The U.S. Vietnam decisions could serve as a case study due to their substance and holding a least likely case for Khong’s arguments. The analysis surveys both “why” and “how” questions: why the U.S. intervened in Vietnam and how it went about it. A successful explanation of the choice of methods (i.e., “how”) is at once an explanation of why the U.S. intervened and its intervention took the form it did.

Focusing on explanations of options has some advantages: it
-holds a prospect of a richer and more satisfying answer: why nonintervention was rejected and why among prointerventions one—or some—were chosen
-reflects the way policymakers actually make decisions in a world of options
-the choice of option may have crucial bearings on outcomes (success or defeat)
-“explaining the choice of options holds more promise of theoretical enrichment than merely explaining policy”

Explanations of options oppose the traditional explanations of Vietnam policy of the U.S., e.g., containment or credibility theses.

Emphasis may be placed on the private, as opposed to the public, record of analogies among policymakers—though they most frequently coincide, i.e., policymakers have no hesitation to make clear for their public audience (share/inform/explain/justify) the historical informative analogies affecting their decisionmaking.

Proof of the analogical reasoning theory: Options inconsistent with analogical lessons must be rejected. Among those basically consistent with the analogies lessons, those fully consistent with most, if not all, lessons are expected to be chosen.