

**More Than a Game**

**Governance Betrayed**

*Sneak Preview*



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# Preface

In the corridors of power where decisions are made and legacies forged, a shadow looms — one cast by the contradiction of words and actions, of promises and betrayals. This book is not merely an account; it is a revelation, a piercing examination of what happens when the ideals of governance are twisted to serve personal ambition. It invites readers to peer behind the curtain of an organization entrusted with the hopes and dreams of a nation’s passion: football. What they find is a cautionary tale of hubris, manipulation, and the slow erosion of democracy in the name of control.

This book finds its basis in my report to the SAFA National Executive Committee (NEC) in May 2020, which was flippantly rejected because I was “no longer in the association”. Between 2013 and 2018, and with a fleeting glimpse into the seismic constitutional upheavals of 2022, this narrative draws readers into the turbulent saga of South African football governance.

It unveils how relentless ambition, cloaked in the guise of transformative leadership, plunged the organization into a mire of dysfunction. With vivid storytelling, the book lays bare the calculated dismantling of the cherished ideal of a non-executive presidency, supplanted by an imperial leadership style that dangerously conflated personal aspirations with organizational stewardship.

Chapter by chapter, the reader will discover a pattern of behaviour that paints a chilling portrait of a calamitous descent into unchecked power. The text recounts moments of grandeur cloaked in vanity: the hosting of costly events that brought no tangible benefit but satisfied a hunger for public recognition; the casual dismissal of constitutional principles to consolidate authority; and the manipulation of key governance structures to entrench majoritarian dominance, silencing dissenting voices in the process.

At its core, the book confronts the profound contradiction of leadership who spoke passionately of good governance while crafting an environment antithetical to it. Relations with Vice-Presidents dissolved into public acrimony, staff lived in fear of unprovoked tirades, and crucial financial decisions were made unilaterally, leaving the organization saddled with the

consequences of reckless behaviour. The narrative illustrates how these actions were not isolated incidents but a methodical dismantling of democratic structures meant to safeguard the organization's integrity.

One cannot ignore the personal stories woven into the narrative — the human cost of leadership gone awry. A senior executive, repeatedly undermined, is marginalized and forced to navigate an increasingly toxic environment; Vice-Presidents, elected to balance power, are pushed out for daring to challenge the status quo; Even legends of the game, with monumental contributions to South African football remain ostracized for voicing differing opinions. These accounts breathe life into the story, making it not just an institutional critique but a deeply personal chronicle of resilience and defiance.

The book also delves into the tragic irony of transformation betrayed. It recalls how, under the guise of reform, key promises were discarded — constitutional amendments ignored, and financial transparency sacrificed on the altar of patronage. The very principles that were meant to unite the organization and chart a path forward became tools to consolidate a narrow circle of power. Each chapter peels back the layers of this paradox, offering stark lessons about the perils of unchecked authority.

Yet, this is not just a story of failure — it is also a call to action. The book challenges readers to reflect on the universal themes of leadership, governance, and integrity. It poses difficult questions: How do organizations protect themselves from the creeping influence of egotistic leadership? What safeguards can prevent the betrayal of democratic principles? And, most poignantly, how do we hold leaders accountable for the power they wield in our name?

The main focus of the book climaxes with a powerful conclusion that is both sobering and thought-provoking. It is a reflection on the fragility of governance and the vigilance required to protect its principles. The lessons extend far beyond football, resonating with anyone who has ever grappled with the complexities of power and responsibility.

Rather than merely exposing the deficiencies of the existing governance system, the final two chapters of this book present pioneering proposals for a reimagined governance framework, intricately woven into a broader ecosystem of good governance. This vision seeks not only to transform the governance of South African football but to raise the standards of sports administration across the nation, promoting a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

As the pages turn, one is left not only with the vivid details of an organization in turmoil but with a deeper understanding of the human condition — of the allure of power and the sacrifices required to resist its darker impulses.

The book closes with an unforgettable reminder:

*"Leadership is not measured by the power it collects, but by the integrity it reflects. Those who weaponized governance for personal gain leave behind a legacy not of greatness, but of ruin. Democracy, though fragile, finds its strength in those brave enough to defend it against the wolves who wear its mantle."*

This is a book that will grip you, challenge you to think about governance in a different way, and stay with you long after you've read the final page. It is not just the story of South African football — it is the story of governance everywhere.

## 9. Majoritarianism, Groupthink and Crowd Dynamics

### *Deepening Democracy in SAFA*

Democracy is often understood as a system where decisions are made collectively, where every voice matters, and where governance reflects the aspirations of those it serves. Within the South African Football Association (SAFA), however, democracy has frequently been a fragile ideal — caught between constitutional promises and political realities. While the SAFA constitution was aligned with FIFA's Standard Statutes and grounded in principles of inclusivity, it often became a tool for power consolidation rather than genuine democratic governance.

We must therefore look at the tension between the democratic aspirations enshrined in SAFA's constitution and the practices that undermined them. Drawing on specific examples from my experiences, it reflects the ethical, philosophical, and political implications of the abuse of democracy within SAFA. Each of the examples listed below reveals not only the practical challenges but also the deeper moral and ethical failures that eroded trust in the organisation's leadership.

Throughout history, organizations and societies have exhibited a striking tendency to conform to dominant narratives, even when those narratives conflict with reason or ethical principles – Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa being extreme examples. This phenomenon, deeply intertwined with human psychology and sociology, can often be attributed to the interplay of group dynamics, groupthink, and majoritarianism. To unpack this complex subject, I refer to the insights of thinkers like Noam Chomsky, Irving Janis, and others who have explored the mechanisms by which individuals surrender critical autonomy in favour of collective alignment.

The examination of these forces is not merely theoretical. The governance of SAFA provides a compelling real-world case study of how these dynamics manifest, offering valuable lessons for organizations seeking to navigate similar challenges.

Groupthink, a term popularized by social psychologist Irving Janis, refers to the psychological drive for consensus within a cohesive group, often at the expense of critical evaluation or dissent. In Janis's seminal work, *Victims of Groupthink*, he describes how the desire for unanimity can override an individual's capacity for independent thought, leading to flawed decision-making processes. While initially applied to analyse political fiascos such as the Bay of Pigs invasion, Janis's theory is widely applicable to any scenario where group cohesion is prioritized over rational deliberation.

Following the decisive victory of the Football Transformation Forum (FTF) in the 2009 SAFA elections, Jordaan implemented a caucus system akin to those used by political parties in Parliament. This practice ensured that positions were consolidated in a caucus meeting held the day before NEC meetings, effectively pre-determining outcomes. Consequently, groupthink became deeply entrenched, particularly during critical moments of decision-making. The leadership created an environment where dissenting voices were systematically side-lined, and decisions were often ratified without challenge by a majority unwilling to question the prevailing narrative.

Majoritarianism, at its core, is the dominance of the majority's will, often at the expense of minority voices and nuanced debate. While it may masquerade as the epitome of democratic decision-making, in practice, it can stifle dissent and create an environment where the majority's preferences become an unquestionable norm. Decisions shaped by majoritarianism frequently prioritize conformity over critical evaluation, as the weight of numbers eclipses the merits of individual perspectives. In such systems, the minority is not simply outvoted but rendered invisible, its contributions dismissed as inconvenient obstacles to consensus. This unyielding adherence to the majority's dictates can erode innovation, suppress diversity of thought, and ultimately undermine the very democratic principles it claims to uphold.

As these practices took hold, they had a chilling effect on the broader group dynamics. Any deviation from the pre-established positions during NEC meetings was met with disapproval. One NEC member from KwaZulu-Natal, who frequently departed from the dominant narrative set by the caucus, was derisively labelled as "wishy-washy". His consistent deviation

ultimately led to his marginalization within the group, underscoring the penalties for stepping outside the boundaries of conformity.

The internalisation of these norms and hegemonic behaviour drew me to revisit Noam Chomsky's insights into propaganda and control mechanisms, which provide a complementary framework for understanding groupthink. Chomsky argues that power structures often employ subtle means of shaping public opinion, creating what he terms "manufactured consent". While Chomsky's focus has often been on media and societal control, the concept is equally relevant within organizations such as SAFA. Leaders, through rhetoric and symbolic gestures, establish norms that are internalized by the majority, leading individuals to act in alignment with the leader's preferences without overt coercion. This self-regulating behaviour can be seen as a hallmark of hegemonic control, where the members of the group not only comply but also police themselves and others to maintain the status quo.

Within SAFA, the leadership's use of propaganda was evident in how narratives about "progress" and "unity" were propagated to stifle criticism. Officials would frequently cite the need for collective harmony, framing dissent as harmful to the organization's goals. For example, within one year of Jordaan's election, one of his Vice-Presidents, Chief Mwelo Nonkonyana, was charged, frog-marched to a disciplinary committee, and subsequently mercilessly expelled from football for merely publicly criticising the performance of the head coach of the men's senior national team. Such was the climate in that congress where he was expelled that the constitutional rule providing for a secret ballot and his *audi alteram partem* right to be heard was completely overlooked. Over time, this created a culture where individuals instinctively aligned their actions with the leadership's preferences, often without explicit directives.

While groupthink focuses on the psychological dynamics within a group, majoritarianism refers to the principle where the preferences or decisions of the majority dominate, often side-lining minority opinions. The two phenomena, while distinct, were expertly interwoven in SAFA. Majoritarianism can create fertile ground for groupthink by reinforcing conformity and suppressing dissent through the sheer weight of numbers.

Conversely, groupthink can magnify the risks of majoritarianism by creating an illusion of unanimity, even when underlying dissent exists.

In SAFA, the interplay between these forces was dramatic. Decisions were often made through majority votes, but the process was heavily influenced by groupthink. For example, the majority FTF bloc wielded significant power, during leadership elections and policy deliberations, marginalizing voices like the highly successful professional wing of the association. The League was often labelled as seeking control over SAFA at the expense of the amateur wing. Once convinced of the League's "bad intentions", it became easy to revoke the League's right to nominate candidates for the position of President by the "will of the majority".

This convergence of groupthink and majoritarianism perpetuated a governance culture that prioritized compliance over innovation; marginalised a key member; set a horrific example through the expulsion of a Vice-President; and suppressed the checks and balances necessary for accountability.

At their core, both groupthink and majoritarianism exploit basic human tendencies toward belonging and social cohesion. Groups often reward conformity with approval and security while punishing dissent with isolation or rejection. For example, in 2020, the loudest voices who concurred with the President to dismiss the allegations levelled against him in my report and the report of another former CEO were rewarded with lucrative and influential assignments, one being appointed as Vice-President in place of another excommunicated Vice-President who called out the President's misconduct. These dynamics are magnified in hierarchical structures, where leaders — intentionally or not — become focal points for group identity. Group members begin to anticipate the leader's preferences and align their behaviour accordingly, often suppressing personal doubts or objections.

The dynamics driving these phenomena are as insidious as they are pervasive. The President's support group often cloaked themselves in an illusion of invulnerability, convinced of their inherent morality and righteousness, which blinded them to risks and silenced alternative perspectives. Collective rationalization became a tool to defend flawed

decisions, with members weaving narratives that obscured the cracks in their logic.

Dissent was stifled not through overt command but through a subtle and corrosive self-censorship as individuals held back their objections to avoid disrupting the fragile harmony of the group for fear of being exiled from the lucrative patronage system that buttressed this environment. Those who dared to challenge the consensus found themselves isolated, their voices marginalized, and their reputations stained with the stigma of disruption or described as “disgruntled” in pejorative tones, as if being disgruntled constituted an act of high treason. Meanwhile, the absence of disagreement is not a sign of true consensus but rather an illusion of unanimity — a mirage that further entrenches conformity and discourages critical thought.

The consequences of these dynamics were nothing short of staggering. In the 2022 congress that saw the constitution amended, members bore witness to a stunning display of self-defeating conformity — agreeing, without hesitation, to their own disempowerment. Among a litany of sweeping changes, Congress was stripped entirely of its constitutional powers. The authority to approve the annual financial statements, once a cornerstone of oversight, was summarily removed from the revised framework. Debate over the proposed amendments was stifled; members were forced to accept the amendments *en bloc*, unable to deliberate on each article individually.

In a further act of procedural theatre, the President, while ostensibly ruling himself ineligible for re-election by rejecting a proposal from the Nelson Mandela Bay Region to exempt him from the regional nomination requirement, nonetheless stood for office — and was re-elected — in defiance of this very stipulation. The pliant Governance Committee, whose own appointment process mirrored the flawed nature of the amendments, lent its approval to this spectacle, cementing the erosion of accountability and good governance with a veneer of procedural legitimacy.

These actions, rooted in the groupthink-driven desire for hegemony, ultimately preserved a flawed status quo.

Ethically, combating these phenomena requires a commitment to developing environments where truth and justice take precedence over convenience or cohesion. This entails not only structural reforms but also cultivating virtues like courage, humility, and intellectual honesty among all members.

Groupthink and majoritarianism are therefore more than abstract concepts; they are potent forces that shape the actions of individuals and organizations alike. As the example of SAFA demonstrates, the interplay of these dynamics can entrench flawed governance and stifle progress. By understanding their mechanisms and underlying dynamics, we gain tools to resist their more harmful manifestations. Drawing on the insights of thought leaders like Janis and Chomsky, and learning from SAFA's experiences, it becomes clear that breaking free from the grip of groupthink and majoritarianism is essential for achieving truly democratic and ethical decision-making.

### *The Intersection of Majoritarianism, Groupthink and Crowd Behaviour*

In human behaviour, there exists a phenomenon that transcends individual intention and rationality — a force that binds, stirs, and often blinds groups of people to both reason and justice. Gustave Le Bon, in his seminal 681-page work *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, dissected this phenomenon with surgical precision, unveiling the psychological mechanisms that drive collective behaviour. When applied to governance, particularly in the context of the SAFA and its NEC, Le Bon's insights illuminate the perilous intersection of groupthink and majoritarianism, a dynamic that underpins what I term “the tyranny of the majority”.

Le Bon's central thesis is that individuals, when subsumed into a crowd, undergo a profound transformation. Their individuality dissolves, giving way to a collective psyche that is susceptible to emotion, suggestion, and simplification. Within the NEC, at least among the FTF faction, this psychological alchemy manifested in an unsettling uniformity. Those members, rather than acting as independent custodians of good governance, seemed to adopt a herd mentality, aligning almost reflexively with the President's positions. This alignment often required no explicit direction;

the mere presence of the President's views acted as a gravitational pull, shaping the collective narrative without overt coercion.

A vivid illustration of this herd mentality emerged during the 2022 SAFA Congress, where constitutional amendments were adopted with an unsettling lack of scrutiny. As described elsewhere in this chapter, the majority's decisions at this congress epitomized self-defeating governance, spurred by the President's deft manipulation of the proceedings. Without a single amendment being debated, the Congress surrendered its constitutional powers completely. The President, in a calculated move, insisted that the changes be adopted *en masse*, even as he ruled himself out of contention for nomination by rejecting a proposal from SAFA Nelson Mandela Bay. This proposal sought to exempt the President from the requirement of belonging to a Region — a provision that had previously been used to bar him from regional affiliation and lend the office an air of impartiality.

Remarkably, the delegates complied without question. Despite having the procedural means to challenge the motion during the voting process, they fell in line with the President's directive. Even the Governance Committee, tasked with upholding the integrity of SAFA's constitutional framework, abdicated its responsibility. In a startling act of acquiescence, the committee pronounced him eligible for nomination, disregarding the very provision designed to safeguard the impartiality of the Presidency. This episode stands as a profound testament to the corrosive power of conformity within collective decision-making.

Le Bon might describe this as the crowd's loss of critical faculties, a phenomenon where reason is supplanted by emotion and where dissent is not just discouraged but rendered psychologically untenable. This dynamic was acutely evident when the NEC faced legitimate criticisms of the President's governance failures. Instead of grappling with these complaints earnestly, the NEC — as if in a trance — closed ranks around its leader, dismissing dissent as unwelcome noise. Here, Le Bon's observation that crowds are inherently intolerant of opposition comes alive. The NEC's behaviour mirrored the traits of a crowd under the sway of a dominant figure: oversimplification of complex issues, an aversion to nuanced debate, and a

readiness to sacrifice long-term interests for the emotional satisfaction of ephemeral unity.

Yet the NEC's acquiescence was not merely the product of psychological submergence. It was also a demonstration of majoritarianism in its most pernicious form. Le Bon warns of the crowd's tendency toward absolutism, a trait that thrives in environments where numbers are mistaken for wisdom. Within SAFA, the majority's endorsement of the President's decisions conferred a veneer of legitimacy, silencing minority voices that raised alarms about governance lapses. This was not democracy but its distortion: the tyranny of the majority masquerading as consensus.

The NEC's majority-driven dismissal of dissenting views exemplifies the dangers of conflating majoritarian rule with good governance. In their rush to defend the President, the committee members overlooked their fiduciary duty to the organization and its stakeholders. This is the crux of Le Bon's critique of crowds: their propensity for moral absolutism and their incapacity to deliberate rationally. In SAFA, this dynamic resulted in a governance culture where loyalty to the President took precedence over accountability, transparency, and the broader interests of South African football.

What makes this confluence of groupthink and majoritarianism particularly insidious is its self-reinforcing nature. As dissent is suppressed, the majority becomes emboldened, mistaking silence for consent and unity for strength. This cycle of conformity deepens the group's descent into irrationality, making it ever harder for individuals to break free from the collective's grip. For the NEC, this meant that even those who privately harboured reservations about the President's leadership found themselves unable to voice them publicly, trapped by the fear of alienation and the allure of belonging.

Le Bon's analysis, though written in the 19th century, offers a timeless lens through which to examine such governance failures. His depiction of leaders as pivotal figures who exploit the crowd's suggestibility resonates profoundly in the context of SAFA. The President's ability to command loyalty without overt coercion underscores Le Bon's assertion that leaders of crowds wield their power not through reasoned argument but through

emotional appeal and the projection of conviction. In the NEC, this translated into a culture where the President's mere assertion of a position carried more weight than any evidence or rationale that might have challenged it.

The lessons from SAFA's NEC are compelling and urgent. Good governance requires more than procedural adherence to majority rule; it demands a culture that values critical thinking, encourages dissent, and resists the allure of unanimity for its own sake. Without these safeguards, organizations risk falling prey to the tyranny of the majority, where the collective's power becomes a tool for entrenching mediocrity and suppressing excellence.

Le Bon's work serves as both a warning and a guide. It reminds us that the forces of group psychology are as potent as they are perilous, capable of shaping destinies for better or worse. For SAFA and similar organizations, the challenge is to harness the collective's energy while safeguarding against its excesses. This requires leaders who not only inspire but also empower; who welcome scrutiny rather than shun it; and who understand that true strength lies not in conformity but in the courage to confront uncomfortable truths.

In the end, the tyranny of the majority is not an inevitability but a choice. It is the product of decisions made — or avoided — by individuals and groups alike. By confronting the psychological dynamics that underpin this phenomenon, we can begin to build governance systems that honour both the wisdom of the collective and the integrity of the individual, charting a path toward accountability, justice, and enduring progress.

The following mini case studies further illustrate how groupthink and majoritarianism, combined with Le Bon's notion of crowd dynamics, undermined common sense, the rule of law, and sowed division among football role-players:

### *Example #1: The Fall of SASFA*

One of the clearest examples of majoritarianism in action was the dismantling of the South African Schools Football Association (SASFA) in 2015. This decision was not merely administrative; it was deeply political. SASFA's President, Mr. Mandla Mazibuko, had run against Dr. Jordaan in the 2013 SAFA presidential elections, and their campaign had been marked by harsh exchanges and bitter rivalries.

When the opportunity arose, Jordaan and his allies orchestrated SASFA's removal from overseeing schools football, using an extraordinary Congress to formalise the decision. While the process followed the appearance of due process, the intent was clear: isolate Mr. Mazibuko and weaken his influence in the schools football space. The consequences were devastating. Schools football, a vital pipeline for talent development, was mired in legal battles and stagnation for years. Sponsors withdrew, and SAFA's regional members were ill-prepared to take over the administration of school football.

This episode highlighted how majoritarianism, when wielded without restraint, can harm the very structures it seeks to improve. As I reflected on these events, I could not help but think about the ethical failure of prioritising political vendettas over the greater good. Democracy should be about inclusivity and representation — not exclusion and retribution.

This psychosocial condition is often referred to as "**groupthink**" or a manifestation of **hegemony through internalized norms**. Groupthink is a phenomenon where individuals within a group prioritize consensus and alignment with perceived group norms or leadership preferences over critical thinking or independent decision-making. In this context, the majority unconsciously internalizes the leader's preferences and ideological stance, leading them to act in ways that align with the leader's agenda without explicit directives. This condition is reinforced by propaganda, social pressures, and the suppression of dissent, creating an environment where conformity is valued above all else.

In SAFA, power dynamics are heavily skewed, and a subtle yet potent force has emerged: the internalized alignment of the majority with the President's

perceived desires. Without needing explicit instructions, individuals instinctively conform to narratives and behaviours that reinforce the President's agenda. This is rooted in groupthink and the internalization of hegemonic norms, silences dissent and ensures uniformity. Those who differ outside of the allowed scope of debate, are summarily excommunicated.

This dynamic is not theoretical but have played a decisive role in shaping the actions and decisions of the close allies of the President. The following examples illustrate how this majoritarianism was strategically wielded to consolidate Presidential power and marginalize alternative viewpoints:

### ***Example #2: The League as a Perpetual Rival***

Another recurring theme in SAFA's governance was the fraught relationship with the National Soccer League (NSL). Over the years, the League had been both a critical partner and a perceived adversary. For many years, Jordaan consistently warned SAFA members about the supposed dangers of the League dominating the association, portraying it as a rival rather than an ally. His narrative was grounded in the negative effects of domineering personalities from the era of George Thabe, a former President of the South African National Football Association (SANFA). Thabe was the proverbial strongman of South African football and when his image suffered a major blow the negative image had a downstream effect on the sport itself.

While the SAFA constitution granted the League special status as a "Special Member," this recognition was often overshadowed by mistrust. Jordaan spearheaded constitutional provisions to prevent the League's Chairperson from becoming SAFA President and barred the SAFA President from owning a club. While these rules ostensibly aimed to prevent conflicts of interest, they also perpetuated an antagonistic narrative that deepened divisions within South African football.

Efforts to build bridges, such as the *2010 Special Committee on Relations Between SAFA and the NSL*, yielded temporary improvements but were ultimately undermined by persistent neglect. Instead of promoting collaboration, SAFA's leadership often chose to reinforce these divisions, blaming the League for sponsorship challenges and other structural

deficiencies. This approach ran counter to the democratic principle of collaboration and collective problem-solving, highlighting how power dynamics can distort governance.

Recently, Paseka Nkone, a former NEC member from the North West Province, repeated a well-worn ugly trope which portrayed the NSL as the perpetual enemy of SAFA, blatantly accusing the NSL of paying a R2 million bribe to the investigating officer in the case that led to Jordaan's arrest on charges of alleged bribery and theft in December 2024.

### ***Example #3: The Tendai Ndoro Affair***

In 2018, the Tendai Ndoro case revealed the deeper issues of governance within SAFA. The case revolved around a player eligibility dispute, with the NSL seeking clarity on the interpretation of FIFA and SAFA regulations. Despite clear rules supporting the League's stance, the President insisted that I, as CEO, had no authority to align with the League on the matter. All the while, the President was in deep conversation about the matter with the lawyer of Tendai Ndoro's club, who had been advocating for a different approach to the case, contrary to the existing rule.

This interference not only delayed the resolution of the case but also undermined the relationship between SAFA and one of its key members. The President's insistence on controlling the narrative and side-lining established procedures created confusion and further strained SAFA's governance structures. The Ndoro case became emblematic of how democracy within SAFA was subverted by unilateral decision-making and a disregard for institutional norms and the rule of law.

### ***Example #4: The Club Licensing Contradictions***

The Club Licensing process, mandated by CAF and FIFA, was another area where SAFA's democratic ideals clashed with its leadership's practices. While the regulations had been finalised and approved, the President unilaterally appointed a new Club Licensing Manager – a SAFA staff member, against my specific appointment of another staff member, who had been known to CAF for many years. This caused significant confusion

among stakeholders and posed a direct challenge to my authority in the office.

The appointment of an inexperienced individual to a highly specialised role reflected a disregard for the meritocratic principle and institutional processes. It was another example of Jordaan's mercurial and high-handed conduct and personal agenda over the organisation's broader goals, eroding trust in the association's ability to manage the portfolio effectively.

### *Implications of Weakened Democracy*

Each of these examples illustrates a deeper truth about democracy: it is not simply about majority rule or the decision of an imperious leader, but about creating systems that balance power, protect minority voices, and prioritise the collective good. When these principles are ignored, democracy becomes a hollow shell — a tool for consolidating power rather than engendering inclusivity.

The challenges also raise profound questions about leadership. What does it mean to lead in a way that respects democratic principles? How can a leader reconcile his personal preferences with his responsibility to serve the collective? These are questions that SAFA's leadership has struggled to answer, and their failure to do so has had far-reaching consequences for South African football.

As I navigated these challenges, I often reflected on the nature of leadership. True leadership is not about consolidating power or silencing dissent; it is about empowering others, encouraging dialogue, and creating an environment where every voice matters. Democracy is not a tool for convenience — it is a responsibility that requires humility, transparency, and a commitment to the common good.

My experiences taught me that democracy is fragile and must be actively nurtured. It requires leaders who are willing to put aside their personal interests and focus on what is best for the organisation and its stakeholders. This is not an easy path, but it is the only way to build institutions that are resilient, inclusive, and capable of serving their purpose.

The struggle to deepen democracy within SAFA is far from over. While the challenges are immense, they also present an opportunity to reimagine governance within South African football. By embracing the principles of inclusivity, transparency, and collaboration, SAFA can become a model of democratic governance — not just for football but for institutions across the country.

## Chapter 19. Epilogue

The South African Football Association had become a ship adrift in dangerous waters, its captain steering it ever closer to ruin with reckless abandon. From the moment of his ascension to the Presidency, Jordaan's agenda was clear — to consolidate power, override governance structures, and rule as an Imperial President in stark contrast to the very principles he once championed.

Jordaan systematically dismantled the FIFA model he professed to emulate, centralizing authority in his own office and bypassing the constitutional roles of the Secretariat and CEO. His interference extended deep into operational matters, from issuing direct instructions to staff without consulting the CEO, to manipulating the SAFA Constitution to entrench his dominance. The result was a parallel administration run from his office, where programmes were initiated, communications controlled, and decisions made without accountability. The General Secretary, relegated to a figurehead, was denied the authority guaranteed by Article 66 of the SAFA Statutes, a brazen affront to good governance.

The President's tenure was marked by an unrelenting assault on democratic norms within the Association. He cultivated a majoritarian culture, alienating dissenters and ensuring that decision-making became the exclusive domain of his loyalists. This ochlocracy — the tyranny of the majority — served only to deepen divisions within the organisation, ostracising competent leaders who could have contributed to SAFA's success. The much-touted "unity" Jordaan spoke of early in his tenure as President was little more than a euphemism for the unity of his supporters, with no room for independent thought or genuine consensus.

Jordaan's disdain for established processes was most glaring in his failure to implement Congress-mandated changes to reduce the size of the Executive Committee; restructuring the Arbitration Tribunal in line with FIFA directives; and to deny NEC members voting rights as per the FIFA directives. Despite these decisions being reaffirmed at multiple Congresses and several FIFA reminders, he unilaterally opted to retain the larger body, maintaining his power by dispensing patronage to local football leaders.

This opportunistic deviation underscored his willingness to sacrifice institutional integrity for personal gain.

Adding to this were his abrasive and demeaning interactions with staff and colleagues. Jordaan's public belittling of others had become legendary, creating an atmosphere of fear and mistrust within the organisation. His inability to greet staff in passing or engage them with basic courtesy was emblematic of his larger disdain for the human element of leadership. Even when confronted about his behaviour in a staff meeting — where he grudgingly admitted to accusations of arrogance — his actions betrayed no genuine intention to change. His penchant for responding irrationally to rumours and gossip only compounded the dysfunction, allowing manipulative individuals to exploit his insecurities.

The financial mismanagement under Jordaan's watch painted an equally grim picture. Despite approving annual budgets, the NEC routinely sanctioned unplanned expenditures, further exacerbating the Association's precarious financial position. Jordaan himself unilaterally committed to high-stakes projects like the Fun Valley/NTC purchase and the ill-conceived hotel plan, bypassing the Accounting Officer and saddling SAFA with unsustainable debt. Perhaps most egregiously, he orchestrated the write-off of ZAR450 million in broadcast income without consulting the CEO, undermining the financial stability of the organisation.

Misleading statements in the Association's financial reports further highlighted the rot. The 2017-2018 Annual Financial Statement cited an anticipated \$10 million payment from the South African government, despite clear indications from the Minister and Director General of Sport and Recreation that such funds were unlikely. This reliance on non-existent funds betrayed a reckless disregard for the truth and for SAFA's financial well-being and constituted reckless trading.

Under Jordaan's leadership, SAFA's reputation reached new lows. Allegations of bribery involving \$10 million paid to former FIFA Vice President Jack Warner, coupled with sexual harassment and rape accusations against Jordaan himself, tarnished the Association's image. Sponsors and broadcasters, wary of aligning their brands with an organisation mired in

scandal, distanced themselves, leaving SAFA without critical financial lifelines. The failure to monetize valuable properties like Bafana Bafana and Banyana Banyana, or to launch a licensing and merchandising programme despite a substantial FIFA grant, further underscored the operational paralysis Jordaan's leadership had wrought.

Jordaan's overreach extended even to the realm of governance itself. Constitutional amendments, ostensibly to align with FIFA Statutes, were instead used to entrench his authority. He routinely delegated operational responsibilities to Executive Members, bypassing the Secretariat and sowing confusion among staff. This deliberate conflation of the roles of President and CEO rendered the latter position almost obsolete, with the President assuming unilateral control over key decisions.

### *As I Wonder – Looking for Answers*

As I reflect on the conduct and governance challenges that have engulfed South African football, I find myself grappling with the question: what drives leaders to centralize authority so thoroughly, to conflate personal and organizational roles, and to resist the very democratic principles they once championed? These observations are not accusations but contemplations — an attempt to understand the deeper forces at play in leaders' behaviour and their impact on an institution's trajectory.

With a mere three years of experience as CEO of SAFA between 1997 and 2004, and later as the CEO of SAFA's two World Cup bids, followed by a stint as CEO of the 2010 FIFA World Cup Local Organizing Committee, has this shaped a sense of self-assurance so strong that it became difficult for him to transition into the more collaborative role of President? Is it possible that he did not fully grasp the difference between running a football association and running a tournament, albeit an international event?

I posit a hypothetical scenario in an attempt to understand this conduct, based on my own experience having worked in both arenas. Running a football association and managing an international football tournament are distinct endeavours that require overlapping but fundamentally different skill sets. Each involves complex responsibilities, but the objectives,

stakeholders, and operational approaches diverge significantly. Understanding these differences might offer some insight into the leadership style of someone who transitioned from leading a national football association to managing part of a global event and then becoming a president.

Organizing an international football tournament, such as the FIFA World Cup, is akin to managing a large-scale project with a fixed timeline, specific deliverables, and a global audience. The focus is on logistical excellence, branding, and flawless execution under immense scrutiny.

Key skills required to run an international event include:

- *Project Management*: The ability to oversee multiple, interdependent workstreams — from stadium construction to hospitality, transportation, and security—while ensuring they meet strict deadlines.
- *Negotiation*: Securing sponsorships, broadcast rights, and partnerships is crucial. This requires diplomacy and the ability to align diverse interests under a shared vision.
- *Event Coordination*: Ensuring that every detail, from opening ceremonies to ticketing systems, runs smoothly is paramount.
- *Crisis Management*: Quick decision-making in response to unforeseen issues, such as protests, delays, or logistical failures, is vital to maintaining public confidence.
- *Public Relations*: Engaging with media, sponsors, and global audiences requires a strategic understanding of branding and storytelling.

In this environment, the leader often functions as the "chief orchestrator", coordinating a vast network of stakeholders, delegating tasks to subject-matter experts, and driving a results-oriented culture. Success is defined by delivering a spectacle that meets or exceeds expectations on a global stage.

In contrast, administering a football association is an ongoing responsibility that involves shaping the sport's development, ensuring good governance, and addressing the needs of different types of stakeholders within the football ecosystem, in a completely different role.

Key skills required include:

- *Strategic Leadership*: Setting a long-term vision for football development, grassroots participation, and national team performance.
- *Governance Expertise*: Adhering to principles of transparency, accountability, and fairness, while managing relationships with governing bodies like FIFA, CAF, and local leagues.
- *Stakeholder Management*: Balancing the interests of players, coaches, referees, clubs, regional associations, and fans requires empathy and negotiation skills.
- *Policy Development*: Crafting policies on everything from talent identification to financial oversight, while ensuring alignment with national and international regulations.
- *Conflict Resolution*: Football associations often deal with disputes, whether between clubs, regions, or other stakeholders, necessitating a calm, impartial approach to mediation.
- *Community Engagement*: Building relationships with grassroots organizations, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring that football serves its wider social purpose.

Here, success is defined not by immediate results but by sustainable growth, institutional stability, and a strong reputation for integrity. It requires collaborative leadership that empowers committees and regional bodies while maintaining a delicate balance of power.

The most significant distinction lies in the time horizon and leadership style. Managing an international football tournament is about short-term execution with a defined endpoint, whereas in a football association it involves long-term stewardship and institutional governance.

In the former, the leader operates within a highly centralized structure, with decisions cascading downward from the top. In the latter, leadership must embrace decentralization, encouraging collaboration among diverse committees, regions, and stakeholders to ensure inclusivity and accountability.

Jordaan's leadership style — marked by a centralized approach, micromanagement, and executive tendencies — may reflect the habits he developed as CEO. In that role, his ability to control outcomes and drive operational decisions was essential for success. However, when transplanted to the context of governing SAFA, this approach appears to have clashed with the principles of good governance and democratic leadership.

Governing an association demands humility, collaboration, policymaking and a respect for institutional processes. Yet, Jordaan's tendency to bypass committees, blur roles by intervening in operational matters in pursuit of power suggests an inability or unwillingness to transition from the project-driven mind-set of a tournament organizer to the consensus-driven ethos required in association governance.

This divergence raises critical questions:

- Does Jordaan see SAFA as an ongoing "project" to be controlled, rather than a democratic institution to be nurtured?
- Has his past success created a blind spot, where the skills that once served him well now hinder his ability to adapt?

To resolve these challenges, leaders must recognize that success in one domain does not guarantee success in another. While Jordaan's expertise in organizing world-class events is undeniable, his tenure at SAFA underscores the importance of evolving leadership styles to fit the context. The solution lies in embracing collaborative governance, relinquishing excessive control, and instilling a culture where decisions reflect the collective wisdom of the organization, not the will of one individual.

Ultimately, the transition from project manager to institutional leader requires a shift in mind-set — from "command and control" to "listen and empower". Only by making this transition can a leader truly serve the long-term interests of the sport they profess to love.

It is conceivable that after years at the helm, making critical decisions and driving major initiatives, instilled a belief that he knows better than anyone else how to steer the administration. He had a habit of rudely reminding

people that he had been the CEO of all these entities and knows better. This is not uncommon; many leaders, having successfully navigated monumental tasks, struggle to relinquish operational control when they assume a role that demands operational distance and hands-off oversight.

Perhaps this conduct stems from a deeply ingrained perception of indispensability, one that may have been reinforced by the accolades and public acknowledgment he received during his previous posts. Might he view his continued dominance as a legacy-building exercise, an effort to ensure that the institution thrives under his watch, even if it means bending rules and protocols? If so, this belief, while possibly well-intentioned, might inadvertently stifle new ideas and emerging leadership, leaving the organization overly dependent on one individual.

Another possibility is that Jordaan's leadership style could have been influenced by the framework of patronage politics. Could his approach to governance — marked by tight control over appointments, decisions, and resources — be rooted in a belief that loyalty must be cultivated and preserved through the distribution of favours or resources? If this is the case, such a system could explain the erosion of democratic norms within SAFA, as it discourages dissent and encourages a culture of compliance. This approach, while effective in consolidating power, often comes at the expense of institutional integrity and accountability.

I also wonder if there is a deeper psychological dimension at play. Could Jordaan's reluctance to embrace dissent and his penchant for micromanagement reflect an underlying discomfort with relinquishing control? It might be that his past successes have created a high personal standard, one that drives him to intervene in every facet of SAFA's operations to ensure that it aligns with his vision. While this could stem from a genuine desire to protect the organization, it risks undermining the very structures and people that make democratic governance work.

The broader question, then, is how such tendencies can be addressed — not to diminish Jordaan's contributions but to strengthen the institution he leads. One answer lies in rethinking the governance structure of SAFA itself. The current constitution allows too much power to be concentrated in the

presidency. A re-evaluation of roles and responsibilities, coupled with the implementation of stronger checks and balances, can help ensure that the organization remains true to its democratic ideals.

Another potential solution is to instil a culture of collaborative leadership within SAFA. Leadership training programmes that emphasize the value of collective decision-making and respect for dissent can help bridge the gap between current practices and the ideals of good governance. By empowering other members of the NEC and promoting a system where differing perspectives are not only tolerated but encouraged, SAFA can build a more resilient governance model.

Finally, I wonder if Jordaan himself might benefit from reframing his role within the organization. What if he saw his position not as the architect of every decision but as a statesman who provides guidance and mentorship to emerging leaders? By focusing on the long-term health of the organization rather than immediate operational control, he could leave a legacy far greater than any single decision or achievement.

These reflections are not meant to besmirch but to explore the factors that might explain the current challenges in South African football governance. Understanding these dynamics is essential if we are to move forward. As I think about these issues, I am reminded of the philosopher John Stuart Mill, who cautioned that "the worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it".

Similarly, the health of an institution like SAFA depends not only on its leaders but on the structures, norms, and culture that support them. Perhaps the most important lesson is that true leadership is not about dominance but about creating an environment where the organization can thrive beyond the tenure of any one individual.

In sum, Jordaan's tenure was a masterclass in how not to lead a major organisation. His actions betrayed every principle of good governance: accountability, transparency, equity, inclusivity, and adherence to the rule of law. Far from safeguarding SAFA's future, he has left it financially crippled, administratively dysfunctional, and ethically compromised. His

behaviour has proven him unfit to lead such a significant institution, his actions more befitting a schoolyard bully than the steward of South African football.

Respect for governance and democratic norms, once given enthusiastic lip service, has been eroded by the very person entrusted to uphold them, leaving SAFA on the brink of a financial, reputational, commercial, and legal catastrophe.

Leadership is not measured by the power it collects, but by the integrity it reflects. Those who weaponized governance for personal gain leave behind a legacy not of greatness, but of ruin. Democracy, though fragile, finds its strength in those brave enough to defend it against the wolves who wear its mantle.

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