

A Critique of the Responsibility of Traditional Leaders in the Electoral Process: A Zimbabwean Experience

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Abstract

In the contemporary Zimbabwean context, traditional leaders have been playing crucial political roles. In the governance process, they always follow the dictates of the ruling regime. The leaders assist the sitting government either by design, default or coercion. They are fully engaged in the electoral and political processes in their respective communities. While the constitution of Zimbabwe clearly stipulates the roles of traditional leaders, the opposite is true in the discharge of their roles. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to critique the role of traditional leaders in the election and electoral processes with particular emphasis on the Zimbabwean experiences. The chapter sought to examine the nature of the responsibility of traditional leaders. The other objective was to interrogate the challenges they faced in the execution of their duties. The last objective was to recommend strategies to overcome them. The study adopted a qualitative methodological approach, utilising a case study research design. The social reconstruction theory illuminated the research study. The conclusion was that in the execution of their duties, traditional leaders face certain challenges. Some traditional leaders in Zimbabwe find it difficult to remain apolitical during the elections and electoral processes since they enjoy a lot of benefits from the government. Certain strategies can be used to overcome those challenges. The laws of the country must be aligned with the 2013 Constitution. Section 49 of the Traditional Leaders Act 1998 should be accordingly amended to inhibit possible political abuse. A monitoring instrument for traditional leaders should be put in place.