



# RED CARD FOR A STOLEN VICTORY



*Sneak Preview*



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## Introduction

Football is more than just a game, it is a powerful force that can inspire, communicate and translate values, and dismantle all artificial boundaries. As South Africa's most popular sport, it occupies a special place in society, and its governance and administration should reflect society's principles and values. Unfortunately, the spectre of misconduct, rampant abuse of power, and a lack of transparency hovered over the 2022 elections like a menacing thunderstorm, highlighting the need for a complete climate change in football.

This book takes a critical look at how the 2022 elections were conducted and lays bare the many tricks used to help those in power to retain their positions by manufacturing electoral consent. There is no doubt that the vast majority of the South African public wished for a much-needed change in leadership, but as the book reveals, virtually every step taken in the lead-up to the election had an element of trickery and deception which resulted in a heavy blow for democracy in the association. Instead of becoming more open and transparent, the leadership has taken the association into a more closeted, virtually privatised organisation.

The book draws attention to the need for a more democratic dispensation that will renew the public's faith in the football association. It presents a profound statement on the dynamics of power and its corrupting influence, and provides a way forward by reminding administrators of their ethical and moral obligation to govern the sport in the interest of the South African public and not just for themselves. It is a guide, a reference, and a call to action to create an era of ethical behaviour to promote accountability, transparency and fair play in football governance.

The electoral system of the association should reflect the democratic principles contained in its constitution, and allow every member to participate in its processes without fear of intimidation or forced into groupthink. The rules must not be seen as optional, and any deviation from ethical conduct must be condemned. Unfortunately, the 2022 election was characterised by the most unsavoury practices and a wanton disregard for the rules, revealing a dreadful slide into autocracy.

Failure to comply with FIFA's election directives has resulted in incumbents overseeing by proxy the very voter selection process in which they participated, undermining the cherished principle of fair play. The book advocates for the reform of the South African football electoral system, and calls for discussions about establishing a new model for football governance and administration in the country.

It is time to rise above the bad practices of the past and chart a course towards a future that prioritises ethical behaviour, accountability, transparency, and the rule of law. Hopefully, this book will ignite that debate about bringing the desired change.

A quote from the book:

*Those who abuse power often do so to satisfy their egotistical desires or to compensate for their feelings of inadequacy. They use their status to exploit vulnerable individuals, to suppress dissent, or to advance their interests at the expense of others. The outcome is a culture of fear, inequality, and injustice.*

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## 5. ON THE DYNAMICS OF POWER

### *What is Power and Why Do People Abuse It?*

Power is a concept, often synonymous with control, influence, or dominance. It can manifest in various forms, such as physical, social, economic, or political. However, true power is not merely about the ability to exert force or authority over others. Instead, it is a reflection of one's inner strength, resilience, and character. Unfortunately, when power is misinterpreted as a means of achieving personal gain or gratification, it can lead to its abuse. Those who abuse power often do so to satisfy their egotistical desires or to compensate for their feelings of inadequacy. They use their status to exploit vulnerable individuals, to suppress dissent, or to advance their interests at the expense of others. The outcome is a culture of fear, inequality, and injustice. Therefore, to achieve a more equitable and harmonious society, it is necessary to re-evaluate our understanding of power and to cultivate empathy, integrity, and respect for human dignity as the motive force for the acquisition of power.

Lord Acton, a British historian and politician, famously remarked that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". This statement has become one of the most well-known observations about the nature of power, and it still resonates today.

Acton's views on power were shaped by his historical studies of monarchies and other societies, which showed him that power had often been abused throughout human history. He saw that those who held power often became tyrannical and oppressive, using their position to enrich themselves at the expense of their subjects. This observation led to Acton's belief that power had a corrupting influence on human nature.

Acton was not alone in his view of power. Many others have also recognised the potential for power to corrupt. However, Acton's insight was unique in its recognition of the absolute nature of this corruption.

In Acton's view, the dangerous nature of power is not limited to those who hold it, but also extends to the society at large. The more power that is concentrated in the hands of a few, the more likely it is that that power will be abused. This is why Acton argued that it was important to limit the power of those in authority and to ensure that power was distributed as widely as possible.

Acton's views on power were not simply an academic exercise. He was deeply committed to the cause of liberty and believed that the best way to protect liberty was to limit the power of the state. He saw the concentration of power in the hands of the state as a threat to individual freedom and believed that society needed to be protected from this threat.

Acton's views on power have important implications for our modern world. Today, we live in a society that is increasingly dominated by powerful corporations and elites in organisations like the football association, who hold a disproportionate amount of wealth and influence. This concentration of power has led to growing inequality, corruption, and general discontent.

If we are to avoid the dangers of power that Acton warned us about, we must work to limit the concentration of power and to ensure that power is distributed more fairly throughout the structures of the organisation. This means strengthening the democratic principles,

promoting greater equality, and fostering a culture of responsibility and accountability among those in positions of power.

Acton's views on power remain relevant today as we grapple with the challenges of an association dominated by a powerful cabal. His warning that power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, should serve as a reminder of the importance of limiting the concentration of power and protecting the rights of individuals against the threat of authoritarianism.

### *The Corrosive Effects of Power*

But why should we even worry about the effects and trappings of power? One may be tempted to ask what will happen without the power elite as we may well find ourselves in a whirlpool of chaos, with no direction or ability to get things done. Power is a captivating force; a force that imbues individuals with the ability to shape the world around them. However, as with all forces, power can have a corrosive nature; a nature that erodes value systems without a conscious effort to guard against the deleterious effects of unconstrained power. The pursuit of power can easily replace the pursuit of virtue and ethical living.

Aristotle was an advocate of living virtuously and with reason. He believed that a life of excellence was one that consisted of virtuous actions, governed by reason. For Aristotle, virtue was not a mere disposition, but a skill that required rigorous practice and intentionality. In essence, living virtuously is akin to training for a sport or a musical instrument. It requires dedication, discipline, and regular practice. Yet, the pursuit of power can easily hijack this pursuit of virtue.

When an individual gains power, they may believe that the rules of virtue no longer apply to them or may twist its meaning to suit their own cognitive biases. They may believe that they have elevated themselves above the need for ethical considerations. This is a dangerous misconception that can set the stage for the erosion of organisational value systems. Power, when left unchecked, can lead to an abuse of power, as Acton contended.

To avoid the corrosion of our value systems, we must always strive for an ethical existence. We must remain vigilant to the pitfalls of unchecked power and seek to live in accordance with our ethical obligations and not give in to the relative ease of abusing it. The ancient philosopher Epictetus argued that living virtuously requires a constant effort to maintain our moral compass. He noted that we cannot remain virtuous by simply adopting ethical principles without making a conscious effort to apply them in our daily lives. The ancient Greek philosophers argued that to live a virtuous life, one must avoid the trap of cowardice (doing nothing) and the practice of doing things in excess (vice). Living virtuously means constantly navigating the middle ground between cowardice and vice, which is the word-forming root of the word 'vicious'.

It is easy to be seduced by power; to believe that we are somehow above the laws and ethical principles that govern the behaviour of others. However, we must resist this temptation and acknowledge the corrosive nature of unchecked power. By living virtuously and with reason, we can guard against the erosion of our value systems and strive for an ethical existence.

## *African Struggles Against the Abuse of Power*

Abuse of power has led to the erosion of many African societies, and many African philosophers have written extensively on this topic. One of the most significant areas of concern for Africans has been the abuse of power by some leaders who came to power through revolutionary means.

In Africa, the quest for justice, peace, and the rule of law has always been challenging and arduous. Many countries have faced political instability, civil strife, and outright conflicts. People fought to free themselves from these injustices. Therefore, it is vital that the abuse of power should not gain a foothold in our organisations. Understanding the cause of power abuse and its destructive effects will enable the ability to mitigate, if not eliminate such conduct.

It is understood that people acquire power through various means in order to control resources, regardless of their source. However, despite the means through which people gain power, their motivations are always the same. This craving for resources is what leads to the abuse of power.

*"It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower"* is a non-fiction book written by Michaela Wrong. In the book, Wrong details the story of John Githongo, a journalist who became Kenya's anti-corruption czar, and his fight against corruption in Kenya's government during the presidency of Mwai Kibaki. The book highlights the complex and interwoven networks of corrupt individuals in Kenya's government and how they thwarted Githongo's efforts to expose and prosecute them. It also explores the role of foreign aid, politics, tribalism, and the culture of impunity in perpetuating corruption in Kenya. Ultimately, the book serves as a testament to Githongo's bravery in standing up to corruption and the challenges he faced in doing so. Githongo's fight serves as the perfect metaphor for how the craving for resources leads to the abuse of power and can corrupt an entire society.

It is therefore all the more important for us to heed the lessons learned from four great African thinkers of our time who fought against the abuse of power. Throughout history, humanity has struggled against this scourge. Political systems, economic structures, and cultural norms have all been shaped by notions of power, and those who wield it have often used it to oppress and exploit others. To understand the complexities of this issue, it is important to examine the views of thinkers who have grappled with it throughout their lives.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, was a political theorist who played a central role in Africa's decolonisation process. He coined the term "neo-colonialism" to describe the ongoing economic and political influence of former colonial powers on African nations. According to Nkrumah, true independence required more than just political autonomy; it required addressing systemic power imbalances that had been created by centuries of colonial rule. Nkrumah's belief was that true freedom could only be achieved by shifting the balance of power in favour of the oppressed, rather than the oppressor.

Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and political philosopher from Martinique, was a leading voice in the struggle against colonialism. His work focused on the psychological effects of colonialism, arguing that it produced a specific form of violence that could only be overcome through revolution. Fanon believed that the oppressed needed to go beyond mere political struggle and engage in a *psychological revolution that would transform their entire way of*

*thinking*. For Fanon, the struggle against power abuse required not only political and economic change, but also a complete overhaul of the way society thought about power and identity.

Steve Biko, an anti-apartheid activist from South Africa, emphasised the importance of cultural resistance in the fight against power abuse. Biko argued that white supremacy was not just a political system, but a cultural one as well, and that Black South Africans needed to create their own culture to resist it. *This involved not just rejecting the cultural markers of the oppressor, but developing a new way of seeing and experiencing the world*. Biko advocated for a shift away from the idea of race as a fixed identity and towards the idea of Blackness as a positive cultural identity - one that could serve as a foundation for resistance and liberation.

Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist and essayist, wrote extensively about the impact of colonialism on African cultures. He argued that the European view of Africa as backward and uncivilised was itself a form of power abuse. For Achebe, the ability to define what was culturally valuable and what was not was a key tool of colonial power. *By demonising African cultural practices, Europeans were able to justify their own power and maintain the social hierarchy they had created*. Only by rejecting the idea of European cultural superiority, Achebe believed, could Africans reclaim their own cultural heritage and resist the abuse of power that had been perpetrated against them.

Their work demonstrates that defeating power abuse requires a fundamental shift in the way we think about power, culture, and identity. It also requires a willingness to confront the systemic injustices that have been built into our social, economic, and political systems. Ultimately, power abuse can only be overcome through a collective effort by those who have suffered from it most.

During revolutionary moments, leaders could capture and inherit a widespread popularity that can significantly shape and transform their societies. However, once such leaders come to power, they often exhibit the same traits they sought to eradicate. Such leaders can use their newfound power to pursue self-interest, subvert justice and democracy, and diminish the rights of the marginalised. In essence, such leaders become the enemies of the revolution.

History has shown us that many revolutionary movements have noble intentions and an honest desire to change society for the better. Such revolutions often attract and mobilise people, who may take up arms, engage in confrontations, and sometimes, make significant sacrifices, all in the pursuit of change. However, in many cases, once such revolutions triumph, the leaders who took over begin to betray the ideals articulated during the revolutions. They may exalt themselves above the spirit of the movement and begin to pursue alternative aims to consolidate their power.

When leaders abandon the very principles they were fighting for, constituencies lose faith in the credibility of these revolutions and the possibility for a positive change. The corrosion of the social and moral fabric of the organisation through the abuse of power puts the very foundation of entire organisations at risk. The abuse of power presents existential threats to an organisation and it is essential to recognise the corrosive effects of power and work to address it for the well-being of future generations.

## *Betraying the Promise*

A revolutionary promise was made with conviction and determination. We believed in the power of change, in the capacity of a collective effort to transform a stagnant organisation into a vibrant, forward-thinking association. We believed that, by harnessing the potential of our football structures and by inspiring our members to pursue excellence, we can create a better future for the sport we all love.

And yet, as we look back at the journey we embarked on, we cannot escape the bitter realisation that our promise was betrayed. The football association remains underperforming, our national teams – with the notable exception of the women’s teams – struggle to hold their own in major FIFA and CAF competitions, most of our professional teams unable to progress to the winner’s podium in continental competitions. The negative public perceptions of the Association’s administration persist, and the poor state of our football structures in many parts of the country shows little sign of improvement.

How did we get here? How did we fail to deliver on our promise? Perhaps the answer lies in our own complacency, in our tendency to measure ourselves by the number of attempts we have made rather than by the number of times we have won. Perhaps it lies in our failure to challenge ourselves enough, to push ourselves beyond our limits, to strive for excellence rather than settle for mediocrity.

But the truth is that we cannot lay the blame solely on ourselves. We must acknowledge the obstacles that we faced along the way – the entrenched interests, the resistance to change, the lack of resources, and the myriad other challenges that threatened to derail our efforts. We must recognise that change is never easy, that progress is never linear, and that the road to a better future is always fraught with setbacks and obstacles.

In the world of South African football, the promise of creating a better future for the game is often bellowed with great hope, but rarely realised. As the leaders of the football association began their tenure, there was anticipation and excitement about the potential opportunities to improve the game. However, this promise was quickly betrayed by the abuse of power by narcissistic leadership and the prevalence of the culture of “it’s our turn to eat”. This self-serving mindset created a toxic atmosphere, where those in power prioritised their own interests over those of the game they were elected to govern. It was a betrayal of the very values that underpin the sport of football - integrity, honesty, and fair play.

The Football Transformation Forum (FTF) represents the bonfire of a revolution gone wrong. A revolution that was betrayed by narcissistic leadership whose quest for personal power triumphed over the dream of building a football association who would service the membership, develop the game to realise its potential, and present hope to the football supporters.

## *Principled Leadership*

Ultimately, the only way to ensure a better future for the football association is by creating a culture of accountability and transparency, where the leadership is held to a high ethical standard and prioritise the good of the game above their own personal interests. Only then can the promise of a better future for football be realised.



We cannot give up. We cannot let our promise fade away into a distant memory, a casualty of our own complacency or the obstacles we face. We must recommit ourselves to the struggle for a better football association – one that is truly representative of the aspirations and needs of our members, one that is committed to excellence in all aspects of the sport, and one that is accountable to the constituency it serves.

We must recognise that the promises we made were not empty rhetoric, but a call to action, a challenge to our members to rise above their limitations and to pursue higher grades in order to move our football to the next level. We must remind ourselves that the election was won based on these promises to lead the association toward a better future, and that we owe it to ourselves and to the members to keep our word.

So, we must summon the courage and determination and recommit to the genuine transformation of the football association. Let us embrace the challenges that lie ahead, let us work tirelessly to overcome the obstacles we face, and let us never forget our promise to create a better future for the sport we all love.

Principled leadership is key to restraining untrammelled power. Principled leadership involves adhering to ethical and moral principles, setting a good example for others, and leading by example. Principled leadership creates a culture of trust, accountability, transparency, and fairness, which can help to prevent abuse of power in the association. When leaders operate within an ethical framework, they are less likely to misuse their authority, engage in questionable practices, or take advantage of others. Such leaders are more likely to make decisions based on objective and rational criteria, rather than personal interests or biases. They create an environment where people feel safe to express their opinions, report improper behaviour, and hold those in power accountable for their actions. Principled leadership can minimise the risk of abuse of power, safeguard the organisation's reputation, and maintain the trust and confidence of the association's stakeholders.

By demonising those who demand greater accountability, South African football's leadership has been able to justify their own power and maintain the social hierarchy they have created. By shifting the balance of power in favour of the marginalised majority of the association, rather than allow the leadership to abuse it, we can encourage a psychological revolution that would transform the entire association's way of thinking. This will require not just rejecting the cultural markers of abusive leadership, but developing a new way of seeing and experiencing the conditions of the association objectively.

**\*\* END OF SNEAK PREVIEW \*\***