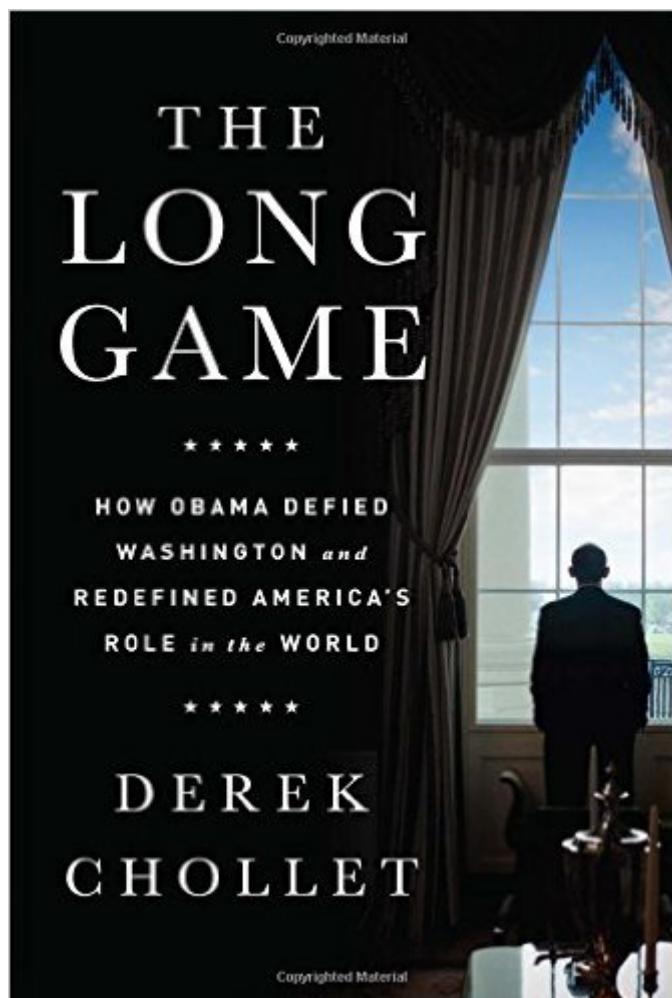


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# The Long Game: How Obama Defied Washington And Redefined America's Role In The World



## **Synopsis**

In this inside assessment of Barack Obama's foreign policy legacy, Derek Chollet tackles the prevailing consensus to argue that Obama has profoundly altered the course of American foreign policy for the better and positioned the United States to lead in the future. The Long Game combines a deep sense of history with new details and compelling insights into how the Obama Administration approached the most difficult global challenges. With the unique perspective of having served at the three national security power centers during the Obama years—the White House, State Department, and Pentagon—Chollet takes readers behind the scenes of the intense struggles over the most consequential issues: the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the meltdown of Syria and rise of ISIS, the Ukraine crisis and a belligerent Russia, the conflict in Libya, the tangle with Iran, the turbulent relationship with Israel, and the rise of new powers like China. An unflinching, fast-paced account of U.S. foreign policy, The Long Game reveals how Obama has defied the Washington establishment to redefine America's role in the world, offering important lessons for the next president.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

An absolute must-read for every American who intends to vote. No matter how you personally feel about Obama as a President, the number one thing I hope you take away from this book is how truly complex foreign policy is. The pundits and critics talk about "dithering" and reduce every decision

down to a sound-bite or a Tweet, but that's just not reality. Think about how difficult it is to deal with your personal relationships (family, co-workers, in-laws, etc) and then imagine having those difficulties on a global scale with leaders of nation-states from entirely different cultures and perspectives than yours. Throw in every arm-chair diplomat who says things like "Just bomb 'em!" or "If we just got rid of all the nukes, the world would be perfect," add a divided Congress, ranting media, budget constraints, and a constantly evolving world order to the mix, and you'll begin to have an idea of what it is like for POTUS, regardless of who is sitting in that seat. This is a fantastic book that will help you understand so much about Obama and America during his eight years of term, and hopefully will make you understand exactly what you are doing when you make a vote for the next President.

Chollet is an unabashed supporter of President Obama having served in several senior positions in the current administration. Consequently this is not only an explanation of why Obama did this and did not do that, but a cogent delineation and evaluation of those policies. Chollet devotes the first chapter to explaining why Obama did not bomb Syria and go after Assad when it was revealed that the dictator used chemical weapons against his own people. Obama has faced an enormous amount of criticism for seemingly doing nothing even though he had drawn a *colored line* in the sand. But what his critics don't want to acknowledge and what the general public doesn't understand is that Obama got rid of the chemical weapons through diplomacy, something Chollet asserts could not have been done by using military force. The main point being that the huge stockpiles of chemical weapons were in numerous sites all over Syria, some in populated areas. Experts concluded that blowing up the sites from the air would be hard to do successfully and there would be the danger of the spread of toxic chemical plumes. (p. 12) Chollet quotes Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu as saying that the removal of Syria's chemical weapons was *the one ray of light in a very dark region.* (p. 25) The Israelis believed that the chemicals weapons could very well be used against them and they saw no clear way to get rid of them. Personally I am convinced that Obama handled the chemical weapons horror in the right way, especially since I also read the same explanation in the recently published *Our Separate Ways: The Struggle for the Future of the U.S.-Israel Alliance* (2016) by Dana H. Allin, and Steven N. Simon. But I am not so sure the President has handled the overall problem of Assad correctly. I think getting rid of Assad early on would have clarified the military situation on the ground in Syria and made it easier to defeat ISIS. But, you know, when you are not privy to all the facts it's a little like Monday morning quarterbacking. Although I have an undergraduate degree in political

science from UCLA, or especially because of that, I am not sure what was the right thing to do, and indeed judgment in this case should probably be left to the historians. At any rate, I don't think any amount of evidence will convince Obama's critics. The heart of the book is the idea in the title: "The Long Game." Short term results in foreign policy may result in long term failures, as we recall from the "Mission Accomplished" banner as George W. Bush deplaned on an aircraft carrier during the initial stages of the Iraq tragedy. The long game can be clarified from a "long game checklist" beginning on page 215. The elements are: Balance, Sustainability, Restraint, Precision, Patience, Fallibility, Skepticism, Exceptionalism, Balance. Obama believed that when he entered the White House in 2008 our policies both foreign and domestic were out of balance. We were too much engaged with the Middle East and not enough involved in what was happening in Asia. We were also too much involved with foreign affairs to the detriment of urgent needs at home. By sustainability Obama means conducting our affairs in such a way as to allow them to be sustained beyond his time in office. Restraint requires the kind of mentality that does not go off half-cocked or without due diligence. Chollet writes, "Strategy is as much about what one decides not to do as much as it is about what one does. (p. 220) Precision demands specific approaches for particular problems. (p. 221) This sheds light on Obama's inclination to use drones against ISIS rather than troops on the ground. Patience. Yes. Working just for next quarter's earnings report may not be the best long term strategy either as a CEO or as President of the United States. Fallibility. Yes we are an imperfect nation and we have and will make mistakes. Chollet remarks, "The recognition of fallibility also cautions a leader to exercise power, especially military force, with great care." (p. 224) Skepticism. We should be skeptical of "quick answers and easy justifications." The quick draw McGraw style of Obama's predecessor is the immediate case in point. Exceptionalism refers to the exceptionalism of the United States which Obama believes in, but with the emphasis on the tremendous responsibility of being the strongest nation on earth. I want to say in closing that what I find attractive about Obama's foreign policy is his deep understanding that we, not just as Americans, but as human beings, must move away from the disastrous tribalism that has dominated international affairs since the dawn of history. The knee-jerk resort to the use of lethal force in attempting to solve conflicts must be reconsidered and every effort towards other solutions must be employed. As Obama has said, war must be the last resort. I enjoyed reading this book primarily because of the insights into the thinking of President Obama that Chollet presented. --Dennis Littrell, author of "The World Is Not as We Think It Is".

I confess to having little patience for 800 page tomes rationalizing behavior by former politicians. This book is so not like that. It is a concise, thoughtful, balanced explanation of how Obama and his staff including Hillary Clinton dealt with the tough issues of his Presidency related to the Arab Spring, Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran. It admits to things that did not work and explains things that did and why. As an insider during several administrations Chollet appears to be extremely fair minded and honest readily admitting when he agreed or disagreed with a given position or decision as well as when he was right and when he was wrong. I found it very insightful about the current administration as well and those of prior Presidents going back to Eisenhower. The book is extremely well written and edited, a rare event these days. You may agree or disagree with his positions but regardless I believe you will respect him and learn a great deal. There is no better time to read this than prior to the next election.

This is an interesting perspective. It essentially, and somewhat convincingly, explains Obama's philosophy as President. It certainly captures the reader's attention in this tumultuous time. It also creates fear if the wrong "person" we're to become President.

Derek Chollet's book is a complete and accurate description of the foreign policy challenges faced by the Obama administration. Despite the many critics pushing for greater action the things that the president did do and those he chose not to do will probably lead to his inclusion among the finest of our leaders. Those chattering for war in Syria, a more belligerent attitude toward the almost bankrupt rump state that is Russia and threatening China will rightly remain in history's dust bin.

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