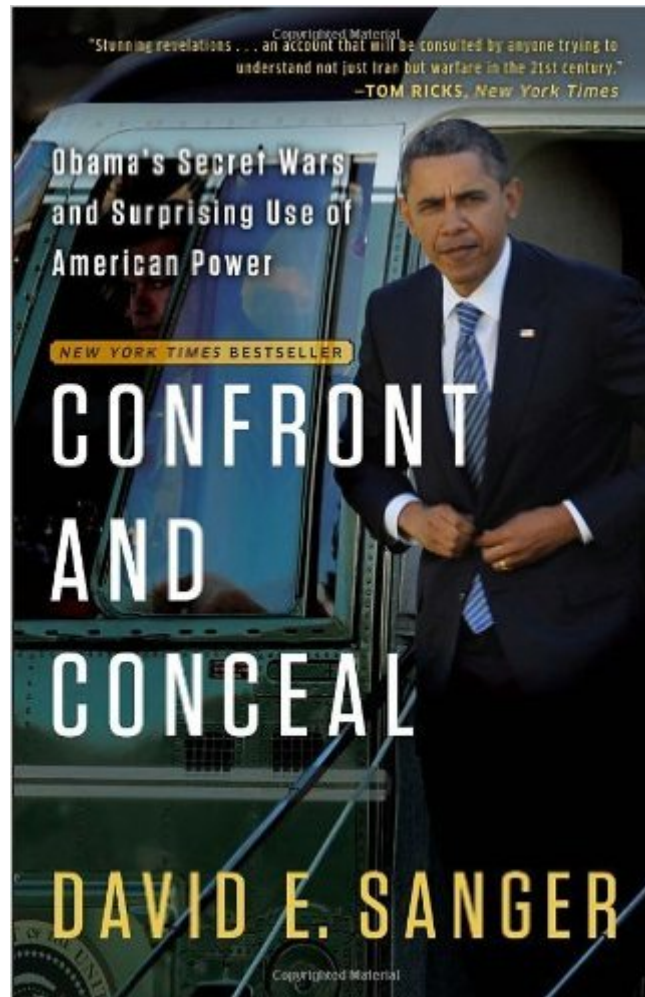


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# Confront And Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars And Surprising Use Of American Power



## Synopsis

"This astonishingly revealing insider's account of the Obama administration's foreign policy process is a triumph." —Foreign Affairs

President Obama's administration came to office with the world on fire. Confront and Conceal is the story of how, in his first term, Obama secretly used the most innovative weapons and tools of American power, including our most sophisticated—and still unacknowledged—arsenal of cyberweapons, aimed at Iran's nuclear program. —Washington and the world were rocked by Confront and Conceal, which goes deep into the Situation Room as Obama questions whether this new weapon can slow Iran and avoid a war—or whether it will create blowback, as the Iranians and others retaliate with cyberattacks on the United States. It describes how the bin Laden raid worsened the dysfunctional relationship with Pakistan, and how Obama's early idealism about fighting a "war of necessity" in Afghanistan quickly turned to fatigue, frustration, and now withdrawal. As the world seeks to understand how Obama will cope with nationalistic leaders in Beijing, a North Korea bent on developing a nuclear weapon that can reach American shores, and an Arab world where promising revolutions turned to chaos, Confront and Conceal—with an updated epilogue for this paperback edition—provides an unflinching account of these complex years of presidential struggle, in which America's ability to exert control grows ever more elusive.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Piggybacking on GW Bush's earlier forays into cyber warfare, President Obama, in lieu of having to launch (or having to prevent Israel from launching) a full-scaled air attack, elected to launch instead, a joint cyber attack with Israel on the centrifuges at Iran's Natanz nuclear plant. In retrospect, it can be seen that Obama's motive for pulling Israel into a highly secret cyber project was designed primarily to dissuade our closest Middle East Ally, from launching its own unilateral (but what would have probably been a highly destabilizing) military attack against Iran's nuclear facilities. This well-written book goes into such scary detail about the whole enterprise, that like John McCain in his recent call for a Special Prosecutor to investigate the matter, I too wondered how a New York Times Reporter could get access to so many intricate details of such a closely held national security secret? Here is a rough summary of the most interesting part of the book in my view: the author's description of how a Bush initiated project called "Olympic Games," unfolded and got played out under Obama's direction: Following up on previous efforts to surreptitiously install faulty parts into Iran's German made computer systems and power supplies, General James Cartwright, of the U.S. strategic command, convinced President GW Bush that launching a cyber penetration effort could be at least as effective as the stratagem of trying to introduce faulty parts. Bush bought into Cartwright's idea, which outlined a way of gaining access to the Natanz plant's industrial computer controls by the innocent introduction via a thumb drive of a small bit of "sleeper" code called a "beacon."

Confront and Conceal is, in many ways, the sequel to The Inheritance. The Inheritance was about the foreign policy challenges Obama inherited from Bush. In Confront and Conceal, Sanger examines how Obama has faced those changes and attempts to pin down an "Obama Doctrine." In Inheritance, Sanger presented America's foreign policy challenges as almost siloed. Here, he makes clear that our continued presence in Afghanistan is largely driven by our strategic interests in Pakistan, and those strategic interests are amplified by our interest in not leaving Pakistan with the alternative of China as their major ally and benefactor. And the money to pay for it all comes from the same place. Everything is linked. Confront and Conceal is organized into five parts, covering: Afghanistan & Pakistan, Iran, drones & cyber warfare, the Arab Spring, and China & North Korea. The section on Afghanistan & Pakistan is the longest by a fair margin, taking up almost one third of the book. China & North Korea, by comparison, is given short shrift. In my mind, it's hard to argue that the Arab Spring deserves twice the space as China & North Korea. A renewed exuberance for the Afghan war (reflecting Obama's campaign rhetoric) soon faded under sober inspection. Transforming Afghanistan into a modern nation was not and never had been feasible. There is

simply no way to replace the development aid and military spending that accounted for the vast majority of Afghanistan's GDP. So our focus shifted to warily watching Pakistan and (rightly) putting our pursuit of al-Qaeda first, even if it means jeopardizing our relationship with Pakistan, as the mission to kill Osama bin Laden did.

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