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Decision-making techniques used by elected officials

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Politicians often make decisions that lead to contradictory outcomes from situations with seemingly similar circumstances and related factors. Recent examples include the U.S. reaction to the uprising in Iran contrasted with the call for the ousting of President Hosni Mubarak after the 18 Day Revolution in Egypt.

This frustrating reality, frequently based on perceived risks of publication of state secrets, has various far-reaching effects. Two effects of this reality include the loss of trust in government and government officials to do the right thing as well as the frequency of market fluctuations.

Lowi (1969) argued that “crisis decisions in foreign policy are made by an elite of formal officeholders “without a high level of consistency and predictability attached to those decisions” (129).

Tversky & Kahneman (1974) introduced the three heuristics used when making decisions under uncertainty namely representativeness, availability and adjustment from an anchor.

**Research question & Methodology**

Research question: Which ethical framework is used to make foreign policy decisions about U.S. involvement in Africa?

Using prospect theory (decisions between alternatives that involve risk where the probabilities are known), a descriptive study is proposed using academic literature as well as historical data to better understand the U.S. foreign policy decisions in Africa.