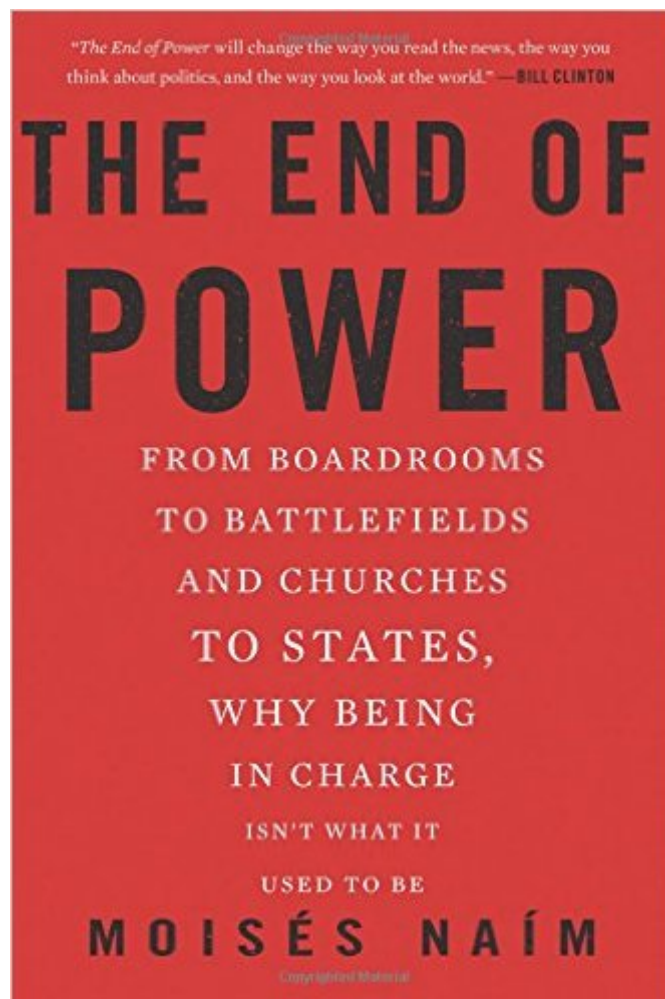


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The End Of Power: From Boardrooms To Battlefields And Churches To States, Why Being In Charge Isn't What It Used To Be



Synopsis

Mark Zuckerberg's inaugural pick for his "Year of Books" challenge, *The End of Power* updates the very notion of power for the 21st century. Power, we know, is shifting: From West to East and North to South, from presidential palaces to public squares, from once formidable corporate behemoths to nimble startups and, slowly but surely, from men to women. But power is not merely dispersing; it is also decaying. Those in power today are more constrained in what they can do with it and more at risk of losing it than ever before. In *The End of Power*, award-winning columnist and former Foreign Policy editor Moisés Naím illuminates the struggle between once-dominant megaplayers and the new micropowers challenging them in every field of human endeavor. Drawing on provocative, original research, Naím shows how the antiestablishment drive of micropowers can topple tyrants, dislodge monopolies, and open remarkable new opportunities, but it can also lead to chaos and paralysis. Naím deftly covers the seismic changes underway in business, religion, education, within families, and in all matters of war and peace. Examples abound in all walks of life: In 1977, eighty-nine countries were ruled by autocrats while today more than half the world's population lives in democracies. CEOs are more constrained and have shorter tenures than their predecessors. Modern tools of war, cheaper and more accessible, make it possible for groups like Hezbollah to afford their own drones. In the second half of 2010, the top ten hedge funds earned more than the world's largest six banks combined. Those in power retain it by erecting powerful barriers to keep challengers at bay. Today, insurgent forces dismantle those barriers more quickly and easily than ever, only to find that they themselves become vulnerable in the process. In this accessible and captivating book, Naím offers a revolutionary look at the inevitable end of power—and shows how it will change your world.

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Customer Reviews

The End of Power starts like dynamite. Moises Naim, an extremely well-respected and well-informed author (he thanks everybody who's anybody in the acknowledgments except perhaps for David Beckham) is truly on fire to begin with. He starts the book by telling you what power is. He defines it as the ability to make others do what you want them to do. It's not about the size of your army or your nuclear stockpile or your advertising budget. It's the ability to get your way. Next, he sets up a matrix, Mc Kinsey style. Two types of power, hard and soft. And each breaks down in two. So hard power breaks down to coercion and bribery. Soft power breaks down to code and persuasion. So "if you don't eat your broccoli you don't get to play with Lego" as well as "if you don't eat your broccoli you'll have a spanking" are both coercion. On the other hand "if you eat your broccoli you can then have ice cream" is bribery. That's hard power, because I have ways to make you change your mind. On the other hand if the pope says you should practice abstinence, that's soft power, he can't do much to keep you chaste. He sets a moral code and that's that. Similarly, if Patek Philippe buy the back cover of the Economist every week and your wife asks you for a diamond-crusted watch (or you decide to buy a little something for the next generation) that's persuasion, but there's nothing in it for you directly. And of course power is seldom on one vector only. The pope, for example, may be going beyond code. If you don't follow his rules, it may later cost you salvation. And if you do, you might go to heaven. So you could argue it's 70% code, 15% coercion and 15% bribery. You get the idea.

Whatever our political ideologies, most of us are aware that we've entered one of those periods of accelerated change that mark the transition from one historical era to another. In the last dozen years we've had the War on International Terror, the Great Recession, public and private sector financial collapses, and a change in politics that has shifted the country from ultra-laissez faire economic conservatism toward a slightly left-of-center regime of higher taxes, more regulation, and more federally-supervised healthcare. These changes may be viewed through many economic and political prisms. This book views it through what is purported to be a change in the power structures that govern politics, business, the military, and even religion. As author Moises Naim posits: "Power is decaying. To put it simply, power no longer buys as much as it did in the past." My first thought is

that this is deja vu back to the late 60's/mid 70's when a plethora of books like MEGATRENDS and FUTURE SHOCK predicted that "The Establishment" would soon be overthrown by an explosion of knowledge, communication, and rising social consciousness among the people, especially the young. The Establishment was alleged to be a cabal of large corporate and academic interests allied with big government for the purpose of suppressing the desires of the "little people" to have a greater share of economic and political influence. Something along these lines did happen on a limited scale. Grass roots environmentalists did combine to thwart powerful corporate interests and their political allies. Young people, women, and minorities did take over the Democratic Party in 1972 and oust its old guard.

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