The U.S. Excursion into “Star Trek” Diplomacy: Policymaking in the Rearview Mirror in China, Korea, and Southeast Asia

I. Captain Kirk and the Starship Enterprise as Metaphor for American Foreign Policy

II. Japan


B. 1950–1953: Economic Revival During Korean War

C. 1953–Present

III. China

A. Civil War and Establishment of People’s Republic of China, 1945–1949

B. Chinese People’s Republic (1949–present)

IV. Korean War (1950–1953)

V. War in Vietnam (1945–1973)

A. Ho Chi Minh Declares Vietnam’s Independence, 1945

B. French Reoccupation (1945–1954)
   1. Battle of Dien Ben Phu (1954)
      a. General Henri Navarre
      b. General Vo Nguyen Giap
      a. Temporary demarcation line at 17th parallel
      b. Elections of a united Vietnam to be held within two

C. American Involvement
   1. U.S. opposes elections, 1956
   2. Domino Theory
   3. Lack of Information Concerning Vietnam among Policymakers
      a. Did not know Vietnam was traditional enemy of China
      b. Thought Vietnam was like Korea
      c. Extrapolation of Cold War thinking to Southeast Asia
         (1) Diem = “good” guy who became “bad” guy
         (2) Ho Chi Minh = “bad” guy
D. Major Events

1955 (October 23): Diem defeats Bao Dai in referendum
(December): Massive land reforms begun in N. Vietnam

1956 (January): Diem begins crackdown on Vietminh

1957 (October): Communist insurgent activity begun in S. Vietnam

1958 (July 22): Pro-American, anti-Communist gov’t in Laos comes to power in Laos

1959 (May): N. Vietnam begins infiltrating cadres and weapons into S. Vietnam

1960 (August): Coup in Laos hands government back to Souvanna Phouma
(November 11): Attempt to overthrow Diem by S. Vietnam army units
(December): National Liberation Front (Vietcong) formed
(December): S.U. supports neutral government of Souvanna Phouma against
U.S.-supported coup attempt

1961 (May): LBJ visits S. Vietnam and proposes U.S. aid to Diem
(October): JFK gives Diem more equipment and advisers

1962 (early): “strategic hamlet” program
(June): American advisers now at 12,000 (up from 685)

1963 (January 2): Battle of Ap Bac: Vietcong defeat S. Vietnamese army units
(June): First Buddhist monk to commit suicide via self-immolation
(August 22): Henry Cabot Lodge becomes U.S. Ambassador
(December): 16,000 U.S. advisers

1964 (July): Covert S. Vietnamese maritime operations against North begin
(August 7): Tonkin Gulf Resolution passed

1965 (February 7): Vietcong attack American installations; LBJ authorizes Flaming Dart
(February 24): Operation Rolling Thunder begins
(March 8): 2 marine battalions land to defend Danang airfield (1st U.S. troops)
(December): U.S. troop strength at 200,000

1966 (December): U.S. troop strength at nearly 400,000

1967 (December): U.S. troop strength at nearly 500,000

1968 (January): Hot pursuit by U.S. forces of Vietcong into Cambodia acknowledged
(January 31): Tet offensive begins
(December): U.S. troop strength at 540,000

1969 (March 18): Nixon begins secret bombing of Cambodia

1970 (February 20): Kissinger begins secret talks in Paris with Le Duc Tho

1972 (March 30): N. Vietnam launches offensive across DMZ
(April 15): Nixon authorizes bombing near Hanoi and Haiphong

1973 (January 27): Cease-fire agreements signed in Paris
(March 29): Last U.S. troops leave

1975 (April 29): Evacuation of Americans from Saigon begins
(April 30): Communist forces capture Saigon

VI. Genocide in Cambodia

B. Khmer Rouge

2. Estimated 2 million Cambodians killed during Khmer Rouge regime
3. Overthrown by Vietnamese army, 1979