


Legal Reform in Political Party Financing in Nigeria: Strengthening Frameworks and Enhancing Enforcement Mechanisms

**Jenigho Philip Esavwede ^a , Peter Ikechukwu Gasiokwu ^a  ,
Godswill Owoche Antai ^b **

^a Faculty of Law, Delta State University, Nigeria

^b School of Law, Kampala International University, Uganda

 Corresponding email: gasiokwupi@delsu.edu.ng

Abstract

Political party financing remains a critical issue in Nigeria's democratic governance, with weak enforcement of electoral laws facilitating corruption, undue political influence, and electoral malpractice. While Nigeria possesses a robust legal framework, enforcement inefficiencies and regulatory loopholes undermine financial transparency and accountability in political processes. This paper critically examines the existing legal framework governing political party financing in Nigeria, particularly the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act 2022, and advocates for comprehensive reforms to enhance compliance mechanisms. Adopting a doctrinal research methodology, the paper analyses statutory provisions, judicial precedents, and international best practices to identify key areas for legal and institutional improvements. The findings reveal that effective enforcement is hindered by political interference, inadequate regulatory oversight, and outdated legal provisions. To address these challenges, this study recommends targeted reforms, including strengthening the financial disclosure obligations of political parties, increasing penalties for violations, and establishing an independent electoral finance monitoring unit within the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). By aligning Nigeria's framework with global best practices, these reforms will promote greater transparency, accountability, and fairness in the country's political finance system.

Keywords

Political Party Financing, Legal Reform, Electoral Integrity, Campaign Finance, Law Enforcement.

Introduction

The financing of political parties and election campaigns has been a subject of extensive debate in democratic governance. The role of money in politics is critical as it determines the extent to which political parties can function effectively in terms of mobilization, outreach, and policy promotion. However, the unregulated or inadequately regulated use of money in politics has raised concerns over corruption, undue influence, and democratic inequality. In Nigeria, persistent issues such as excessive spending, illicit funding sources, and weak enforcement mechanisms highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive examination of political party financing laws.

From a juridical perspective, the legal framework governing political party financing in Nigeria, including the 1999 Constitution and the Electoral Act 2022, aims to ensure transparency and prevent financial malpractice. However, enforcement remains a major challenge, as political actors often exploit loopholes to evade compliance. The judiciary plays a crucial role in interpreting and enforcing these laws, but selective enforcement, legal delays, and political interference weaken its effectiveness. Notable cases, such as *Col. Mohammed Sambo Dasuki (Rtd) & Ors v Federal Republic of Nigeria & Ors*¹ and *Olisa Metuh v Federal Republic of Nigeria*,² reveal systemic weaknesses in prosecuting financial misconduct in Nigerian elections.

From a philosophical standpoint, democratic governance requires a level playing field where elections are decided by the electorate rather than by financial power. Political financing should reflect democratic values such as equity, fairness, and accountability, but in Nigeria, the commercialization of elections has resulted in elite domination, voter manipulation, and reduced political competition. The influence of money in politics undermines the democratic ideal that all candidates

¹ SC 617/2016.

² [2017] 11 NWLR (Part 1575) 157.

should have equal opportunities to compete based on ideas rather than financial capacity.

The sociological implications of political finance malpractice in Nigeria are far-reaching. The unrestricted flow of money into elections has led to vote-buying, political violence, and governance failures, deepening public distrust in the electoral process. Reports indicate that in the 2023 general elections, financial inducements ranging from ₦5,000 to ₦20,000 per voter were widely used to influence electoral outcomes.³ This trend not only compromises electoral integrity but also reinforces a culture of corruption and clientelism, where elected officials prioritize the interests of their financiers over public welfare.

The historical context of party financing in Nigeria reveals a trend of limited regulatory oversight, which has allowed political parties and candidates to raise and use funds without stringent accountability mechanisms. The 1959 elections were conducted under the provisions of the Nigeria (Electoral Provisions) Order-in-Council Act of 1958, enacted by the British Parliament.⁴ During this period, there was no clearly defined regulatory framework on party finance, and political parties were predominantly financed through private means. Consequently, illegal party financing and corruption were rampant, leading to judicial investigations into financial misconduct. Notable cases include the Foster Sutton Tribunal of 1956, which examined the involvement of National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) politicians with business interests in the African Continental Bank (ACB), and the Coker Commission of Inquiry in 1962, which investigated financial mismanagement linked to the Action Group (AG) in Western Nigeria.⁵

³ Oluwaseun Clement Ajayi, "Vote Buying and Electoral Practice in Nigeria: The Experience from 2023 General Elections," *Journal of Political Science and Leadership Research* E-ISSN 11, no. 1 (2025): 2025, <https://doi.org/10.56201/jpslr.v11.no1.2025.pg13.28>.

⁴ Lucky A Tongs, Omololu Fagbadebo, and M.O.A. Alabi, "The Historical Overview of the Evolution of the Legislature in Nigeria," in *The Legislature in Nigeria's Presidential Democracy of the Fourth Republic: Power, Process, and Development*, ed. Omololu Fagbadebo and M.O.A. Alabi, (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 21–37, https://doi.org/10.1007/9783031246951_3.

⁵ Babayo Sule, "Evolution of Nigerian Political Parties," in *Nigerian Political Parties in the Fourth Republic: Evolution, Characteristics and Dynamics of Transformation*

As Nigeria transitioned into the Second Republic (1979-1983), a combination of private and public funding mechanisms emerged.⁶ However, subsequent elections, including those of 1979, 1983, and the most recent 2023 general elections, have shown that political parties continue to enjoy unrestricted access to funds from both legal and illegal sources.⁷ These realities raise fundamental questions: Are there no applicable laws on party finance to curb excessive and illicit funding? Are the existing laws inadequate? Or is the problem rooted in poor enforcement? This paper seeks to provide answers to these questions by examining the legislative framework governing political party financing in Nigeria and assessing its effectiveness in curbing financial misconduct in electoral processes.

Several studies have explored the complexities of political financing, particularly in emerging democracies like Nigeria. Ayeni⁸ highlights that party funding significantly impacts the institutionalization and competitiveness of political parties, particularly in emerging democracies like Nigeria. Financial resources influence a party's ability to organize, mobilize voters, and secure media coverage, shaping electoral outcomes. Well-funded parties can conduct extensive campaigns, hire professionals, and ensure broader outreach, while underfunded parties struggle with visibility and grassroots engagement. Additionally, funding affects internal democracy, as wealthier candidates may manipulate party primaries. Ultimately, Ayeni⁹ emphasizes that financial dominance in politics undermines fairness and democratic

(Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 71–114, https://doi.org/10.1007/9783031771101_3.

⁶ R. O. Oji, Okechukwu Innocent Eme, and Hyacinth A. Nwoba, “Political Party Funding in Nigeria: A Case of Peoples Democratic Party,” *Nigerian Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review* 2, no. 11 (November 2014): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.12816/0011636>.

⁷ Babayo Sule et al., “The Electoral Commission, the Conduct of Elections and Party Financing,” in *Presidential Elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 135–79, https://doi.org/10.1007/9783031549199_5.

⁸ Oluwadare O Ayeni, “Commodification of Politics: Party Funding and Electoral Contest in Nigeria,” *Sage Open* 9, no. 2 (2019): 2158244019855855, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019855855>.

⁹ Ibid.

competition, highlighting the need for stronger regulations on political party financing.

Tonhäuser argues that political party financing globally has been marred by corruption scandals, with high-profile cases in Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK) illustrating how financial irregularities undermine democratic integrity.¹⁰ These scandals often involve illegal donations, undisclosed campaign expenditures, and corporate influence over political decision-making, leading to reduced public trust in electoral processes. In many instances, weak regulatory frameworks and enforcement gaps allow political actors to exploit financial loopholes, undermining transparency and accountability. Tonhäuser¹¹ emphasizes that without stringent oversight, political financing remains a key avenue for corruption, reinforcing elite dominance and distorting democratic representation.

Furthermore, Usman *et al.*,¹² differentiate between general political corruption and corruption in political financing, emphasizing that while political corruption typically involves personal enrichment, corruption in financing is primarily aimed at securing electoral advantage for a party or candidate. They argue that illicit funding, vote-buying, and opaque campaign expenditures distort electoral competition, enabling financially dominant candidates to manipulate outcomes. Unlike general corruption, which diverts public resources for private gain, corruption in political financing entrenches elite control over the political landscape, marginalizing candidates with fewer financial resources. Usman *et al.*¹³ stress that weak regulatory mechanisms and enforcement failures exacerbate these challenges, allowing undue financial influence to shape democratic governance.

¹⁰ Valeria Andreevna Tonhäuser, *Anti-Corruption Regulation of Political Finance and Conflict of Interest: A Conceptual Framework and Analysis of Its Development* (PhD diss., University of Cologne, 2020), <https://d-nb.info/1220027405/34>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Salisu Ogbo Usman et al., “An Exposé on Encumbrance in Political Parties’ Financing and Electoral Credibility in Nigeria,” *International Journal of Professional Business Review* 8, no. 9 (September 29, 2023): e03249–49, <https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i9.3249>.

¹³ *Ibid.*

In Nigeria, Okpeh¹⁴ contends that money in politics has entrenched elite domination, sidelined public interests, and contributed to governance failures. He argues that the monetization of elections weakened the bond between leaders and the electorate, as politicians prioritize the interests of wealthy financiers over public welfare. This has fostered opportunism, corruption, and mediocrity, where electoral success depends more on financial resources than on competence or policy ideas. Okpeh¹⁵ highlights that weak regulatory enforcement further enables this trend, perpetuating a system where money, rather than merit, determines political influence and decision-making.

Moreover, Sule¹⁶ highlights the growing reliance on illicit funding sources in African democracies, warning that weak legal frameworks and ineffective enforcement mechanisms sustain electoral corruption and weaken democratic institutions. He argues that unregulated political financing enables money laundering, foreign influence, and the entrenchment of political elites who exploit financial power to manipulate electoral outcomes. This lack of oversight fosters a cycle where politicians prioritize the interests of financial backers over democratic accountability. Sule stresses that without stronger regulations and enforcement, electoral processes in Africa will remain vulnerable to corruption, undermining public trust and democratic governance.

While these studies provide valuable insights into the challenges of political finance regulation, they fail to offer a holistic, Nigeria-specific analysis that integrates legal, socio-political, and historical perspectives to propose concrete reforms. This paper fills that gap by critically examining Nigeria's legal framework for political financing, identifying enforcement challenges, and proposing regulatory solutions grounded in both local realities and international best practices. Unlike previous works that focus solely on corruption or campaign financing in isolation,

¹⁴ O.O. Okpeh, "Issues and Common Features of Nigerian Elections," in *Studies on the Nigerian Legislature, 1999-2011*, ed. P I Ukase, O Afaha, and L Tangshak (Abuja: Vast Publishers, 2013).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Babayo Sule, "How Accountable and Transparent Is the African Democracy? Reviewing Political Party Financing and Regulations," *African Social Science and Humanities Journal* 2, no. 3 (August 24, 2021): 168–84, <https://doi.org/10.57040/asshj.v2i3.47>.

this study adopts a multidimensional approach, combining legal analysis with empirical evidence on political funding trends and their broader impact on governance.

The urgency of this research stems from the systemic failure in enforcing Nigeria's political finance laws, particularly as observed in the 2023 general elections, where vote-buying, illicit campaign funding, and financial inducements reached unprecedented levels. Without urgent reforms, Nigeria risks further entrenching political clientelism, where governance is dictated by financial backers rather than the electorate. This study is significant as it not only evaluates existing legislative gaps but also proposes specific regulatory reforms, including enhanced financial disclosure, stricter enforcement mechanisms, and the establishment of an independent electoral finance monitoring unit within the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

This paper goes beyond merely identifying enforcement challenges in political party financing; it also pinpoints critical areas for reform. Drawing from international best practices, it recommends legal amendments, institutional improvements, and regulatory frameworks necessary for strengthening compliance mechanisms and curbing financial malpractice in Nigeria's electoral system. The study underscores the importance of real-time financial disclosure, stricter penalties for violations, and a legislative review to close loopholes in existing laws.

Moreover, campaign finance laws have been widely debated, with scholars divided between those advocating for stringent regulation and those favouring limited oversight. Proponents of strict campaign finance laws argue that they promote fairness, reduce undue influence from wealthy interests, and enhance electoral competition. Countries with strict campaign finance laws tend to have higher levels of welfare spending and more representative governance structures due to limitations on large political donations. Conversely, opponents argue that stringent disclosure requirements infringe on privacy and free expression, potentially discouraging political participation, especially for marginalized groups like women candidates. A persistent criticism of campaign finance laws is that they are often ineffective in curbing corruption, as vested interests find alternative ways to exert influence. These diverging perspectives highlight the need for a balanced approach that both safeguards democratic principles and mitigates corruption.

The primary objective of this paper is to critically assess Nigeria's political financing laws, highlight existing gaps, and propose reforms to enhance transparency and accountability in electoral financing. To achieve this, the study will analyse key legislative frameworks, judicial precedents, and comparative international approaches, ultimately recommending policy measures that align Nigeria's legal system with global best practices. By bridging the gap between theory and policy, this research aims to contribute to ongoing policy debates and practical electoral reforms that will strengthen democratic integrity in Nigeria.

Method

This paper adopts a doctrinal legal research methodology, which involves an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary legal sources to examine the regulatory framework governing political party financing in Nigeria. The research is designed to provide a comprehensive legal appraisal of the laws and enforcement mechanisms related to political finance, using a normative approach to assess their effectiveness against legal principles and international best practices. The study is qualitative, relying on legal interpretation and comparative analysis to evaluate the adequacy of Nigeria's electoral finance regulations.

This research follows a doctrinal legal research design, focusing on the examination of legislative instruments, case law, and legal doctrines to critically assess the legal framework governing political party financing in Nigeria. The study is structured to analyse statutory provisions, such as the Electoral Act 2022 and the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended), to determine their scope and enforcement mechanisms. It also examines judicial decisions and relevant case law to understand how courts have interpreted and enforced political finance regulations.

Additionally, a comparative legal analysis is conducted to identify best practices from other jurisdictions, such as the US, France, Germany, Sweden, and Indonesia, that could inform reforms in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study evaluates the impact of weak enforcement mechanisms on electoral integrity and democratic governance. The research employs a normative legal approach, assessing how existing laws align with legal standards, democratic principles, and international benchmarks. By adopting this approach, the study critically examines

whether the current regulatory framework effectively addresses corruption, illicit funding, and transparency issues in political party financing.

The study is grounded in legal positivism and democratic theory. Legal positivism emphasizes the authority of law as it is written, analysing statutes, case law, and regulations to determine their applicability and effectiveness. This perspective helps assess the coherence, consistency, and enforceability of Nigeria's political finance laws. Additionally, democratic theory provides a broader normative foundation by exploring how legal frameworks should function to promote fairness, accountability, and political equality in electoral processes. By incorporating this theory, the research evaluates whether Nigeria's regulatory system fosters a level playing field in politics or enables financial dominance by elite political actors.

This research is primarily desk-based, relying on legal texts, case law, and academic literature. While this study provides a comprehensive legal analysis, it acknowledges certain limitations. First, publicly available data are reliant, as confidential financial records of political parties are inaccessible due to their sensitive nature. As a result, this research depends on legal documents, public reports, and secondary sources, which may not capture the full extent of undisclosed or illicit political funding. Second, the study does not incorporate empirical financial data, as statistical analyses of political finance trends are limited by data availability. Instead, it focuses on legal doctrine, case law, and policy analysis to assess regulatory effectiveness.

Third, comparative analysis constraints exist due to differences in political, economic, and legal contexts among jurisdictions. While lessons from countries like the US, France, Germany, Sweden, and Indonesia provide valuable insights, direct transplantation of foreign legal models to Nigeria remains challenging. The study carefully considers these contextual differences when drawing lessons from international best practices. Lastly, challenges in enforcement assessment pose a limitation. Given the discretionary nature of law enforcement, it is difficult to measure the extent to which political finance laws are uniformly applied. This study relies on documented cases and scholarly critiques to evaluate enforcement challenges.

Results and Discussion

Electoral spending in Nigeria has witnessed a significant upward trajectory over the years, reflecting the increasing commercialization of political contests and the growing financial burden of electioneering. The role of money in Nigerian elections has evolved into a critical issue, raising concerns over transparency, accountability, and the overall integrity of the democratic process. While statutory regulations exist to curb excessive electoral expenditure, enforcement mechanisms remain largely ineffective, leading to widespread non-compliance by political actors.

Nigeria's electoral expenditure has skyrocketed over the past two decades, with each election cycle witnessing a significant increase in the funds spent by political parties and candidates. According to estimates by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties collectively spent approximately ₦196 billion (USD 982 million) in the 2015 general elections, nearly double the expenditure recorded in 2011.¹⁷ This escalation was driven by increased campaign activities, greater reliance on traditional and digital media, and the high cost of mobilizing party supporters.

The 2019 elections saw further financial intensification, with the two dominant political parties—the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP)—accumulating an estimated ₦11.6 billion (USD 38 million) in campaign expenses for the presidential race alone.¹⁸ INEC reported that the PDP/Atiku campaign spent ₦2.9 billion (USD 9.5 million) on traditional media advertising, while the APC/Buhari campaign allocated approximately ₦4.6 billion (USD 15 million) for similar activities.¹⁹ These figures, however, exclude the substantial financial outlays on logistics, transportation of party members to rallies, venue rentals, security arrangements, and other associated costs. Beyond officially declared expenses, electoral expenditures in Nigeria often involve illicit financial activities such as

¹⁷ Victor Adetula, *Political Finance in the Digital Age: The Case of Nigeria* (Strömsborg: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2024), 6, <https://doi.org/10.31752/idea.2024.32>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

vote-buying, bribery, hiring of political thugs, ballot box snatching, and election-related violence.²⁰ Reports from civil society organizations and election monitors indicate that these clandestine expenditures significantly inflate the actual cost of elections, making it difficult to accurately quantify total campaign spending.

In the 2023 elections, political expenditures likely exceeded these figures mentioned above. However, the lack of transparency in political financing has made it difficult to confirm exact spending figures, as major parties, including the APC and PDP, have yet to publicly disclose their financial reports in compliance with the Electoral Act 2022. One of the most concerning trends in the 2023 elections was the unprecedented scale of vote-buying, with reports indicating that political parties offered financial incentives ranging from ₦5,000 to ₦20,000 per voter in some regions.²¹ The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) made several arrests related to vote-buying, yet these actions had minimal deterrent effects due to the systemic nature of the practice. Additionally, cryptocurrency and digital financial transactions played an increasing role in campaign financing, allowing political actors to bypass traditional banking systems and regulatory scrutiny

A. Juridical Objectives: Legal Framework for Political Party Financing in Nigeria

The regulation of political party financing in Nigeria is enshrined in constitutional provisions and statutory instruments, primarily the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) 1999 (as amended) and the Electoral Act 2022. These legal frameworks are designed to ensure financial accountability, transparency, and compliance with electoral integrity principles. However, despite the existence of these provisions, enforcement remains a major challenge.

²⁰ UV Awhefeada, EO Okumagba, and PC Aloamaka, “LEGAL REGULATION OF INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY in NIGERIA,” *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs* 9, no. 2 (January 1, 2023): 369–84, <https://doi.org/10.47305/jlia2392476a>.

²¹ Gabriel T Abumbe and Owa Egbara Owa, “Democracy and Electoral Integrity in the Nigerian 2023 General Elections: An Assessment,” *Global Journal of Social Sciences* 23, no. 1 (July 13, 2024): 117–41, <https://doi.org/10.4314/gjss.v23i1.10>.

Political actors frequently circumvent the laws through illicit funding channels, unregulated cash transactions, and excessive expenditure beyond stipulated limits.

1. Constitutional Provisions on Political Party Finance

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) sets out the foundation for financial regulation in the political process. The most relevant provisions are contained in Sections 225 and 226, which mandate financial disclosure obligations and empower the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to oversee compliance.

Section 225(1) of the CFRN mandates political parties to submit periodic statements of their assets and liabilities to INEC. This provision is intended to promote transparency and accountability in political party funding. Furthermore, Section 225(2) requires political parties to provide annual reports detailing their sources of income and expenditures, ensuring that political parties do not receive undisclosed or illicit funding. The prohibition of foreign donations, as outlined in Section 225(3), further reinforces Nigeria's sovereignty by preventing undue external influence in domestic politics. Additionally, Section 225(4) requires any foreign funds received by political parties to be surrendered to INEC within 21 days.

Regulatory oversight is further enhanced through Section 226(1), which mandates INEC to prepare annual financial reports of political parties and submit them to the National Assembly. Additionally, Section 226(2) empowers INEC to conduct investigations into party finances, while Section 226(3) grants INEC and its agents unrestricted access to the financial records of political parties. However, in practice, INEC has struggled to enforce these provisions effectively due to administrative inefficiencies, inadequate resources, and political interference.²² Many political parties fail to submit their financial records on time, while others provide incomplete or misleading reports without facing consequences.

²² Babayo Sule et al., "Issues and Regulations in Party Financing and Electoral Expenses in Nigeria (1999–2020)," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 40, no. 2 (February 16, 2022): 253–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2022.2031917>.

2. Provisions under the Electoral Act 2022

The Electoral Act 2022 supplements constitutional provisions by introducing comprehensive regulations on political party financing, campaign expenditures, and sanctions for violations. These provisions are designed to enhance transparency, promote electoral integrity, and prevent the undue influence of wealth in the democratic process. A critical aspect of the Act pertains to the regulation of campaign financing, particularly the imposition of statutory expenditure limits and disclosure requirements for political parties and candidates.

Under Section 88(1) of the Electoral Act 2022, statutory expenditure limits have been established for political campaigns across various elective offices in Nigeria. These financial thresholds serve as mechanisms to prevent excessive spending that could compromise electoral fairness. The stipulated expenditure limits are as follows:

TABLE 1. Electoral Expenditure Limits under Section 88(1) of the Electoral Act 2022

ELECTIVE OFFICE	EXPENDITURE LIMIT (₦) Naira
Presidential election	5 billion
Gubernatorial election	1 billion
Senatorial election	100 million
House of Representatives election	70 million
State House of Assembly election	30 million

These statutory restrictions aim to create a level playing field for political actors and mitigate the risk of financial inducement distorting the electoral process. However, empirical evidence suggests that these limits are frequently exceeded, with political parties and candidates exploiting legal loopholes and weak enforcement mechanisms. The widespread use of third-party donors, political patrons (godfathers), and offshore financial channels facilitates unregulated campaign financing, thereby circumventing statutory restrictions.

Beyond expenditure limitations, the Electoral Act 2022 imposes donation caps and disclosure obligations to promote financial

transparency. Section 88(8) stipulates that no individual or entity shall contribute more than ₦50 million to a political candidate, curbing the concentration of financial influence in electoral politics. To enforce compliance, Section 88(10) prescribes punitive measures for violations, including a fine of ₦500,000 or a nine-month term of imprisonment for individuals or entities exceeding the stipulated donation threshold.

Furthermore, Section 90(1) explicitly prohibits political parties from accepting anonymous donations, reinforcing the principle of financial traceability in electoral processes. This provision is complemented by Section 90(2), which mandates that political parties maintain detailed financial records of all contributions exceeding ₦1 million, including the name and address of the contributor. These provisions are instrumental in preventing illicit financial flows, money laundering, and the covert manipulation of electoral outcomes through undisclosed funding sources.

To strengthen financial transparency and accountability, Section 89(8) of the Electoral Act 2022 mandates that political parties publish audited financial reports in at least two national newspapers and on their official websites. This requirement ensures that campaign financing remains subject to public scrutiny. Non-compliance with this provision carries significant legal consequences under Section 89(4), which imposes a ₦1 million fine for failing to submit audited reports, with an additional penalty of ₦200,000 per day for continued default.

Despite these regulatory frameworks, enforcement remains a significant challenge.²³ Political parties and candidates routinely flout financial disclosure requirements with minimal legal repercussions. The absence of stringent monitoring mechanisms, coupled with weak institutional enforcement by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and other regulatory bodies, has led to persistent non-compliance with financial reporting obligations. This gap underscores the need for enhanced regulatory oversight, stricter enforcement measures, and institutional reforms to uphold the integrity of Nigeria's electoral financing framework.

²³ Babayo Sule, "Political Party Financing in Nigeria," in *Nigerian Political Parties in the Fourth Republic: Evolution, Characteristics and Dynamics of Transformation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 291–325.

B. Judicial Precedents on Political Party Financing in Nigeria

Judicial pronouncements on political party financing in Nigeria provide significant insight into the misappropriation of public funds and their use in electioneering activities. The judiciary plays a critical role in interpreting and enforcing laws regulating political financing, yet its effectiveness in deterring illicit practices remains questionable. One of the most high-profile cases involving political party financing in Nigeria is the case of *Col. Mohammed Sambo Dasuki (Rtd) & Ors v Federal Republic of Nigeria & Ors*.²⁴ The appellant, a former National Security Adviser, was charged at the Federal High Court of the Federal Capital Territory for allegedly misusing public funds to campaign for the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 general elections. The allegations revolved around the dishonest misappropriation of federal funds, originally allocated for national security purposes, to facilitate party activities.²⁵ The prosecution contended that Dasuki supervised the diversion of ₦2.1 billion meant for the procurement of arms to fund the PDP's presidential campaign. This case brought to light the systemic abuse of state resources for partisan electoral advantage, raising fundamental concerns about good governance, electoral integrity, and financial accountability. Although Dasuki was granted bail on December 18, 2015, his prolonged detention and the subsequent legal battle exposed the political underpinnings of the case. Despite its significance, this case failed to set a strong judicial precedent for the prosecution of political actors involved in illicit party financing. Political considerations and legal technicalities prolonged the trial, diminishing its deterrent effect. The case demonstrated that despite legal provisions, the selective application of justice and the lack of political will to prosecute offenders create loopholes in Nigeria's electoral finance enforcement.

²⁴ SC 617/2016.

²⁵ Babayo Sule, Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, and Bakri Mat, "Independent National Electoral Commission and Campaign Financing Monitoring in Nigeria: The 2015 General Elections," *Journal of International Studies* 13 (2017): 15–31, <https://doi.org/10.32890/jis2017.13.2>.

Similarly, in *Olisa Metuh v Federal Republic of Nigeria*,²⁶ the appellant was charged with the illegal expenditure of ₦400 million to finance the campaign of the PDP in 2015. The prosecution argued that the funds originated from the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) and were illegally funnelled into the party's campaign. The trial court convicted Metuh in 2020, sentencing him to seven years in prison for money laundering and related offenses. The case was seen as a rare instance where a political actor faced conviction for financial misconduct in election campaigns. However, the Supreme Court overturned the conviction in 2022, citing procedural irregularities and violations of Metuh's constitutional rights to a fair trial. This case highlighted the difficulties in securing lasting judicial outcomes in political finance violations. While the initial conviction signalled an attempt at judicial accountability, the subsequent reversal reinforced the perception that the prosecution of political figures for campaign finance violations is often inconsistent, politically motivated, or legally flawed.

The enforcement of financial regulations in Nigeria has been sporadic and largely ineffective, with INEC and other regulatory bodies failing to hold political parties accountable for financial infractions. Despite the existence of comprehensive legal frameworks, weak implementation and political interference often render these laws ineffective. Judicial decisions have yet to produce significant deterrence, as similar financial misconduct cases re-emerge in successive electoral cycles.

C. International Conventions and Normative Standards on Political Party Financing

Globally, campaign finance regulations are assessed against democratic standards established by international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations (UN), and regional bodies like the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These frameworks provide normative principles that emphasize transparency, accountability, and fairness in political party financing. The regulation

²⁶ [2017] 11 NWLR (Part 1575) 157.

of campaign finance is crucial to ensuring free and fair elections, preventing the misuse of state resources, and mitigating the influence of illicit funding sources.

The 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document is a foundational instrument that outlines electoral fairness and transparency. It mandates that participating states provide an equal legal footing for political parties and ensure that political campaigns are conducted in a free and fair atmosphere. Paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 of the Copenhagen Document emphasize that incumbents must not misuse state resources for electoral advantage. These provisions serve as a benchmark for democratic integrity, urging states to regulate campaign finances effectively. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has further developed guidelines on political party regulation, advocating for independent oversight bodies, financial disclosure mechanisms, and strict limitations on private and state contributions. The OSCE's monitoring of elections in Europe and Central Asia frequently assesses the degree to which member states comply with these standards, highlighting violations and best practices in political financing.

The 2003 UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is a critical international instrument that addresses transparency in political party financing. Under Article 7(3), member states are required to implement legislative and administrative measures to curb financial misconduct in electoral processes.²⁷ This includes the establishment of effective disclosure mechanisms that monitor sources of election funding and prevent illicit financial influence. Furthermore, the 1996 UN Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 25 to Article 25 of the ICCPR prescribes reasonable campaign expenditure limitations to prevent undue financial influence. The ICCPR recognizes that while political expression and association must be protected, unchecked financial contributions can distort electoral processes, favouring candidates or parties with greater financial resources.

²⁷ Agaptus Nwozor et al., "Has Anything Changed with Illegitimate Electoral Financing and Political Power Contestation in Nigeria?" ed. John Kwame Boateng, *Cogent Social Sciences* 7, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 1961396, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1961396>.

The Council of Europe has significantly influenced political finance regulation through the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2003) 4 on Common Rules Against Corruption in the Funding of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns, which establishes key principles to enhance transparency, accountability, and fairness in electoral competition.²⁸ The recommendation mandates expenditure limits to prevent excessive campaign spending, mandatory disclosure of financial contributions to enhance transparency, and independent monitoring mechanisms to oversee compliance. Additionally, it prescribes enforcement measures and sanctions to deter violations and uphold electoral integrity. By promoting these principles, the Council of Europe seeks to curb corruption, prevent undue financial influence in politics, and ensure a level playing field in democratic elections, though challenges in enforcement and compliance persist in many jurisdictions.

The 2002 Council of Europe's Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters reinforces fundamental democratic principles by advocating for transparency, equal opportunity, and independent oversight in electoral processes.²⁹ This document serves as a global reference point for electoral commissions, providing legal and procedural guidelines that shape electoral reforms in both Council of Europe member states and non-member states. By emphasizing the fair administration of elections, impartiality in electoral management, and accountability in campaign financing, the Code aims to strengthen democratic legitimacy and electoral integrity. Its influence extends beyond Europe, as many jurisdictions incorporate its principles to enhance the credibility and fairness of their electoral frameworks.

The 2010 Venice Commission and ODIHR Guidelines on Political Party Regulation provide further recommendations for regulating financial contributions, ensuring accountability, and

²⁸ Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers. *Recommendation Rec(2003)4 on Common Rules Against Corruption in the Funding of Political Parties and Electoral Campaigns*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2003.

²⁹ Venice Commission. "Code of good practice in electoral matters." *Conseil de l'Europe-AD 23*, no. 190 (2002): 1-33.

addressing conflicts of interest.³⁰ These guidelines emphasize the need for public funding mechanisms to support democratic competition while reducing reliance on private and corporate donations, which may introduce corrupt practices.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has adjudicated multiple cases related to campaign finance, interpreting provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) about freedom of expression under Article 10 of the ECHR and freedom of association as provided under the ECHR.³¹ In its rulings, the Court has emphasized that while political parties must enjoy financial freedom to participate effectively in democratic processes, states have a legitimate interest in preventing financial abuses that could distort electoral integrity and undermine democratic principles. Consequently, the ECtHR has upheld reasonable restrictions on political finance, provided they are proportionate, transparent, and serve a legitimate aim. These rulings have shaped electoral jurisprudence across Europe, reinforcing the need for a balanced regulatory approach that both safeguards democratic participation and ensures fairness in electoral competition.

One of the notable cases is *Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi (Freedom and Solidarity Party) v. Turkey*,³² which addressed the issue of campaign finance restrictions and their compatibility with democratic principles under the ECHR. The case involved the Turkish Constitutional Court's decision to deprive the Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) of state funding due to its electoral performance, raising questions under Article 11 (freedom of association) and Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the ECHR. The ECtHR ruled that restricting public funding to political parties based on electoral results could disproportionately affect smaller parties, thereby limiting political pluralism and hindering democratic competition. The Court emphasized that while states have a legitimate interest in regulating political finance, they must ensure that such restrictions do not create an

³⁰ Venice Commission. "Guidelines on political party regulation." *Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 84th Plenary Session, Venice* (2010).

³¹ European Court of Human Rights. *Guide on Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights: Freedom of Expression*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2021.

³² European Court of Human Rights. *Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi (Freedom and Solidarity Party) v. Turkey*, Application no. 23885/07, Judgment of 10 May 2012.

undue disadvantage for opposition parties or undermine the essence of political participation in a democratic society.

The 2002 CIS Convention on Democratic Elections³³ establishes key principles for transparency and fairness in election financing, mandating that political funding must be transparent, with clear disclosure of sources; equitable, ensuring equal access to financial resources; and subject to robust oversight mechanisms to prevent illicit financial flows. Member states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have adopted diverse approaches to political finance regulation, with some implementing public funding schemes to create a level playing field, while others enforce strict donor contribution limits to curb undue influence.

The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) has consistently emphasized the importance of independent oversight bodies in regulating campaign finance.³⁴ Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) must be institutionally strengthened to exercise greater autonomy, investigative authority, and enforcement capacity. Without such reforms, electoral financing will remain susceptible to abuse, undermining Nigeria's broader democratic and governance structures.

D. International Debates on Campaign Finance Laws

The regulation of political party financing remains a subject of extensive debate in both developed and emerging democracies. These debates revolve around issues of financial transparency, the role of public and private funding, regulatory effectiveness, and the balance between free political expression and anti-corruption measures. Different legal frameworks have emerged globally, reflecting distinct approaches to regulating political financing, with some jurisdictions emphasizing strict

³³ Commonwealth of Independent States. *Convention on Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms in the Member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States*. Chisinau: CIS, 2002.

³⁴ Svetoslav Spassov, "The EU's Policy towards Modernizing the Legislative Framework on Anti-Corruption Reforms in Bulgaria," *Vocational Education* 26, no. 2-3 (October 11, 2024): 158–73, <https://doi.org/10.53656/voc2024-2-3-06>.

public oversight while others prioritize private contributions with transparency measures.

The United States has had a complex relationship with campaign finance regulation, with landmark judicial decisions shaping the legal landscape. Cases such as *Buckley v. Valeo*³⁵ and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*³⁶ have set significant precedents in balancing campaign finance laws with free speech protections under the First Amendment. These decisions provide valuable lessons for Nigeria, where campaign finance regulations remain a subject of reform and scrutiny. Examining the U.S. approach alongside regulatory frameworks in European democracies such as France, Germany, Sweden, and Indonesia can offer insights into reforming a more transparent and equitable campaign finance legal system in Nigeria.

One of the most influential decisions in American campaign finance jurisprudence is *Buckley v. Valeo*. The case arose in response to the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) of 1971, which sought to impose restrictions on campaign expenditures and contributions to prevent undue influence by wealthy individuals and organizations. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that while restrictions on campaign contributions were constitutional to prevent corruption and maintain electoral integrity, limitations on a candidate's expenditures violated the First Amendment's free speech protections. This decision established a critical distinction between contributions and expenditures, affirming that while contributions could be regulated to deter corruption, a candidate's right to spend their own money in pursuit of public office constituted a fundamental free speech right. The ruling in *Buckley v. Valeo* underscored the delicate balance between regulating campaign finance to promote transparency and ensuring that such regulations do not infringe upon constitutional rights. The decision remains a cornerstone of American campaign finance law, influencing subsequent legal debates on the permissible scope of government intervention in political financing. While the ruling allowed for contribution limits to mitigate corruption risks, it also facilitated the rise of self-funded campaigns, where wealthy candidates could leverage their financial

³⁵ 424 U.S. 1 (1976).

³⁶ 558 U.S. 310 (2010).

resources without restriction. This precedent has significant implications for Nigeria, where concerns over financial transparency, political patronage, and the influence of money in elections persist. A nuanced approach that mirrors aspects of the *Buckley* decision could provide Nigeria with a legal framework that ensures both transparency and democratic participation while safeguarding constitutional rights.

More than three decades after *Buckley v. Valeo*, the U.S. Supreme Court issued another landmark ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which significantly altered the landscape of campaign finance regulation. The case involved a dispute over whether the Federal Election Commission (FEC) could restrict corporations and unions from engaging in independent political expenditures. The Court, in a controversial 5-4 decision, ruled that corporate and union spending on political campaigns constituted a form of protected speech under the First Amendment, effectively allowing corporations to spend unlimited amounts in support of or against political candidates. The *Citizens United* ruling had profound implications, leading to the proliferation of Super Political Action Committees (Super PACs) and the unprecedented flow of money into U.S. elections. The decision enabled wealthy donors and corporate entities to exert significant influence over political campaigns, raising concerns about the role of money in democratic governance. A striking example emerged in the 2024 U.S. presidential election when Elon Musk contributed over \$260 million to Donald Trump's campaign, primarily through America PAC, a Super PAC he helped establish.³⁷ This unprecedented financial involvement exemplifies how the *Citizens United* case has enabled affluent individuals to shape electoral outcomes, raising concerns about fairness and democratic integrity. Critics argue that the decision disproportionately amplifies elite voices while marginalizing ordinary voters, whereas supporters claim it protects free speech and broadens political participation.

³⁷ Fredreka Schouten, David Wright, and Alex Leeds Matthews, "Musk Spent More than a Quarter-Billion Dollars to Elect Trump, Including Funding a Mysterious Super PAC, New Filings Show," *CNN*, December 6, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/12/05/politics/elon-musk-trump-campaign-finance-filings/index.html>.

For Nigeria, the *Citizens United* ruling serves as a cautionary tale about the potential consequences of deregulated campaign finance. While Nigeria's legal framework currently imposes limitations on political donations and campaign expenditures, there is a need for stringent enforcement mechanisms to prevent undue influence from wealthy donors and corporate entities. Unlike the U.S., where free speech considerations limit regulatory interventions, Nigeria's legal system provides greater latitude for state oversight of campaign finance. Strengthening regulatory institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to enforce financial disclosure requirements and expenditure limits can mitigate the risks associated with unchecked political spending.

While the United States has embraced a relatively laissez-faire approach to campaign finance, many European democracies have adopted stringent regulatory frameworks to ensure electoral fairness and transparency. Countries such as France, Germany, and Sweden impose strict financial disclosure requirements, public financing mechanisms, and limits on individual and corporate donations to prevent undue influence in political processes. In France, campaign finance regulations are among the strictest in the world.³⁸ Candidates are subject to spending caps, and corporate donations to political parties and candidates are prohibited. Instead, public financing mechanisms are employed to ensure that candidates have equitable access to campaign resources. The National Commission for Campaign Accounts and Political Financing (CNCCFP) oversees compliance with campaign finance laws, ensuring that candidates adhere to spending limits and financial disclosure requirements.³⁹ These measures enhance electoral integrity and prevent financial disparities from distorting democratic competition.

Germany follows a mixed model that combines public financing with private contributions, but strict transparency requirements are imposed to deter corruption. Political parties receive state funding based

³⁸ Law Library of Congress, *Foreign Involvement in Elections: Laws and Regulations*, (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2023), 15, <https://maint.loc.gov/law/help/elections/foreign-involvement/foreign-involvement-in-elections.pdf>.

³⁹ Ibid.

on their electoral performance, reducing reliance on private donors.⁴⁰ Additionally, individual and corporate donations are subject to disclosure requirements, ensuring accountability in campaign financing.⁴¹ The German system prioritizes financial transparency and public trust, serving as a model for countries seeking to regulate political spending while maintaining democratic participation.

Similarly, Sweden implements robust campaign finance regulations, emphasizing transparency and public financing. Political parties receive state subsidies to fund their activities, and strict disclosure laws mandate that all contributions above a certain threshold be publicly reported.⁴² By limiting the role of private money in elections, Sweden ensures that political competition remains fair and that financial influence does not overshadow democratic principles.

Indonesia presents a unique model of political party financing that contrasts with both Nigeria's lax enforcement framework and France's strict regulatory system. The country allows corporate donations to political parties and election campaigns, but enforces statutory limits under Law No. 2/2011 on Political Parties.⁴³ Corporate contributions to political parties are capped at IDR 7.5 billion (~USD 500,000) per year, while individual donations are limited to IDR 1 billion (~USD 67,000) per year.⁴⁴ For presidential election campaigns, the ceiling for corporate donations rises significantly to IDR 25 billion (~USD 1.7 million).⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Michael Koß, "When (and How) Ideas Become Arguments: The Regulation of Party Donations in Germany," *Italian Political Science Review/Rivista Italiana Di Scienza Politica*, 2024, 114, <https://doi.org/10.1017/ipo.2023.31>.

⁴¹ Thomas Schmitz, "Political Parties and Their Funding in Germany," *Journal of the University of Latvia. Law* 12 (2019): 86–95, <https://doi.org/10.22364/jull.12.06>.

⁴² Gullan M. Gidlund, "Regulation of Party Finance in Sweden," in *Comparative Political Finance among the Democracies*, ed. Herbert E. Alexander (New York: Routledge, 1994), 10.

⁴³ Moch Andry W. W. Mamonto and Andika Wahyudi Gani, "Model of Political Party Financial Regulation in Post-Reformation Indonesia," *Golden Ratio of Law and Social Policy Review* 1, no. 2 (June 28, 2022): 76–85, <https://doi.org/10.52970/grlspr.v1i2.181>.

⁴⁴ Teguh Ilham and Agni Grandita Permata Sari, "Political Party Financing Regulation and Gaps for Corporate Donations: Case of the Developing Country," *Journal of Governance and Regulation* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 28–41, <https://doi.org/10.22495/jgrv13i1art3>.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Despite these regulations, weak enforcement mechanisms and financial opacity enable parties to exceed legal limits. Unlike France, where strict public financing and an independent campaign finance oversight body (CNCCFP) regulate political donations, Indonesia's General Elections Commission (KPU) and Election Supervisory Board (BAWASLU) primarily focus on monitoring campaign spending, with limited authority over general party financing.

The international debates on political party financing laws offer valuable lessons for Nigeria. While the U.S. model underscores the dangers of deregulation, the European, Indonesian, and international legal frameworks emphasize transparency, spending limits, and enforcement mechanisms. By adopting global best practices, enhancing enforcement, and closing loopholes in digital transactions, Nigeria can create a more transparent and accountable political finance system that strengthens electoral integrity and democracy.

E. Philosophical Objectives: Electoral Integrity and Fair Political Competition

From a philosophical standpoint, democratic governance requires a level playing field where elections are decided by the electorate rather than by financial power. Political financing should reflect democratic values such as equity, fairness, and accountability. However, in Nigeria, the commercialization of elections has resulted in elite domination, voter manipulation, and reduced political competition. Excessive money in politics undermines the democratic ideal that all candidates should have equal opportunities to compete based on ideas rather than financial capacity. Unregulated campaign financing has weakened electoral integrity, as vote-buying, patronage politics, and financial inducements have taken precedence over policy-driven governance. This fosters corruption and mediocrity, preventing capable candidates with fewer financial resources from effectively participating in the electoral process.

Without strict regulatory oversight, Nigeria's political system risks becoming a plutocracy, where only the wealthiest individuals and corporate sponsors control electoral outcomes. This study highlights the urgent need for legislative and institutional reforms to restore electoral integrity and promote fair political competition.

F. Regulatory Gaps and Weak Enforcement Mechanisms

Despite the robust legal framework, enforcement of political finance regulations remains highly ineffective. Several factors contribute to this persistent challenge:

1. **Weak Institutional Capacity** – INEC lacks the necessary human, technical, and financial resources to effectively monitor campaign finances. The absence of an independent campaign finance monitoring body further complicates enforcement efforts.
2. **Lack of Accountability and Prosecution** – Although the Electoral Act prescribes penalties, there have been no major prosecutions of political figures for campaign finance violations. This lack of enforcement fosters a culture of impunity.
3. **Prevalence of Vote-Buying and Illicit Funding** – Vote-buying and bribery remain widespread, with political parties engaging in covert cash transactions to evade scrutiny. According to reports from civil society organizations, political actors frequently distribute cash, food items, and other inducements to sway voters.⁴⁶
4. **Use of Cryptocurrencies and Digital Transactions** – The increasing use of cryptocurrency and electronic transactions has created new challenges for tracking political donations. Existing regulations do not adequately address digital financial flows, making it difficult to trace illicit funding sources.
5. **Influence of Political Godfathers** – The dominance of wealthy political sponsors and financiers enables candidates to circumvent financial regulations. These individuals often fund campaigns through opaque means, making financial disclosures ineffective.

⁴⁶ MOINwabuoku, PJ Esavwede, and KO Mrabure, “The Menace of Vote-Buying in Elections in Nigeria. Need to Enforce Applicable Law,” *BiLD Law Journal* 8, no. 1s (2023): 160–67.

6. Judicial Bottlenecks – The slow pace of judicial proceedings hampers efforts to hold violators accountable.⁴⁷ Cases of campaign finance violations often drag on for years without resolution, undermining deterrence.

G. Proposed Legal and Institutional Reforms

To address the regulatory loopholes and enforcement challenges, this study proposes a series of legal and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening compliance mechanisms in Nigeria's political finance system. These reforms are categorized into legislative amendments and institutional improvements.

1. Legislative Amendments

Amendment of the Electoral Act 2022: The *Electoral Act 2022* needs to be amended to introduce real-time digital reporting requirements for political donations, ensuring immediate transparency in campaign financing. Political parties should be mandated to disclose all sources of funding, including indirect contributions and third-party funding networks, to curb illicit and undisclosed financial inflows. Additionally, penalty provisions should be strengthened by increasing fines, imposing stricter disqualifications for non-compliance, and enabling asset forfeiture for funds obtained through unlawful means, thereby enhancing accountability in Nigeria's electoral financing system.

Prohibition of Undisclosed Digital Transactions: With the rise of cryptocurrency and anonymous digital financial transactions, political parties and candidates have new ways to bypass financial regulations, making financial monitoring more difficult. To address this, new legal provisions should explicitly prohibit the use of cryptocurrencies for undisclosed political donations while ensuring that all electronic financial contributions are processed through traceable banking channels. Additionally, financial institutions and digital payment platforms should be required to report large or suspicious transactions linked to political parties to regulatory agencies such as INEC and the

⁴⁷ U.G. Ehirim et al., "Constitutional Safeguard for Preservation of Democratic Political Culture and the Legitimacy of Political Porting in Nigeria," *Udayana Journal of Law and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2025): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.24843/UJLC.2025.v09.i01.p01>.

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), enhancing financial oversight.

Mandatory Public Disclosure of Political Financing: Political parties and candidates should be legally required to publish their quarterly financial reports in national newspapers and on INEC's website to ensure public access to campaign finance records. This measure would enhance transparency by allowing voters, civil society organizations, and anti-corruption agencies to scrutinize political expenditures. Furthermore, INEC should be granted enhanced oversight powers to regularly audit political party finances and impose penalties for non-compliance, thereby strengthening the enforcement of financial disclosure laws and ensuring greater accountability in Nigeria's electoral system.

2. Institutional Reforms

Establishment of an Independent Electoral Finance Monitoring Unit: To strengthen financial oversight in Nigeria's electoral process, INEC should establish a dedicated Electoral Finance Monitoring Unit with the authority to investigate and audit campaign funds. This unit should be staffed with financial experts, forensic accountants, and legal professionals who can effectively track illicit financial flows and detect non-compliance with electoral finance laws. Additionally, the unit should work in close collaboration with key financial regulatory bodies such as the EFCC, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), and other relevant agencies to monitor suspicious transactions, ensuring that all political funding sources are properly scrutinized and disclosed.

Creation of a Special Electoral Finance Tribunal: A specialized Electoral Finance Tribunal should be established to handle cases related to campaign finance violations and to fast-track judicial processes involving electoral funding misconduct. The tribunal should be empowered to conduct expedited hearings and impose swift penalties on political parties and candidates found guilty of breaching campaign finance laws. This specialized judicial body would ensure more efficient prosecution of financial infractions, reduce delays associated with regular courts, and serve as a strong deterrent against financial misconduct in Nigeria's political system.

Conclusion

The regulation of political party financing in Nigeria is crucial to electoral integrity, yet weak enforcement, political interference, and legal loopholes undermine transparency and accountability. Despite constitutional and statutory safeguards, vote-buying, unregulated donations, and excessive expenditures persist, exposing the ineffectiveness of current laws. INEC's limited capacity and inconsistent judicial enforcement further weaken accountability, allowing financial elites to dominate electoral processes.

Philosophically, fair elections should reflect democratic values by limiting undue financial influence, yet Nigeria's system favours wealth over political ideas. The unchecked role of money erodes electoral competition, fosters corruption, and weakens governance. The sociological impact includes deepening public distrust and reinforcing a system where financial backers, rather than voters, dictate governance priorities.

To address these issues, this paper recommends reforms including real-time financial disclosures, a ban on undisclosed digital transactions, and stricter penalties for violations. Strengthening INEC's enforcement capacity and establishing an Electoral Finance Monitoring Unit are essential. Comparative insights from jurisdictions like France and Germany emphasize transparency, independent oversight, and public funding to curb financial dominance.

By aligning Nigeria's framework with global best practices, these reforms will enhance electoral integrity and ensure a more transparent, accountable, and competitive democratic process. Without urgent action, financial corruption will continue to erode Nigeria's democratic foundations.

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