

SUMMARY



THE END OF POWER

Moisés Naím's masterpiece summarized in only

30 pages

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COOLTURA

The decay of power

Just as Moisés Naím describes it, *The End of Power* is a book about power. In the opening chapter, he clearly explains its purpose.

He argues that power is decaying, it's shifting from one player to another. Those who used to maintain power by brute force such as governments, companies, armed forces and labor unions, among others, are nowadays challenged by small groups which generally have fewer resources than they do, but possess more knowledge. This is epitomized by the increase of women, young people and small entrepreneurs in power, in comparison to the number of men, old people, and major businessmen. On the other hand, they must face another problem: They are more constrained in the ways they can use power. Naím states that power itself "is slipping away."¹

According to this author, we often attribute the causes of this change to the impact of technology, more precisely the Internet, and a shift in geopolitics which is displayed in China's growing power in relation to the United States. For him, "In the twenty-first century, power is easier to get, harder to use — and easier to lose"².

Naím mentions the leaders of the most popular companies and media organizations, and explains that in the past, their positions used to be more durable. But this has changed, as a result of the decay of power, and they currently retain their position for a shorter period of time. Besides, they have more competitors than their antecessors used to have and power is more constrained. Another fact

to take into account is that the price they must pay for their mistakes is now higher because the relationship between those in power and their subordinates has changed.

Moisés Naím alludes to the case of James Black, a chess player whose inspiration to play chess stems from the way it let him wield power. He is one of the few chess masters who has achieved this ranking at a very early age (he was 12 in 2011).

But although this was an unusual achievement in the past, it is more natural nowadays, as young players often defeat the more experienced ones. Their nationality is no longer limited to some countries in particular (generally, the more developed ones), but they come from all over the world. This is in part due to the fact that the city has spread over the rural areas, children no longer consider chess an unknown luxury and have time to devote to it, and in addition, travelling is less costly. Another reason for this phenomenon is the improvement of education and children's health. Thanks to the Internet, among other methods, children can learn to play, practice techniques, compete against players from all over the world and replay the games they prefer. But this is limited to those who have access to the Internet.

Following this example, the author explains that the situations generated in chess games can also occur in real life. One of the concepts he explains is the erosion of the barriers that used to protect the reduced space of the most powerful people. The tumbling down of barriers is produced by many factors such as demographic, economic, political and technological changes (in terms of the great scope of the information technology) and also by changing social values, expectations and norms. Other reasons are

economic growth, the increase in migrations and the improvement of health services and education systems in poor countries. Naím illustrates this by referring to different sectors.

The first one is geopolitics. He says the number of sovereign states has increased, but not only do they compete with each other, but also with numerous transnational companies and non-state organizations.

For example, in times of war, military power is no longer important, but military and political tactics are. There is still a great difference between the enemies in a war, but this does not mean that the stronger one will be the winner. Small forces, according to Naím, can be identified as militias, insurgent groups, rebels and separatist movements. These groups have more chances of damaging their enemy with lesser expenditure.

Dictators and party bosses are also losing power. The emerging candidates come from different sectors and this generates confusion among party bosses and leaders.

Naím makes reference to the economic world, which is also affected by these changes. Although power is still concentrated in a few hands and the economic gap between the rich and the poor is growing, this is not the only tendency. Different surveys have proven that in times of crisis, the rich are the most severely affected.

Now, it's also true that the wealthiest people are not necessarily the most powerful ones. The author explains that the leaders of big companies are the biggest power holders. Even though, as mentioned previously, their status