

# THE EXIT DILEMMA:

## Providing Golden Parachutes to Embattled Dictators

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### Abstract

Advances in the study of conflict dynamics show that the post-tenure fate of leaders influences conflict escalation, duration and termination. Golden parachute offers to embattled leaders should help mitigate the costs of a prolonged intrastate conflict by providing the incumbent a safe exit. However, the number of verified cases of a leader receiving and accepting a golden parachute offer remains small. The paucity of recorded cases is puzzling, even after taking into account challenges related to false negatives. Using a modified patron-client model, this paper seeks to identify the conditions under which sponsoring states offer this option, as well as the conditions under which embattled leaders accept the offer. We find that the offer is only made in those cases where an acceptable alternative to the incumbent exists, and the bid is accepted only when the incumbent has received a credible signal that the patron prefers the challenger. The model also explores the off-equilibrium conditions under which a parachute offer is not extended. The current draft presents a case study on Panama in the late 1980s to identify the processes and dilemmas that unfold when a golden parachute is on the table. A second case study tracing the failure of the golden parachute offer during the recent Syrian conflict is forthcoming.

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