encounter at Farpoint," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Corey Allen (1987; Hollywood, CA: CBS Studios, 2006).

55. "Contagion," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Joseph L. Scanlan (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

56. *Ibid.*

Some aspects of the *Star Trek* universe are militarily unrealistic, pointing to interesting simplifications of modern military operations in a work of popular culture. The *Enterprises* constantly operate alone and never as part of a task force. No military expert would want a capital ship to go into battle without smaller vessels providing escort, protection, and reconnaissance. The bridge crew undertakes away missions as well, effectively emptying the bridge of experienced officers. Even De Forest Research, *TOS*'s scientific advisers, showed some discomfort over this.<sup>57</sup> That the bridge crew is both a command team and a commando unit is an impossibility; the training and duties of bridge officers are radically different from those of a reconnaissance or raiding party. Kirk abandons his bridge to go on away missions even in the face of enemy vessels—behavior that would cause waves of horror to a naval officer. (At least in *TNG* the captain stays on his bridge.) Also unrealistic are the miniskirts of the female members of the crew in *TOS*; such attire is, to say the least, militarily impractical. Clearly, the production team saw little need for military realism.

## Facing Great Powers: Cold War Challenges in Space

An “international” system in space means that the other of *Star Trek* is an absolute other—a non-Terran—and the dilemmas of handling the resulting power relationships emerge with clear intensity. Scholars have pointed to the teamwork involved in the series, but the main creators of this fictional international system were Roddenberry and Coon.<sup>58</sup> Super-beings appear who are far more powerful than the *Enterprise*, but these are not described as part of the international system. The main polities that shape the international balance are the UFP, the Klingons, and the Romulans. In *TNG*, more powers are introduced: the highly militarized Cardassians and the greedy Ferengi. Relations with these states are governed by threat, deterrence, and agonizing efforts to avoid the slippery slide to war. The bluff is a crucial tactic in this context, which may partially account for the prominence, in both series, of poker as a distinctly human game, revealing of both character and strategy.

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57. See De Forest Research comments (“The Cloud Minders”), 1 November 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 22, Folder 9. “An ordinary ship’s party would not be made up of the captain and the first officer.”

58. Sarantakes, p. 80; and Cushman, *These Are the Voyages*, Vol. 1, pp. 489, 560.

In *TOS*, the Klingons represent the Soviet adversary: the “pseudo-Soviet enemy.”<sup>59</sup> In the first episode in which Klingons appear (in 1967), war breaks out with the UFP, although a race of super-beings intervene and prohibit an armed conflict. As producer Justman noted, from then on relations with the Klingons are based on a “truce” and not on normal diplomatic contacts.<sup>60</sup> Thus, hostility is expressed in profoundly Cold War terms, through antagonism in an underdeveloped “periphery” of space, reminiscent of the Third World of the 1960s. *TOS* has no Berlin blockade, no Berlin Wall, and no Prague Spring, but it does include Vietnam allegories. The Klingon Empire is described as a “military dictatorship” that turns whole planets into labor camps, suppresses the free press, takes property from people, deprives them of their liberty, and threatens their way of life. This is clearly the Western perception of the Soviet Union. Kirk points to the fundamental difference with the UFP, which is a democracy. A Klingon governor explains to Kirk the ways of the Klingon Empire, a society that Westerners in the 1960s would recognize as totalitarian: “Because we are a unit. Each of us is a part of a greater whole, always under surveillance.”<sup>61</sup> Like the Cold War, the UFP’s conflict with the Klingons is about power as well as ideology. As a battle of the liberals, it is a “profoundly just [Cold] war.”<sup>62</sup> In subsequent episodes, this Cold War in the periphery continues. The Klingons incite rebellions and destabilize hitherto stable societies; they claim resources, mainly minerals, from neutral planets; and they provide advanced weapons to primitive peoples, causing local conflicts.<sup>63</sup> This is a clear reflection of the phenomenon that Western analysts of the 1960s called the “Sino-Soviet economic offensive” in the Third World, the Soviet penetration of world markets of raw materials (which the Soviet Union attempted to distort through its state-run external trade), and the formidable Soviet weapons exports to developing countries.<sup>64</sup>

59. Cull, “Reading, Viewing, and Tuning In to the Cold War,” p. 453. See also McGuire, “The Final Reflection?”

60. Justman to Coon, 5 July 1967, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 15, Folder 7.

61. “Errand of Mercy,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by John Newland (1967; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

62. Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, p. 103.

63. “Friday’s Child,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Joseph Pevney (1967; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004); “The Trouble with Tribbles,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Joseph Pevney (1967; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004); “A Private Little War,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Marc Daniels (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004); and “Elaan of Troyius,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by John Meredyth Lucas (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

64. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 66–72; Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 109–114, 138–139, 247–248; and Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *NATO and Western Perceptions*

The Klingons are an almost omnipresent menace, in the same way the Soviet Union was during the Cold War. As Roddenberry noted to director John Meredyth Lucas, “[t]he Klingons, as ever, are anxious to move in and . . . support the more barbaric of the two races. . . . The Klingons . . . are always ready to rush in and help the North Vietnamese or whatever.”<sup>65</sup> The Klingons are also portrayed as skillful in planting dangerous operatives in less-developed neutral states.<sup>66</sup> The Klingons of *TOS* are a fully anthropomorphized race; only in the later motion pictures and in *TNG* do they appear with their characteristic cranial bone ridges. However, across both series and in all of the movies they are presented with facial characteristics, behavior, dress, and manners that mark them as a barbaric “Asian horde” or as a manifestation of “Oriental despotism.” For the episode “Errand of Mercy,” the first in which the Klingons appear, Coon gave instructions to picture them as “hard-looking, Asian-types,” and the actor John Colicos, in the role of the Klingon commander, used parallels with “Tartars” and with Genghis Khan, “ready to take over the entire universe with his hordes.”<sup>67</sup> Coon’s instruction to portray the Klingons as “Asian-types” becomes even more interesting when considered along with his claim that “[w]e have always played them very much like the Russians.”<sup>68</sup> Guidelines to the authors of *TOS* note that the Klingons should be presented as cruel and devoid of honor, characterized by a “usual lack of tact.”<sup>69</sup> Still, in one of the last episodes of the first series, the unthinkable happens: The Klingons and the *Enterprise* crew unite against a common threat from an alien entity.<sup>70</sup> This is an obvious reference to the search for détente in the late 1960s.

The Romulans, the second adversary of the UFP, are warlike, distant, and arrogant. Some have suggested they represent the People’s Republic of China (PRC).<sup>71</sup> Still, the Romulan Empire lacks key characteristics of the

*of the Soviet Bloc: Alliance Analysis and Reporting, 1951–1969* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 145–150.

65. Roddenberry to Lucas, 1 April 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 22, Folder 13.

66. Justman to Roddenberry, 21 March 1968 (“Elaan of Troyius”), in Roddenberry Collection, Box 22, Folder 13.

67. Cushman, *These Are the Voyages*, Vol. 1, p. 565.

68. Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” p. 78.

69. De Forest Research comments (“Errand of Mercy”), 11 January 1967, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 11, Folder 12; and De Forest Research comments (“The Trouble with Tribbles”), 11 August 1967, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 15, Folder 4; and Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” p. 78.

70. “Day of the Dove,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Marvin Chomsky (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

71. Worland, “Captain Kirk,” p. 112.

PRC of the 1960s, such as an aging tyrant or a Cultural Revolution. In Roddenberry's *TOS* archive, they display values that Americans associated with the Japanese during the Second World War—for example, they prefer to die rather than surrender.<sup>72</sup> One of their prominent characteristics, according to Roddenberry's guidance to scriptwriter Schneider, was that “at the first sign of weakness the Romulans will attack.”<sup>73</sup> Such behavior could allude to both the pre-1941 Japanese and the Soviet Union of the Cold War. Although the Romulans seem to impersonate several “enemies” (the creative team, after all, was not responsible for developing a scholarly representation of one or the other), their relationship with the UFP clearly presents Cold War characteristics, and this, rather than the question of whom exactly the Romulans impersonate, is the crucial element.

The Romulans appear in a 1966 episode that bears a title taken directly from the Cold War: “Balance of Terror.” The Romulan Empire had been engaged in an inconclusive war with the UFP some time ago, and the two states are now separated by a “neutral zone,” entry into which can provoke war.<sup>74</sup> The confrontation with a Romulan vessel raises the dilemmas of deterrence for the *Enterprise* crew. A hardliner suggests destroying the enemy so that they can deter aggression, whereas McCoy argues that the *Enterprise* should not provoke war on the basis of vague assumptions. In the end the *Enterprise* prevails, but the Romulan captain, before destroying his shattered starship, tells Kirk that “in a different reality I could have called you friend.”<sup>75</sup> In a subsequent episode (aired in 1968), written by D. C. Fontana and inspired by the North Korean seizure of a U.S. surveillance ship (the USS *Pueblo*), Kirk and Spock provoke a confrontation with the Romulans. This is a feint that allows them to steal a Romulan cloaking device, the invention of which threatens to upset the military balance.<sup>76</sup> As Fontana noted, in this covert mission, the UFP will, if necessary, allow *Enterprise* personnel to die in order “to keep the peace.”<sup>77</sup> The search for a balance between hostility and settlement—a major

72. Justman to Freiberger, 2 April 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 21, Folder 7.

73. Roddenberry to Paul Schneider, 18 April 1966, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 32, Folder 4.

74. The neutral zone concept came from the Demilitarized Zone dividing North and South Vietnam. Cushman, *These Are the Voyages*, Vol. 1, p. 234.

75. “Balance of Terror,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Vincent McEveety (1966; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

76. “The *Enterprise* Incident,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by John Meredyth Lucas (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004); and Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” pp. 97–99. D. C. Fontana thought NBC would resent the direct parallel with the international political event. See Fontana to Roddenberry, 29 March 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 21, Folder 7.

77. Fontana to Roddenberry, 29 March 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 21, Folder 7.



consideration on the road to détente in the late 1960s—is prominent in the Romulan-UFP relationship.

Aiming to educate the public, *TOS* is both representative and critical of Cold War mentalities.<sup>78</sup> The need for robust deterrence of Soviet aggression was a salient conclusion of a U.S. society that had experienced the rise of Adolf Hitler, the attack on Pearl Harbor, and the onset of the Cold War. Thus, the determination of the UFP to hold its ground and avoid appeasement is a crucial factor. As Justman noted, the Romulans “test the Federation of Planets and . . . determine how vulnerable the Federation is to this sort of pressure.”<sup>79</sup> Roddenberry’s instructions to writer Schneider in the first Romulan episode stressed the role of perceptions: “It doesn’t matter that the enemy does have better weapons; the important thing is that the enemy *thinks* the *Enterprise* is superior.”<sup>80</sup> However, *TOS* was created by a society that also understood the danger of an involuntary slide to war, especially after the Cuban missile crisis. Roddenberry gave specific instructions to avoid depicting Kirk as “trigger happy.”<sup>81</sup> Moreover, *TOS* insisted on reminding the viewer that the perspective of the other side must be taken into account. As Spock notes in “Balance of Terror,” “Earth believes the Romulans to be warlike, cruel, treacherous, and only the Romulans know what they think of Earth.”<sup>82</sup> In preparing this episode, Roddenberry expressly noted that Kirk and the Romulan commander should be pictured as “two strong men of honor,” and Stanley Robertson, the film programming manager of the National Broadcasting Company, noted his satisfaction at the strength of character of both Kirk and the Romulan commander.<sup>83</sup> In the “Enterprise Incident,” a female Romulan commander (who is attracted to Spock and also wears a miniskirt) gravely reminds Spock that suspicion “works both ways.”<sup>84</sup>

The need to understand the other side’s perspective also appears in storylines without direct Cold War connotations. In an episode of 1967, the crew encounters a hostile lizard-like race and debates whether the *Enterprise* should destroy the alien vessel that had attacked a UFP outpost. As is

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78. See Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture.”

79. Justman to Freiburger, 2 April 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 21, Folder 7.

80. Roddenberry to Paul Schneider, 18 April 1966, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 32, Folder 4; emphasis in the original.

81. Roddenberry to Coon, 18 May 1967, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 13, Folder 1.

82. “Balance of Terror,” *ST:TOS*.

83. Robertson (NBC) to Roddenberry, 4 May 1966, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 32, Folder 4; and Cushman, *These Are the Voyages*, Vol. 1, p. 236.

84. “The *Enterprise* Incident,” *ST:TOS*.

eventually shown, however, the aliens believe the construction of the outpost in a contested area was an act of aggression against them. Spock and McCoy are shocked to realize that Earth could be “in the wrong” and that the aliens might simply be trying to protect themselves.<sup>85</sup> *TOS* had an important didactic function, educating its audience about crucial notions of the international system.

Following an unsuccessful attempt in the 1970s to reintroduce the series (as *Star Trek II*) on television, *TOS* had a sui generis set of sequels in the 1979–1991 motion pictures. These dealt with perceptions of the Cold War in a random and/or oblique manner. The 1977 writers’ guide for the planned *Star Trek II* series mentioned nothing about adversaries. However, evidently reflecting the climate of détente, it provided for the Russian Chekov to be “a full lieutenant,” in command of the starship’s “security division.”<sup>86</sup> In the first motion picture of 1979, relations with the Klingons are still uncertain, but communication is better—another reference to détente. In the 1984 film (in which the Klingons kill Kirk’s son), the Klingons seek to acquire advanced UFP technology.<sup>87</sup> This film mirrors the climate of increased Cold War tensions in the early 1980s as well as the U.S. government’s stepped-up efforts to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining access to Western technology.<sup>88</sup> The 1986 film, however, includes a telling relaxation: The *Enterprise* returns to the Earth of the 1980s, where the crew needs to find U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carriers (among them, the real USS *Enterprise*) to repair their ship. When the film came out, many in the audience laughed when Chekov, who throughout the series and movies speaks in a strong Russian accent, asks an astonished San Francisco policeman “where the nuclear wessels are.”<sup>89</sup> Such a joke was “permissible” in the time of Mikhail Gorbachev’s perestroika and “new thinking,” when the threat of nuclear war had receded. In the *TOS* episodes of the 1960s, nuclear weapons were not a laughing matter.

The 1991 motion picture was a commentary about the end of the Cold War. The plot depicts the *Enterprise* crew as refusing to adjust to the prospect

85. “Arena,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Joseph Pevney (1967; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

86. *Star Trek II*, “Writers/Directors Guide,” 12 August 1977, p. 18, in Menosky Collection, Box 15. The *Enterprise* is still described as a “semi-military” vessel (p. 34).

87. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*; and *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, directed by Leonard Nimoy (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1984).

88. Philip Hanson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Economy: An Economic History of the USSR from 1945* (London: Longman, 2003), pp. 158–162, 175–176.

89. *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, directed by Leonard Nimoy (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1986).

of peace, and this sparked internal disagreements in the *Star Trek* team. Roddenberry expressed his discomfort with it.<sup>90</sup> The film focuses on the need to overcome hostility. Following an explosion at a huge energy facility (reminding the viewer of the Chernobyl disaster), the Klingon Empire does not have the resources to deal with the problem because of its excessively high military expenditure (another Soviet problem of the 1980s) and thus faces collapse. The Klingon chancellor—who is reminiscent of Gorbachev—offers reconciliation but is assassinated by a conspiracy of Klingons and human beings who fear peace and have vested interests in the continuation of the antagonism. Kirk himself is in a precarious position. Having spent all his life fighting the Klingons, and having lost a son in the process, he needs to overcome his prejudices, despite having been sent to a Klingon gulag (the term is explicitly used). The driving force for the peace process is Spock, who prevails on Kirk to act as peacemaker, with the trenchant (and inadvertently amusing) remark, “There is an old Vulcan proverb: Only Nixon could go to China.” The effort to overcome prejudice is eventually successful.<sup>91</sup>

Meanwhile, *TNG*, starting in 1987, projected a partly different picture. Stewart, the actor who played Picard in the series, noted a major difference between his character and Kirk: “Unlike my predecessor, Captain James T. Kirk, Jean-Luc Picard believed first and foremost in negotiation. . . . He was a diplomat before he was a warrior.”<sup>92</sup> But this was not only a question of different characters or the result of Roddenberry’s intention to play down the military element in *TNG*. This was the era of perestroika, when far-reaching East-West reconciliation, not mere détente, was on the agenda. The United States and the West were now questioning the black-and-white attitudes of the high Cold War. In the first episode of *TNG*, the super-being Q, dressed as a high-ranking officer of the U.S. Marine Corps, accuses humankind of playing power games and reminds the *Enterprise* crew of the past:

Q: You must return to your world and put an end to the commies. All it takes is a few good men.

Captain Picard: What? That nonsense is centuries behind us.<sup>93</sup>

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90. Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” pp. 99–102.

91. *Star Trek VI* (1991).

92. Ryan Buxton, “Why Patrick Stewart Wants All Politicians to Watch ‘Star Trek,’” *Huffington Post*, 13 August 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/patrick-stewart-star-trek\\_us\\_55cbbbc7e4b064d5910a6c27](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/patrick-stewart-star-trek_us_55cbbbc7e4b064d5910a6c27).

93. “Encounter at Farpoint,” *ST:TNG*. De Forest Research noted that the phrase “all it takes is a few good men” was a U.S. Marine Corps slogan. Joking about the Iran-Contra scandal of those days, the researcher, Joan Pierce, a *Star Trek* adviser since the 1960s, commented, “Sure you don’t want to

Nowhere was this change reflected more saliently than in the image of the Klingons. Still alien, and savage by Terran standards, they are also partners in the pursuit of peace. They are a “tamed” former enemy.<sup>94</sup> The Klingons are now portrayed as motivated by honor, loyalty, pride, and bravery. Although the creative team’s guidance documents referred to the similarity of the Klingon Empire with ancient Sparta or feudal Japan, the parallel with the Soviet Union remained strong. De Forest Research even warned the scriptwriters against using the name “Masha” for a Klingon person because it was “perhaps too Russian to be acceptable as an alien female name.”<sup>95</sup> In a guidance document from the Ron Moore collection on “Klingon History and Culture,” the description largely encapsulates imperial Russia or the Soviet Union, based on the imposition of one people’s rule over others:

Unlike the United Federation of Planets, the Klingon Empire is not an amalgam of several different star systems brought together by common purpose and values. The Klingon Empire sprung from a single, relatively poor, planet in a modest star system. The worlds that now make up the Empire were either subjugated in the not-so-distant past, or were annexed at the point of a sword. . . . This is not to say that the member worlds of the Klingon Empire are straining at the bit to break away from despotic rule. Quite the contrary; the member worlds of the Empire have learned the many advantages and benefits of their association with the Klingons and few would choose to leave even if given the option.<sup>96</sup>

The teleplay of one of the episodes described the Great Hall of the Klingon capital as “the parliament/supreme court/public square” of the city.<sup>97</sup> The name “Kremlin” was not used expressly, but the visual representation of the Great Hall presents similarities with the center of Soviet power. The 1987 *TNG* writers’ guide noted that “for the past twenty-five years, the Klingon Empire and the Federation have been at peace with one another.”<sup>98</sup> This may be a coincidence, but 25 years prior to 1987 was 1962, the year of the Cuban missile crisis, the moment when the United States and the Soviet Union came closest to nuclear war and then began to seek *détente*. Much like the

make him [Q] a light [*sic*] colonel . . . they are very much in fashion today.” See De Forest comments (“Encounter at Farpoint”), 6 May 1987, in Moore Collection, Box 53, Folder 22.

94. Iver B. Neumann, *Diplomatic Sites: A Critical Enquiry* (London: Hurst, 2013), p. 109. See also, McGuire, “The Final Reflection.”

95. De Forest Research comments (“Sins of the Father”), 28 December 1989, in Moore Collection, Box 1, Folder 10.

96. “Klingon History and Culture: A Brief Overview,” n.d., in Moore Collection, Box 1, Folder 10.

97. “Sins of the Father,” teleplay, 26 December 1989, in Moore Collection, Box 1, Folder 12.

98. *ST:TNG*, “Writers/Directors Guide” (1987), p. 33.

relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the UFP-Klingon détente is depicted as “always tenuous at best.”<sup>99</sup>

In *TNG*, interaction with the Klingons usually involves efforts to overcome the suspicions of the past, and in one episode the *Enterprise* cooperates with a Klingon vessel to stop Klingon renegades who do not accept peace with the UFP.<sup>100</sup> The rapprochement with the Klingon Empire leads to the implementation of the first exchange program of officers between the two fleets. Riker volunteers for this mission, and, despite the effort of the Klingon officers to prove him weak-kneed, shows that he is a match for them in every respect, living up even to their ideals of honor, efficiency, and toughness. Their suspicion threatens to spark a confrontation that Riker ingeniously averts. He returns to the *Enterprise* noting that the Klingons are a “very brave and unique people.”<sup>101</sup>

Like Gorbachev’s USSR, the Klingon Empire of *TNG* faces a wide range of internal problems, including debilitating factionalism and other acute structural weaknesses. This is no fully “modern” polity, another depiction that is strongly reminiscent of the image of the Soviet Union in the late Cold War.<sup>102</sup> After the mid-1970s, the Soviet Union’s military potential was still enormous and expanding, and its successes in the Third World were impressive, but its social structures were deficient, its economic growth rates were slowing, and its ideological appeal was diminishing. By the second half of the 1980s, such views had been diffused to the public—for example, through a well-known book from 1986 that suggested the Soviet Union was an “incomplete superpower.”<sup>103</sup> However, the USSR still was powerful and fearsome; its structural problems and huge military establishment called for even greater prudence when dealing with it.

The Klingon Empire is likewise an “incomplete superpower.” The Klingons are in constant trouble, mostly because of their premodern social structures, and the *Enterprise* helps them in their hours of need. Lieut. Worf allows his family to be branded as traitors to prevent the Klingon Empire from

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99. “Sins of the Father,” first draft outline, 14 December 1989, in Moore Collection, Box 1, Folder 12.

100. “The Emissary,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Cliff Bole (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

101. “A Matter of Honor,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Rob Bowman (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

102. See, among others, Odd Arne Westad, “The Fall of Détente and the Turning Tides of History,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997), pp. 3–33.

103. Paul Dibb, *The Soviet Union: The Incomplete Superpower* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1986).

plunging into civil war.<sup>104</sup> Later, Picard is asked by the dying head of the Klingon state to direct the process of choosing the next leader. Picard has to act fairly but also prevent the emergence of a Klingon leader who would align with the Romulans, thus upsetting the balance of power.<sup>105</sup> Worf and Picard soon become involved in the Klingon civil war on the side of the moderates, in two episodes that deal prominently with the “national” interests of the various states.<sup>106</sup>

In *TNG*, the relationship with the Romulan Empire is the one best described as being like the Cold War. According to the 1991 guide: “The Klingons are *brutish*; the Romulans are satanic, capable of their own kind of refined culture.”<sup>107</sup> Picard describes relations with the Romulans in terms that Cold Warriors would enthusiastically embrace:

If force is necessary, we will use it. But that will mean we have failed. Our goal here is to establish some kind of relations with the Romulans. If we do not succeed, then to convince them of our resolve. . . . I’d rather outthink them than outfight them.<sup>108</sup>

Mutual suspicion is dominant. When a Romulan survivor is found on a planet in the neutral zone, it implies that the Romulans are seeking to prepare new positions to gain a strategic advantage. Picard has to act carefully to deter them without provoking war. His eventual success leaves him skeptical: “Brinkmanship is a dangerous game.”<sup>109</sup> Suspicion also looms large when a Romulan defector reveals information about the building of a secret Romulan base in the neutral zone. This creates huge dilemmas for Picard. Is this a Romulan trap to lure UFP forces into action and thus make them responsible for war? Now, however, it is the Romulan defector, commenting on Lieut. Worf’s warlike attitude, who gives the central message: “Lieut. Worf. I like him. To be more accurate, I understand him. A warrior, proud, fearless, living only for combat.

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104. “Sins of the Father,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Les Landau (1990; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

105. “Reunion,” *ST:TNG*.

106. “Redemption,” *ST:TNG*, two parts, DVD, directed by Cliff Bole and David Carson respectively (1991; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002). For the consideration of state interest, see handwritten notes (probably Ron Moore), 29 January 1991, in Moore Collection, Box 6, Folder 16.

107. *ST:TNG*, “Writers’/Directors’ Guide” (1991), p. 57, in Menosky Collection, Box 15; emphasis in the original.

108. “The Neutral Zone,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by James L. Conway (1988; Hollywood, CA: CBS Studios, 2006).

109. “The Enemy,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by David Carson (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

Exactly the type that will get us all killed, if we're not careful."<sup>110</sup> The episode was drafted as the story of a war crisis, with forces building on both sides of the border. Members of the creative team extensively discussed the problem of deception in international affairs.<sup>111</sup>

Circumspection also dominates relations with the new aliens of *TNG*. The Cardassians were formerly at war with the UFP, but relations are now characterized by a low-intensity Cold War climate. When a Federation starship goes renegade and attacks Cardassian outposts and ships, Picard is ordered to protect the peace at any cost—even if that means allowing the renegade UFP vessel to be destroyed. This reflects the West's soul-searching at the time of perestroika: protecting the peace might require difficult decisions, including containing one's own extremists. When the renegade Federation captain tells the *Enterprise's* transporter chief, Miles O'Brien, that "[t]he Cardassians live to make war," the latter responds melancholically: "That's what everybody thinks about the enemy. That's probably what they think about us."<sup>112</sup> If the relationship with the Klingons highlights the difficulty of cooperating with former enemies, UFP relations with the Romulans and Cardassians point to an additional set of dilemmas: how to handle peace with a former adversary, once accustomed to enmity; and how to avoid a slippery slope to crude hostility that could prove a self-fulfilling prophecy. These were also crucial questions for the West in the late 1980s.

In an increasingly complicated world, as the Cold War was coming to its end, *TNG* insisted on the subtlety of diplomacy and on the crucial element of cultural diversity. In the 1991 episode "Darmok," the *Enterprise* crew faces a stalemate and must establish communication with people who speak only metaphorically. However, without knowledge of their culture, it is impossible to understand the meaning of their phrases. Picard cautions his crew that communication is "a matter of patience, imagination," and Counselor Troi notes that in this situation "[a] single word can lead to tragedy. One word misspoken or misunderstood."<sup>113</sup> In an early script of the episode, Picard would have made another melancholic comment: "It is as if we are trying to translate an

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110. "The Defector," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Robert Sheerer (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

111. Ron Moore, "The Defector," outline, n.d., in Moore Collection, Box 54, Folder 12; and David Krieger, technical comments, 11 October 1989, in Moore Collection, Box 54, Folder 12.

112. "The Wounded," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Chip Chalmers (1990; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

113. "Darmok," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Winrich Kolbe (1991; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

ancient forgotten language with no dictionary, no Rosetta stone, only a few hieroglyphs scratched on a tablet.”<sup>114</sup>

Another, qualitatively different challenge in *TNG* was the enemy that comes both from within and from without, thus representing a nightmare scenario of the liberal West: collectivism and the loss of individuality. The Borg are a collective comprising former individuals who have been mechanically altered to become members of a cell and parts of a collective mind. Not only physically repugnant, the Borg are also unappeasable and viciously determined to absorb everybody else into their collective (thus to deny the other’s right to exist). They represent the ultimate enemy.<sup>115</sup> The connotation is that the struggle never ends. Notably, the 1991 motion picture expressly rejects the notion of the “end of history” put forward in 1989 by Francis Fukuyama in an article arguing that after a struggle of alternative ideologies in the twentieth century, “history” may have ended insofar as there no longer seemed to be any viable ideological alternatives to liberal democracy.<sup>116</sup>

### **Star Trek and the Third World: Interventionism, Vietnam, and the Riddles of the Prime Directive**

The international system of *Star Trek* is not just a world of great powers. The *Enterprise* often deals with smaller, “non-aligned” states, which De Forest Research, the scientific advisers, described as “undeveloped.”<sup>117</sup> The peoples of these planets are either unaware of other planetary civilizations or are in contact with the UFP but significantly inferior in technology and social and economic development. However, the *Enterprise*’s crushing firepower cannot solve every problem. These situations call for different virtues: the search for a point of balance between general policy principles and respect for local conditions. They represent an old U.S. dilemma: Can a republic also be an empire?<sup>118</sup>

114. Philip LaZebnik, “Darmok,” first draft, 16 March 1990, in Menosky Collection, Box 11. The script was revised and finalized by Menosky.

115. “Q Who?” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Rob Bowman (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002); and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon, “Representation Is Futile? American Anti-collectivism and the Borg,” in Jutta Weldes, ed., *To Seek Out New Worlds: Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003), pp. 143–167.

116. *Star Trek VI* (1991); and Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, pp. 3–18.

117. De Forest Research comments (“Elaan of Troyius”), 20 May 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 22, Folder 12.

118. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 8.



The basis for relations between the *Enterprise* and less-developed peoples is the “Prime Directive,” which dictates that the UFP must not intervene in such cultures in ways that could prejudice their natural evolution. The Prime Directive is a moral as well as a political guideline, and Picard’s comment on it is telling:

The Prime Directive is not just a set of rules. It is a philosophy. And a very correct one. History has proved again and again that whenever mankind interferes with a less developed civilization, no matter how well-intended that may be, the results are invariably disastrous.<sup>119</sup>

This is a popular understanding of history. Most historians do not think history “proves” many things (if historians are certain of any one thing, it is that it does not) and would not endorse Picard’s remark about the disastrous effect of *all* interventions as a valid historical conclusion. Still, the Prime Directive was not prominent at the outset of the series. Its ascent in 1967–1968 points to the experiences of the Vietnam War.

*TOS* largely reflected aspects of the modernization theory that helped shape U.S. policy toward the Third World in the 1960s. This theory acknowledged that Communism promised to local populations significant advances through violent change. The task of the United States was to win them over to the idea of evolution based on technology and the measurable improvement of living conditions. Development, progress in education and public health, and the growth of representative institutions were the key concepts of this strategy, aiming at extensive nation-building in the periphery. Modernization theory was a complicated set of considerations. It sometimes had to be combined with large-scale military interventions (notably in Vietnam); the middle classes in Third World countries (unlike in Europe in the case of the Marshall Plan) were often too weak to support the modernization process; and the U.S. administrators often became hostages of cunning local elites who were eager to use U.S.-funded projects as power statements rather than as a means to strengthen the institutions of their states. Last but not least, another problem of modernization theory was its slow, evolutionary nature: “instead of the clear-cut Marxist theory of social change, the Western experience was a messy, drawn-out series of unheroic social processes, with few concrete points of reference that could enflame young Third World intellectuals.”<sup>120</sup> In

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119. “Symbiosis,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Win Phelps (1988; Hollywood, CA: CBS Studios, 2006).

120. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, pp. 32–38. See also Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and Nation Building in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North

contrast, the Soviet model appeared “beguilingly attractive” to many, “as a fast track to modernization.”<sup>121</sup>

In *TOS*, the “Third World” of less-developed planets is the field of antagonism between the UFP and the Klingons. The creative team echoed aspects of modernization theory:

We should establish the fact that whichever of these two opposing forces is able to homestead and develop [a] planet is the one that can actually lay a claim on it. This should be one of the results of the last conflict between our Federation and the Klingon Empire.<sup>122</sup>

To counter Klingon penetration of these worlds, Kirk points to the UFP’s offer of arms, technicians, governmental know-how, and help in education.<sup>123</sup> Each contested planet requires that each great power prove it can develop the planet best, but—much like the Western governments monitoring Soviet penetration of the Third World—Kirk worries that, “though the Klingons are brutal and aggressive, they are most efficient.”<sup>124</sup> *TOS*’s depiction of modernization theory might be fragmentary, but a popular television series does not have to present a fuller picture.

Until early 1968, the *Enterprise* crew, although mentioning a “non-interference/prime directive,” regularly intervened to stop wars or promote freedom in less-developed societies. According to the *TOS* writers’ guide of April 1967, “general order number one” (the Prime Directive) can be disregarded “when absolutely vital to the interests of the entire Earth Federation.”<sup>125</sup> From an operational point of view, this was a reasonable but vague exception, offering a wide range of options. Thus, Kirk decides to circumvent the directive to free a people from the domination of a computer that controls their lives, arguing that this was an enslaved, not a living culture and that, “without freedom of choice, there is no creativity, no life.”<sup>126</sup> Spock’s argument that they should not apply human criteria to non-human people

Carolina Press, 2000); Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); and Thomas Robertson, “Cold War Landscapes: Towards an Environmental History of US Development Programmes in the 1950s and 1960s,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Fall 2016), pp. 417–441.

121. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, p. 231.

122. Justman to Coon, 5 July 1967, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 15, Folder 7.

123. “Errand of Mercy,” *ST:TOS*.

124. “The Trouble with Tribbles,” *ST:TOS*.

125. “*Star Trek* Writers/Directors Guide” (1967), p. 24.

126. “The Return of the Archons,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Joseph Pevney (1967; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

is swept aside by McCoy, who insists on the primacy of personal choice and freedom.<sup>127</sup>

The episode “A Private Little War” is a direct reference to the Vietnam War. The Klingons give flintlocks to a primitive people, and Kirk, brushing aside McCoy’s doubts, decides to balance this move by arming the opponents of the Klingon’s clients. When McCoy wonders what will happen if the Klingons give more powerful weapons to their allies, Kirk replies that the UFP will reciprocate to maintain a balance of power: “Well, war isn’t a good life, but it is life.” This is an interesting description of the U.S. flexible response strategy of the 1960s, which referred to gradual escalation in conflicts (and thus also excluded the early use of nuclear weapons).<sup>128</sup> The planning of this episode started in the spring of 1967 and involved painful disagreements among the authors. Although the initial story by Don Ingalls pictured Kirk as being ordered, and thus compelled, to intervene in this Vietnam parallel, Justman, Coon, and Roddenberry in the summer of 1967 introduced a clearer message. In the final version, Kirk has no orders: he makes the decisions alone. Coon stressed that the episode should show the inevitability of Kirk’s actions and expressly noted the centrality of the message that “if Vietnam falls all Southeast Asia falls.” Ingalls subsequently removed his name from the credits.<sup>129</sup>

These episodes have become the subject of extensive scholarly debate. Some have argued that, in effect, the non-interference directive is “a rule most honored in the breach.”<sup>130</sup> Others maintain that “A Private Little War” portrays the U.S. intervention in Vietnam as an “unpleasant necessity” or even as an “apologia” of U.S. policy.<sup>131</sup> The show’s early episodes recorded the moral dilemmas and the arguments against interventions but left little doubt that the UFP was a force of peaceful revolution (a central concept of Western reformism, including its modernization theory), set to undo wrongs. Kirk’s decisions to emancipate less-developed peoples or to counter the Klingons win through rather easily.

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127. “A Taste of Armageddon,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Joseph Pevney (1967; Hollywood, CA, Paramount Pictures, 2004); and “The Apple,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Joseph Pevney (1967; Hollywood, CA, Paramount Pictures, 2004).

128. “A Private Little War,” *ST:TOS*. On flexible response, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 198–236.

129. Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” pp. 90–96.

130. Lagon, “We Owe It to Them to Interfere”; and Weldes, “Going Cultural.”

131. Franklin, “Star Trek in the Vietnam Era”; O’Connor, “Liberals in Space,” p. 198; and Worland, “Captain Kirk.”

But things soon changed. By the autumn of 1967 popular support for the U.S. military presence in Vietnam, which for a long while had been strong, was declining. On 30 January 1968 came a dramatic development in the Vietnam War. The Tet Offensive by the Viet Cong, despite its military failure, exposed the weakness of the U.S. position in the country, shocked the public, and evidently contributed to Lyndon Johnson's dramatic announcement that he would not run for reelection to the presidency in November 1968. These developments were reflected in *TOS* as well. The episodes created before Tet—including “A Private Little War,” which was shown on 2 February but created well before that—tended to discuss the notion of intervention as a serious though not necessarily preferable option. However, those produced by the end of 1967 and aired well after the Tet Offensive represent a significant change. The episode “Patterns of Force,” broadcast on 16 February 1968, described the disastrous effects of the violation of the “non-interference directive” by an Earth historian who transplants Nazism into an alien society. Dying in disgrace at the end of the episode, he admits: “I was wrong. The non-interference directive is the only way,” a conclusion radically different than the one projected in the previous episodes.<sup>132</sup> The rigid, fully developed, and binding Prime Directive, strictly prohibiting interference and expressly described as a Starfleet officer's “most solemn oath,” appears for the first time in such clear form in the episodes “The Omega Glory” (aired on 1 March 1968) and “Bread and Circuses” (15 March 1968).<sup>133</sup> Kirk's declaration from the (pre-Tet) “Apple” episode, which had convinced many that *Star Trek* was in favor of interventions (“we owe it to them to interfere”), is not repeated in the episodes broadcast after Tet. On the contrary, in “Omega Glory,” which introduces the rigid Prime Directive, Kirk takes a radically different position: “I don't think we have the right or the wisdom to interfere, however a planet is evolving.”<sup>134</sup> Kirk does intervene in a less-developed society in a 1969 episode, but this planet is a *member of the UFP*, not a “Third World” state.<sup>135</sup>

The emergence of the Tet offensive as a watershed for *Star Trek's* depiction of interventions requires some qualification. The creative team followed the larger trends of U.S. opinion. The conflict over “A Private Little War” between

132. “Patterns of Force,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Vincent McEveety (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

133. “The Omega Glory,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Vincent McEveety (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004); and “Bread and Circuses,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Ralph Senensky (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

134. “The Omega Glory,” *ST:TOS*.

135. “The Cloud Minders,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by Jud Taylor (1969; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

Ingalls, on one side, and Roddenberry, Coon, and Justman, on the other side, occurred in the spring and summer of 1967. The episode was finalized in late September and filmed in early October.<sup>136</sup> However, major changes were then occurring in U.S. perceptions of the Vietnam War. In the autumn of 1967, opinion polls in the United States showed for the first time an even balance between supporters of military involvement in Vietnam and those opposing it. By October 1967, polls even showed a slight lead for the latter.<sup>137</sup> This was when the episodes broadcast after Tet were being finalized and filmed. “Patterns of Force,” for example, was filmed in early December 1967, and “The Omega Glory,” although the kernel of the story was from 1965, was finalized in the autumn of 1967 and filmed from the 15th to the 26th of December.<sup>138</sup> Additional evidence suggests that the attitudes of the creative team evolved during this period in ways that followed the patterns of U.S. opinion. Many among the writers and producers of *Star Trek*, including Roddenberry himself, signed an antiwar petition before the start of the Tet Offensive; the petition was published in March 1968, after Tet’s impact had been felt.<sup>139</sup> The *TOS* episodes produced around this time seemed to follow a similar course.

Thus, the creative team’s turn toward a *rigid* non-interference directive began before Tet, at the time of a discernible shift in U.S. public opinion. The change of attitudes was then completed after Tet’s impact had been felt. From then on, the viewer was almost overwhelmed with episodes drawing a clear red line against intervention in less-developed societies. The Tet Offensive coincided with the airing of the crucial episodes, acted as a catalyst, and cemented the new pattern.

The new, rigid Prime Directive created a dilemma for the *TOS* crew that U.S. diplomats of the post-Vietnam era might find familiar: What are the limits of non-interference? Preparing a new episode in summer 1968, De Forest Research suggested that the *Enterprise* should uphold the Prime Directive, “the most sacred parts of Federation Law,” *even when threatened*; namely, in a

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136. Cushman, *These Are the Voyages*, Vol. 2, pp. 373, 376.

137. See Mark Gillespie, “Americans Look Back at Vietnam War,” and tables of opinion polls, at <http://news.gallup.com/poll/2299/americans-look-back-vietnam-war.aspx>. See also a connection of these popular trends with the creative team’s attitude in Worland, “Captain Kirk,” p. 113.

138. “Bread and Circuses,” arguing against interventions, was finalized and filmed in September. For the time of production, see Cushman, *These Are the Voyages*, Vol. 2, pp. 331, 343, 539, 546, 569, and 575. The episode “A Piece of the Action,” taking a more relaxed attitude toward interventions, was filmed in November 1967 (p. 493). However, this episode explicitly indicated that the *Enterprise* would have to deal with a previous intervention by a UFP vessel, “before the non-interference directive went into effect.” See “A Piece of the Action,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by James Komack (1967; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004).

139. Franklin, “Star Trek in the Vietnam Era.”

situation in which the rule was probably non-applicable.<sup>140</sup> Arguably, neither *Star Trek* nor the post-Vietnam United States fully resolved this dilemma.

The *TNG* episodes until 1991 and the Gulf War were the products of a time when the Vietnam trauma was still strong in U.S. memory. During this period, the United States avoided direct military interventions in the Third World. Nevertheless, under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, the United States engaged in covert interventions and indirect assistance to anti-Communist forces there (e.g., aiding anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan and anti-Communist rebels in Nicaragua and southern Africa), invaded the small Caribbean island of Grenada in 1983, and carried out air strikes against Libya in 1986.<sup>141</sup> However, in *TNG* no similar activities are undertaken by the UFP, and this evidently was an unspoken criticism of U.S. actions in the Third World during the 1980s. The 1987 *TNG* writers' guide amplified the importance of the Prime Directive, going out of its way to caution the authors on this:

We do not have the right to interfere with the natural process of evolution on any planet. We do not have the right to interfere with the culture of the people who live on the planet. We do not have the right to interfere with the natural processes of life.<sup>142</sup>

Although the conflict with the Klingons in the Third World of space had been resolved by the time of *TNG*, the problem of the limits of non-intervention recurred throughout the series. A planet that at first glance seemed to be an Eden eventually revealed its dark side, including unjust rules that threatened members of the *Enterprise* crew with the death penalty. In this case, Picard had to balance between his duty to uphold the rigid Prime Directive and his duty to his people.<sup>143</sup> A later episode that discussed the breaking of the Prime Directive by a member of the crew bears the title "Who Watches the Watchers?"—reflecting a key dilemma of Western principal-agent theory.<sup>144</sup> The *Enterprise* encounters terrorists fighting a desperate war against the cruel Cardassians;

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140. De Forest Research comments ("Plato's Stepchildren"), 26 July 1968, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 20, Folder 2.

141. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, p. 331. For the "Reagan offensive," see pp. 331–363.

142. *ST:TNG*, "Writers/Directors Guide" (1987), p. 39.

143. "Justice," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by James L. Conway (1987; Hollywood, CA: CBS Studios, 2006).

144. "Who Watches the Watchers?," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Robert Wiemer (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

the Prime Directive has to be upheld.<sup>145</sup> The episode reflects the ambivalence of Hollywood toward Third World liberation movements.<sup>146</sup> Picard's *Enterprise* does not have the option to intervene in the politics of less-developed worlds. Still, non-involvement hides moral dilemmas, and *Star Trek*, as always, presents the counterargument strongly. In a nonaligned world ravaged by civil war, the leader of the rebels sharply criticizes Picard:

Captain, the Federation has a lot to admire in it, but there is a hint of moral cowardice in your dealings with non-aligned planets. You're doing business with a government that is crushing us, and you say you're not involved? You're very, very much involved. You just don't want to get dirty.<sup>147</sup>

Mediation in local disputes is also a regular mission. This calls for significant diplomatic skills, including for a case in which one alien delegation appears to have eaten a member of the other.<sup>148</sup> In another instance, Picard has to evaluate a planet's petition to join the UFP. When, however, it becomes apparent that its inhabitants have used biogenetics to create a warrior race that they then torment, Picard decides they are not yet ripe for accession. The episode is a commentary on the reintegration into U.S. society of Vietnam veterans, a debate that was peaking exactly then.<sup>149</sup>

*Star Trek* also took a strong position on the longstanding U.S. fluctuations between internationalism and isolationism, flatly rejecting the latter. In both series, the starships *Enterprise* discover highly developed peoples who are able to cloak or isolate themselves from the galaxy in order to enjoy their affluence. However, these ideal worlds soon prove false. The seemingly advanced isolationists prove to be either tyrannical (and want to trap the *Enterprise*, thus ending its quest for exploration and progress) or completely dependent on their machines, which they no longer understand or control (thus they are

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145. "Ensign Ro," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Les Landau (1991; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

146. Tony Shaw, "Hollywood's Changing Takes on Terrorism: Re-viewing John Huston's *We Were Strangers* (1949)," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 2017), pp. 399–417.

147. "The High Ground," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Gabrielle Beaumont (1990; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002)

148. See the *TNG* episodes, "Lonely Among US," DVD, directed by Cliff Bole (1987; Hollywood, CA: CBS Studios, 2006); "Too Short a Season," DVD, directed by Rob Bowman (1988; Hollywood, CA: CBS Studios, 2006); "The Outrageous Okona," DVD, directed by Robert Becker (1988; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002); "Loud as a Whisper," DVD, directed by Larry Shaw (1988; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002); "Manhunt," DVD, directed by Rob Bowman (1988; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002); "The Vengeance Factor," DVD, directed by Timothy Bond (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002); and "The High Ground" (1990).

149. "The Hunted," *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Cliff Bole (1989; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2002).

no longer enlightened). The message is clear: isolationism is self-destructive or produces menacing cultures.<sup>150</sup> The notion of Eden also emerges in the form of “primitive,” “authentic” societies of aboriginals. This is the theme of successive episodes of *TOS* and represents a view of some in the First World of the 1960s who, having satisfied their immediate needs, longed for an imaginary authenticity of simpler times. But these idyllic planets also prove false and dangerous. The implication is that the search for Eden may also be a form of isolationism (and conservatism), which *Star Trek* strongly rejects. Planets that opt for isolation “are portrayed as morally deficient or at best dubious,” and Edens are dangerous illusions.<sup>151</sup>

## Conclusions

*Star Trek* tried to raise issues and educate, and therein lies its importance in both mirroring and shaping popular perceptions about the Cold War. Like all social phenomena, however, popular perceptions of the international system do not develop as if they were the products of a laboratory. They incorporate contradictions, misperceptions (similar to those we may hold today), and are parts of a process, in constant interaction with the realities of each epoch. No matter how good a show is, there is always a limit to allegory. Thus, works of popular culture should be approached with self-restraint and respect for the worldviews of the eras in which they were created. These challenges present themselves with no greater intensity than in the international system of the Cold War, which is so contemporary and at the same time so different from the world of the early twenty-first century. To give an example: historians will inevitably be intrigued by the fact that, in a *TOS* episode (supposedly taking place in the 23rd century), Chekov discusses whiskey with Scotty and dismisses it with the argument that it was “invented [*sic*] by a little old lady from Leningrad”—a name that did not survive the twentieth century.<sup>152</sup> The scene points to the temporary character of the unspoken assumptions of any era, including the 2020s. At the same time, it is crucial to realize the importance, even boldness, of mentioning—in a positive manner on a U.S. popular

150. See, among others, “Plato’s Stepchildren,” *ST:TOS*, DVD, directed by David Alexander (1968; Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2004); and “When the Bough Breaks,” *ST:TNG*, DVD, directed by Kim Manners (1988; Hollywood, CA: CBS Studios, 2006).

151. Neumann, “Grab a Phaser, Ambassador,” p. 619; and Timothy Sandefur, “The Politics of *Star Trek*,” *Claremont Review of Books*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (2015), pp. 98–102.

152. “The Trouble with Tribbles,” *ST:TOS*.



television series in 1967—the proud Soviet name, with its connotations of the Bolshevik seizure of power and the city’s desperate defense during the Second World War. The scene was retained even after De Forest Research noted that the reference, with its nationalistic overtones, was at odds with the writers’ guide’s dictate that scripts should not get into 23rd-century Earth politics.<sup>153</sup> However, at the end of the day, in 1967 there was a city called Leningrad, and the creators used it to send a clear message to the public.

The Cold War allegories presented by the two series have important differences. *TOS*, in the late 1960s, presented both deep political/ideological differences with and strong suspicions of the adversary. The series was the product of a society that, having gone through the Second World War and the high Cold War of the postwar years, was experiencing the predicaments of Vietnam and moving toward détente with the Soviet Union. In contrast, for *TNG*, produced in the late 1980s as the Cold War was ending, the major challenge with regard to the—still alien, still formidable—adversary was how to find ways to face its power and also proceed to a reconciliation, not to a mere détente. These differences reflected the changes that had taken place in the West and in the international system from the late 1960s to the late 1980s.

Beyond these relatively straightforward observations, this article has discussed *Star Trek’s* wider depictions of the changing international system. Recent historiography points out that the Cold War was a multifaceted conflict, involving military, political, economic, social, cultural, and ideological dimensions pertaining to the organization of human societies. *Star Trek* is an interesting indicator of the extent to which the dilemmas involving both the strategic and the political/ideological Cold War became part of the fabric of the societies of these eras. Both series touched on issues involving deterrence, the exercise of power, the danger of a slippery slope to war, and the need to consider the other side’s perspective—and did so in a highly elaborate manner. At the same time, *Star Trek* radiated an internationalist and optimistic understanding of international affairs while presenting dilemmas of power and justice, and conflicts between realism and idealism, that were tormenting—and still torment—U.S. society and public debate.

Some have argued that *Star Trek* mounted a critique of U.S. foreign policy from an idealistic perspective.<sup>154</sup> Although elements of idealism do appear in the episodes, *Star Trek* is more a call for a *moderate* realism—a worldview compatible with the evolution of Western liberalism during the later stages of

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153. “*Star Trek* Writers/Directors Guide” (1967), p. 29; and De Forest Research comments (“The Trouble with Tribbles”), 11 August 1967, in Roddenberry Collection, Box 15, Folder 4.

154. Sarantakes, “Cold War Pop Culture,” p. 97.

the Cold War. A larger measure of idealism can be seen in *TNG*'s post-1991 episodes, when the creative team had to adjust not only to Roddenberry's death but also to a new era in international relations. Such a discussion, however, would have to trace popular perceptions of a U.S. *victory* in the Cold War and the resulting expectations of the new era and is thus beyond the scope of the discussion here.

The fact that a work of popular culture could discuss these difficult issues in such a rich and elaborate manner shows the openness and strength of the United States and reflects another pivotal characteristic of the postwar West. Self-evaluation, evolution, and progress presupposed a functional mixture of both certainties and self-criticism, and *Star Trek* is an impressive example of the manifestation of these elements not only among the West's elites but in its popular culture. This ability to consider such dilemmas could even be seen as one of the intellectual strengths that allowed the West to win the Cold War.