

THE EMPIRE FROM WITHIN (PART ONE)

I am amazed at the widespread ignorance about issues so vital for the existence of mankind, at a time that it has great media, unimaginable a hundred years ago, some as recent as the Internet.

Just three weeks ago the news was announced of the imminent distribution of a spectacular book by Bob Woodward, The Washington Post journalist, whose articles with Carl Bernstein, 38 years ago, led to the Watergate scandal which destroyed the Nixon administration for spying against the Democratic Party in June 1972, for violations of laws that American society could not ignore.

I contacted our "ambassador in Washington," as I call Jorge Bolanos, the head of the Cuban Interests Section in the U.S. capital, and asked him to send me at least two copies of the book as soon as it appeared in the bookstores. Bolaños sent four copies.

The text is in English, of course, and as usual it will be long before the over 500 million people who speak or understand Spanish worldwide, including the Latin American immigrants in the United States, can read it in that language.

I contacted one of our best English translators, and asked for a special effort to summarize the contents. The voluminous copy, entitled "Obama's wars", has 33 chapters and 420 pages.

I should point out that I was given an overview of the 33 chapters, in 99 pages in 18 point type, in just three days.

I will pass on the contents of this book, using the exact words, crystal clear and precise, that the English translation specialist sent me. It will take up the Reflections for several days.

It would be impossible to understand anything about the current U.S. policy if the contents of this book by Woodward are ignored. He is the holder of more than one Pulitzer Prize and, for sure, has absolutely no intention of destroying the empire.

Our country will be the first in the world to know the essential contents of this book in an articulate form. As it is known, Cuban citizens have high levels of education, and it is the country with highest percentage of students enrolled in universities.

Our main strength is not in arms, but in ideas.

CHAPTER 1

"Two days after being elected President, Obama summoned the national intelligence director, Mike McConnell, for a meeting in Chicago to get details about the most secret intelligence operations of the extensive system of espionage in the United States. Other officials participated in the meeting, but McConnell said he had orders from former President Bush not to disclose the information related to spies, the new techniques of infiltrating Al Qaeda, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the protection of the nation, to anyone other than the elected president.

Michael J. Morell, Head of the CIA analysis department, and McConnell sat alone with Obama in a secure room. He was informed, among other matters, that the main threat to the United States came from Pakistan and that this was the No. 1 priority of the NID. If the U.S. withdrew from Afghanistan, India and Pakistan would fill the power vacuum. The best was that Obama should seek peace between the two

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countries. Bush had ordered the drone attacks on the camps in Pakistan, and he had instructed that this country should be notified "concurrently"; that is, when the attack occurred or, for greater security, few minutes later."

We encourage readers to take note of the names of each of the personalities mentioned, as well as the theories developed to justify the incredible events that take place.

"Al Qaeda had recruited people from 35 countries whose passports did not need a visa to enter the United States, and that was a big concern. Obama was informed of the key words for the attacks by drones (SYLVAN-MAGNOLIA), only known by those with the highest level of access to security issues, among whom was now the new president.

The main successes came from human sources, spies on the ground. The CIA told them where to look, where to hunt and where to kill. The spies were the real secrets that Obama carried with him from now on. The CIA was very careful with their sources.

Each one had a code name, for example, MOONRISE. When too many people knew about him or her, or their successes, they were liquidated. The officer in charge of the case reported that MOONRISE had made the ultimate sacrifice, but the person in question had not really died. Only their codename changed, and now the CIA would have another source called SOOTHING STAR, the same person with a new name.

One important secret that has never been reported in the media, or anywhere else, was the existence of a covert army of 3,000 men in Afghanistan, whose objective was to kill or capture Taliban and sometimes venture into the tribal areas to pacify them and get support.

McConnell and Morell referred to the Iranian nuclear program. It was known that they were trying to obtain nuclear weapons and had hidden installations. McConnell said he was confident that Iran would get a gun-type nuclear weapon, probably primitive, but that could detonate in the desert with great effect and that in his opinion this would occur between 2010 and 2015.

Another major threat was North Korea, which had enough material to make six bombs. The Koreans would talk, they would lie, would threaten to leave and then they would try to renegotiate.

The Chinese had hacked the computers of the Obama campaign in the summer of 2008 and also those of McCain, and had removed files and documents at an astounding rate. McConnell said the United States were vulnerable to cyber attacks."

Straight away, the Woodward book reflects Obama's first reaction to the mess and complexity of the situation created by the war on terror unleashed by Bush.

"Obama told one of his closest advisers he had inherited a world that could explode at any time in over six different ways, and had powerful but limited means to avoid it. Obama acknowledged that after the elections, all the world's problems were seen as his responsibility and that people were saying, 'You are the most powerful person in the world. Why don't you do something about it?'"

CHAPTER 2

"John Podesta, former chief of staff to Bill Clinton, was convinced that the policy should be designed, organized and monitored through a centralized system at the White House. But Obama had someone else in mind for the post: Rahm Emmanuel, who became the No. 3 of the White House. Both were from Chicago but they did not know each other well.

Obama, as presidential candidate, had told David Petraeus in Iraq to ask for everything he would need if eventually he became Commander in Chief. Obama was ready to say 'no' to what Bush had said 'yes'.

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Petraeus virtually redefined the concept of war in a new manual he wrote (Counterinsurgency Field Manual) that came into effect in Iraq. His main idea was that the U.S. could not get out of the war. They had to protect and win over the population, live among them, for a stable and competent government to succeed. The new soldier, he said, should be a social worker, a physical planner, an anthropologist and a psychologist.

Petraeus had few hobbies (he didn't fish, hunt, or play golf). He could pass for a man of 35, and run 5 miles in about 30 minutes. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Princeton. His father died and he decided to stay in Iraq to oversee the war. The Iraqis call him King David. Some of his colleagues call him the Legend of Iraq. But the Obama presidency would change the status of Petraeus."

CHAPTER 3

"The new Director of the CIA, Mike Hayden, traveled to New York to discuss, with Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, the attacks by unmanned 'Predator' planes within that country. The great lesson of the Second World War and Viet Nam was that attacks from the air, even massive bombing cannot win a war.

The Pakistani media was concerned about the number of civilian casualties. But the accidental death of Pakistanis was only half the story.

In a meeting Hayden had with the Pakistani President, the latter told him: Kill the principals. You Americans can worry about collateral damage. I'm not worried.' Zardari gave the CIA the green light and Hayden thanked him for his support.

In one of his long conversations with David Axelrod, his chief political adviser and closest to him, Obama brought up the issue of Hillary Clinton. Axelrod asked Obama how he could trust Hillary. Obama replied that he believed he knew her well and if she were part of the team, she would be faithful to him. She stood beside her husband during the Monica Lewinsky scandal, and Obama was impressed by her resilience. He needed someone with enough stature to become a major player in the international arena.

Mrs. Clinton was not convinced that this post would be for her. There was no body of trust between her team and his.

Then came the problems with her husband and the contributors of large sums of money to his presidential library, his foundation and the Clinton Global Initiative. Obama's lawyers said these entities could not accept money if Hillary was appointed Secretary of State. She acknowledged that this was a big hurdle but she would not send Bill to live in a cave for four or eight years. She was not going to tell him to cancel the operations he had in 26 countries and were saving lives, she said, it was not worth it. Podesta promised they would work on that.

She prepared a speech in which she thanked Obama, by phone, for having taken her into account for the position, but Podesta saw to it that both could not connect.

The 'no' from Hillary was transformed into a 'maybe'. Mark Penn, chief strategist for her campaign, thought that if they remained at the State Department for eight years, she would again be in the best position to be nominated for President. She would only be 69, the same age as Reagan when he took office."

CHAPTER 4

"Retired General James L. Jones considered that the Bush administration was amazingly disorganized

and unfortunately not very serious regarding peace in the Middle East. Jones said the Bush Security Council lacked personnel and that it was dysfunctional, and that National Security advisor had to take measures to guarantee reasonable advancement in pursuing the objectives.

An over large sector of US policy was on autopilot, and the National Security advisor had to find the way to achieve results without having detailed control of what different departments and agencies were supposed to do. Obama asked him how he could achieve that. Jones recommended that he should convince his subordinates that their vision was the President's vision. [...] Obama decided to appoint Jones National Security advisor. Jones was surprised that Obama had appointed him for a post with such a high responsibility and that he trusted someone that he hardly knew. Jones thought everything was based on personal relations, and he did not have such relations with Obama.

On November 26, Bush called one of the last meetings of the National Security Council to analyze a very secret report on the war in Afghanistan, made by Army Lieutenant General Douglas Lute, known as the Czar of War. The report concluded by stating that the United States could not stay in Afghanistan unless they solved three major problems: improving governability, lowering corruption levels and eliminating Taliban sanctuaries in Afghanistan."

Another astonishing episode now follows, behind which was the hand of the US administration, revealing the risk hypothetically referred to by the author of the "Nuclear Winter". It would only take—he said—a war between Pakistan and India, the two countries with the least number of atomic weapons in the Group of 8 that belong to the "Nuclear Club." What is revealed by the book "Obama's Wars" is the fact that any irresponsible step in US policy could lead to a catastrophe.

"Condoleezza Rice was not pleased with the report. Bush decided not to publish it. Later, 10 armed people began prowling the Indian city of Bombay and creating a picture of chaos and violence, which was aired live on TV for 60 hours. Six US citizens were killed. The operation was organized by a group known by the acronyms LeT, which means Army of the Righteous and was financed by Pakistan's Intelligence Agency. Bush wanted to prevent any tensions between India and Pakistan. His mandate was based on zero tolerance with terrorists and their allies. The FBI was horrified to see that a low-cost, high-tech operation had paralyzed the city of Bombay. US cities were as vulnerable. An FBI official said that Bombay had changed everything."

CHAPTER 5

"On taking on the post as CIA director, Hayden had inherited an organization that, according to him, was suffering from the battered child syndrome.

Obama had called him to a briefing on covert operations. Hayden considered it to be the opportunity to prove how serious the threats were and how seriously the CIA took them. He referred to 14 highly secret operations, whose objective was to carry out covert and lethal operations against terrorism, prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, discourage North Korea from building more nuclear weapons, carry out operations against proliferation in other countries, operate in an independent manner or in support of the United States in Afghanistan, carry out a series of lethal operations and other programs in Iraq, support undercover efforts to stop genocide in the Sudanese region of Darfur, and offer Turkey intelligence information to prevent the Workers' Party in the Kurdistan from establishing a separatist enclave in Turkey.

On January 4, 2009 Hayden learned, from an article on the Washington Post Website, that he had been replaced as CIA director and that Leon Panetta had been appointed the new director. Hayden considered that being replaced by a politician was a personal humiliation. Panetta is skillful in making personal relations. While meeting with Panetta, Hayden advised him: 1) You are the commander of the nation in the global war against terrorism; 2) You have the best personnel of the Federal Government; 3) I have read some of your articles; do not use the words CIA and torture in the same paragraph again. Torture is a felony. You might not like this but do not ever say torture exists. Legally, the CIA has never

tortured anyone. McConnell warned Panetta that he had to understand the battle he had to wage against the CIA, because they saw him as if he were the enemy.”

CHAPTER 6

“Obama asked Biden to travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan before his inauguration as President, and he asked him to be accompanied by a Republican. Lindsey Graham, from South Carolina, was the chosen man.

Biden officially told the Pakistani President about Obama’s idea: Afghanistan would be his war; he would send more troops soon, but he needed to work jointly with Pakistan.

Zardari, for his part, admitted not having as much experience as his late wife Benazir Bhutto, but he said his mission was not different and that he needed the United States to help him win enough support on the domestic scene, and that there was much anti-American feeling in the country.

Biden warned him that in that direction Zardari had to stop playing in both teams at the same time, since the CIA thought that much intelligence information was being used to alert terrorist camps about the attacks by unmanned planes.

Biden and Graham left for Kabul. Relations between Karzai and the United States had become very volatile after the 2004 elections. He would frequently criticize the Americans for the number of civilian victims. Evidence of corruption within his government and in his family raised tensions with the United States. Biden warned Karzai that he was not interested in making life difficult for him, but the success of the United States to a large extent depended on him.

Karzai called several members of his cabinet to inform Biden and Graham directly about what he was doing. Karzai was told that Obama wanted to help, but the idea of lifting the phone and calling President Obama as he used to do with Bush would not happen anymore. Biden criticized Karzai for his inability to rule the whole country, for his rejection of touring the country to raise a consensus among the different tribes, for the sumptuous homes of Afghan officials near the presidential palace and which undoubtedly were being paid for by the United States. You are nothing but the mayor of Kabul, Biden told Karzai.

Karzai was critical about the large number of civilian victims and Biden committed to minimize them, but he warned that he had to join them in that war; he said that if it was not their war, the United States would not send more troops. Karzai replied that he was not making any criticism, but letting them know about a problem. Biden suggested addressing the issue in private, not at a press conference, and Karzai did not agree. The number of civilian victims was a public problem and Biden had denigrated him in front of his cabinet members. Karzai warned that the Afghan people would not tolerate that, and the Afghan people should be their allies and not their victims. Ambassador William Word said that the conversation had been useful but that it revealed frustrations on both sides.

Biden met with the chief of the American troops in Afghanistan, David McKiernan, who told him that in order to win the war it was necessary to send the 30,000 troops still to come since Bush was in power. Biden inquired about Al Qaeda and David said that he had not seen a single Arab soldier there in two years. This confirmed Biden’s suspicion that Al Qaeda, the main objective of the war, was a Pakistani problem.

Biden suggested that Obama distance himself from Karzai. Graham told the President that they were losing the war. Graham was convinced that it was impossible to win the war in Afghanistan if they lost the war in Iraq.”

CHAPTER 7

“Obama’s swearing-in ceremony on January 20 was about to be cancelled. Reliable intelligence reports

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indicated that a group of Somali extremists were planning to attack Obama with explosives. However, all the attention was focused on Obama's speech and what he would say.

General Petraeus was again concentrating on Afghanistan.

Obama called a meeting of his National Security group on January 21. The key decision was to appoint Petraeus chief of the Central Command. Obama requested three options on the war on Iraq. He ordered a 60-day study to know how they would get to where they wanted to. One of the options to bear in mind, as requested by the President, was the withdrawal of the troops in a 16-month period.

A team of 80 people began to study the situation in Afghanistan. They analyzed the interrogations of prisoners, the battlefield reports, financial reports, the propaganda and the communiqués issued by the Taliban.

When Petraeus asked what they had found, Derek Harvey, from the Defense Intelligence Agency, said that the situation was similar to that of a blind man helping another blind man to walk, that the United States was very ignorant about the Afghan insurgency, about who and where the enemy was, and the enemy's perception of the war and their motivation.

They knew too little about the enemy to draw up a strategy that would lead to victory. Harvey tried to speed up the gathering of intelligence information and he dedicated himself completely to it. He held the opinion that the war could be won, but that the US administration had to make a significant commitment for many years; which perhaps would not be well accepted by the voters. Harvey said he believed that the war in Afghanistan could be waged, but could not be sold.

Obama said that the sending of new troops should be announced as part of a new strategy. Petraeus indicated that they would not reach their objectives without a larger number of troops, and that they could not just rely on the attacks by unmanned planes. Petraeus insisted on the sending of the 30,000 troops. Obama asked if sending all those troops at once was necessary, and he warned that it was before having a strategy and that the President needed him to propose the decisions to take. The President seemed to understand that the war would not be won in one or two years. The President left the meeting to fulfill other commitments without having taken any decision on that respect."

To be continued tomorrow

Fidel Castro Ruz
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