

## IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BOKO HARAM, WHAT'S THE ROLE OF THE MULTI-NATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE?

By Hilary Matfess

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In this Sunday Jan. 31, 2016, file photo, a man walks past burnt-out houses following an attack by Boko Haram in Dalori village near Maiduguri, Nigeria. (Source: AP Photo/Jossy Ola, File.)

Hilary Matfess is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

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Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe sings the national anthem before addressing the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association, at the party headquarters, in Harare, Wednesday, July 27, 2016. Zimbabwe’s 92-year-old president on Wednesday said the longtime loyalists who turned against him last week should face “severe” punishment, and he vowed to stay in power for “a long time.” (Source: AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi.)

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The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

IDA’s three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA’s Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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Tanzania's new President John Pombe Magufuli holds up a ceremonial spear and shield to signify the beginning of his presidency, shortly after swearing an oath during his inauguration ceremony at Uhuru Stadium in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. (Source: AP Photo/Khalfan Said.)

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## Founding and Funding of the MNJTF

The MNJTF was created in [1998](#) as a partnership between Nigeria, Chad, and Niger to counter cross-border crime and smuggling. The African Union (AU) approved the repurposing of the MNJTF as a counter-Boko Haram force in [January 2015](#), with an operational [headquarters](#) in N’djamena boasting roughly 100 military and civilian personnel. The task force’s counterterrorism force, intended to engage in military operations against the insurgency, was to comprise 8,700 troops from [Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin](#), united under the command of Nigerian Major-General [Buratai](#). The operational budget for this endeavor, originally [authorized for a year](#), was pegged at \$700 million, some \$250 million of which was pledged by Nigeria and France. In addition, the United States offered intelligence support and training to the force. The force was supposed to act as a way to coordinate regional efforts and lead the offensive against Boko Haram. Its [charter](#) gives the force the responsibility to engage in everything from psychological operations against the insurgents, to organizing humanitarian aid convoys, to preventing arms trafficking—in addition to “conducting military operations to prevent the expansion of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups activities and eliminate their presence.”

One important issue limiting the efficacy of the MNJTF is funding: the AU has struggled to collect contributions for the force, and the disbursement of pledged funds has been slow. [Reuters](#) quoted an anonymous senior officer with the MNJTF who claimed that the force’s budget had been able to buy only “11 vehicles and some radio equipment.” The officer also noted that the remaining costs were borne by the individual countries’ militaries, creating a financial strain on already tight budgets. Even in relatively wealthy Nigeria, the [decline in the global price of oil](#) has limited the military’s budget. Other shortages, like the jet fuel scarcity in the North East, have made it difficult for the Nigerian Air Force to conduct air operations, according to the Chief of Defense Staff, [General Gabriel Olonisakin](#).

The fragmented financial responsibility mirrors the current operational characteristics of the force’s military operations against Boko Haram. For example, credit has been given to the force for successfully dislodging Boko Haram from much of the territory it [overran last year](#), but since then, the territory has not been adequately secured by the

Nigerian military or police. Moreover, many of these operations that dislodged Boko Haram were conducted largely by national forces, rather than the regional force. [Vincent Foucher](#), a West Africa researcher with the International Crisis Group reported that “each force is based in its country of origin,” and observed that there is not yet a truly integrated force. At best, the MNJTF has been a complement to national efforts in the region; at worst, it has delayed military action and obfuscated which military forces are responsible for responding to developments.

## Fragmentation of Effort

Even though Nigeria’s initial [reluctance](#) to allow any foreign forces onto its territory seems to have faded, a true coalition force remains elusive. Tensions between Nigeria and its neighbors have contributed to the lack of coordination. For example, in March 2015, Chadian President Idriss Déby complained that the Nigerian military was not providing necessary support. He told the [New York Times](#) that he wants “the Nigerians to come and occupy” the territory his troops reclaimed from Boko Haram. Despite Buhari’s efforts to smooth over [regional disputes](#), tensions remain.

A related issue is that lines of authority remain blurred within the MNJTF, making commitment more difficult to coordinate. Although Nigeria announced, “All the countries agreed this operation will not recognize international boundaries—wherever terrorists are they will be chased to these locations and they will be fought [until they are finished](#),” the issue of territorial sovereignty remains a [thorny](#) one.

The lack of clear oversight mechanisms and organizational hierarchy is another issue, because the individual efforts of regional militaries have led to uneven efforts against the group. Niger, in particular, has suffered from the lack of a unified effort; as Nigeria and the other countries have stepped up their military offensives, the country has not been able to muster the necessary military force to counter the insurgents domestically. Although the MNJTF should have responded to the Boko Haram attack on Bosso, Niger, the President of Niger was forced to [request military assistance](#) from the Chadian military. Even then, while Idriss Déby agreed to help, Chadian troops arrived only about a month later; the MNJTF never sent military support. The failure to coordinate a regional effort has resulted in military efforts that move Boko Haram around, rather than eradicate the insurgency.

## Conclusion

Hopes were initially high for a regional force to defeat Boko Haram, but the MNJTF has not lived up to these expectations. The international community may be well advised to increase its focus on improving the effectiveness of the coalition’s military efforts. It may be necessary to rethink the broad mandate of the MNJTF, narrowing its scope of activities to more achievable goals—e.g., focusing on cross-border surveillance and intelligence sharing rather than more ambitious military objectives—that could complement the activities of the national forces of the participating countries.

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## Background

Zimbabwe's security sector has played a long and prominent role in the country's politics. After Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, Robert Mugabe relied on the military and other security sector actors, including intelligence organizations and war veterans groups, to consolidate his power. Starting in 2000, when ZANU-PF faced its first credible political threat from the newly formed Movement for Democratic Change, Mugabe leaned on the security sector to [violently](#) guarantee electoral wins for him and ZANU-PF. This reliance led Mugabe to grant increasingly powerful political positions to the security sector, resulting in a gradual [militarization](#) of the party and state. Despite its considerable political power, the security sector in Zimbabwe is far from a monolithic organization, as exemplified by the stark [divides](#) between military and intelligence organizations in the 2014 ZANU-PF purge of former Vice President Joice Mujuru.

## ZANU-PF's Bitter Struggle to Succeed Mugabe

As [noted](#) in previous editions of Africa Watch, ZANU-PF has experienced a long-running battle over who will succeed the aging Mugabe. Before 2014, this battle was fought between two major party factions, with one camp led by current Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa and the other by Mujuru. This rivalry came to a head when Mugabe, accusing Mujuru of plotting to overthrow him, expelled Mujuru and [hundreds](#) of her allies from the party in late 2014. [According](#) to the scholar Blessing-Miles Tendi, the security sector was deeply divided between support for Mnangagwa and Mujuru, who are both veterans of the liberation period. In the run-up to the 2014 expulsions, Tendi maintains that Mnangagwa had support from Commander of the Zimbabwe Defense Forces, General Constantine Chiwenga, and Zimbabwe's Military Intelligence, while the Central Intelligence Organization actively supported the Mujuru faction.

## Succession Battle and Security Sector Divides Continue

The sacking of Mujuru and her loyalists, and the installation of Mnangagwa as Vice President, bought Mugabe some time, but failed to decisively resolve the party's succession issue. Indeed, the fight over who will take over from Mugabe has continued unabated. In the period since Mujuru's departure, the Mnangagwa faction has come to be



Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe sings the national anthem before addressing the Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association, at the party headquarters, in Harare, Wednesday, July 27, 2016. Zimbabwe's 92-year-old president on Wednesday said the longtime loyalists who turned against him last week should face "severe" punishment, and he vowed to stay in power for "a long time." (Source: AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi.)

known as Team Lacoste, a reference to Mnangagwa's nickname of the "Crocodile." On the other side, Mugabe's wife, Grace, has stepped into the vacuum created by Mujuru's ouster and risen to prominence as the de facto leader of a different faction, known as [Generation 40](#) (G40), which is also aligned with ZANU-PF's young political commissar, Savior Kasukuwere. At the [moment](#), President Mugabe appears to be supporting his wife and the G40 faction over Team Lacoste. The security sector has also continued to play a role in the latest chapter of the succession struggle. Speaking openly on this issue in December 2015, Mugabe [said](#), "The military, police and the intelligence are now involved and split as well. Let's stop this. We do not want factions."

### **Conclusion: Mugabe Still Calls the Shots but Faces Unprecedented Splits**

While it is of course difficult to ascertain where loyalties lie within the Zimbabwean security sector, the available evidence suggests that Mnangagwa continues to enjoy support from some of the higher echelons of the [military](#), including from Chiwenga. Just last week, in the midst of the fallout from the war veterans' break with Mugabe, Chiwenga [attacked](#) prominent figures in the G40 faction, who are seeking Mnangagwa's ouster. Chiwenga chided G40 members for a lack of real liberation credentials, [asking](#), "Where did you participate in the war?" A senior military officer [spoke](#) to Tendi about this alliance between Chiwenga and Mnangagwa: "Chiwenga's plan is to succeed ED [Mnangagwa] after ED succeeds Mugabe. When ED is President, Chiwenga will be his Vice-President. There is an alliance between the two." Before their recent break with Mugabe, the war veterans openly [voiced](#) support for Mnangagwa as well, with ZNLWVA spokesperson, Douglas Mahiya, explaining: "Seniority tells who is next in line. So next in line from those who took part in the struggle, is Mnangagwa. There is nothing sinister about that; it is just a matter of principle."

While Chiwenga also [reiterated](#) his pledge to Mugabe last week and some war veterans groups have [distanced](#) themselves from the July 21 rebuke of Mugabe, it appears that the security sector's largely unwavering support for Mugabe may be shifting, especially if Mugabe continues to back the G40 faction. Indeed, in addition to ostensible support shifting away from Mugabe and toward Mnangagwa, senior elements of the security sector are also believed to remain loyal to Mujuru. In March of this year, Mujuru officially [launched](#) her new opposition party, named Zimbabwe People First (ZPF). ZPF's Didymas Mutasa, himself a former ZANU-PF stalwart, [noted](#) residual allegiance to Mujuru among security sector officials: "I know people in the defense forces, people in the police, people in the Central Intelligence Office who will be very willing to see her [Mujuru] leading Zimbabwe." Although Mugabe's ability to cultivate support from the security sector and divide and rule the two intra-party factions should not be underestimated, it appears that Mugabe may not be able to depend on the country's powerful security sector to unequivocally defend his rule in elections scheduled for 2018.

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Tanzania's new President John Pombe Magufuli holds up a ceremonial spear and shield to signify the beginning of his presidency, shortly after swearing an oath during his inauguration ceremony at Uhuru Stadium in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. (Source: AP Photo/Khalifan Said.)

## Government Reform ... Up to a Point

Magufuli’s election revitalized his struggling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), which has been the ruling party in Tanzania since 1977. CCM was weakened under former President Jakaya Kikwete by economic decline and corruption scandals that caused Western donors to [cut budget support](#). Magufuli promised voters that he would clean up the government and, once elected, began a variety of reforms. These changes ranged from geopolitics—repairing relationships with Uganda and Rwanda to land two [infrastructure deals](#)—to public relations—[canceling](#) expensive Independence Day celebrations to spend the day picking up litter. Magufuli’s forceful style of governance is popular with Tanzanians, who took to Twitter in December 2015 to celebrate their President’s thriftiness under the hashtag [#WhatWouldMagufuliDo](#).

Despite his personal popularity, Magufuli’s government has failed to reform authoritarian practices that began under previous administrations. The government has made broad use of a [cybercrime bill](#), signed into law by Kikwete, which makes it illegal to share “false, deceptive, misleading, or inaccurate” information online. In [April](#) and [June](#) 2016, this law was used as justification to arrest two Tanzanian citizens who insulted Magufuli on social media.

More troubling, Magufuli’s administration has either [closed](#) or [threatened to close](#) over 25 newspapers, television stations, and radio stations. In August, Tanzania’s Information, Youth, Arts, Culture and Sports Minister [announced](#) that media organizations that published “inflammatory statements” when covering protests would be banned. [Journalists](#) report that this crackdown has created a culture of self-censorship within Tanzanian media as news outlets fear repercussions for reporting on political issues.

## The Government Takes a Hard Line against Opposition

The government’s suppression of criticism has increasingly brought it into conflict with opposition parties. In early June, the opposition *Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendaleo* [Party of Democracy and Progress] (Chadema) [announced](#) it would begin a nationwide series of demonstrations, concluding in a “defiance day” on September 1, to protest against CCM’s “suppression of democracy.” At an early rally, Tanzanian police used tear gas to disperse protesters and, on June 7, issued a [ban](#) on further opposition protests. Chadema sued the Inspector General of Police to overturn the ban, but was [overruled](#) by the Tanzanian High Court on August 10.

Magufuli's response to the protestors has further inflamed tension. On July 29 he [told reporters](#) that he would respond to protests "without mercy," and on August 8, he issued an additional ban on protests other than by opposition constituencies without describing how these constituencies would be defined. In addition, in early August, talks between opposition groups, CCM, and the government [fell through](#) after CCM, the office of the Inspector General of Police, and the office of the Attorney General failed to send representatives to preliminary meetings with the opposition.

## A Long History of Failed Constitution Reform

Magufuli's treatment of the opposition is in keeping with CCM's history of avoiding political reform, supporting instead the status quo. This tendency has been most evident in a series of curtailed efforts to reform the 1977 constitution. Since 1991, Tanzanian presidents have appointed three successive [commissions](#) to make recommendations for constitution reform. Critically, the two most recent commissions recommended that Tanzania move to a [three-tier government](#) so that the mainland and Zanzibar Islands would each have a federated government with a third, the Union government, ruling on issues affecting the country as a whole. This would replace the current two-tiered system in which Zanzibar has a government for internal affairs, but relies on the mainland government to rule on national issues.

In December 1999, the [second commission](#) issued an 800-page report recommending a three-tiered system, among other changes. Alarmed, then-President Benjamin Mkapa insisted the report would need to be [approved by CCM](#) before being presented publicly for debate. This move effectively tabled discussions, and the report's recommendation for a three-tiered system was ultimately not adopted.

The issue was raised again when the [findings](#) of the third commission, released in December 2013, led to a recommendation to adopt a three-tiered system. A constituent assembly was drawn from parliament, the Zanzibar House of Representatives, and civil society to discuss and incorporate the commission's recommendations into the design of a new constitution that would undergo a referendum vote in April 2015.

This referendum never came to pass. In April 2014 the opposition coalition and civil society representatives [walked out](#) of the assembly, protesting a failure to abide by the commission's recommendation, while the rump constituent assembly, now composed primarily of CCM members, put forward a draft text. Ultimately the referendum on the constitution was [postponed](#), but CCM's attempt to move forward without the opposition deepened political animosity in the run-up to the October 2015 elections.

## Conclusion

Since coming to power, Magufuli has had to balance his promise to reform the government against existing political constraints. Primary among these constraints is his status as a relative outsider in his own party. Although Magufuli became chair of CCM in July 2016, he was not an influential or high-ranking member in the party until his nomination as CCM's presidential candidate. This outsider status played to his advantage during the national election, enabling his campaign to successfully make the argument that he was well-placed to clean up the government. After his victory, however, [observers believe](#) his lack of ties to traditional party leaders has weakened his leverage over CCM.

The political standoff between the opposition and CCM may be reaching a breaking point with Chadema's insistence that it will [move forward](#) with protests despite the ban. This puts Magufuli in a difficult situation. He must defend his reputation as a reformer while also keeping his party in line. To maintain this balance, he has attempted to suppress the opposition while presenting himself as a reformer working in the people's interest. Now, opposition groups want Magufuli to commit his party to dialogue with them, but there are not yet any signs the "bulldozer" is interested in talking.

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