ANALOGIES AT WAR

KOREA, MUNICH, DIEN BIEN PHU, AND
THE VIETNAM DECISIONS OF 1965

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CHAPTER 1

Analogical Reasoning in Foreign Affairs: Two Views

AT THE BEGINNING of Werner Herzog's film Aguirre, the Wrath of God, a troop of Spanish conquistadores debates whether to continue the dangerous search for El Dorado, the legendary city of gold. The leader of the expedition urges the troop to turn back, but his assistant, Aguirre, argues for continuing the expedition. Aguirre twice invokes the analogy of Mexico—Cortez "found" Mexico by defying orders to return, and that won him riches and glory—to make his case. Partly through this argument and partly through intimidation, Aguirre succeeds in persuading the entourage to continue. What he and his entourage do not know is that El Dorado is a fiction invented by the Peruvians to entrap their conquerors. There is no El Dorado. Only death and destruction await them.

Aguirre's use of the Mexico analogy brings to mind a National Security Council (NSC) meeting between President Lyndon Johnson and his principal advisers on July 21, 1965. The issue was whether the United States should commit one hundred thousand troops to South Vietnam. George Ball spoke against sending the troops. When Ball finished, McGeorge Bundy, Dean Rusk, and Robert McNamara attacked his arguments in succession. The U.S. ambassador to South Vietnam, Henry Cabot Lodge, delivered the coup de grace. Summarizing his colleagues' analysis as well as their impatience with Ball, Lodge blurted out, "I feel there is a greater threat to start World War III if we don't go in. Can't we see the similarity to our own indolence at Munich?" 2

Lodge's use of the Munich analogy at a crucial juncture in the deliberative process may be unusually dramatic, but it is hardly unique. Statesmen have consistently turned to the past in dealing with the present. The way they have invoked historical parallels when confronted with a domestic or foreign policy problem has ranged from the implausible to the prescient. In the early months of World War I, for example, Woodrow Wilson feared that Anglo-American disputes over American rights on the seas would lead to war between the two nations. His reasoning...

2 Meeting on Vietnam, notes by Jack Valenti, July 21, 1965. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, Mailing Notes File. Unless otherwise noted, all documents cited in the notes are located in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas.
was based on a curious analogy: "Madison and I are the only two Princeton men that have been President. The circumstances of the War of 1812 and now run parallel. I sincerely hope they will not go further." Less idiosyncratic but more egregious learning from the past includes the "no more summers of 1914" mindset of some European leaders. British and French leaders saw World War I as a mistake that resulted from overreaction to rigid diplomacy. This assessment contributed to a conciliatory policy toward Germany throughout the 1920s, culminating in the appeasement of Hitler at Munich. In the United States, the same attitude took the form of "no more 1917s": many believed that the country was "duped" into World War I, whether by British propaganda or by private financiers and arms merchants. To avoid being drawn into another war in Europe, Congress enacted, from 1933 through 1939, four neutrality acts that sought to prevent the United States from following the 1917 path to war. President Franklin Roosevelt shared the public's aversion to American involvement in another war. He did little to strengthen British or French resolve at Munich, and he may have inadvertently given Hitler the green light to proceed with his expansionist policies.

Munich's infamous role in bringing about World War II is now led to a "no more Munich" syndrome in the postwar period. In 1950, the Truman administration reversed its assessment that the Korean Peninsula was unimportant to U.S. security because President Truman saw North Korea's invasion of South Korea as analogous to the actions of Mussolini, Hitler, and Japan in the 1930s. Similarly, when informed by his superiors that China might enter the war if the United States moved too far north, General Douglas MacArthur refused to reexamine U.S. aims and protected that strategy by his troops short of the Yalu amounted to appeasing the Chinese as the British had appeased Hitler. British Prime Minister Anthony Eden also saw a campaign of Hitlerite prophecies in Nasr's seizure of the Suez Canal in 1956. Eden, who was more prescient than most in sizing up the true Hitler in the 1930s, was quick to apply the same schema to Nasr. This perception of the stakes, among other things, convinced him that a British-French response was imperative. President Dwight Eisenhower and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, did not accept Eden's characterization of Nasr. Indeed, the Americans were more concerned about antiquated British and French imperial pretensions. The result was that the United States applied strong pressure to force the British and the French to withdraw from Egypt. Misapplying the lessons of history cost Eden and the nation he led dearly.

A happier instance of learning from the past occurred during the Cuban missile crisis. President John F. Kennedy rejected the advice of his more hawkish advisers to remove Soviet missiles in Cuba by an air strike and opted instead for a naval blockade of the island. He rejected the air strike in part because he was worried about repeating the mistakes of 1914; he also did not want the action to be perceived as a Pearl Harbor in reverse. Kennedy's use of the 1914 and Pearl Harbor analogies is an exception: it injected a certain caution into the Executive Committee's deliberations and thus made possible the selection of the naval blockade, a less drastic option that turned out to be effective.

More recent examples of policymakers using history in their decision-making, like most earlier examples, have more ambiguous or unfortunate outcomes. A principal reason for the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic in 1965 was avoiding "another Cuba"; subsequent analyses, however, have raised questions about the accuracy of such a diagnosis and about the impact of the intervention on U.S.-Latin American relations. In 1975, President Gerald Ford and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, likened the seizure of the U.S. vessel Mayaguez by Cambodia to the North Korean seizure of the Pueblo in 1968. Both actions were interpreted as designed to humiliate the United States. Ford and Kissinger were anxious to avoid the protracted negotiations that Lyndon B. Johnsonope as the one who first expressed reservations about the "Pearl Harbor in reverse" analogy (conversation with author, New York City, July 22, 1980). Cf. "Documentation: White House Tapes and Minutes of the Cuban Missile Crisis," International Security 10 (1985): 154-203. See also James Blight and Donald Welch, On the Brink: Americans and Soviets React to the Cuban Missile Crisis (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), pp. 26, 78, 141, 156, 157, 219, 278.


Johnson endured; they chose to bring the United States’ overwhelming military force to bear in a rescue mission. Although the rescue team was successful in releasing the hostages, an accident during the mission claimed the lives of more U.S. rescuers than there were hostages.

In the early 1980s, the Munich analogy was back in vogue. Officials of the Reagan administration who formulated the policy of using Nicaraguan rebels, the contras, to pressure or overthrow the Sandinista regime saw critics of their policy as “appeasers” of the Sandinistas. Some, like Joan Kirpatrick, argued that Munich, not Vietnam, was the appropriate analogue for the challenge in Nicaragua. For many Americans, however, the Munich argument had been discredited by the Vietnam War; the argument that resonated in their minds was that of the “Vietnam syndrome.” Thus critics of the Reagan administration’s policies in Central America argued that they were likely to lead to “another Vietnam.”

A final example of political elites resorting to historical analogies can be seen in Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping’s decision to crush the pro-democracy movement in the spring of 1989. Pivotal notes from a meeting of Chinese leaders report Deng egging the students’ demands for democracy as “altogether the same stuff as what the rebels did during the Cultural Revolution. All they want is to create chaos under the heavens.” Having lived through the horror of those chaotic years, Deng could not countenance their possible return. He saw himself as suppressing a new Cultural Revolution.

This book is about how and why policymakers use historical analogies in their foreign policy decision-making and about the implications of their doing so. It builds on previous attempts to understand the role of “learning from history” in international politics. Learning from history is said to occur when policymakers look to the past to help them deal with the present; the principal device used in this process is the historical analogy. The term historical analogy signifies an inference that if two or

14 See David Fromkin and James Chace, “What Are the Lessons of Vietnam?” Foreign Affairs 65 (1986): 725-49, for an interesting collection of different interpretations of “the lessons of Vietnam” as they pertain to Central America.
16 Ibid.
17 The quotations marks indicate the following: (1) the term it borrowed from others, especially Robert Jervis, Perversion and Misappraisal in International Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), chap. 6: (2) policymakers may learn the wrong lesson just as frequently as they learn the right lessons; and (3) since it is possible to argue that learning the wrong lesson is not learning at all, I prefer to use a more neutral term to denote the phenomenon I am investigating: “false decision-maker use history.” Cf. Philip Tetlock, “Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy: In Search of an Elusive Concept,” in Learning in U.S. and Soviet Foreign Policy, ed. George Roudanez and Philip Tetlock (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 85-101.
to analyze or make sense of their foreign policy dilemmas, has found corroboration in the works of Robert Jervis, Glenn Snyder, Paul Diezing, Yaacov Vertzberger, and Deborah Larson. 26

Others accept the finding that policymakers often resort to history but are skeptical about the claim that statesmen use analogies for policy guidance or analysis. The problem for these skeptics is aptly summarized by Arthur Schlesinger in his otherwise favorable review of May’s book. For Schlesinger, “the past is an enormous grab bag with a price for everybody. The issue of history as rationalization somewhat diminishes the force of the argument that history is per se a powerful formal determinant of policy.” 27 Skeptics argue that analogies are used more for justification and advocacy than for analysis. 28 In this view, Agriure, Lodge, and Deng were all using the lessons of history to justify and to advocate, before an audience, policy choices they had already made. The issue as Schlesinger sees it is that “the historian can never be sure the statesman himself cannot be sure—to what extent the invocation of history is no more than a means of dignifying a conclusion already reached on other grounds.” 29

If this is the case, one cannot conclude that the analogies policymakers invoke genuinely explain their policy choices. Still other critics—mainly


28 In this context, it is interesting to note the similarities between the works of Robert Jervis and Glenn Snyder, who both use historical analogies to explain the behavior of policymakers. Jervis, for example, argues that policymakers often use historical analogies to justify their actions, while Snyder suggests that policymakers may use these analogies to provide a basis for their decisions. This is consistent with the findings of the current study, which suggests that policymakers do use historical analogies to explain their actions. However, it is important to note that the use of historical analogies by policymakers is not always successful. In some cases, policymakers may over-rely on historical analogies, leading to inaccurate or misleading assessments of current situations. This is particularly true when policymakers are faced with complex and rapidly changing political landscapes.

29 It is also important to consider the role of other factors, such as political ideology, in shaping the use of historical analogies by policymakers. For example, policymakers with a liberal ideological orientation may be more likely to rely on historical analogies that emphasize the importance of freedom and democracy, while policymakers with a conservative ideological orientation may be more likely to rely on historical analogies that emphasize the importance of national security and traditional values. This suggests that policymakers may use historical analogies in a way that is consistent with their political beliefs, rather than in a way that is necessarily grounded in objective analysis.
used badly.\textsuperscript{93} That is, if analogies do not affect the decision outcome, it does not matter if they are used badly or wisely.

Hence the challenge—a challenge that can be inferred from the skeptics' position—to those who posit such a causal link: specify what it is that historical analogies do and demonstrate how, if at all, such tasks influence decision outcomes. I take up this challenge in this book. Taking from earlier works the cue that analogies are used for analysis, I specify what those analytic tasks are and how they are interrelated, and I organize them into a coherent framework. For the sake of brevity, I shall call this the AE (Analogical Explanation) framework. Simply stated, the AE framework suggests that analogies are cognitive devices that "help" policymakers perform six diagnostic tasks central to political decision-making. Analogies (1) help define the nature of the situation confronting the policymaker, (2) help assess the stakes, and (3) provide prescriptiveness. They help evaluate alternative options by (4) predicting their chances of success, (5) evaluating their moral rightness, and (6) warning about dangers associated with the options.\textsuperscript{94}

Since the test of any framework is how well it illuminates concrete issues, the AE framework will be used in chapters 5, 6, and 7 to elucidate American decision-making during the Vietnam War. I provide reasons for this choice, and I elaborate on the decision outcomes I wish to explain in chapter 5, here it suffices to note that in addition to its substantive importance, Vietnam decision-making would seem to be a "most likely" case for the skeptics' hypothesis that analogies are used for justification and advocacy and a "least likely" case for my hypothesis that analogies

\textsuperscript{93} Neither is there much point to asking questions such as these from where do policymakers get their analogies? How is the "appropriate" analogy useful in a given instance? These questions become interesting only when we succeed in establishing that analogies do affect the decision outcomes.


influence decision outcomes.\textsuperscript{95} This is so because such a large number of analogies were invoked so publicly, frequently, and indiscriminately by Vietnam decision-makers that even those sympathetic to the analogical explanation may want to begin by taking the skeptics' claims seriously.\textsuperscript{96}

Yet I shall argue that the AE framework, when applied to the analogies invoked by America's Vietnam decision-makers, succeeds in accounting for the Vietnam decisions of 1965 at a level of precision not achieved by other explanations. Specifically, I suggest that the Korean and Munich analogies—or rather, the lessons the policymakers drew from these historical parallels—predispersed them toward military intervention in Vietnam. In particular, the lessons of Korea had an especially powerful influence on Vietnam decision-making because they not only predisposed the policymakers toward intervention but also predisposed them toward selecting a specific option among the several preintervention options. The Korean analogy, in other words, shaped the form as well as the fact of the U.S. intervention.

In this sense, the Korean analogy had a more decisive impact than the Munich analogy in the making of the Vietnam decisions of 1965. If Korea and Munich shaped the perceptions of the most senior decision-makers and predisposed them to favor intervention, the French experience in Vietnam during the 1950s suggested to others that Vietnam was an unwinnable war and that it was therefore essential for the United States to cut its losses and withdraw instead of taking over the fighting from the South Vietnamese. By teasing out the specific analytic tasks performed by these analogies and by showing how, for example, the French, Korean, and Munich analogies led to different policy preferences, the AE framework shows how analogies matter in foreign policy decision-making. Much of this book is devoted to this enterprise.

Insofar as I succeed in demonstrating that historical analogies affected the selection of America's Vietnam options, it becomes meaningful and

\textsuperscript{95} Like most researchers who choose small N studies, I have been influenced by Harry Eckstein's seminal discussion of how crucial cases can be used for theory building. Eckstein considers the "most likely" and "least likely" cases as crucial cases because the former seems "especially tailored" to invalidation and the latter to confirmation. See Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in Handbook of Political Science, vol. 7, Strategies of Inquiry, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1975), pp. 113-20. Thus if Vietnam decision-making were a most likely case for the skeptics' hypothesis that analogies are used for justification and advocacy, and if analogies actually played a major diagnostic role in policymaking, would constitute a decisive invalidation of the skeptics' hypothesis. The same finding, however, would give strong confirmation to the analytical view if Vietnam were a "least likely" case for the analytical view.

\textsuperscript{96} This description is applicable to the majority of public speeches and interviews given by major administration officials from 1965 to 1967. For examples, see the issues of the Department of State Bulletin for January 28, 1966, March 23, 1966, and September 18, 1967.
interesting to address a second question: the question of how well analogies were used. As chapters 5, 6, and 7 will show, the way U.S. policymakers picked and used analogies and the way they responded to critics of their analogies suggest that they did not use analogies well. Analogical reasoning during the Vietnam War thus confirms a central finding of previous research on the relationship between history and policy: decision-makers often use history badly. More often than not, decision-makers invoke inappropriate analogies that not only fail to illuminate the new situation but also mislead by emphasizing superficial and irrelevant parallels. Insomuch as such analogies influence decisions, they are deemed to be at least partially responsible for costly or failed policies. The task now is to explain this observed pattern of poor use of analogies.

An explanation is needed because, for those who see a causal link between analogies and policy, the finding that policymakers are so often misled by their analogies is puzzling. Why are they so easily misled, and if the record is so sorry, why do they continue to rely on historical analogies? For the skeptics, these facts are not in need of explanation. They are consistent with their view that analogies are used to justify and to advocate, not to analyze. Insofar as superficial similarities between the analogy invoked and the new situation exist, what matters from the skeptics' perspective is how effective the analogy will be in convincing others. Therefore it is not surprising that the analogies invoked are often the ones that are the most obvious and the most superficial.

Hence the skeptics' second challenge: explain the observed tendency of policymakers to use analogies poorly and recurrently. The traditional response to the question is that policymakers are poor historians; they do not know enough history, their repertoire of plausible historical parallels is limited, and consequently, they pick and apply the wrong analogies. This answer also implies a certain cure. That is, if only policymakers know more history, if only techniques could be developed to enable policymakers and their staff to identify misleading parallels and to bring them to their superiors' attention, the latter might be able to use history more successfully. The problem, I suspect, is deeper. For if policymakers of diverse historical depths across administrations seem, on average, to use analogies

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86 See note 21 above.
87 See note 25 above.
88 One may of course argue that because of my selection of Vietnam, the conclusion that analogies were used badly was predetermined. But that is precisely the point: the case of analogies used badly is an excellent case of a general pattern. I can concentrate on examining why rather than whether decision-makers used analogies poorly. I am less interested in dwelling on the normative duality of the patterns than I am in explaining it.
89 May, "Voltaire of the Past," pp. xl, 55-56, 80, 116-21.
90 May, "Voltaire of the Past," pp. xl, 55-56, 80, 116-21.
91 ibid., esp. chap. 5-7. Neustadt and May, Thinking in Time, is devoted to teaching others how to use history more actively.
92 poorbly, something systemic—something about the process of analogical reasoning itself—is likely to be at work. My analysis of how analogies figure in the private deliberations of America's Vietnam policymakers supports this notion. It suggests that the issue is only partly how knowledgeable or analytically careful the relevant cast of decision-makers was. Those who dominated Vietnam decision-making in the 1960s were intellectually serious individuals. As a whole, they probably knew more about history and politics than any other comparable group of decision-makers before or after the 1960s. Some of them, including Dean Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, Walt Rostow, Arthur Schlesinger, and James Schlesinger had taught those subjects before assuming power; others, including George Ball and William Bundy, were certainly more historically conscious than the average career official. For these reasons one of the most perceptual accounts of how America came to be involved in Vietnam refers to the policymakers of the 1960s as 'the best and the brightest.' Yet these individuals picked and used analogies in ways as confident, indiscriminating, and erroneous as the policymakers cited in the works of May, Jervis, Snyder and Diesing, and Vertebarger. The second purpose of this book is to explain why policymakers often use analogies poorly, the Vietnam policymakers being cases in point. In contrast to the political explanation provided by the skeptic, and to explanations focusing on deficient historical knowledge, I propose an explanation that focuses on the processes of analogical reasoning. The basic idea is that there is something about the psychology of analogical reasoning that makes it difficult, though not impossible, to use historical analogies properly in foreign affairs.

The psychology of analogical reasoning begins with the idea that human beings are creatures with limited cognitive capacities. As a result, a means by which they cope with the enormous amount of information they encounter is reliance on "knowledge structures" such as analogies or schemata. These knowledge structures help them order, interpret, and simplify, in a word, to make sense of their environment. Matching each new instance with instances stored in memory is then a major way human beings comprehend their world. 94

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88 David Henderson and Andrew Ostrom, "The Representation of Knowledge in Memory," in Schoeling and the Acquisition of Knowledge, ed. Richard Anderson, Paul Spiro, and
This view of human beings as engaged in continuous analogical reasoning in order to make sense of their world fits hand in glove with the AE framework developed earlier: in fact, it corroborates and encompasses the key assumptions of the framework. The psychological approach's strong point is its emphasis on the centrality of knowledge structures such as analogies and schemas to human comprehension and its posture about the systematic biases associated with analogical or schematic information processing are experimentally based. In other words, and in contrast to the skeptics' views, psychological theories suggest that, although the cognitive reasons why human beings resort to analogies, for information processing and comprehension, and that there are also identifiable and systematic biases associated with the process, because these arguments are borne out by rigorous experimental tests, they have greater credence than the plausible but untested view of analogies advanced by the skeptics, namely, that the functions of analogies are limited to justification and advocacy.

In addition to adopting the assumption that to help make sense of reality human beings match new instances with old instances—analogy and schemas—stored in memory, I use two sets of key findings from the social cognitive psychological research program to explain why policymakers often use analogies recurrently and suboptimally. The first set of findings focuses on how analogies are picked or accessed: the key finding here is that people tend to access analogies on the basis of surface similarities. The second set of findings concerns the nature of analogical or schematic processing. Once the analogy or schema is accessed, it (1) allows the perceiver to go beyond the information given, (2) processes information "top-down," and (3) can lead to the phenomenon of persever- ance. These two sets of findings suggest that the process of analogical reasoning involves cognitive mechanisms and inferential steps that may lead to simplistic and mistaken interpretations of the incoming stimuli.

Using the psychology of analogical reasoning to explain why policymakers do not use analogies well leads to implications that are at odds with conventional wisdom. They suggest that the problem lies less with a fail-
of a cognitive role for historical analogies is untenable. What is needed is a perspective that allows an independent cognitive role for analogies in decision-making without denying that they may also play an instrumental role in persuading and convincing others in the policy process. The AE framework, buttressed by the findings of cognitive psychology, is such a perspective.

The cogency of the AE view does not depend on denying the use of analogies in justification and advocacy; in fact, it allows it, for policymakers who are influenced by the lessons of history in arriving at their decisions can be expected to use those same lessons to advance their policy preferences. What is critical is that insofar as analogies play a role in informing policymakers’ diagnoses of the situation and of their policy options, it becomes possible for the analyst to begin to understand their choices. The fact that policymakers use the same analogies to justify their choices does not vitiate the diagnostic role of the analogies in helping the policymakers arrive at those choices. Thus Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who used more historical analogies than most others during the Vietnam conflict, spoke of “advocacy with integrity,” by which he meant his willingness to use the very lessons of history that informed his thinking about Vietnam to persuade his colleagues and Congress that it was necessary for the United States to fight and to fight in a certain way there. Rusk challenged his critics to find any instance in which he “thought one thing and said another.”

Skeptics are right to warn against informing too much from a policymaker’s analogies on the basis of their mere invocation. Arthur Schlesinger’s earlier remark that at some point the decision-maker himself may no longer know whether history is used to dignify decisions reached on other grounds is well taken. It suggests the importance of seeking and finding in the empirical record evidence of repeated use of the same set of analogies over time before granting plausibility to the analogical explanation. Such a pattern of use may not always be apparent, since analogies may have played important roles in crisis situations such as the Cuban missile crisis and the Dominican Republic intervention, even though they were invoked sparingly. However, in cases such as Vietnam, when decision-makers had more time and deliberated more often, it is fair to expect repeated private use. Analogies that surface recurrently in the policy formulation and deliberative stages are less likely to be used to “dignify decisions reached on other grounds” than analogies used once or twice in a NSC meeting.

Schlesinger’s remark, however, is also telling in ways that he may not have anticipated. It points to a final weakness of the skeptics’ position, that is, that their position beggs the question: just what are these “other grounds”? For those who assume that analogies play diagnostic roles, the grounds on which a decision is reached can be partially inferred from the analogies invoked, when and if they are invoked. When the latter occurs, an analysis of the policymakers’ analogies is likely to shed light on their decision-making. Skeptics doubt that the policymakers’ analogies tell us much about their decisions, but they (the skeptics) fail to identify the other grounds that supposedly tell us more. Without a theory specifying what those other grounds are, the skeptics’ position is, in the final analysis, unhelpful.

But it may be useful, for the purposes of contrast, to fill in for the skeptics what those “other grounds” might be, given their perspective. In searching for nonanalogical explanations for the Vietnam War, one may pick from a variety of alternatives. In this book I consider four such explanations proposed for the Vietnam decisions of 1965: containment, political-military ideology (along a hawk-dove spectrum), bureaucratic politics, and domestic political considerations. I assume these explanations are the most plausible other grounds that the skeptics can provide. In chapter 7, I contrast each of these explanations with the analogical explanation; the latter is strengthened to the extent that I can show that these “other grounds” cannot explain the decisions of 1965 as well as it can.

I have assumed throughout that there exists a broad category of political scientists and historians who have either voiced the objections of the skeptics or who share their sentiments. The picture of the skeptics I have presented is necessarily a composite one, and it may not fit any particular analyst, but I believe my summary of their positions is representative of the general orientation of those cited, it is certainly representative of the questions raised by many thoughtful students of international relations to earlier versions of my argument. Nonetheless, to the reader who remains doubtful whether anyone or any group really holds

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* Interview with author, Athens, Georgia, August 21, 1985.

* Note, however, that I have not chosen to organize this work around the systematic testing of competing explanations of Vietnam. While I do try to specify what the various competing “theories” claim, infer propositions about what to expect from them, and “test” these propositions against my case study, I consider the exercise more suggestive than con-clusive. Explicit and systematic testing of theory is not the purpose of this book in part because the rival “theories” are all underspecified. My main purposes are first, to develop, extend, and revise the analytical view of history’s effect on foreign policy first articulated by Hoffmann, May, and others, and second, to spell out the implications of this revised view (the AE framework). I illustrate the utility of my framework by applying it to Vietnam decision-making.

* See note 25 above, esp. Snyder, Myth of Empire, chaps. 1, 6, and 7.
the views I have labeled as belonging to the skepticism, I suggest that my use of the skeptics' arguments be seen as a heuristic device used to generate a set of questions that I consider worth asking and answering. The significance of the questions and the quality of the answers can be assessed independently of the way the questions were generated.

CHAPTER 2

The AE Framework

Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the "world images" that have been created by "ideas" have, like switches, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest.


Weber's sentiment about the importance of ideas has always had a sympathetic, if small, following among contemporary analysts of international politics. What keeps the estuary of analysts who actively pursue this research program small, I suspect, is that while it is easy to acknowledge that ideas and images can guide the tracks of foreign policy action, it is difficult to indicate precisely how ideas translate into decision outcomes. Alexander George's work on the "Operational Code," in my view, comes closest to showing how one might theorize about the precise ways in which ideas affect policy. In his influential 1969 article, "The 'Operational Code': A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," George argued that the systematic study of

the ideological precepts of political leaders could shed much light on their foreign policy behavior. What made the article theoretically important was that George went beyond stating that beliefs influenced behavior; he resurrected the notion of the "Operational Code." From Nathan Leites' *A Study of Bolsheviks*, refined and systematized it, and came up with a set of questions by which the Code could be defined.5

Five questions, ranging from whether politics was perceived by political elites to be a harmonious or conflictual enterprise, to the role of business in human affairs, tapped policymakers' philosophical beliefs. A second set of questions, ranging from how best to set one's goals to the best timing of action to advance one's interests, defined the instrumental beliefs of a political leader. According to George, the answers to these questions enable us to tap the policy-relevant beliefs of statesmen and thus to obtain a sense of their policy dispositions.

In this book I do to analogies what George did to *A Study of Bolsheviks*. George asked the question, How can the beliefs of the Soviet Politburo, so painstakingly documented in Leites' massive tome, be simplified, organized, and systematized so that it can be used to explain their foreign policy? Following George, I ask the question, How can the numerous ways in which historical analogies have been used by decision-makers, documented so well by May, Jervis, and others, be systematized and simplified so that they can be used to explain foreign policy decisions?

Analogies, I suggest, can be viewed as intellectual devices often called upon by policymakers to perform a set of diagnostic tasks relevant to political decision-making. Six of these tasks are especially important. First and foremost, analogies "help" define the nature of the problem or situation confronting the policymaker by comparing the new situation to previous situations with which the policymaker is more familiar.6 This comparison highlights the similarities between the two situations and downplays their differences. Once the new situation is partially or wholly defined in terms of a previous situation, the second and third diagnostic tasks follow: analogies give the policymaker a sense of the political stakes involved, and they also imply or suggest possible solutions to the problem as defined.7

These three tasks and their interrelationships can be easily discerned in the cases of Aquirre and Deng Xiaoping, the first and last examples cited in chapter 1. Aquirre was faced with the dilemma of whether to obey orders to discontinue the expedition or to defy orders and continue on his own. Remembering Cortez's "founding" of Mexico allowed him to liken his situation to that of Cortez's; once that was done, the stakes—personal fame and glory—became clear, as did the implied solutions: defy orders and continue, as Cortez did. Similarly, the student demonstrations in Tiananmen reminded Deng Xiaoping of the beginnings of the Cultural Revolution. This assessment of the nature of the situation suggested that the political stakes were extremely high—the violent upheavals of 1966-1976 might return, and Deng might lose power again—and it also implied that suppression might be his only option. The point here is straightforward: the first three diagnostic tasks I attribute to historical analogies—defining the situation, stake assessment, and implicit policy prescription—are connected to or imply one another, with the first normally controlling the context of the second and the third.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth diagnostic tasks all pertain to evaluating the implicit policy prescribed, as well as other possible alternatives. Analogies thus "help" evaluate the implied solution or other alternatives by "predicting" their likelihood of success, "assessing" their moral rightness, and "warning" of dangers associated with them. Thus Aquirre's Mexican analogy does not merely provide an implied solution, but also predicts that this course of action is likely to succeed, since it did so for Cortez. The analogy says nothing about the morality of the action, but it does warn about the hardship and danger of continuing with the expedition. In the case of Deng, the Cultural Revolution analogy says nothing about whether the implied solution, suppression, will work; it does tell Deng that suppressing the students is morally correct (from his point of view), and it also warns of no dangers associated with this course of action.

By breaking down the concept of diagnosis into six distinct but related tasks, we can see how each task "helps" to provide the answers decision-makers need. Summing up over the six tasks, it becomes clear why analogies are such powerful diagnostic tools and why policymakers, for better or worse, are likely to find them attractive and convincing. In other words, when analogies are used to define the situation and evaluate the


7 Cf. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapiro, *Foreign Policy Decision-Making*; Snyder, Bruck, and Sapiro were among the first to treat "situation definition" as an important variable in understanding foreign policy decision-making, however, they did not specify the possible sources of this variable. See Charles Hermann and Gregory Pecorek, "The Evolution and Future of Theoretical Research in the Comparative Study of Foreign Policy," in Hermann, Kegley, and Bierman, *New Directions*, pp. 22-83.

8 Studies of complex organizational decision-making have also found a clear connection between problem definition and the generation of solutions. According to Robert Abelson and Ariela Lott, decision-makers "typically develop or identify alternatives while diagnosing the decision problem." See Abelson and Levi, *Decision Making and Decision Theory*, in Lindsay and Aronson, *Handbook*, p. 272.
options in the ways indicated, they introduce choice possibilities into an actor's decision-making\(^7\) they predispose the actor toward certain policy options and turn him away from others.\(^8\) If the Mexican and Cultural Revolution analogies performed the diagnostic tasks I claim they did, it should hardly surprise us that Agranov chose to continue the expedition and Dong Xueping chose to suppress the student demonstrations.

The above exercise takes as its point of departure the analytical view's notion that analogies are indeed used for diagnostic purposes by decision-makers. It develops that notion by identifying the tasks analogies perform, isolating the most important few, elaborating on them, and specifying their interrelationships. The result is a framework that identifies with some precision what policymakers are likely to use analogies for and how analogies might affect their policy choices. Of a policymaker's use of historical analogy \(X\) when faced with situation \(Y\), the AE framework suggests that we ask the following questions: (1) How will \(X\) define situation \(Y\)? (2) What might \(X\) say about the stakes in situation \(Y\)? (3) Does \(X\) provide an implicit prescription about what to do concerning \(Y\)? In addition, what does \(X\) say about (4) the chances of success, (5) the morality, and (6) the risks of its implied prescription or other alternatives put forward to deal with \(Y\)? Analogy \(X\) may not provide answers to all of these questions, but it usually answers enough of them to give content to the framework. When it does so, the framework can shed light on the policymaker's dispositions.

A major advantage of this framework is that it captures the versatility and therefore the power of analogical reasoning better than the analytical view. It does so by attributing to analogies multiple diagnostic functions, a notion that is absent or undeveloped in the analytical view. I will illustrate this point by considering one of the best documented and most widely cited instance of how analogies affect policy, Harry Truman's 1950

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I had time to think about the place. In my generation, this was not the first occasion when the strong had attacked the weak. I recalled some earlier instances: Manchuria, Ethiopia, Austria. I remembered how each time that the democracies failed to act it had encouraged the aggressors to keep going ahead. Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted in ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. . . . If this was allowed to go on unchallenged it would mean a third world war, just as similar incidents had brought on a second world war.\(^9\)

Informed by the parallel of the 1930s, Truman and his advisors came to the conclusion that "refusal to repel the aggression would be nothing but ' appeasement.'" And appeasement, as history has shown, would ultimately lead to war.\(^10\) The analytical view suggests that the lessons of the 1930s convinced Truman that appeasement was bad because it would lead eventually to war. It was this reasoning that led Truman to intervene in Korea.

More can be said about the role of the lessons of the 1930s if one adopts the AE Framework. How is the situation defined? In terms of the events of the 1930s. What does that tell us about the stakes as Truman was likely to perceive them? Extremely high, since appeasement led to war before. Is there an implied solution? Yes, to do now what the democracies in the 1930s had failed to do: repel the aggression. What are the chances that this implied solution will work? Good—the assumption among those who took the lessons of the 1930s to heart was that Hitler could have been stopped if the West had been more resolute.\(^11\) Is this solution moral? Undoubtedly. Are there any dangers associated with this solution? The answer is unclear or negative, since intervention was not tried in the 1930s. This series of questions, based on the hypothesis that analogies are capable of performing multiple, interdependent diagnostic tasks, lends a certain order and clarity to the phenomena of analogical reasoning that is absent or only implicit in the analytical view.

The framework makes the process of analogical reasoning comprehensible in its entirety. Perhaps more important, it also demonstrates the diagnostic powers of the historical analogy, the sum of which seems greater than its parts. By this I mean the lessons of the 1930s did not merely suggest to Truman that appeasement was wrong and therefore needed to be stopped, they also suggested—and this can be teased out

\(^9\) Truman, Memoirs, 5:335-36.

\(^10\) ibid., p. 335.

\(^11\) ibid., p. 171.

\(^12\) Dorn Bush, interview with author, Athens, Georgia, August 21, 1989. Whether taking a firm stance against Hitler in 1938 would have actually stopped him and prevented World War II remains a controversial issue. Recent historiography suggests that Hitler might have preferred war earlier (1939) rather than later. See Gerhard Weinberg, "Meinich After Fifty Years," Foreign Affairs 67 (1989): 165-78.
through the framework above—that the stakes in Korea were exceedingly high, that the North Koreans and their Soviet sponsors could be stopped, and that trying to do just that would be a profoundly moral policy. When the different diagnostic tasks all reinforce the same solution, the power of the analogy can be overwhelming. In fact, if the stakes are high enough and the goal profoundly moral, perhaps it might even be permissible to do more than restore the status quo ante. General Douglas MacArthur thought so. He took the position that stopping his troops short of the Yalu was tantamount to appeasement.12

It is important to note that the diagnoses relating to the implied solution, its chances of success, its morality, and its dangers need not always reinforce one another. In the case of the 1990s they did. It is conceivable that, for example, when another analogy is used, its diagnosis of the dangers associated with the solution may be in tension with its diagnosis of its chances of success. In such cases the implied solution may no longer be attractive. A modified and less dangerous form of the solution might become the preferred alternative. The ability to detect such instances is another advantage stemming from differentiating the diagnostic tasks performed by historical analogies. In Chapter 5, I rely on such diagnostic tensions to explain the options selected by America’s Vietnam policymakers.

THE COGNITIVE DIMENSION OF THE AE FRAMEWORK

Although the above arguments are derived without reliance on the concepts of cognitive psychology, readers familiar with the “cognitive revolution” will be quick to note that my attribution of specific diagnostic functions to analogies converges with some of the major findings of cognitive psychology. The two perspectives meet in the importance they attach to human information processing, as the key to understanding behavior, and in the centrality they assign to knowledge structures such as schemas or analogies in human information processing.13

Cognitive psychologists have demonstrated that one major way human beings make sense of new situations is by matching them with old situations stored in memory. In the words of Richard Nisbett and Lee Ross, two leading social psychologists, “Objects and events in the phenomenal

12 Cited in Schooled, Policy and Direction, pp. 292-51.
"recalled some earlier instances: Manchuria, Ethiopia, Austria." In each of
these cases, the West failed to act and the aggressors continued. From
those experiences, Truman arrived at the axiom that aggression un-
checked means general war later.

Truman's axiom is called a schema by cognitive psychologists. A
schema is a generic concept stored in memory. It may refer to objects,
situations, events, or sequences of events and people. A schema may
also be viewed as a person's subjective "theory" about how the social or
political world works. This subjective "theory" is typically derived, as the
case of Truman illustrates, from "generalizing across one's experiences"
in the political world. The difference between a schema and an analogy
is that an analogy is specific and concrete, while a schema is abstract and
generic. Thus, if Truman reasoned that failure to stop North Korea would
have the same consequences as Japan's invasion of Manchuria, he would
be reasoning by analogy. If he abstracted from the specifics of Manchuria
to form the axiom that aggression unchecked means general war later,
the axiom would be a schema. As this example indicates, the difference
between a schema and an analogy is not easy to discern, because their
users constantly shift between the two knowledge structures or the two
levels of abstraction.

Neither the cognitive psychologists nor the political scientists have seen fit to distinguish strictly between the two structures.
In practice, they have been used interchangeably. As Hazel Markus and
R. B. Zajonc put it in their review of the field of cognitive social psychol-
ogy in the 1980s, "The research of the past fifteen years has made it
clear... that cognitive structures are more alike than they are differ-
ent." Schemas, scripts, and historical analogies may thus be considered
knowledge structures whose functional similarities are much more im-
pressive and pertinent than their differences. Theories advanced by cog-
nitive psychologists on how schemas are formed, recalled, and used to

[13] See a close paraphrase of Deborah Larson's subtle definition, as Larson, Con-
tamination, p. 51. For a review of the various definitions of schema, see Seth Tower, "Schem-
a tic Principles in Human Memory," in Social Cognition: The Ontario Symposium, ed.
Terry Higgins, C. Herman and M. Zanna (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Asso-
Robert Abelson, "Script Processing in Attitude Formation and Decision-Making," Cogni-
tion and Social Behavior, ed. John Carroll and John Piere (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence
Erlbaum Associates, 1979); Abelson and Levie, "Decision-Making," 1:271-73; Fiske and Tay-
lor, Social Cognition, p. 149; Larson, Contamination, pp. 30-37; and Vertebinger, "Framing
Policy Decisionsmakers.

THE AE FRAMEWORK

process information can therefore shed light on the origins, cues, and
functions of historical analogies.

What is most important for our purposes is that research on schemas
and analogies confirms the importance of these knowledge structures for
apprehending reality. Schema theory, for example, holds that schemas are
the "building blocks of cognition." They are," according to David Runnstatt,
"the fundamental elements upon which all information pro-
cessing depends." Specifically, they are necessary for interpreting sen-
sory data, for retrieving information from memory, and for guiding the
flow of processing in the system. There does not yet exist a universally
accepted or unified schema theory that accounts for all these aspects of
information processing, and this lack has led some observers to argue that
there is no such thing as schema theory. In a strict sense, they are right;
however, the schema concept has led to enough important and validated
findings that, for the sake of convenience, it should be possible to refer
to these findings as those of schema theory. More important, there is
wide agreement about the centrality of the concept of the schema in
modern-day studies of human information processing. In the words of
Nisbett and Ross, "it has become increasingly clear to theorists working
in almost all areas of psychology that the schema construct is a corner-
stone of psychological theory."

The advantage of adding a cognitive psychological dimension to my
framework is manifest: the findings of cognitive psychology provide in-
dependent corroboration for the assumption that analogies play an im-
portant role in information processing. In my earlier discussion of the
relative merits of the two contrasting views of policymakers' use of anal-
ologies, I claimed that the skeptics' view, with its emphasis on justification
and advocacy, begs the question of how policymakers arrive at their de-
cisions. The analytical view, in contrast, assumes that analogies help
shape policymakers' interpretation of events and in so doing, make cer-
tain options more attractive than others. 52

in Reading Comprehension, ed. Band Sintra, Bertram Bruce, and William Brewer (Hills-
[53] Ibid.
[54] Nisbett and Ross, Human Inference, p. 36.
[55] There is no implication here that all policymakers will be informed by the same anal-
ogies and thus be predisposed in the same way. On the contrary, different policymakers

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CHAPTER 1

The notion of the schema provides strong support for the analytical view. If it is true that knowledge structures such as schemas and analogies are the fundamental elements for interpreting sensory data, for retrieving information, and for guiding human information-processing, it follows that the analytical view's assumption that analogies play an important information-processing role in foreign policy decision-making is strongly vindicated. What makes this corroboration strong, and exciting, is that it is independent: it comes from a different theoretical tradition, a tradition with research agendas and questions very different from ours. When such different research traditions, via their own paths, agree on the importance of knowledge structures such as analogies in cognition, the analytical view and, by extension, the AE framework, are buttressed.

The notion of the schema does more than provide independent corroboration for my assumption that analogies perform diagnostic functions. It also characterizes those functions in a way entirely consistent with the AE framework. Not only do schemas help human beings interpret incoming information, but they also allow them to go beyond the information given. The "default values" of the schema fill in for information missing in the incoming stimuli; thus, the schema makes a more complete picture possible. The schema for "bird," for example, will have variables for color, size, beak shape, and so on. When stored in memory, "a schema has default values for all these variables, providing a prototype against which specific examples can be compared." For most individuals, the prototypical bird is a robin. Thus, in attempting to identify a bird, given only information about its size and color, individuals are likely to allow the default values, about beak shape, for example, to fill in for the missing information; if the size and color of the observed bird are similar to that of the robin, individuals may conclude that its beak shape is also that of a robin and that it is, in fact, a robin.

The relevance of these notions can be seen in our example of Harry Truman pondering the appropriate U.S. response to North Korea's invasion of South Korea. Assume that Truman asked two questions: What is happening, and what is likely to happen next? For Truman, North Korea's behavior was a case of aggression, analogous to the fascist aggressions of the 1930s. In the 1930s, appeasement led to general war; in the case of North Korea, therefore, failure to respond might lead to World War III. With the information available in June 1950, neither Truman nor anyone could know what might be the repercussions of not stopping North Korea and its perceived sponsor, the Soviet Union. Lurking in the situation of 1950 to that of the 1930s, however, allowed Truman to go beyond the information given by relying on the default answer supplied by the 1930s schema: aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed.

Schema theory has allowed us to provide a general description of what analogies are capable of doing: going beyond the information given and allowing default values to fill in for missing information. It is nevertheless important to note a significant difference between this general characterization and the AE framework. According to some cognitive psychologists, schema theorists have yet to "clarify their [schemas'] properties or define the type of work they perform." The AE framework goes beyond the findings of schema theorists when it isolates and specifies the six diagnostic tasks of analogies relevant to foreign policy decision-making. The argument that analogies perform such tasks as helping define the situation, assess the stakes, and prescribe policy entails a certain specificity that is absent in the schema literature.

Schema theory's description of some of these diagnostic tasks enriches the AE framework; it is useful to know that among the six tasks I claim analogies perform, many of them, such as state assessment, implicit policy prescription, and prediction of chances of success of alternative options, will often involve going beyond the information given, thus allowing the default value of the analogy invoked to fill in for the missing information. Truman's assessment of the stakes, of the best response (counter the invasion), and of its chances of succeeding all entailed going beyond the information he had in 1950, the default values of the 1930s schema may well have filled in what information he did not have. The ability of analogies to form such inferences, according to schema theory and the AE framework, is what makes analogies such popular and powerful heuristic tools.

SCHEMAS AND THE PROCESS OF ANALOGICAL REASONING

So far, the findings of schema theorists have been used to do two things. First, to provide independent support for the idea of historical analogies that
as knowledge structures that play an important role in information processing and comprehension. Second, to highlight the idea that analogical reasoning often involves going beyond the information given and using the default values of the analogy invoked to fill in for missing information. It is now possible to use schema theory to explore a third aspect of analogical reasoning in foreign affairs: What explains the recurrent tendency of policymakers to use analogies poorly? Or, more specifically, why did America's Vietnam policymakers have difficulty using analogies well? "Poor use" is defined primarily by process, that is, by the tendency of policymakers to pick the first analogies that come to mind, by their failure to search for and to seriously consider other parallels, by their neglect of potentially important differences between situations being compared, and finally, by their tendency to use analogies as substitutes for proof. Poor use, therefore, implies a pattern of partial or inaccurate assessments of unfolding foreign situations, as well as dubious estimates of the costs of alternative policies. On average and over time, one would expect poor use to be associated with suboptimal policy outcomes. 34

In focusing on poor use, I do not mean to suggest that policymakers never use analogies well. Earlier, I indicated that the World War I and "Pearl Harbor in reverse" analogies were well used during the Cuban Missile Crisis; later, I will analyze at length Under Secretary of State George Ball's use of the Dien Bien Phu analogy, which is widely regarded as an example of an appropriate and prescient use of history. The point to emphasize, however, is that researchers in this field have documented many more instances of poor use than of good use. Whether the latter implies that poor use is the norm and good use the exception is an interesting question. In either case, it bears only marginally on our explanation. If poor use is the norm, our explanation will have wide applicability; if, not, our explanation will be applicable only to Vietnam and to other instances of mismatch documented in the literature. Other instances of mismatch provide critical context to the problem of inferring "poor use" from bad policy outcomes, they do rely, implicitly or explicitly, on the assumption (between poor use and poor outcome) that "poor use" or "poor outcome" is "bad". If there were no positive "correlation" of their claims about who used analogies poorly when. If there were no positive correlation between poor use and bad policy outcomes, it would not be very interesting to document poor use. That poor use may sometimes still lead to good outcomes need not detract from these authors' arguments, however, if we considered poor leads repeatedly to good outcomes, the critics and perhaps the concept itself may need to be reconsidered.

34 See chap. 1, n. 25.

35 See also pp. 309-12, 219-20, and 247-48 below.

36 Although May, Neustadt, Jervis, and most who write about this issue are sensitive to the problem of inferring "poor use" from bad policy outcomes, they do rely, implicitly or explicitly, on the assumption (between poor use and poor outcome) that "poor use" or "poor outcome" is "bad". If there were no positive correlation between poor use and bad policy outcomes, it would not be very interesting to document poor use. That poor use may sometimes still lead to good outcomes need not detract from these authors' arguments, however, if we considered poor leads repeatedly to good outcomes, the critics and perhaps the concept itself may need to be reconsidered.

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The available evidence therefore strongly supports the notion that decision-makers recurrently use analogies poorly. Vietnam is a case in point: virtually all analysts of the Vietnam War agree that the decision-makers of the 1960s were ill-served by their historical analogies. 39 The
task now is to explain why even "the best and the brightest" had trouble using analogies well.

From where do policymakers get their lessons of history? How is the "appropriate" analogy used in any given instance? Is there something about how analogies process information that makes reasoning by analogy hazardous? The answers to these questions will enable us to construct an explanation, and we will look to schema theory for preliminary answers. If the answers seem plausible, we will have come part of the way toward providing a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon of analogical reasoning in foreign affairs.

A caveat is in order. Though interesting, the findings of cognitive social psychology are not easy to apply to real-world political situations. The laboratory experiments that give psychology the status of a "science" also deny it wide applicability beyond the laboratory. Human beings may deviate from their laboratory behavior when confronted with real-life situations because these situations may not duplicate laboratory conditions and because the stakes involved tend to be higher. Some researchers have claimed, however, that experimental findings on cognitive biases underestimate their pervasiveness in actual situations, because the information given to subjects in the laboratory is unambiguous and controlled, whereas the decision-maker must glean the relevant data from the welter of information present in real situations. All the same, one should be cautious in using the findings of cognitive psychology to illuminate political decision-making. The discussion that follows should not be construed as anything more than highly suggestive.

THE ORIGINS OF THE LESSONS OF THE PAST

From where do policymakers get their historical lessons? Wars, revolutions, and other crucial political events experienced directly or vicariously by the relevant decision-makers seem to be major sources. Particularly strong is the impact of major events such as the most recent war (Venezuela), The Vietnam Tragedy in American Foreign Policy, 1945-75 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1980). pp. 96-99. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Bitter Heritage: Vietnamese and American Democracy, 1941-1960 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), chap. 7; and Richard J. Pfeffer, ed., No More Vietnam! The War and the Ethic of Peace (Boston: Harvard and Ross, 1966). For a more sym

or revolution on a generation coming of age. Thus the generation that fought in World War I would be anxious to avoid another "summer of 1914" when they took over the reins of power in the 1930s. Similarly, the generation that saw Munich's effect on Hitler would be attuned to the necessity of ensuring "no more Munches" when it came to their turn to rule.

This generational hypothesis is an indispensable first cut at the problem. But it has an obvious liability: How does one account for the fact that the members of the same generation may be influenced by different historical analogies? Or for that matter, for the fact that when the members of a given generation look at the same historical event, they may derive different lessons? These questions indicate that it is probably a mistake to view policymakers of any one generation as fixated on any one historical experience. It is necessary to supplement the generational hypothesis with one that allows for some individual variation.

In thinking about how policymakers form their analogies, it is appropriate to begin with the generational analogy, thought of as a historical experience that impresses itself upon an entire generation of individuals. But the generational analogy may be reinterpreted or modified by or merely exist with other historical analogies. Policymakers are also affected by lessons from personal and especially career experiences. Thus policymakers of the same generation, while always aware of and attuned to the generational analogy, will also have in store lessons of the past that relate to their individual experiences.

This view of policymakers as possessing repertoires of analogies is consistent with schema theory's assumption that human beings store in their long-term memory numerous schemas. Individuals will be strongly attached to historical lessons in which generational and personal effects reinforce one another. Thus, an entire generation of Europeans will re

46 Ibid.
48 The more frequently individual experiences reenact general experiences, the more likely policymakers are to abstract from them to form general analogies they apply in a variety of situations. In schema terminology, this means that the "more often one encounters schema-relevant examples, the more abstract the schema becomes, other things being equal. This occurs because people generalize schemas from experiences with instances of the category in question" (Fiske and Taylor, Social Cognition, p. 173). More abstract schemas, schemas set at the top of the abstraction hierarchy, are more likely to be used in a variety of situations. For Keith Holoyak and Paul Thagard, "transfer is facilitated when subjects have the opportunity to form more generalized schematic representations of categories of problems" ("A Computational Model of Analogical Problem Solving," in Vosniadou and Ortony. Similarity and Analogical Reasoning, pp. 281-42). When the generational and personal lessons merely exist or are at odds with one another, they are stored as different schemas and at a lower level of abstraction.
member Munich, but a British cabinet minister of the 1930s who opposed Chamberlain's appeasement policy will be especially attuned to future Munichs. The cabinet minister was of course Anthony Eden, who became prime minister in the 1950s. In the Suez crisis of 1956, it will be recalled, Eden repeatedly equated Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal with Hitler's campaigns of the 1930s. This perception of the stakes helped convince him that a British-French response was required. When the generational and personal lessons of history reinforce one another, they are likely to overpower the unique characteristics of a new foreign policy situation.

When the generational and personal lessons coexist or contradict one another, there is more potential for analysis. In such cases, there may be more opportunities for matching the parallels and nonparallels of the new situation with the old situation. Alternatively, the contrast between the prescriptions suggested by different and contradictory analogies may alert the policymaker to trade-offs that he might not have otherwise realized. For example, although U.S. military leaders may have shared their commander in chief's and the generational lesson of preventing an Asian Munich during the Korean War, their enthusiasm for preventing Asian Munichs dwindled substantially after China's intervention and after the frustration of fighting a limited war. Many vowed "Never Again," by which they meant they would never allow the United States to fight another limited war in the Asian成绩单. When the prospect of another Far Eastern Munich—the defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu and communist domination of at least the Northern region of Vietnam—appeared in 1954, members of the "Never Again Club" took their personal lessons to President Eisenhower. Although Eisenhower and his civilian advisers did not subscribe to the full set of lessons learned by the "Never Again Club," it is probably fair to assume that they had to weigh their determination to resist aggression against the cost of another protracted land war in Asia. The lessons of Munich had to be weighed against the lessons of Korea. In his memoirs, General Matthew Ridgway, former U.S. Commander of the Eighth Army in Korea and a charter member of the "Never Again Club," takes credit for helping Eisenhower see the danger of intervening in Vietnam, namely, that it might involve the United States in a land war more dangerous and costly than even the

Korean War. 24

The most helpful way to look at the problem, then, is to view each policymakers as having a repertoire of analogies, some shared by the policymakers' generation, others more peculiar to the individual policymaker's career and personal experiences. Since the generational analogies

and their lessons will be more widely shared than the personal analogies, it follows that the generational lessons are more likely to be taken seriously in a decision-making context.

RECALL: AVAILABILITY AND REPRESENTATIVENESS

If a decision-maker has a repertoire of historical analogies on which he may rely, the next question becomes, How is one analogy chosen over another in a given situation? To put it in terms of the decision-making of the 1960s: How would the Korean analogy be "activated," given the situation in Vietnam? Why the Korean analogy, with its implication of Soviet-Chinese instigation, instead of the Yugoslavian analogy, which would have portrayed Ho Chi Minh as an Asian Tito with his own political agenda? Historians and political scientists who study low decision-makers "learn" from the past have observed that policymakers tend to rely on the analogies that come most readily to their minds, that they are impressed by superficial similarities, and that they seldom probe more deeply or widely in search of less obvious but perhaps more relevant analogies. 25 In making these observations, the researchers have already provided a partial answer to the question of how analogies are activated. According to cognitive psychologists working on judgment heuristics and analogical problem solving, these characteristics—mediated toward using analogies most easily recalled and most superficially similar—are also responsible for schema arousal and activation. 26

When faced with a new situation, individuals turn to their repertoire of historical memories. Which historical event or experience is invoked depends, all other things being equal, on the ease with which it can be recalled. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, the two foremost researchers working on judgment heuristics, have called this the "availability heuristic": it operates when a person estimates the probability of an event by the ease with which similar instances can be recalled. 27 I will


defer discussion of Kahneman and Tversky’s experimental evidence until later in the book, but it is possible to state now that the availability heuristic is consistent with the idea that more recent events are easier to recall. Arguments that the most recent war exercises the most important influence on future wars are based on this recency argument: the more recent events are more "available." 40

The availability heuristic suggests that within a given repertoire, the most recent events are more likely to be recalled. A second component in the selection of the relevant analogies involves assessing the "B" between the incoming stimuli and the repertoire of available analogies stored in memory. The perceiver will have to make a similarity judgment, that is, a judgment of the extent to which the memory invoked fits the new situation. Kahneman and Tversky have been able to specify the role or heuristic that people normally use in making such judgments. They found that people typically assess the probability that A (e.g., the challenge in Vietnam) is a B (e.g., communist expansionism) by relying on the representativeness heuristic, their assessment of the degree to which A resembles B. Thus if A is highly representative of B, the probability that A belongs to or is generated by B is judged to be high. 41 The question is, of course, How do people come to the judgment that A is highly representative of B? Kahneman and Tversky are not very explicit on this issue, but researchers working on analogical problem solving have found that "surface commonalities" play a critical role in accessing analogies. 42 Applied to our earlier question of the choice of the Korean analogy instead of the Yugoslavian analogy to assess the situation in Vietnam, the "surface commonalities" hypothesis suggests that the similarities shared by Vietnam and Korea—geographical proximity to China, communist ideology, a North-South divide, and a North bent on unifying the South by force—made the Korean analogy a more likely choice. Notwithstanding the fact that the Korea-Vietnam similarities were superficial and the possibility that there were deeper similarities between Yugoslavia’s Tito and Vietnam’s Ho Chi Minh, surface similarities seemed to play the more important role in accessing the analogy. 43

Availability, recency, representativeness, and surface commonalities

40 CE, Perceptions and Misperceptions, pp. 206-79.
41 Kahneman and Tversky, "Judgment under Uncertainty," pp. 4-11.
43 The Yugoslavian analogy suggests an important similarity between Tito and Ho Chi Minh that policymakers might have taken more seriously as they considered U.S. options: both were less subject to Soviet influence than commonly assumed, and their independence affected their political strategies. Holbrook and Thagard use the term "structural similarity," as opposed to "surface features," to describe this kind of analogy ("Computational Model," pp. 383-403.)

all provide conceptual leads as to which analogies within a given repertoire are more likely to be accessed. Admittedly, these concepts are more difficult to operationalize in real-life situations than in experimental ones. The ambiguity about their meanings in nonexperimental settings notwithstanding, I will try to show in chapter 8 that they can help identify a good number of the historical analogies actually used by decision-makers to analyze the situation in Vietnam.

INFORMATION PROCESSING BY ANALOGY. TOP-DOWN PROCESSING AND PERSEVERANCE

Once cued, analogies affect foreign policy decision-making by performing the information-processing tasks specified by the AE framework. Schema theory points to two aspects of schematic information processing that are especially relevant here: the notion that schematic information processing occurs "top-down" and the idea that schemas persevere even in the face of contradictory evidence. Top-down processing and the phenomenon of perseverance help point to and explain a pattern that has been observed, even if only anecdotally, by political scientists: policymakers are more sensitive to incoming information consistent with their analogies, they seem to have great faith in their analogies, and they persist in using their analogies even when defects have been pointed out to them. 44 This pattern of behavior, it will be seen, occurred regularly in the making of America’s Vietnam policy.

The idea of top-down or "theory-driven" processing is that incoming information is compared with or fitted into existing schemas stored in memory. Top-down processing of course is not the only way human beings process information. "Bottom-up" or "data-driven" processing happens just as frequently, and there is some controversy among cognitive psychologists as to which of these processes are more important when. That said, it remains true that researchers using the schema construct usually emphasize the theory-driven nature of information processing. 45 Tony Higgins and John Bargh offer the most persuasive synthesis of which process matters when:

Features of the current environment would appear to activate or "prime" automatically the abstract constructs (schemas) that represent them, no matter what the person’s processing goals during priming. . . . Once a social construct is activated by environmental data, however, it constitutes the

44 Jervis, Perceptions and Misperceptions, chap. 4, uses the consistency principle to explain decision-makers’ insensitivity to information inconsistent with their beliefs.
ory-driven influence on the interpretation of subsequent environmental events. The significance of top-down processing is that information that does not fit the schema is either ignored or not given the weight it deserves. A classic experiment illustrating this tendency is the one conducted by Harold Kelley in 1950. Subjects were given a seven-adjective description of a guest lecturer. One group received a description that included the word cold and another group the word warm in an otherwise identical list of traits. This simple manipulation of expectations had a profound influence on the perceptions of the subjects:

Those expecting a "warm" instructor perceived him to be relatively sociable, informal, even-tempered, friendly and so on, and they responded accordingly by participating more actively in class. In contrast, subjects expecting a cold instructor rated the same person as relatively self-centered, unsociable, and formal, and they showed a corresponding reluctance to participate in class.

The point is not that the subjects were misled by their preconceptions or that they coded the incoming information incorrectly. Rather, the point is that the subjects coded the information according to the schema already invoked. A smile by the lecturer was interpreted as a response to the class by the "warm" group, whereas it was seen as a sign of self-satisfaction by the "cold" group. When the lecturer quickened the pace of his presentation, the "warm" group read it as a sign of enthusiasm, the "cold" group as a sign of impatience. The parallels between schematic top-down processing and analogical reasoning should be apparent. Like schemas, analogies try to fit incoming information into their mold. Discrepant information tends to be slighted or ignored; ambiguous information tends to be interpreted as supporting the expectations of the analogy. These tendencies on the part of the Vietnam decision-makers will be documented in the chapters that follow. In the absence of psychological theory, it is unclear whether the Vietnam decision-makers were using analogies especially badly or whether they were especially dense. With the help of psychological theory, it seems clear that their way of using analogies was neither especially bad nor dense, but simply in accordence with the way schemas or analogies process information.

The second aspect of schema theory that is essential to understanding analogical reasoning is the perseverence effect. Schema theorists have found that individuals tend to hold on to their schemas even when confronted with contradictory information. This could have been partly anticipated from the assumptions that human beings are cognitive misers and that processing occurs top-down. Susan Fiske and Shelley Taylor explain this perseverence effect eloquently:

Schemata facilitate information processing, for the most part, by allowing the general case to fill in for a specific example. No single example fits the schema perfectly, but most fit well enough. If people changed their schemata to fit every nuance of every new example, the information-processing advantages of schemata would be substantially lost. The perseverence effect, as it is called, describes a major feature of schemata: they often persist stubbornly even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

The experiment credited for establishing this effect was conducted by Lee Ross and his colleagues in 1975. Subjects were asked to perform a novel task, distinguishing between authentic and unsensical suicide notes. Subjects were told how well they did after each trial. Later, they were "debriefed": they were informed that the rating of their performance was false. It was found that even after debriefing, subjects who were told that they were successful continued to have a high opinion of their ability at the suicide discrimination task and similar tasks involving social sensitivity. Presumably, their self-schema for social sensitivity was activated by the false rating, and despite debriefing, they continued to cling to the schema. Similarly, those who were called unsuccessful continued to rate themselves that way.

Numerous experiments along the same lines have demonstrated the same point: schemas persist in the face of contradictory evidence. What is true of schemas should also be true of historical analogies: pointing out to policymakers the nonsimilarities between their favorite analogue and the actual situation is unlikely to erode their faith in their analogy. This phenomenon will be discussed and documented in the chapters that follow. It will be seen that in most cases in which a senior policymaker used a historical analogy, there were others who would question the validity of the analogy by pointing out important differences. None of these efforts had any impact on the senior policymakers. Without the help of psychological theory, their faith in their analogies must appear puzzling. With

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70 Nisbett and Ross, Human Inference, p. 98.

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71 Fiske and Taylor, Social Cognition, p. 171.


73 See Nisbett and Ross, Human Inference, pp. 167-61, for a summary of the experimental literature.
the help of psychological theory, however, their faith in their analogies in face of evidence to the contrary is neither puzzling nor primarily a result of their dizziness; it is simply routine.

In viewing historical analogies as knowledge structures that perform specific diagnostic tasks, the AE framework essentially takes an information-processing approach to understanding decision-making. If the tasks have been properly specified, the analyst should be able to judge the impact of an analogy by tracing its path in the policy process: how it led policymakers to define the situation and evaluate the options, and how these evaluations in turn led to certain policy preferences.

It is useful to conclude with two observations about the schema construct and the cognitive psychological research program from which it is derived. The first observation pertains to how novel or useful the concept in Robert Jervis and Philip Tetlock have both warned against the uncritical appropriation of the latest psychological concepts to explain political matters. Jervis worries that emphasizing the new may result in the premature abandonment of the older theories. Tetlock wonders whether some of the ways in which the schema construct is being used border on the premature trend of pouring old wine into new bottles. These warnings are sensible and well taken. At times, it does appear that political scientists have too quickly latched on to the latest concepts without assessing their likely payoffs. Some uses of the schema concept do border on being tautological, with little gain in explanatory power.

These cautionary notes are helpful because they invite the analyst to be explicit about the explanatory mileage gained through a concept such as the cognitive schema. What I consider those gains to be should be obvious by now. I use schema theory in the first instance to provide independent corroborations for the notion that analogies can be considered knowledge structures that human beings routinely use to process information. Using schema theory this way shifts the burden of disproving the skeptics who deny that analogies play any meaningful information-processing or diagnostic role. The burden of proof has been shifted to the skeptics because the finding that knowledge structures such as schemas and analogies are often essential to information processing is based on rigorous experimental tests, while the skeptics' denials remain hypothetical.

In the second instance, drawing from the findings of the schema theorists allows us to characterize in more explicit, full, and informative ways some of the key functions attributed to historical analogies. Thus it is useful to know that when decision-makers rely on analogies to perform some of the tasks specified by the AE framework, they are not only going beyond the information given but are also allowing the default values of the analogies to substitute for missing information. By identifying and describing these inferential mechanisms, schema theory increases our understanding of how analogies process information and where their diagnostic powers lie. Schema theory complements and supplements the AE framework, and enriches it.

Most importantly, findings by cognitive psychologists about how schemas are retrieved and process information are used to explain several tendencies observed by students of analogical decision-making: why policymakers seem to pick superficial analogies, why they seem unresponsive to differences between their analogy and the situation being assessed, and why they cling to their analogy even when its flaws have been pointed out to them. Thus the availability and representativeness heuristics, the notion that schemas process information top-down and the notion that schemas tend to preserve, are used to provide preliminary explanations for these observed tendencies.

To be sure, schema theory does not have a monopoly on explanations for these tendencies. The consistency principle, for example, can also account for such observations as the lack of receptivity to contradictory information and excessive faith in one's own beliefs. Popular in the 1950s and 1960s, the consistency approach postulates that people tend "to believe in ways that minimize the internal inconsistency among [their] interpersonal cognitions." The balance principle is held to be an organizing principle of human cognitions; people "feel more comfortable when configurations are balanced. . . learn them more quickly, remember them better. . . and interpret new information in such a way as to maintain or increase balance."

The empirically based on the dynamics of maintaining balance instead of the information-processing functions of the belief structures. The cognitive dynamics of seeking balance suggest that incoming information fitting one's preexisting beliefs is assimilated quickly, discrepant information is ignored, and one is likely to continue

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62 See Lee and Sears, Political Cognition. Most of the essays in this pioneering volume use the schema construct to explain issues in American politics. I have it in the reader to decide which essays reasoned and which ones suffer from the problems raised by Jervis and Tetlock. For an early attempt to use the schema construct, see Robert Axelrod, "Schema Theory: An Information Processing Model of Perceptions and Cognition," American Political Science Review 67 (1973): 1248-66.
64 Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception, p. 118.
to hold on to preexisting beliefs even in the face of contradictory evidence. The consistency or balance principle, then, seems able to account for some of the observations accounted for by the schema notion. I have chosen, however, to rely only on the schema concept in constructing the explanations provided in this work. The main reason for choosing the schema notion over the consistency notion is that the empirical and theoretical adequacy of the latter has been called into question by subsequent research. Researchers have found that people are often unaware that they are holding contradictory beliefs, that when they are aware they experience little discomfort about the inconsistency, and that achieving a coherent belief system is not necessarily a high priority. It has even been argued that under certain conditions, people are inconsistency seekers. These findings cast doubt on the core assumption of the consistency paradigm, namely, that people are consistency seekers. In a recent review of the field of cognitive social psychology, Markus and Zajonc praise "the balance principle" for generating "direct experimental predictions" that are "quite precise and unambiguous," but they conclude that "the data, unfortunately, did not always agree with the predicted values." Empirical difficulties, together with the realization that the understanding of internal cognitive dynamics could not advance without an understanding of the "cognitions themselves and how they were represented or structured" were in part responsible for the shift, in the 1970s and 1980s, from consistency theories to information-processing theories. In contrast to the assumption of consistency seeking, information-processing approaches rest on the assumption that the mind organizes and processes information around "some type of internal perceptual or cognitive structure." The challenge was to settle on a cognitive structure that was consistent with the core assumptions of cognitive psychology—that people have limited cognitive capacities and adopt mental shortcuts—and that could be used as a point of departure for theorizing about mental processes. The schema has emerged as the most widely accepted perceptual structure or unit of cognition; much research in cognitive and social psychology consists of specifying and testing theories about how schemas are "primed" and how they process information. Schemas are presumably agnostic about the consistency principle since inconsistent beliefs may be stored as different schemas; however, once a given schema is primed, it tends to process information top-down, so that discrepant information is likely to be slighted. Schemas do so not because of a need for balance but because it is a simplifying strategy for coping with the massive amount of information they must process. Since the schema is structurally and functionally similar to the historical analogy, theoretical findings about how schemas are formed, accessed, and used to process information may be applied to historical analogies. Because many key findings about schematic information processing utilized here—such as going beyond the information given, top-down processing, and perseverence—are consistent with the core assumptions that human beings are "cognitive misers" or that they practice "mental economies," schema theory seems not only relevant but potentially fruitful for the purposes at hand. Our second and final observation pertains to the less than flattering picture of our cognitive capabilities that emerges from the research of the social and cognitive psychologists. This theme may seem initially at odds with our personal experience, since we seem to do reasonably well in the analogical reasoning we perform every day. Psychologists do not deny this. They argue, however, that the very schemas and analogies that seem appropriate in one context may be inappropriate in another. For example, researchers have found simple analogies to be indispensable to learning by children, but they have also found that in the acquisition of advanced knowledge, "simple analogies that help novices to gain a preliminary grasp of difficult, complex concepts may later become serious impediments to fuller and more correct understandings." Rand Spiro and his colleagues found that when analogies were used to introduce medical students to complex concepts, the students were able to grasp the ideas suggested by the parallel (for example, the analogy between

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43 Ibid., p. 143.
44 Herbert Klein has also used Lewin's formulation of cognitive consistency to analyze international crises. Lewin finds the role of cognitive consistency helpful in explaining decision-making failures but concludes that overall, it is less helpful than models emphasizing the motivational sources of perceptual distortions. See his Renescence Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1950), pp. 222-28.
45 Lewin, Confrontation, pp. 34, 354. Lewin's systematic and superb analysis of the emergence of the Truman administration's Cold War belief system supports some of these assessments. She finds that Truman and James Byrnes did not have stable and coherent beliefs about the Soviet Union and that they could hold "incoherent cognitions without discomfort." See also Robert Abelson et al., eds., Theories of Cognitive Consistency: A Sourcebook (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1980).
48 Ibid., p. 140, emphasis mine.
water pipes and blood vessels was used to illustrate how the radius of the vessel affects impedance to blood flow. However, at a later stage, when students were required to master complex but important details, those analogies hindered their efforts; students had difficulty comprehending features, such as resistance in blood vessels, not suggested by those analogies.

Similarly, a schema that is helpful in illuminating a domestic political situation may be dangerous when applied to a foreign policy problem. Thus Deborah Larson has argued that Truman’s use of the Boss Tom Pendergast “machine politics” schema may have helped Truman in American politics, but when Truman applied the same schema to Stalin, it led to less happy consequences.77 The problem then, is partly one of over-extension and misapplication.80 Robert Jervis summarizes the situation well when he writes that the lessons policymakers learn “will be applied to a wide variety of situations with a careful effort to determine whether the cases are similar on crucial dimensions.”81 Jervis concludes that “often the actor would perceive more accurately had he not undergone the earlier experience.”82

It is necessary to note, however, that the problem of overuse stems in part from the cognitive allure of reasoning by analogy. Inasmuch as the mental effort and information required to size up new situations is daunting, and inasmuch as analogical reasoning provides a short cut to understanding, through strategies such as going beyond the information given, top-down processing, and perseverance, it should not be surprising that analogies will often be overused and misapplied. The cognitive payoffs, in terms of mental operations saved and simplified, are simply too inviting. Nor should it be surprising that overuse will in turn increase and amplify the cognitive distortions we discussed earlier, distortions associated with simplifying strategies such as top-down processing and the phenomenon of perseverance.

Although there is nothing to suggest that the overuse of analogies will be more prevalent in foreign than in domestic affairs, there are indications that overuse in international affairs will be more difficult to check and correct; the consequences are also likely to be more serious.83 For if analogies seem to help us make reasonably good inferences in our daily life, it is because we are performing routine tasks in a familiar environment, where feedback about the accuracy of our inferences is often im-

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73 Ibid.
74 Larson, Commentary, pp. 213-34, and 228.
75 Nisbett and Ross, Human Inference, p. 255.
76 Nisbett and Ross, Human Inference, p. 255.
77 Ibid., p. 258.
78 Ibid., pp. 250-58.

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meditate and clear. The familiar environment and the routineness of our judgemental tasks enable us to judge similarities along crucial dimensions more accurately. Clear and constant feedback serves as a reality check on actions based on our analogical reasoning. On many occasions, the costs of being wrong are also not very palpable; being proven wrong quickly and repeatedly, however, does enable us to update our beliefs, and to discard unhelpful analogies.84 Natural scientists are even luckier: they use analogies freely in their theorizing, but they always put their inferences to rigorous experimental tests. Upon such usages have major scientific discoveries been made.85

The statesman who seeks the help of historical analogies in dealing with foreign situations is in a different position. His task is anything but routine, and he operates in the less familiar but more complex environment of the international setting, where feedback about his analogical inferences, and actions based on these inferences, is costly to obtain, and where, even when such feedback is obtained, it is difficult to interpret. Consider the case of Dean Rusk, who often applied the lessons of Korea to Vietnam. In Rusk’s view, the United States faced serious setbacks at the beginning of the Korean War, but eventually it did prevail; one should therefore not be overly pessimistic about setbacks in Vietnam, for eventually the United States might still prevail.86 What kind of feedback is required to prove or disprove Rusk’s inference? One that seems prohibitively costly. The only way to “test” whether the United States could win was through an actual war. If the feedback provided by the first year of fighting suggested that the United States was not winning, Rusk would not necessarily conclude that his inference was wrong. He might point to the high communist casualties and argue that trying even harder might get the United States “the same breaks [as in Korea] down the road.”87 Rusk’s deputy, George Ball, argued that the Vietnamese did not intend to give the United States such breaks and that it would defeat the United States.

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73 Consider, for example, the inferences we make on meeting new people. On meeting someone who reminds us of an old flame, we might allow the old flame schema to influence our expectations of the new person’s demeanor. Whether our expectations are correct will be quickly proven in the course of the meeting; the costs of being wrong on such occasions are usually magnified, unless of course, it is love at first sight. The example is adapted from Susan Fiske, “Schema-Triggered Attraction: Apprehensions to Social Perception,” in Affet and Cognition, ed. Margaret Clark and Susan Fiske (Hillside, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982), pp. 55-78.
74 See Haase, Models and Analogies in Science, Black, Models and Metaphors, and pp. 248-50 below.
75 Author’s interviews with Dean Rusk, August 21, 1986, Athens, Georgia, and George Ball, July 23, 1986, New York City, New York. See also chap. 5.
76 George Ball, Oral History Interview, 1.33.
Thus, even if feedback is available, it may not be easily interpretable because the international environment is much more complex than our daily environment: many variables at different levels interact to bring about a particular outcome, making it difficult to assess or to agree on the influence of a particular variable on a particular policy. The terms structural uncertainty and decision-making under ambiguity have been used to characterize this situation. 66 Although these complications actually make analogical reasoning even more irresistible, they do not necessarily make it more appropriate. For without immediate, constant, and usable feedback, it is more difficult to check our analogical inferences and harder to alleviate the problem of misapplication. Foreign affairs being what they are, the consequences of overuse and misapplication of analogies can be potentially destructive to the larger world.

66 See Holsti, "Foreign Policy Cognitively Viewed", John Stenström, Cybernetic Theory of Decision (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) and Alexander George, Structured Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990), chaps. 2-3, for conditions under which cognitive factors such as historical analogies are likely to be influential in decision-making. The term "structural uncertainty" is from Stenström, Cybernetic Theory, p. 18.

CHAPTER 3

America's Vietnam Options

Whatever one's view about the degree to which choices in international affairs are "objectively" determined, the decisions are made by individuals who will be above all conscious of the remorseful multiplicity of options.

—Henry Kissinger, American Foreign Policy

THE AE FRAMEWORK is based in part on an empirical generalization and in part on a body of deductive theories. The specification of the six diagnostic tasks is based on abstracting from the numerous ways policymakers have used history over time, while the psychological dimension of the framework is derived from the theories and experiments of cognitive social psychology. Regardless of origins, the test of any framework is how much light it sheds on concrete and significant issues in which we are interested. The issue or case I will use the AE framework to elucidate is the making of America's Vietnam policy.

In what follows, I discuss (1) the reasons for choosing the formulation of America's Vietnam policy as my case study, (2) the aspects of American decision-making I seek to explain, and (3) the method I will use to assess the impact of analogical reasoning on decision outcomes. 1

VIETNAM AS A CASE STUDY OF ANALOGICAL DECISION-MAKING

The major aim of this book is to develop a set of arguments about how policymakers use history and to use those arguments to illuminate an important case of foreign policy decision-making. The case I have chosen to examine is the making of America's Vietnam policy. In particular, I focus on U.S. decision-making on Vietnam in the one-year period be-

1 I seek to explain two particular aspects of American decision-making: first, the selection and rejection of options noted in 1965 (chap. 5-7) and second, why policymakers often use analogies in suboptimal ways (chap. 8). Since the rationale for explaining the latter has been discussed in chap. 2, the discussion of decision-making in this chapter focuses exclusively on the selection of options.