

## THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF YAR'ADUA IN GOVERNMENT: 2007-2010

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### **Abstract**

This article aims at an analysis of the radical political ideology of this president who, within a short time, changed the narratives in government towards meaningful projects for the development of the nation. We look at his ideology on the rule of law, the electoral process, the oil and gas industry and the economy at large. Our method is a critical analysis of some of Yar'adua's policies that shaped his government. He aggressively focused on translucent democracy, education, health, agriculture, infrastructure, and banking and finance. It is found that at a time when the nation needed a President who could take quick, strong, and decisive action his health problems ensured a hindrance. While he pursued his striking ideas, his fragile health became a serious distraction. He died on 5 May, 2010. Former Nigerian President Umaru Musa Yar'adua (2007-2010) started his political career during the Second Republic (1979–83) when he joined the leftist People's Redemption Party (PRP), due to his revolutionary ideology, while his father was a member of the conservative National Party of Nigeria (NPN). In 1990 Yar'adua was one of the foundation members of the Peoples Front. He contested the 1991 Governorship election in Katsina state as Social Democratic Party (SDP) flag bearer but lost to the candidate of the National Republican Convention (NRC). Significantly, this article shows that a careful nursing of radical political ideology and putting it into practice at the slightest opportunity is a step towards the achievement of determined goals.

**Key words:** Political philosophy, rule of law, ideology, policy, economy.

### **Introduction**

President Umaru Musa Yar'adua was born in Yar'adua ward of Katsina city. He came from an aristocratic Fulani family of the Mutawalle (custodian of the royal treasury) of Katsina emirate. He started his education at Rafukka Primary School in 1958, and attended Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, from 1972 to 1975, obtaining a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in Education and Chemistry, and then returned in 1978 to

achieve Masters of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Analytical Chemistry. (Yakubu, 2011: p. 288)

Yar'adua's political career started during the Second Republic (1979–83) when he joined the leftist People's Redemption Party (PRP), while his father was a member of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). In fact, his father held the National Vice Chairmanship of NPN for a while. During the Transition Programme of President Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, Yar'adua was one of the foundation members of the Peoples Front, a political association under the leadership of his elder brother, Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'adua. That association later fused with other political groups to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Yar'adua was a member of the 1988 Constituent Assembly. He was a member of the SDP National Caucus and the party's State Secretary in Katsina. He contested the 1991 Governorship election as its flag bearer but lost to Sa'idu Barda, the candidate of the National Republican Convention (NRC) (Aminci, interview held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

In 1999, he ran for the same position under the ticket of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and won. Yar'adua became the first governor of the Fourth Republic to publicly declare his assets. He was also re-elected in 2003. According to a public hearing he was the most outstanding Governor in the history of Katsina State. The policy of free education for primary and secondary school students was a policy he left to become a legacy in the state.

At the National Convention of the PDP on 16–17 December 2006, Yar'adua was chosen as the Presidential candidate of the then ruling PDP for the April 2007 general election (<http://www.africamasterweb.com/AdSense/PDP2007ConventionResults.html>.

Retrieved 12 November, 2022). A view on the support Yar'adua received from PDP leaders is that he was one of the few serving governors with a spotless record, devoid of any suspicions or charges of corruption. (Aminci, 2018). In the Presidential election, held on 21 April 2007, Yar'adua won with 70% of the vote (24.6 million votes) according to official results released on 23 April. The election was highly controversial and strongly criticized by observers, as well as the two primary opposition candidates, Muhammadu Buhari of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and Atiku Abubakar of

the Action Congress (AC) ('Huge win for Nigeria's Yar'Adua', BBC News. 23 April 2007. Retrieved November, 10, 2022).

After the election, Yar'adua proposed a government of national unity. In late June 2007, two opposition parties, the ANPP and the Progressive People Alliance (PPA), agreed to join Yar'adua's government. ("Nigerian opposition parties agree to join government". People's Daily Online. Xinhua News Agency. 29 June 2007. Retrieved November, 10, 2022). Yar'adua's new cabinet, which comprised of 39 ministers that included two for the ANPP, was sworn in on 26 July 2007 (Associated Press, July 26, 2007. Retrieved November, 10, 2022).

### **The Making of an Ideology**

While a student of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Yar'adua, like his contemporaries, was exposed to the Marxist ideology by the proactive and radical scholars of the Faculty of Arts. (Yakubu, 2011, p. 288). Prolific scholars like Dr. Yusufu Bala Usman, Patrick Wilmot, Mahmud Tukur, and Femi Adegunle were known to have promoted educative public lectures, seminars and debates on national and international socio-political and economic relevance. Such meetings attracted not only the students of humanity but those from other faculties including the sciences, engineering and medicine. Yar'adua, therefore, graduated with this ideology and during the Second Republic joined the People Redemption Party (PRP). This was reported to have caused him a dispute with his elder brother, General Shehu Musa 'Yar'adua, who was clearly known to be a capitalist (Yakubu, 2011: p. 288).

The PRP was an embodiment of the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), a First Republic radical anti-colonial party. It was embraced by the exploited but fearless peasants of northern Nigeria of the period. Abba (2000: p. x) notes that for the British to effectively siphon the economic resources of northern Nigeria they gave the emirs and chiefs the control of three basic instruments of law enforcement, namely, the local police (Native Authority Police), the native courts (*Alkali* Court) and local prisons. The emirs and chiefs made use of these institutions to subjugate the ordinary people and repress their opponents, as well as the opponents of the colonial administration. The NEPU then emerged in 1950 to break the shackles of that exploitative and repressive

system and to struggle politically for a better future for the people of Nigeria. But the party was also very clear about who was going to shoulder this responsibility of emancipation. It was the *talakawa* themselves, organised in their own political party.

PRP had four fundamental principles: equality, socialism, federalism and liberation from imperialism. The general programmes of the party included building durable democratic institutions, restoring public service and accountability, guaranteeing the rule of law, forging national unity based on genuine federalism, advancement of the role of women, promoting and defending Fundamental Human Rights, total Liberation of Africa, ensuring healthy and productive citizens, education for enlightenment and production among others (PRP *Constitution and Manifesto*, 1978). That was the basis on which the PRP was founded, and the reason for which it appealed to Yar'adua. Thus, as soon as he was nominated as the presidential candidate for Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), he came up with a *Seven Point Agenda* as part of his campaign manifesto.

**These Seven Points Agenda were:**

1. Power and energy
2. Food security and agriculture
3. Wealth creation and empowerment
4. Mass transportation
5. Security
6. Land reform
7. Qualitative and functional education (Yakubu, 2011: p. 229).

**YAR'ADUA'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**

***The rule of law***

As far as the rule of law is concerned it is the indeterminacy thesis that is initially the more alarming theme, for it implies that there is ultimately no distinction between

government by individual whim and government via the enactment and enforcement of general rules (Campbell, 1993:p. 239). According to Aristotle's political philosophy, in one sense, humans do not rule – law does.

And the different forms of government make laws democratical, aristocratical, tyrannical, with a view to their several interests; and these laws, which are made by them for their own interests are the justice which they deliver to their subjects, and him who transgresses them they punish as a breaker of the law, and unjust. (Plato, 1998: p. 28).

The democratic rule of law, however, is best for free and equal humans who are citizens of the same city. But more precisely, law and men must rule together. Wanting law to rule alone is like asking God and intellect (*nous*) to rule (which is impossible); wanting humans to rule alone is like asking wild beasts to rule (which is undesirable), “for passion perverts rulers even when they are the best men,” whereas “law is intellect (*nous*) without desire.” So, law rules, and humans are “guardians of and assistants to the laws.” (Mayhew, 2009: p. 531-532)

The focus of Yar'adua's government is evident in the strategy adopted to impart his radical but democratic ideology in determining Nigeria's developmental path. An undisputed fact is the declaration of President Yar'adua on the day of his inauguration that his government will be dedicated to transparent election. First, he pledged that his government would anchor the principle of the rule of law. He publicly declared his assets even when the law didn't require him to do so. This open display of transparency, the first by any Nigerian leader, did not go unnoticed at a time when the national mood had been fouled by his predecessor's scuttled attempt to seek a third term in office and by the fiasco of the April 2007 general elections.

There were some controversial decisions taken at the end of the Obasanjo administration that had engendered a feeling of despondency within the polity. Some of these decisions included jacking up the pump prices of petroleum products and selling vital national assets, like Kaduna and Port Harcourt refineries. University lecturers had been on strike. These were some of the immediate challenges before Yar'adua and the deft manner with

which he tackled them endeared him to many Nigerians. After difficult negotiations with the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), which had served a two-week ultimatum on the day the President assumed office, the President revoked the sale of the federal government's 51% stake in the Port Harcourt and Kaduna refineries to Transcorp. He also reduced the price of petrol from N75 to N70 per litre. Also, following his personal intervention, a compromise was reached with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), which immediately suspended the then on-going nationwide strike.

The philosophy of his administration was anchored on the principle of the rule of law. At his first official duty while receiving the British Government Whip with responsibility for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Baroness Jan Royall, Yar'adua said, "I will assure the Chief Justice of the Federation that I will support any moves for an independent and strong judiciary". (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 4). Yar'adua's actions left no one in doubt that the rule of law was, for him, his covenant with the Nigerian people. It was also very clear to the people in government, especially in the administration's early days, that the President indeed subscribed to the time-honoured view that society will flourish when it is governed according to law rather than by the whims of office holders (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 5).

The first major test of this conviction emerged on 14 June, 2007, when the Supreme Court restored Mr. Peter Obi, of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), as governor of Anambra state and ordered Dr. Andy Uba of PDP, who had been sworn-in as governor just two weeks earlier to vacate the Government House. Ordinarily, one would expect that the police and all the relevant authorities would simply obey the court order without any prodding. But that was not the case in Anambra State. All the officials concerned were still waiting for either the body language of the President or a directive to ignore the court ruling since it did not favour the ruling party. But the President issued a press statement where he ordered security agencies to enforce the order to swear in Mr. Peter Obi as Anambra State governor. The prompt enforcement of that ruling, earned the President huge commendation and set the tone for more judicial activism. A few weeks later, the President ordered the immediate release of the Lagos State local governments' funds amounting to N10.8 billion, which had been seized by

the previous administration, bringing to an end a long-drawn legal and political battle that had pitched the federal government against the Lagos State government (Adeniyi, 2011: pp. 5-6)

Guided by the notion that the rule of law also presupposes respect for the independence of each arm of government under the doctrine of separation of powers, the President stayed out of the election of principal officers in the National Assembly (Mukhtar, 2018. Interview, July 15, 2018). In the same vein, even amid the crisis in the House of Representatives, there were calls on the President to intervene by asking the Speaker to quit. But he would not intervene. It was only after the crisis had abated that many Nigerians came to appreciate the fact that the President allowed the House of Representatives to resolve the matter on their own terms. This also reinforced the perception that Yar'adua was ready to abide by his words; respect for the rule of law.

Another critical issue was the case of the contract awarded for the construction of primary health care centres in the 774 local government areas in the country. The President directed the National Economic Council (NEC), chaired by the VP, with all the governors as members, to examine the matter. The governors had been opposed to the plan for paying for the health centres, which they saw as an encroachment on fiscal federalism. The project was terminated after a meeting of the NEC on 9 December, 2007, on the grounds that the contract was unconstitutional and the deduction of money from the accounts of the local governments was irregular.

### ***The electoral process***

President Yar'adua took the rather unusual step of conceding on 29 May, 2007, that the elections that had brought him to office had shortcomings. So, he pledged to reform the process. He, therefore, established a 22-member electoral reform committee, headed by former Chief Justice of the federation, Justice Muhammed Uwais, to examine and identify lapses and inadequacies that have stifled the yearning for free and fair elections in Nigeria. The mandate of the committee included a review of Nigeria's history with general elections and identification of factors that militate against their credibility. (Nigerian Muse, online 2007. Retrieved November, 10, 2022)

The President held a consultative meeting on electoral process in Nigeria with all the state governors on 16 January, 2008. The meeting has the presence of leadership of political parties that won elections in one or more states in the 2007 elections, the leadership of the National Assembly, and the heads of various security agencies (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 115). In the meeting, the President spoke candidly about the methods usually adopted to manipulate elections, stopping occasionally to ask rhetorically whether his observations were false. He concluded by telling the participants that collectively, they could lay a new foundation for democracy in the country if the political elite had the will. It was a most enlightening session that revealed quite clearly that the average Nigerian politician would rather not leave matters in the hands of the electorate on polling day. The meeting, ended with the constitution of four committees under the coordination of the Vice President. One of the committee's tasks was to examine the role of security agencies in the course of elections and why murder and arson perpetrated on polling day were usually treated as electoral 'violence', with nobody ever prosecuted for such heinous crimes (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 115).

The Uwais committee came up with extensive and rather radical recommendations in its report, which was made public. The recommendations included among other things:

- establishing a new, truly independent, non-partisan and impartial INEC composed mainly of representative of professional groups nominated through the National Judicial Council (NCJ);
- abolishing the state independent electoral commissions and resident electoral commissions so that INEC handles all elections in the country;
- establishing a political parties registration and regulatory commission to, among other things, register political parties, monitor their organization and operations, and arrange for the annual auditing of their accounts;
- establishing an electoral offences commission to investigate electoral offences and prosecute offenders;
- establishing a constituency delimitation commission to handle the creation and periodic review of electoral constituencies; and



- stipulating the time limit for disposing of election petitions, that is, four months for election tribunals to deliver judgement and two months for the conclusion of all appeals. (*Report of the Electoral Reform Committee Volume 1 Main Report* December 2008: pp. 248-253)

The President appointed a committee to produce a draft white paper on the report for the Federal Executive Council (FEC) on 16 January, 2009. The FEC agreed that to ensure its financial and administrative independence the funding of INEC would be a first line charge on the consolidated revenue fund of the federation. The FEC also accepted the recommendation that politicians convicted of violence during elections, in addition to any other punishment, should be barred from holding public office for 10 years. However, some recommendations like holding all elections on a fixed date, at least six months before the expiration of the term of incumbents, to allow adequate time for election petitions and appeals to be concluded before swearing anyone in and staggering of elections such that National and state Assembly elections hold two years after Presidential and gubernatorial elections were not accepted.

The FEC session was heated and some members had taken the issues personally, as if it was the integrity of Yar'adua that was being questioned. But it was clear that almost all the memoranda that the Uwais committee received canvassed the position that the choice of electoral officials should be made by the NJC and that it had been the main issue at the public hearings. In addition to the saga in FEC, on the day the President presented the FEC's conclusions on the Uwais Report to the Council of State, notwithstanding the pleas of Governor Adams Oshiomhole, its members rejected outright the inclusion of nominees from Labour, media, civil society, youth and women into the INEC Board. They also rejected the abolition of the State Independent Electoral Commissions (SIEC) (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 119).

### ***Oil and gas industry***

Sticking to his idea of fight against corruption since the PRP days, the unprecedented decision to declare his assets in public indicated that Yar'adua came to office with a reputation of personal integrity. His convictions in relation to the oil and gas industry were not in doubt from his first day in office. To him, a holistic review of the governing structure of the sector was necessary for it to truly serve the interest of the people. He

made no pretences about his commitment to that, and he often viewed Brazil's Petrobras' as a model. Therefore, he had taken keen interest in the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB), conceived to harness opportunities and address the challenges in the oil and gas sector. The bill's aim is to ensure that Nigeria derives maximum benefit across oil and gas value chains by opening up horizons for wider participation of stakeholders and entrenching transparency (Petroleum Industry Bill- Draft, 2012).

The PIB introduces a number of changes to the existing fiscal system governing oil and gas operation in Nigeria. Some of the key changes include requiring all companies engaged in upstream petroleum operation would be required to pay Company Income Tax. The bill's other creation is the Nigerian Hydrocarbon Tax (NHT), which is a simplified version of Petroleum Profit Tax. When implemented, these would provide for a higher government take for deep offshore fields and marginally higher government take for onshore and shallow waters. The PIB also introduces a modern acreage management system with strict relinquishment guidelines that would provide a platform for new investors to enlist and contribute to the growth of the industry. Companies operating in Nigeria would be required to give back certain acreages from existing oil prospecting licenses and oil mining leases, except with regard to acreages with production activities, or acreages that will be developed in the near future. The intention was to prevent companies from sitting on acreages that would have otherwise been available to new investors (Petroleum Industry Bill- Draft, 2012).

The President directed the NNPC to take steps to recover outstanding payments of about 2 billion US dollars due to the federal government from Shell and Exxon Mobil on the Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) for the Bonga and Erha oilfields. This verify the claims in a petition that alleged that revenue opportunities had been lost to the nation in the implementation of the PSCs for the two deep-offshore oil fields, which account for about 20 per cent of the country's total oil production (Nyekwere and Ambrose, 2017: p. 145). The windstorm of reform was not about to subside. President Yar'adua further directed that the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) should re-examine the company income tax payments due from Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company (SNEPCO) and Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited (EEPNL) on the operation of the two oilfields (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 48).

When Mr. Rich Kruger, President of Exxon Mobil, led an eight-man delegation to the State House about three months after a similar visit by his Shell counterpart, the President re-echoed his commitment to the oil companies:

I assure you that as we reform the national oil company, we will take into account the mutual interests of the international oil companies and the federal government. The reforms meant to restructure out national economy will be a win-win situation for Nigeria and the oil companies. (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 48)

Passage of the PIB (as originally conceived) would also ensure that with the gas sector that is just being developed, the nation does not commit the same mistake it made with crude oil. The President said at a meeting with representatives of the organized private sector in Abuja in November, 2007 that:

Part of the reasons why we are restructuring our oil sector is to free the resources that we pay the oil companies under joint venture agreements for critical areas like power, education and health (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 53).

It was at the margin of the 33<sup>rd</sup> G8 summit in Germany in June 2007 that the then Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, has a brief chat with Yar'adua. He bluntly told the President that Nigerian officials were denying a level playing field to Gazprom, Putin told the President he had information that Nigerian government officials, in collaboration with Shell, were deliberately making it impossible for Russian and Chinese IOCs to operate in the country. Upon return from the summit, the President directed for a monitoring and feedback on NNPCs proposed partnership with Gazprom until appropriate protocols were signed. He also detailed for assessment of the Chinese interest (Reuters, 2009). The President felt that Nigeria needed the competition between the pre-existing IOCs, of which Shell was the *primus inter pares*, and the Chinese and Russian IOCs then prospecting Nigeria. His reasons were that if the new global players

were allowed to participate in fresh bid rounds, especially on long term leases held by Shell that were about to expire, the IOCs would be compelled to jack up their bids. While he never contemplated replacing western IOCs with Russian and Chinese competitors, he believed that the new entrants could be used as a bait to extract value and concessions from the reluctant western IOCs on the many fronts on which he thought they could do better for the nation.

The United States government did not hide its displeasure about the possibility of the involvement of the Chinese in the Nigeria oil industry. But the President had not acted with the intent to anger America or to provoke diplomatic jealousy. He was only committed to the passage and subsequent implementation of the PIB notwithstanding the opposition from the IOCs. What was important to President Yar'adua, as entrenched in his political ideology, was not so much how other countries felt about the choices Nigeria was making as it was about whether those choices were in the country's interest.

### ***The economy***

Early in his tenure, one issue that would cause public consternation was that of naira re-denomination. During Obasanjo's last week in office, he signed into law several bills targeted at institutional reforms. One of them, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Act 2007, was gazetted on June 1, 2007, three days after Yar'adua assumed office. The CBN Governor, Professor Chukwuma Charles Soludo addressed the media on the decision by the CBN board to re-denominate the naira. The President was not comfortable with the decision but also felt he could not overrule the CBN board. But an open disagreement ensued between Soludo and the then national planning minister, Senator Sanusi Daggash, who queried the wisdom of such a policy. Many ministers also felt that their input should have been sought before CBN's decision.

The president's had granted Soludo and the board autonomy on monetary policy and on the grounds that what he did was legal, even if politically incorrect. The Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) discovered that the CBN Act 2007 does not in fact grant Soludo the powers he claimed with respect to currency denomination. What these provisions mean is that only the President could give approval for naira re-denomination if he was satisfied about its desirability or necessity (Gazette, No. 55 Vol.94). Thus, on

the account of absence of appropriate regard for the rule of law by the CBN, the President stopped the re-denomination of the naira (The Guardian online)

The political philosophy of the Yar'adua's government was very much felt in the banking industry. The impact of the global financial crisis grew in intensity as 2008 drew to a close, and that was a cause of anxiety for most governments. Soludo, appeared before the FEC in early February 2009 to brief members on the implications of the global meltdown for the Nigerian economy (Soludo, 2009). Soludo said the crisis had led to the collapse of commodity prices, especially oil. It had caused revenue to shrink, declining capital inflows into the economy, de-accumulation of foreign reserves and pressure on the exchange rate were also apparent fallouts of the crisis (Soludo, 2009). To tackle these challenges, Soludo listed a number of measures already taken by CBN. His forecast was that the.... "Growth rate of GDP between 7-9 percent is still possible despite the economic crisis" (Soludo, 2009, p. 18). His optimism was built on the conviction that while Nigeria was not insulated from the global economic crisis, it was better prepared for it than in 1982 when the crash of crude oil price pushed the nation to near bankruptcy. Not everyone in the FEC shared Soludo's optimism. Many members indeed raised doubts about the CBN report on Nigerian banks (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 89).

In January 2009, Yar'adua inaugurated a Presidential steering committee with a mandate to assess the impact of the global economic crisis on Nigeria with particular reference to the nation's annual budget, financial and commodity markets. The President personally chaired this committee. The goal was for the committee to recommend appropriate macro-economic policy responses to stimulate the economy and identify more practical measures aimed at bolstering the confidence of investors and increasing production in the real sector. The committee was also to examine other related issue such as unemployment, poverty alleviation, food availability, and how to ensure a sustainable debt position. The committee was also supposed to make recommendations on any other issues or actions that may be required (Vanguard, February, 8, 2009).

At the end of Soludo's first term in office, the President faced a predicament on whether to reappoint him or not. However, on 1 June 2009, when the President has made up his mind and a letter nominating Sanusi Lamido Sanusi as CBN governor was sent to the Senate. Yar'adua was particularly impressed with Sanusi's performance in the Senate in

the course of his screaming. When Sanusi resumed at CBN, his first mandate from the President was to examine the state of the banks, to ensure that all was well and that the fears being expressed in certain quarters were unfounded. As it turned out, the fears indeed were not unfounded. As a former bank CEO with vast experience in risk management, Sanusi knew exactly what to look for in the banks. After studying internal memos, various reports and correspondences, and also interviewing regulators, bankers, business persons, government officials and other stakeholders, he became convinced that some of the banks were virtually inactive (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 95).

Sanusi's review of activities in the Expanded Discount Window (EDW) revealed some unsavoury details: some banks were almost permanently locked in as borrowers and were most often unable to repay their obligations. When CBN decided to temporarily shut the EDW to these banks, they, in desperation, turned to banks like UBA, which had excess liquidity, but such funds were lent at very high premium rates. Four banks were in this dire strait. A fifth one was also a frequent borrower on the EDW. While these banks were not the only beneficiaries of the EDW, the persistence and frequency of their demand, by Sanusi's reckoning, could only be a manifestation of a deeper malaise, which CBN identified as a probable source of financial instability (Sanusi, 2009). Following these revelations, Sanusi prepared a report with clear options as to what needed to be done, he briefed the President on his findings and suggested only two options open to him: either to send the report to the NDIC or bail out the distressed banks and deal with those who put them in that condition. He, however, preferred the second option, but without the support of the president, there was no way he could carry it through (Adeniyi, 2011: p. 94).

While Yar'adua immediately gave his approval for Sanusi to go after the bankers, the CBN governor warned of the likely consequences. He voiced the fact that the accused were powerful people, and some of whom were close to the President, as such they are very likely to put pressure on him. To this Yar'adua assured the CBN governor that he will not interfere in his work (Daily Trust, May, 9, 2010). The President called the DG of State Security Service (SSS), the Inspector General of police (IG) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) chairperson and without going into specifics told them that the CBN governor was going to carry out a difficult national assignment,

and he wanted them to do whatever he (Sanusi) asked of them (Vanguard, August, 2009). Having secured the approval of the President, Sanusi decided to wield the big stick by sacking the CEOs of five banks: Intercontinental Bank, Finbank, Afribank, Oceanic Bank and Union Bank. The media was addressed by the President's adviser on media that the President fully endorsed the measures announced by the CBN governor to sanitize Nigeria's banking sector and prevent fresh bank failures with their attendant negative effects on the national economy. Within a period of four weeks, a whopping sum of N110.8 billion had been recovered and report on the second batch, comprising 15 banks, was ready. Bank PHB, where the President's family has considerable interest, was among those to be affected (Vanguard, October 3, 2009).

Sanusi also took action on the remaining five banks that fell short of the required minimum capital. Those were Bank PHB, Equatorial Trust Bank, Unity Bank, Spring Bank, and Wema Bank. The President believed the CBN governor had a responsibility to protect the interest of depositors in the affected banks and therefore gave Sanusi all the support he needed. The special examination conducted by CBN assisted in unveiling the problems in some of the banks, and Sanusi's action to save and strengthen the affected banks was proactive and helped in averting what could have been a major systemic crisis. The President understood this and gave his unwavering support.

### **Conclusion**

Politics, as the saying goes, is a dangerous game. While Yar'adua openly proclaimed that his administration would be guided by the rule of law, throughout his tenure, there was a gap between the rhetoric of the President and the action of government, especially with regard to decisions emanating from the office of the AGF. The oil companies stepped up their onslaught to frustrate the passage of the PIB, which remained with the lawmakers almost three years after it was submitted. The seven Points Agenda, which was so dear to him, could not have his full attention. He also faced other challenges in his idea of stabilizing the crises in the Niger delta region of the country, education reform, the power industry, and Land Reform Act. These challenges are areas which need further discussions. At a time when the nation needed a President who could take quick, strong, and decisive action the health problems of President Yar'adua ensured he could not be fully focused on his job. He died on 5 May, 2010.

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Interview Abdullahi Garba Aminci held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018 in Katsina.

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