

## COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON MILITARY SUPPORT TO RULING PARTIES

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### INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

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### OVERVIEW

This session examined a number of current cases—Venezuela, Zimbabwe and Algeria—in which the interaction between party hegemony and military control has provided strong political protection against attempts by social or opposition movements to precipitate greater democracy, even when the regime has lost its initial electoral appeal or its international legitimacy. The role of a professional military can change from safeguarding peace and national sovereignty to one in which the armed forces control and manage key industries (legally or illegally) in a country. In exchange for access to these economic rents, the military may agree to be ‘loyal to the revolution’, thereby limiting policy options for peaceful transition.

### FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The session aimed to consider the implications for crisis management and peacebuilding of the political phenomenon of military support for the ruling party. By comparing cases, the session aimed to provide a more precise understanding of the specific dynamic.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

It is key to understand the nature of state information and the military’s independence. In the case of Zimbabwe, the liberation forces connected to nationalist ideals aimed to secure their position of power. The right of political leaders to rule the country is deeply legitimized by connections to military and liberation actors.

In addition to military–political ties is the military’s ability to hold economic power. In Venezuela, the economic interest of the military arises from its involvement in oil and food distribution. Seeing the military as an economic actor is key to understanding its position of power.

International cooperation between military institutions creates a private and bilateral marketplace that can influence the political agenda a great deal. External actors and foreign policy have played a role in all three cases studies, both through military cooperation and international pressure.

Finally, given the intricate and determinant position that the military has, there is poor understanding of these institutions—both of how they operate and what their motive is.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Delink the military, the party and the revolutionary ideal since the military can exploit the importance of revolutionary ideals in their interest for self-legitimization.
- Improve understanding of the military's incentives. This is best achieved through direct communication, regardless of ideological convictions.
- Consider the three factors of political party, military and the president when understanding the creation of co-dependence over multiple years.



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