

Explaining Zimbabwe's Survival Against Sanctions (1997-2017): A Resilience Perspective

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Abstract

International economic sanctions (IES) were imposed on Zimbabwe by Western sanctions-imposing nations (SINs) from 1997, when President Mugabe was still in power. This study examines how Zimbabwe survived the IES menace during President Mugabe's reign (1997-2017) and highlights how conventional theories on resistance against sanctions did not adequately acknowledge the concept of resilience in Zimbabwe. This problem arose because current resistance theories tended to apply only to the SINs and not the IES target countries (including Zimbabwe), which were often labelled as anti-democratic and pro-terrorism. The findings of this study were that President Mugabe, his government, and the people of Zimbabwe had extraordinary resilience against IES, hence the continued existence of the country as a unitary state by 2017. The study adopted an interpretivist philosophy to understand the real-life situations of respondents, as reflected by their behaviours and preferences. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, while the secondary data was gathered from desk research. In addition, triangulation techniques were employed to enhance the validity and reliability of findings. The study draws on resilience theory, with the researcher coming up with a resilience model (ZRM) to help explain Zimbabwe's survival. Resilience theory is a unique approach because, whilst the concept had previously been the preserve of scientific areas like engineering, public health, social sciences, psychology, and others, its importance has been overlooked in the area of IES. By re-contextualising the resilience phenomenon to IES, the study makes an important contribution to knowledge.

Keywords:

Zimbabwe; Resilience; IES; ZRM; RCA

Introduction

The imposition of international economic sanctions (IES) on Zimbabwe by Western nations, including the UK, USA, EU, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, occurred between 1997 and 2001. The IES are defined as collective foreign-policy tools employed by nations or global entities to penalise nations that contravene international law or the principles of lawful governance (Morgan et al., 2023). According to the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the sanctions-imposing nations (SINs) punished Zimbabwe through IES imposition after claiming that the country acted in contravention

of lawful governance when it embarked on the Land Reform Exercise over the period 1999 to 2011. However, the SINs never publicly mentioned the land reform exercise, instead accusing the ZANU-PF members of corruption and deviant behaviour, hence the covertness of the chastisement.

The SINs imposed 'targeted sanctions' on Zimbabwe, primarily aimed at government elites who were assessed as unethical and obstinate. In reality, the sanctions were comprehensive, given that all Zimbabweans suffered from hardships resulting from the chastisement. Zimbabwe was historically a former British colony that gained independence

from the UK government in 1980, following a long and arduous struggle waged by the people of Zimbabwe with the enthusiastic support of her neighbours: (Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania, Angola, and Mozambique. Since 1966, the country has fought in the war of liberation against the former colonisers (the British), who were instead represented by a breakaway regime of Rhodesia, ruled by the Rhodesia Front Party led by then-Prime Minister Ian Douglas Smith (Ngwenya & Molapo, 2018). Despite the seemingly pleasant relations between Zimbabwe and the world, particularly the West, several undercurrents existed within the Southern African country, chief amongst which was the issue of land ownership. This was seen as a means to correct the colonial injustices that included land grabs made by the British colonialists during the country's occupation in 1890 (Mararike, 2019).

The 'targeted sanctions' against Zimbabwe consisted of financial embargoes and travel restrictions for government elites and their associates (Ogbonna, 2017). The government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) and supporters of ZANU-PF as the ruling party concluded that the sanctions were meant to facilitate the regime-change agenda (RCA) fronted by the SINs. However, the SINs and the Zimbabwe opposition parties maintained that the IES were intended to correct the deviant behaviours of the ruling party's members, who were generally corrupt and irrational (Mararike, 2019). The differences in opinion between these two rival camps continued until the sitting President, Mugabe, left office in 2017. It was also clear that the Western countries never openly disclosed that they preferred a regime change in Zimbabwe, which concealed the RCA objective of the SINs.

This article provides insight into Zimbabwe's resilience against IES over the twenty years of Mugabe's rule (1997-2017). It also explains how the concept of resilience assisted the country in foiling Western sanctions and the intended RCA. To achieve

this objective, the paper explains the rationale for the imposition of IES by the SINs, specifies the stance of the ruling ZANU-PF party regarding the sanctions, and reviews literature on Zimbabwe's IES. The paper then outlines the research methodology, where the Resilience Theory and the strategic Zimbabwe Resilience Model (ZRM) are covered to amplify the concept of resistance in the country. The paper also shows how the concept of resilience led to Zimbabwe's survival against sanctions during the Mugabe era. Thereafter, the paper presents a rundown of the research results, followed by a discussion and a conclusion.

Literature Review

International researchers like Grebe (2010) and Ogbonna (2017) have conducted studies on Zimbabwean IES. Grebe (2010) covered all areas within the country's socio-political and economic environments. The scholar concluded that IES were not solving the problems outlined by the SINs but were instead harming innocent Zimbabweans through incessant hardships occasioned by the sanctions. The targets of IES (the ZANU-PF elite and their associates) were either evading the sanctions or finding alternatives to cushion the effects. These alternatives included using other friendly airlines and chartered planes, as well as bypassing Europe when visiting other continents. Grebe (2010) highlighted how the targeted officials were circumventing the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA), the notable US Act passed by the US Congress in 2001 that was meant to legally put the Western sanctions into effect. The implementation of ZIDERA was supervised by the US Office for Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which was based in Washington DC. OFAC has operated under the Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence within the US Treasury Department since 2004 (Mararike, 2019).

A similar study by Ogbonna (2017) covered specifically the health and education sectors in Zimbabwe. These two sectors form

the key social departments for any government. Ogbonna's findings aligned with those of Grebe (2010) to highlight the unfortunate plight of the ordinary people resulting from IES in Zimbabwe. The findings also revealed how the sanctions in Zimbabwe failed to satisfy the objectives of the SINS. Ogbonna actually suggested that SINS needed to find alternative ways of punishing the IES targets. The scholar bemoaned the anguish of ordinary Zimbabweans at the hands of ZIDERA, especially concerning poor people's lack of access to schools and health facilities (Ogbonna, 2017).

Zimbabwean researchers like Makumbe & Charumbira (2018), Maruzani et al. (2018), Mararike (2019), Mkodzongi & Lawrence (2019), Nyoni (2019), Moyo (2020), and Makawa (2021) all expressed despair over the treatment that was given to common innocent Zimbabweans during this period of IES. They concluded that all evidence indicates IES' failure to resolve outstanding problems in Zimbabwe. They also highlighted that the coercive measures were quite comprehensive as opposed to being targeted, as claimed by the SINS. However, the study established that all the scholars looked at Zimbabwean sanctions from a conventionally acceptable Western perspective, hence failing to acknowledge the role played by the concept of resilience in ensuring the failure of IES during this era (1997-

2017). Although these Zimbabwean scholars praised the GoZ for embarking on the land reform programme, they all recommended that the SINS reflect on adopting more humane forms of chastisement to address the perceived deviancy in Zimbabwe.

Chipanga & Mude's (2015) study on Zimbabwe's sanctions takes a slightly different angle by looking at the legality of Zimbabwe's IES. Although the scholars concluded that the sanctions are legal by law, they lamented the unwarranted human rights violations by the SINS (Chipanga & Mude, 2015). Incidentally, John Forrer (2017) identified the main advantage of IES as their ability to be custom-made to fulfil various foreign policy objectives of the SINS. He then noted the disadvantage of counter-sanctions that can create undesirable results for the SINS. A good example was Russia's imposition of food and oil embargos on several European countries as retaliation against European Union (EU) sanctions, after Russia's takeover of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 (Bélin & Hanousek, 2021). A continuation of this retaliation is the 2025 expansion of the EU Entry Ban, following the European body's sanctions against Russia for the invasion of Ukraine in 2021 (Global Sanctions, 2025).

Table 1 below gives a summary of the SINS' rationale for imposing sanctions against Zimbabwe:

Table 1.
Rationale and Type of Sanctions against Zimbabwe

Sanctions- Imposing Nation (SIN)	Rationale for Sanctions against Zimbabwe	Sanction Type	Imposition Year
UK	Lack of democracy; disregard for the independence of the judiciary; lack of respect and ill treatment of opposition political formations; ill treatment of independent media.	Socio-politico-economic sanctions; these were presented as targeted although proven to be comprehensive.	1997
USA	Same as the UK	Same as the UK, but called 'smart sanctions'.	2001
EU	Same as the UK	Same as the UK but called 'restrictive measures'.	2002
Australia	Same as the UK	Same as the UK	2002
Canada	Same as the UK	Same as the UK	2007

Source: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2024)

This paper looks at the sanctions from the standpoint of Zimbabwe as the target state, looking at how ordinary people endured the sanctions-related hardships (resilience) from the recipient's perspective. However, most scholars, both within Zimbabwe and internationally, looked at Zimbabwean IES from a Western perspective (which characterised the GoZ as being non-democratic and pro-Communism). This Western perspective tended to value so-called democratic principles over the suffering of the people (and the associated resilience emerging from the anguish caused by IES). Furthermore, this perspective considered the targets of sanctions (former imperial colonies) as possessing immoral values that supported terrorism. This paper identified the important role played by the concept of resilience in assuring Zimbabwe's survival against IES. This was the gap in the knowledge that this research subsequently filled.

Resilience Theory

Resilience theory is a conceptual framework concerned with the capacity to endure extreme chastisement. Historically, resilience theory has covered other areas like peace studies, psychiatry, psychology, engineering, health, social sciences, and environmental studies (Hartigh & Yannick, 2022). This article specifically refers to resilience against IES in Zimbabwe. The lens of resilience was chosen for this article because it provides a satisfactory understanding of the mental and emotional circumstances of Zimbabweans under IES. In addition, the theory enunciates the physical and social sturdiness required for Zimbabwe's survival during the period under review.

The study also looks at other forms of resilience to understand the dynamics of survival in an IES environment. Contributions by Galtung (1968) and other resilience scholars like Van Breda (2018) and Hartigh et al. (2022) describe resilience as the ability to withstand

hardships associated with their areas of expertise. Whilst Galtung (1968) looked at resilience in peace research, van Breda (2018) explored resilience in social work, and Hartigh et al. (2022) conceptualised and measured psychological resilience. This capacity to withstand adversities remained the basis for resilience to be nurtured in sanctions' target countries, including Zimbabwe. The concept of resilience is based on an individual's or Institution's ability to strongly bounce back from adversity (Van Breda, 2018).

Zimbabwe's resilience was a testament to the GoZ's strategic coordination of policies and programmes through various frontline ministries, which pooled scarce resources in a bid to withstand the hardships imposed by sanctions. For example, the Ministry of Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment spearheaded the establishment of syndicates or cooperatives in mining, agriculture, and manufacturing, among others, to empower the country's marginalised youth and women. These empowerment initiatives formed a key attribute of the Zimbabwe Resilience Model (ZRM), a theory meant to amplify the importance of resilience in resisting sanctions-related hardships in the country.

Zimbabwe Resilience Model (ZRM)

The ZRM is a theoretical model developed by the author to explain the foundation of the country's resilience under an environment of IES. In formulating the ZRM, the researcher considered three attributes drawn from the epochs of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle and post-independence Zimbabwe. The attributes are politics and international relations (Pol & IR), covering the diplomatic initiatives to navigate the IES period; indigenisation and economic empowerment (IEE), covering the localisation of economic power and authority in a bid to enhance the capacity of Zimbabweans to withstand sanction hardships; and *Chimurenga* and culture (CC), covering the



Figure 1. The Zimbabwe Resilience Model (ZRM)

Source: Author

tenacity and spirituality required to withstand sanctions' hardships.

The Pol & IR dimension of the ZRM focuses on how Zimbabwe leveraged politics and diplomacy as an IES survival mechanism. The shift towards Africa and the Global East for trade and investment was meant to strengthen the country's economic capacity against sanctions. The IEE programmes were a key resilience enhancement measure to mobilise public support for the GoZ. The concept managed to mobilise internal economic resources for the struggle against sanctions. The CC concept was anchored on politicising the masses to be robust against the imperialists (Mararike, 2019) and blended well with the people's cultural ethos of perseverance, which is rooted in *Chimurenga* spirituality. Both *Chimurenga* spirituality and Zimbabwean culture inspired the people to stand their ground against sanctions. By making use of the three tenets of the ZRM (Pol & IR, IEE, and CC), the GoZ cultivated resilience and ensured the success of the people's resistance against IES hardships.

Mavhunga (2018) defines *Chimurenga* as a term that denotes resistance through a revolution, noting that it came into existence during the colonisation period, when resistance to colonisers' oppressive tactics quickly

progressed into a war of resistance (Mavhunga, 2018). The birth of the *Chimurenga* philosophy dates back two centuries ago, when Southern Rhodesia was founded by the British colonisers. The British invaded Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) under the leadership of a Briton called Cecil John Rhodes in 1890 (Mararike, 2019). Following colonisation, people adopted *Chimurenga* revolutionism as a guide to the prosecution of wars of resistance. As such, *Chimurenga* denotes the fine art of warfighting, including the logistical science that accompanies the skill (Mavhunga, 2018).

Figure 1 below is an organigram of the Zimbabwe Resilience Model as presented by this paper:

The three key attributes (Pol & IR, IEE, and CC) contributed to the successful resilience-related manoeuvres of the vital ministries under the Zimbabwe government. The blending of the *Chimurenga* spirit and the country's culture facilitated the birth of a Zimbabwean *Chimurenga* ideology. The ideology then merged with the other attributes of Pol & IR and IEE to nurture the country's resilience against the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe.

The model above examines how *Chimurenga* spirituality spanned the century from the time of the Zimbabwean spirit

medium, Mbuya Nehanda (1890s), to the era of Mugabe (1997–2017). The model uses the interconnectedness of the chosen attributes to nurture the resilience that led to the unexpected failure of IES and the related RCA. The government of Zimbabwe offered the requisite guidance, support, and supervision in the implementation of the resilience programmes.

However, the study suggests some ZRM limitations, especially regarding its application in other IES target countries. Although the first two attributes (Pol & IR and IEE) can be suitably modified to apply in other countries, the third attribute (CC) is specific to Zimbabwe since it covers issues centring on Zimbabwean *Chimurenga* ideology. The attribute touches on *Chimurenga* spirituality and Zimbabwean culture, both of which are specific to Zimbabwe. The ZRM is therefore a Zimbabwe-specific model and does not necessarily possess universal qualities.

Methods

The research adopted a qualitative research methodology with a case study approach on the Zimbabwean sanctions, given the fact that this research was specific to Zimbabwe. In addition, the author developed a strategic theory, the ZRM, to satisfactorily amplify the concept of resilience in Zimbabwe.

The methodology supported the study's adoption of the 'resilience theory' to explain how Zimbabweans supported their leadership against IES imposed by the SINs. Qualitative methodology was used in the data collection and analysis, producing the research results outlined below. An interpretivist research philosophy was also chosen to appreciate the opinions of all respondents (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). A purposive sampling technique facilitated the selection of Zimbabwean experts for the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions (Palinkas et al., 2016).

The purposive sample included senior officials who were serving in GoZ. These

respondents understood sanctions and their general application throughout the world. Some of the respondents understood the GoZ anti-sanctions strategy from its inception. Out of the twelve respondents selected, three were key members of the Mugabe government who led ministries that championed resilience programmes; two were former ambassadors to Zimbabwe (with the Cuban ambassador representing the targets of sanctions and the French ambassador representing the SINs); two were university lecturers (one from the University of Zimbabwe and the other from the Women's University in Africa); two were university students (both from the University of Zimbabwe); one was a business executive from the private sector in Harare; and one was a respected member of the political opposition (the Movement for Democratic Change; MDC) from the Midlands Province. There were two female respondents within the purposive sample. The eighth respondent, the focus group (FG), was chaired by a Social Studies Faculty Dean from the University of Zimbabwe. The other members of the FG included an economist from a consultancy firm, a shadow Minister of Industry and Commerce from the MDC Party as the official opposition in the Zimbabwe Parliament, a Dean of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, a Small-to-Medium Enterprise executive, and a female Member of Parliament (MP) from the ruling party (ZANU-PF).

The research had three methods of gathering data. The first involved in-depth interviews that were done virtually in April 2022 because of COVID-19. The second consisted of FG interviews done in October 2022, and the third was desk research. The desk research started at the inception of the study in 2019 and continued through to 2025 to bring secondary data that complemented the primary data from the field. After gathering both primary and secondary data, the information was inspected and presented for analysis. The preparation for analysis involved organising

the data, adapting and scrutinising it for any thematic or discourse issues that could arise.

The research examined resilience-related issues presented by respondents, especially regarding how adversities were handled. The scrutiny of repetitive phrases was particularly useful in both discourse and thematic analyses, leading to the identification of themes from the gathered data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Triangulation techniques, which strengthened the validity and reliability of the research findings, were also used to gather and process the research data (Noble & Heale, 2019). This research achieved data triangulation by gathering the information from various locations at different times, whilst methodological triangulation was achieved by using in-depth and FG interviews as well as the desk research. Investigator triangulation was achieved through the use of two additional research agents who assisted the author to conduct the field study. In addition, theoretical triangulation was achieved through the use of both sanctions and resilience theories as highlighted above.

The desk research covered the analysis of documents and speeches regarding IES in Zimbabwe by the late President Mugabe, his ZANU-PF comrades, and his ministers. The secondary data from the desk research complemented the primary data from the in-depth interviews and FG discussions. The secondary data, which made good use of the desk research techniques, was obtained from online materials, published books, and newspaper articles. Narrative inquiry techniques were used to cross-examine information during the data-gathering process (Kankam, 2020).

Primary data gathering used interview protocols (guides), which outlined the issues to be covered by the researcher during both in-depth and FG interviews. While there were specific interview protocols for every respondent, questions to do with the rationale for IES, effects of IES on Zimbabweans and

identification of the resilience-related activities were common to all interview guides.

Results

The research establishes that the resilience of former President Mugabe, his government, and the people of Zimbabwe facilitated the survival of the nation of Zimbabwe during the period under review (1997–2017). The research further establishes that conventional theories on sanctions' resistance failed to consider the concept of resilience as an important factor, given that the current theories/conceptualisations were only relevant to developed Western nations and not useful to the IES targets (who tended to be former imperial colonies that were aligned towards the East). Therefore, Western nations viewed the IES targets as anti-democratic and pro-terrorism. But the question that remains unanswered is: how did these countries manage to stay afloat for so many years? The concept of resilience offers a more satisfactory explanation for the countries' survival, including Zimbabwe. The study further establishes that GoZ made use of the ZRM to nurture resilience against IES. The sub-sections below (headed by the ZRM tenets) highlight the study's major findings.

Politics and International Relations (Pol & IR)

The GoZ or ZANU-PF leadership addressed every forum to denounce IES and the SINS: United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), African Union (AU) Assembly, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Assembly, Heroes Acre gatherings in Harare, and any sizable gathering in any part of the country. Such gatherings were also used to officially invite investors to Zimbabwe; incentives in the form of tax havens were put in place. The GoZ targeted investors from the Far East as part of its Look East Policy (LEP) adopted in 2003, as well as the African Continent (personal communication with a key respondent on 21 April 2022).

The investors from the East, especially from Russia & China, showed interest in mining and agriculture. From the continent of Africa, investors came from the Republic of South Africa, with notable interest in banking and retailing (personal communication with a key respondent on 21 April, 2022). The GoZ established more embassies in the Far East and Africa to improve trade relations between Zimbabwe and countries from that part of the world. However, embassies in the West were deliberately left to operate as normal (personal communication with a key respondent on 21 April 2022).

The Pol & IR attribute was credited with facilitating the independence of Namibia (1990); the freedom of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) (1994); Zimbabwe's LEP (2003); and Zimbabwe's Internal Political Dialogue (2009). In addition, the FG highlighted the advantages realised from maintaining cordial relations with the other IES targets (Cuba, DPRK, Iran & Venezuela). These advantages include sanction-busting techniques and public indoctrination procedures (personal communication with the FG on 23 October 2022).

Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment (IEE)

The GoZ went full throttle with the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) as an empowerment tool for ordinary Zimbabweans. Besides providing families with income and food from agriculture, the programme also decongested rural areas (personal communication with the FG on 23 October 2022).

GoZ also implemented the empowerment of women and youth through the syndicated ownership of agricultural farmlands, mines and businesses. Women and youth in all ten provinces of Zimbabwe participated in this empowerment venture (personal communication with the FG on 23 October 2022).

The growth of Small-to-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was a result of the

shrinkage of the formal sector in Zimbabwe. This reduction of the formal sector came as a blessing in disguise, as it led to the ballooning of the informal sector, where small business units were formed by skilful members who had been retrenched from the formal sector. SMEs thus created employment for many Zimbabweans (personal communication with a key respondent on 22 April 2022).

Chimurenga and Culture (CC)

The ZANU-PF party used the Zimbabwean *Chimurenga* ideology (resulting from the fusion of *Chimurenga* spirituality and Zimbabwean culture) to indoctrinate the people of Zimbabwe to withstand the hardships of IES during the era of former President Mugabe. The proof of the utility of ideological indoctrination was the winning of all statutory elections by ZANU-PF since independence in 1980 and onwards (personal communication with a key respondent on 21 April 2022).

Chimurenga ideology was used by the GoZ to strategically fine-tune the ZRM (in dealing with the IES hardships). Several respondents concurred that the ZRM was highly useful in purposefully mapping the resilience strategies that were used by all departments of the ruling party, ZANU-PF, in the war against IES and the RCA (personal communication with five respondents in April 2022).

The French Ambassador to Zimbabwe during the Mugabe era was one of the three antithesis (dissenting) respondents whose views are presented in Table 2 below. From the in-depth interview, the respondent insisted that IES succeeded in the country. The respondent also maintained that an RCA was achieved when President Mugabe tendered his resignation in 2017. When reminded about ZANU-PF's claim that it was not a regime change because the ruling party remained in power, the respondent argued that the removal of ZANU-PF from the throne was a different objective altogether. The Ambassador insisted that the initial objective

of the SINS was to remove President Mugabe from the throne, which was achieved (personal communication with the former French Ambassador on 22 April 2022).

Table 2 below provides a synopsis of the questions replied to by selected respondents

and the information that they volunteered. Serials 1 to 8 represent the selected respondents denoted by alphabets A to H, whose personal details are known to the researcher. Responses to approximately five questions have been combined in the table. The questions covered

Table 2.
Selected Respondents' Views

Serial	Respondent	Summary of Respondent's Contribution	Summary Remarks by Author
1.	A	Ordinary Zimbabweans bore the brunt of the sanctions imposed to punish the ZANU-PF government for its deviancy. ZANU-PF believed that the sanctions were retaliation for the land reform programme, while the SINS maintained that they imposed IES to punish the GoZ for deviant behaviour. The land reform programme was legal in Zimbabwe, created wealth, and decongested rural areas. The ideological indoctrination of the people drew from experiences of the Zimbabwe liberation struggle, as well as lessons learnt from other targets of IES (like the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [DPRK], Cuba and Iran).	Respondent believed in the usefulness of the ZRM and the legality of FTLRP. Failure of IES was assured.
2.	B	People were surviving on help from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), thus, there was no resilience to speak of. The respondent supported the SINS' rationale for the imposition of sanctions because corruption levels were rising within the GoZ. The respondent did not acknowledge any useful lessons from other IES targets.	Respondent believed the ZRM was non-existent and that the success of IES and RCA were assured.
3.	C	Increased unemployment and high emigration were attributed to IES. Levels of corruption increased within the GoZ and in society. The respondent supported the imposition of IES to deal with ZANU-PF's deviancy (several members of ZANU-PF were cited to be dishonest and disrespectful).	Respondent believed the ZRM was non-existent; and that the success of IES and RCA were assured.
4.	D	The hardships experienced by the people were 'like the grass suffering where two elephants are fighting'. Despite this suffering, ZANU-PF used the <i>Chimurenga</i> ideology to rekindle the survival hopes of the people. Respondent supported the ZANU-PF-led land reform programme. Many useful lessons were learnt from other targets of IES like DPRK, Cuba, Iran and Venezuela.	Respondent believed the GoZ used the concept of resilience, as represented by ZRM, to fight IES.
5.	E	Ordinary people experienced extreme anguish due to IES. The land reform programme was very beneficial to ordinary Zimbabweans. Many SMEs were successfully launched by those retrenched from the formal sector. Many useful lessons were drawn from other IES targets, like DPRK, Cuba, and Iran. Chinese and Russian investments took place mainly in Zimbabwe's mining and agriculture sectors.	Respondent believed that the resilience theory/ZRM was used by the GoZ to overcome IES and RCA.
6.	F	Sanctions were targeted at the Head of State, his inner circle, and his Ministers. NGOs were helpful in cushioning sanction hardships. IES and RCA were successful by 2017 as ZANU-PF members' deviancy became more evident.	Respondent believed that the success of IES and RCA became pronounced by 2017.
7.	G	The shrinkage of the formal economy created informal employment. Many SMEs were established as a result. Many useful lessons were drawn from other targets of sanctions, e.g., sanction-busting techniques and public indoctrination methods.	Respondent believed that the failure of IES and RCA was assured by 2017.
8.	H	Zimbabweans were exposed to many hardships, which required local interventions by the GoZ. Many innovations emerged from local industries and commerce. The GoZ empowered women and youth with farms, mines, and businesses. Many useful lessons were drawn from other IES targets (including DPRK, Cuba, and Iran).	Respondent found the FG interviews very useful with respect to IES' related innovations.

Source: Author

the effects of IES on ordinary Zimbabweans, the rationale for the imposition of sanctions (from the perspectives of both the SINS and ZANU-PF), the resilience-related programmes by the GoZ, and the lessons drawn from other IES targets.

Discussion

The paper discusses how Zimbabweans developed extraordinary resilience to survive during the Mugabe era against IES imposed by the West. It also chronicles how Zimbabwe endured the sanctions' scourge, which were classified as comprehensive or 'blanket' by researchers, given that all Zimbabweans suffered from resulting hardships. The research details how the resilience of the people and the GoZ saved the nation from collapse during President Mugabe's tenure. The UK imposed the sanctions in 1997, with the rest of the Western countries following between 2001 and 2002; Australia only joined the SINS in 2007. The IES imposed included financial embargoes on the country and travel restrictions on ZANU-PF elite and their henchmen. Although IES were targeted, their practical implementation resulted in the suffering of many innocent Zimbabweans.

The research that was carried out by the author was a qualitative case study on Zimbabwean IES. A purposive sample of twelve individuals was assembled for the study. The sample consisted of people who were knowledgeable about the sanctions and why they were imposed. The SINS maintained that IES were imposed to address Zimbabwean deviancy, in line with the stance that the people who were involved in deviant behaviours were ruling party (ZANU-PF) stalwarts who grew wealthy due to corruption. Other issues cited as deviancy included the non-independence of the Zimbabwe judiciary and the harassment of independent media by the GoZ.

However, ZANU-PF's position regarding the sanctions was that the West was punishing

Zimbabweans for the Land Reform Programme, which had been implemented by ZANU-PF three years after the first IES imposition by the UK, in 1997. The UK had cited ZANU-PF's deviancy when imposing the sanctions. However, the West also maintained that their sanctions were against ZANU-PF deviancy only. Thus, according to ZANU-PF, the real reason behind IES remained hidden, demonstrating the covert nature of the SINS' rationale for the imposition of IES. However, from the Zimbabwean standpoint, it was evident that the land reform programme was carried out in line with the country's legal provisions (personal communication with a key respondent on 21 April 2022).

The results of the study are that the resilience of President Mugabe, the people, and the GoZ led to the survival of Zimbabwe against Western-imposed IES during President Mugabe's tenure. Although a minority of respondents believed that IES and the RCA objectives of the SINS were achieved, the study established otherwise. According to the study, neither IES nor the RCA were successful in Zimbabwe during the Mugabe era.

Incidentally, the UK press offered some opinions regarding this subject. The Diplomatic Editor of *The Guardian* (7 September 2019) revealed the UK plot to topple President Mugabe through deceitful means, which successive UK governments failed to do (Landale, 2017). Similarly, Chris Bishop from CNBC Africa (21 July 2020) revealed how Tony Blair attempted to mobilise the support of RSA as part of the UK's bid to launch a military operation against Zimbabwe (Bishop, 2020). Unfortunately, according to the report, RSA President Mbeki rejected the UK's request (Bishop, 2020).

In line with the ZRM's Pol & IR strategy, the GoZ mobilised the support of the SADC region against sanctions, given that the sanctions were negatively affecting the region (Murwira, 2020). The SADC was easily mobilised because

Zimbabwe commanded great respect, to the extent that the country almost always managed to steer the regional organisation towards its preferred direction. An example was the formation of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security way back in 1996, which Zimbabwe proposed and justified (Louw-Voudran, 2018). The deployment of the SADC Allied Forces into the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 1998 was another example of Zimbabwe's influence within the region (Louw-Voudran, 2018).

However, despite Zimbabwe's diplomatic success within SADC, economic conditions in the country became so dire that many professionals sought better opportunities within the SADC region and beyond. By 2017, the official number of Zimbabweans in the diaspora had reached half a million, with 87% residing in South Africa (UNFPA/ZimStat,

2017). Other SADC countries, including Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, and Eswatini, also hosted many Zimbabwean emigrants. Outside the SADC region, the most attractive destinations for Zimbabwean professionals were the UK, Australia, the EU, and the USA. In all the different countries outlined above, Zimbabweans occupied professional positions in government, as well as in education, engineering, tourism, and other related sectors (UNFPA/ZimStat, 2017).

Despite the emigrations, Zimbabwe continued to survive as a sovereign state. The country made use of the ZRM to survive IES hardships. The inter-relationship of the ZRM tenets (Pol & IR, IEE, and CC) helped to enhance the resilience architecture of Zimbabwe against IES. The study established that the CC attribute was the key pillar of the ZRM due to the power of ideological indoctrination.

Table 3.
Resilience Attributes in Selected IES Target Countries

Country	Date of IES Imposition	Rationale for IES Imposition by Western Countries	Key Resilience Attributes of Target Country
North Korea	1950	- Support for terrorism in the Korean peninsula in the 1950s. - Lack of democracy coupled with the government's human rights suppression. - Embarking on a nuclear programme in the 1980s. - First nuclear test in 2006.	- Charismatic leadership. - Strong Juche ('self-reliance') ideology. - Revolutionary history. - Nuclear defence capability.
Cuba	1959	- Support for the USSR and international communism. - Negative relations with the US since Cuba's successful anti-Batista revolution of 1959. - Lack of democracy coupled with the government's suppression of human rights.	- Charismatic leadership. - Marxist-Leninist ideology. - Revolutionary history. - Defence pact with USSR.
Iran	1979	- Support for the 1979 student seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran. - Support for international terrorism since 1987. - Pursuing a controversial nuclear programme, which lacked international inspections starting from 2006 to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of 2016. - Lack of democracy coupled with human rights suppression.	- Charismatic leadership. - Khomeinist ideology. - Revolutionary history. - Nuclear defence capability.
Venezuela	2005	- Support for Russia, Cuba, and international communism. - Negative relations with the US, particularly critical of the US's imperial global dominance. - Lack of democracy coupled with human rights subjugation.	- Charismatic leadership. - Revolutionary history. - Bolivarian ideology. - Defence pact with Cuba.

Source: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2024)

However, the study observed that IES are not unique to Zimbabwe, as the coercive measures had been applied much earlier by the US and other Western countries to Cuba, North Korea, and Iran, among others. The US imposed sanctions on North Korea in 1950, Cuba in 1959, and Iran in 1979. As was the case with Zimbabwe, the sanctions did not succeed in toppling the targets, as these sanctioned regimes continued to subsist during the period under review. This indicated that the four IES target countries had resilience programmes that cushioned them against adverse impacts of the coercive measures, as shown in Table 3 below. The table compares the resilience attributes of other international targets of sanctions with those of Zimbabwe. The table also includes Venezuela, the most recent target of IES by the SINS. The Maduro government in Venezuela became a target when the US and other Western SINS imposed sanctions on the country in 2005. In all the IES target cases cited above, resilience by the citizens proved to be the key concept accountable for the survival of the regimes that were expected to fall in tandem with the SINS' objectives.

The SINS concluded that all four countries were supporters of terrorism and had varying levels of democratic inadequacies. However, this study establishes that the countries relied on the personality cult of their popular leaders as well as the ideological indoctrination of their people to nurture the countries' resilience architectures (personal communication with the FG on 23 October 2022). The terrorism associated with Zimbabwe was slightly different from the four IES cases above. According to the SINS, Zimbabwean terrorism involved the inconsiderate torture of former farmers who lost their land during the land reform exercise. Resultantly, this study concludes that the SINS had no universal definition for terrorism (personal communication with the FG on 23 October 2022).

This paper highlights the survival of IES target countries, including DPRK, Cuba, Iran,

Zimbabwe, and Venezuela, among others. Although they were accused and labelled as supporters of terrorism by the SINS, DPRK and Cuba withstood sanctions since the 1950s, with Iran following in the 1970s and Venezuela in 2005. Like the Zimbabwe scenario, the feat of surviving sanctions can only be a result of the resilience of the people of these countries. If anything, Zimbabwe drew useful lessons from DPRK, Cuba, and Iran with regards to busting sanctions and indoctrinating the public, among the many teachings attained.

Conclusion

This study covered twenty years from the commencement of IES to the year of resignation of President Robert Gabriel Mugabe (1997–2017). The research was a case study on Zimbabwean IES, and a qualitative research methodology was used for the study. The research looked at resilience theory and developed the Zimbabwe resilience model (ZRM) under the research methodology. This study on Zimbabwe's resilience against sanctions is novel and contributes immensely to knowledge about sanctions' survival. The next three paragraphs summarise the findings of the research in line with the objectives reflected in the introductory remarks.

From the desk review and field research, the study established that the SINS had a covert objective of regime change in Zimbabwe during the Mugabe era (1979–2017). The research observed that the SINS imposed IES on Zimbabwe with the hope that a revolt would occur in response to the extreme chastisement of Zimbabweans. The uprising was then expected to topple the sitting Zimbabwe government, thereby changing the country's governing regime. The SINS were ready to install a government that favoured Western norms and values.

The research ascertains that a consideration and appreciation of the resilience of Zimbabweans against Western sanctions was

largely missing from academia, and no serious study had been conducted to establish how and why Zimbabwe continued to subsist as a normal sovereign state within the community of nations during the Mugabe era. This paper concludes that conventional theories on resistance to sanctions were deliberately not applicable to IES targets (who, in most cases, were former imperial colonies that were considered by the West to be non-democratic and pro-terrorism) but were appropriate to Western countries (including the SINs), hence the lip service paid to the concept of resilience by the Western world. The research highlights the importance of resilience in surviving sanctions, in Zimbabwe and other countries alike (examples given by this paper include DPRK, Cuba, Iran and Venezuela). The regimes highlighted above have existed for many years under IES environments. Such an achievement could be attributed to the resilience of the people under those regimes.

The research concludes that the Mugabe-led Zimbabwe government adopted the ZRM, which coordinated programmes like IEE, LEP, intra-regional trade, the SADC-initiated Political Dialogue in Zimbabwe, and other relevant economic and diplomatic initiatives against IES to improve the country's resilience architecture. These strategies were implemented by the line ministries in the Mugabe government for ease of coordination, since the ministries had decentralised structures reaching all areas countrywide.

The study establishes that the Zimbabwe government's solitary implementation of the land reform programme was the main motivation for the imposition of sanctions against the country from the ZANU-PF point of view. However, the research identifies the deviant behaviours of the ZANU-PF government and corruption within the ruling party as the major reasons specified by the SINs for the IES imposition. Ultimately, the research establishes that the resilience of

former President Mugabe, his government, and the people of Zimbabwe were the main contributors to the failure of IES and RCA in Zimbabwe.

However, it is pertinent to emphasise that this paper does not dismiss the possibility of sanctions succeeding in other target countries, including Zimbabwe. Equally important is acknowledging that the paper does not absolve the ruling ZANU-PF party of the reasons highlighted by the SINs for imposing the sanctions. The researcher sincerely hopes that ZANU-PF takes proactive steps to address any limitations highlighted by the study. Whilst former President Mugabe used anti-sanctions strategies to successfully pilot Zimbabwe out of the IES saga, the country's survival efforts now rest with the second Zimbabwe Republic, ably led by Dr Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa from 2017.

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