

International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)

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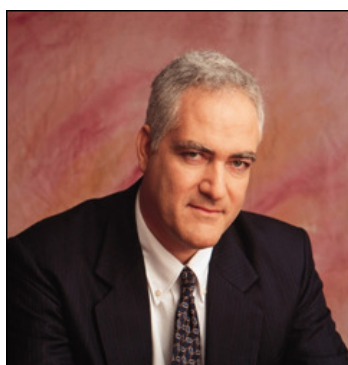


The death of Osama bin Laden – Interview with ICT Senior Researchers

The following is a series of five interviews with senior researchers of the International Institute of Counter-Terrorism (ICT), on the impact and implications of Osama bin Laden's death. Conducted between June and July 2011, the experts discuss the possible effects of Osama bin Laden's death on Al Qaeda as an organization and as a concept. Amongst other featured topics, it includes a discussion on the role that Bin Laden's death will play in international policy and cooperation between the United States and other countries, and Al Qaeda's future strategy and tactics.



Interview with Dr. Boaz Ganor



Dr. Boaz Ganor is the Founder and Executive Director of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) and the Acting Dean of the Lauder School of Government and Diplomacy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya, Israel. He served previously a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institute Stanford University. Dr. Ganor is a member of Israel's National Committee for Homeland Security and Technologies, the International Advisory Board of Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS) in Singapore, the International Advisory team of the Manhattan Institute (CTCT) to the New York Police Department (NYPD).

Can one expect a boomerang effect from the death of bin Laden?

The boomerang effect occurs when you attack a terrorist organization; and this attack leads to retaliation against the state, i.e. a boomerang effect. In my PhD dissertation, I posed a question to many Israeli decision-makers. I asked them if there is such a thing as a boomerang effect. I received mixed answers, which were divided into two groups, one group said yes and the other said no. Those who said yes gave me two examples to explain why there is a boomerang effect. The first example was the 1992 Abbas Mousawi case, where there was a clear retaliation from Hezbollah and Iran, Israel suffered from the suicide attack on its Embassy in Buenos Aires. The other example was the killing of Yahya Ayyash - The Engineer - which led to another retaliation attack.

"This reason leads back to the two elements of terrorism; motivation and capabilities."



The other group argued that there is no such thing as a boomerang effect, since terrorists are always trying to launch attacks. Their attacks are an outcome, not out of motivation, but of operational capabilities. They also gave me two examples to support their argument. The first example was the case of the killing of Fathi Shaqaqi in Malta in 1995, which although Israel did take responsibility, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) promised severe retaliation which never occurred. The second was after the killing of Ahmed Yassin and still there was no retaliation thus the boomerang effect does not exist. From that we can conclude that there are cases where there is a boomerang effect and cases where there is not. The reason leads back to the two elements of the terrorism equation: motivation and operational capabilities. I would argue that if you are attacking a terrorist organization using proactive measures and that the delimiting factor of the organization's activity prior to your attack is its operational capability; even if you increase the motivation of the organization there will be no retaliation. There might be an attack later on but it would occur in any case and not be considered a boomerang effect. If you are attacking an organization in which the delimiting factor is its own motivation, you will suffer from a retaliation attack because your attack will increase the motivation and they will have the operational capability to retaliate.

With this in mind, we should analyze the different parts of the Global Jihadi network and ask the following question; what are the motivations and operational capabilities in avenging the death of bin Laden and launching a retaliation attack? Here I differentiate between four elements of the Jihadi network. The first element is the epicenter of the global Jihadi network, which is Al Qaeda itself. The



rest of the elements are elements that circle around this epicenter. The first circle is the local agents of Al Qaeda which are operating around the world. They adapt the strategy and ideology of Al Qaeda and adopt the Al Qaeda name. Here we should refer to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Al Qaeda in Iraq. Those organizations, in my view, have high levels of motivation and would like to retaliate and avenge the death of bin Laden. Their operational capability was not affected by bin Laden's death. Therefore I would expect to see soon terrorist attacks or plots against the

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West and the United States. This is why we saw the failed attempt to kill Anwar Al-Awlaki because the United States is also concerned with those elements and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which has proven more active and capable than other branches. The second circle is affiliates of Al Qaeda. They share the same ideology, adopt similar strategies, but they are not an integral part, or under the control, of Al Qaeda. I refer to Jamaat al-Islamiyya in Indonesia, al-Jihad in Egypt, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines, etc. Those organizations would have a higher motivation to retaliate against the West and the United States but their operational capability was quite limited prior to the death of bin Laden. After his death, we will probably see much of what we saw in recent years in terms of capabilities. The third circle is the homegrown terrorists. They could be elements, individuals, or groups which are inspired by Al Qaeda but have no operational ties to Al Qaeda. They would be more motivated to launch terrorist attacks but by definition their capability is quite limited. We are talking about local networks, spear groups, lone wolves with limited capabilities. Then we have Al Qaeda itself. I do believe the successors of bin Laden, not only have a higher motivation to retaliate but I would even dare to say, their motivation is to launch another



terrorist attack to show that they still have operational capabilities and it will be of the magnitude of September 11th, 2001. Al Qaeda's leadership took under consideration that their leader's life is at risk and possibly prepared a contingency plan for such an event. I think it has been proven in the last few years that Al Qaeda is much less capable than they claim to be. The threats they make towards the United States and the West in many cases were not fulfilled because they could not launch the attack. Here, we should take another element under consideration: the numerous materials that the American Forces capture in the residence of bin Laden. This intelligence might be used as a source for the United States to learn more about the capabilities of Al Qaeda and its proxies but also to thwart potential attacks. In a way the killing of bin Laden raised the motivation in all four elements but some elements do not have the operational capabilities. However, the intelligence the United States gathered will help them limit the capability of Al Qaeda after bin Laden. I would not underestimate the threat of a retaliation attack, whether or not it will be successful remains to be seen.

Has Al Qaeda, as an organization, gone far beyond bin Laden, the man himself, and if yes how could this limit the positive impetus that can be gained from bin Laden's death for the fight against terrorism?

Al Qaeda has reached the point in which his influence is much more than one man or one organization. Al Qaeda encouraged the concept of violence and terrorism to promote what they believe is the Global Caliphate State. The real goal of Al Qaeda is not with the creation of itself or the 9/11 attacks but buying the hearts and minds of many Muslims all over the world. I still believe it is a small number compared to all the Muslims around the world but

Al Qaeda has reached the point in which his influence is much more than one man or one organization.



we are still talking about hundreds of thousands of people who believe in the goals of bin Laden and Al Qaeda and believe that the use of terrorism and violence is the best, if not only way, to achieve their goals. This is the biggest success of bin Laden, killing him was in a way too little and too late in the development of the concept of the Global Jihadi threat.



Dr. Col. (Res.) Eitan Azani

Dr. Azani currently serves as deputy executive director of the Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya. He is a Colonel (Res.) in the Israel Defense Forces with operational, research and academic experience in counter-terrorism in the regional and international arenas. As part of his position at ICT, Dr. Azani maintains working relations and advises both private and government entities on counter-terrorism issues. Dr. Azani lectures at the School of Government and Politics at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya and additional security and organizational establishments in Israel and abroad.

Does the nomination of Ayman al-Zawahiri change Al Qaeda's strategy?

The strategy of Al Qaeda does not depend on one man. Even during the bin Laden period, the organization's strategy was based on the different views of the circles within Al Qaeda's leadership of the far enemy and a near enemy. Al-Zawahiri has his own view about the strategy of Al Qaeda; specifically regarding the near enemy. In al-Zawahiri's eyes, the near enemy is the regime in Egypt. As a consequence, he might spend a lot of efforts to exploit the revolution in Egypt in the coming years to enlarge Al Qaeda's capabilities to cause a collapse of this corrupted regime. The global vision of Al Qaeda, the idea of establishing the Islamic Caliphate, continues to be the main ideology within Al Qaeda and will continue to influence the operations of the organization. To sum up, there could be some minor changes within Al Qaeda's strategy but the main tenets of the strategy will continue.

"The strategy of al-Qaeda does not depend on one man."



Based on your opinion, what will be the focus of Al Qaeda in the coming years? In your answer, please refer to Al Qaeda's ideology, strategy and tactics, and theaters of jihad?

It is still too early to estimate what will be the focus of Al Qaeda in the coming years. One would think that is very clear that Zawahiri will work hard to build his own image as a leader. Ayman al Zahawiri will try to do something so that everyone understands that this is now the al-Zawahiri period. He will need to be shown as a strong leader with his own strategy and policy. What we might see in the next coming years? Al Qaeda main strategies and tactics of operations will continue. Al Qaeda Central will continue to inspire, indoctrinate and support "lonely wolf" and homegrown efforts; alongside other channels of operation through and with the cooperation of leaders in the theater of jihad (i.e. Islamic Emirates, Islamic Front, etc). Beside these channels of operations, I think that al-Zahawiri, who was in the past involved in the 9/11 attacks and large-scales terrorist attacks, will spend his efforts to build several special teams under the control of Al Qaeda Central to carry out a major terror attack. Some of them may fail, but there is a possibility that at least one will succeed.

Zawahiri has another field of operation through Al Qaeda media outlets to convince Muslims that Al Qaeda is very sensitive to innocent Muslim lives and, this will be taken into consideration in every operations. It looks like Al Qaeda will be very careful with its attacks where a lot of innocents Muslims may die. The leadership of the organization will try to convince that they embedded the concept of not killing a lot of innocent Muslims on the way to achieving their goal. Zawahiri will try also to earn points and loyalty from the heads of Jihadi groups



and fronts to,construct the connections between Al Qaeda Central and the various affiliated organizations and networks as well.

Based on your opinion, does the rivalry within Al Qaeda's leadership increase or decrease following al-Zawahiri's nomination as head of Al Qaeda?

Regarding the rivalry, we need to remember that even in the bin Laden period, Al Qaeda leadership was very problematic and sprung different circles of people leading the various factions of Al Qaeda. This can be seen in groups such as the Egyptian one, the Yemeni one, the North African one and so on. Some of them from time to time had very high criticism on bin Laden's strategy, behavior, and relationship with the local Taliban. In my view, this trend will continue. We will have the same internal tension within the Al Qaeda leadership. However, what we will see very clearly within the leadership is more high ranking members from the Egyptian group. It is not clear yet who will be the deputy al Zahawiri. It is likely that the deputy will be from the Egyptian group but it is not certain because he may need to find a way to influence other sections of Al Qaeda. I think al-Zawahiri wants first to establish more power and then he will decide who the deputy will be and what the internal relationship of Al Qaeda will be like.

Will bin Laden's death inspire more young Muslims to join the global Jihadi movement or will it discourage them from moving toward radicalism?

In my view, even during the time of bin Laden, the recruitment of new jihadists was based on bin Laden acts. The death of bin Laden will be exploited by recruiters in Al Qaeda as they try to get more members. They will describe the



“bin Laden way” or path and say that they must get revenge for his death, exploiting the death by blaming the west.

The second part is that bin Laden became

“...bin Laden became a symbol for every youth within the umma of Islam...”

a symbol for every youth within the umma

of Islam, as it occurred with bin Laden’s mentor Abdallah Azzam. So for them there is a continuation of the first leaders of Islam to bin Laden. Nothing will stop the bin Laden trend because it is being carried out by millions of Muslims from across the world. Bin Laden will continue to be the symbol for these young people who describe his death in a way as if he was fighting against the Americans when they raided his compound. Also, the American withdrawal from Afghanistan and in Iraq will help the recruitment effort for Al Qaeda. The recruitment effort will continue to grow locally in places like Somalia, Yemen and North Africa. It does not seem like the recruitment for Al Qaeda will diminish anytime soon.



Interview with Col. (Ret.) Jonathan Fighel



Col. (Res.) Jonathan Fighel is a senior researcher at the International Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT) and the head of "The Prosecuting Terrorism Intelligence Unit" at ICT. His expertise covers the Palestinian Authority, Islamist terror groups (Hamas, PIJ, and al-Qaeda) and the Palestinian suicide terrorism phenomenon, which he has studied in both academic and governmental frameworks. Col. (Res.) Fighel has an academic and operational knowledge in counter terrorism, Islam, Arab culture and his fluent in Arabic.

Riyadh claimed to be happy that its people will no longer be Al-Qaeda's targets; Yemen calls the killing a "monumental milestone". The death of bin Laden is really a turning point for those countries or are they rather planning to exploit this issue for their interests?

I think Saudi Arabia is relieved because the world was saying that bin Laden was a product of the Saudi Wahhabi radical

"Arab Countries should not be relieved. Bin Laden might be dead but the "Bin Ladenism" is not."

Islamic school. He was, in essence, exploiting and taking advantage of the Saudi radicalism to spread it worldwide. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is regarded as the spearhead for supporting radical Islamic organizations around the world. The death of bin Laden will be perceived as a relief to Saudi Arabia because the West will no longer claim that Saudi Arabia is responsible for the creation of bin Laden or Al Qaeda. Generally speaking, other Arab countries should not be relieved by the fact that bin Laden is dead because the "Bin Ladenism", or the ideology of the Global Jihad, is not dead. The involvement of Al Qaeda or Al Qaeda affiliated



groups will continue to try to be involved for regime changes for Islamic purposes in places that have been toppled by the Arab Spring and Arab revolutions. To summarize, nobody should be relieved anywhere because of bin Laden's death due to the fact that the Jihadist ideology still exists. Additionally, it will take a relatively long time to change the mindset of his supporters.

Staying on Saudi Arabia, do you think that the death of bin Laden will change anything in the implementation of their counter-terrorism strategy and policies?

No, I do not think so. I think that Saudi Arabia is very consistent with their two-faced policy; on the one hand they cooperate with the West and on the other hand, they act against it. This policy will continue as long as the current regime remains in place. It was already proved that what is called by the Saudis the "rehabilitation program for Jihadist" is a practical mockery and as long as the Saudi regime will not change its religious radical approach, nothing will happen. Despite the decade of the West's war on terror, and Saudi Arabia's longer-term alliance with the United States, the Kingdom's Wahhabi religious Ulama and the religious establishment has continued to bankroll Islamic extremist ideologies around the world through the Saudi governmental official establishment and charities. Only the reformation of Saudi scholarly religious doctrine and support systems, blended into the new Saudi political determination for change, seems to be the only catalyst to start a change in the "battle on hearts and minds" between radicalism and violence or moderation and reconciliation. Only the united impartial straight forward Saudi policy can ignite some change.



Hamas spoke out to mourn bin Laden's death after the Palestinian government announced their reconciliation agreement. A group who comes out and mourns bin Laden's death does not seem to be the most reliable peace partner for Israel as portrayed by Europeans, Americans and Israelis. What new threat does this pose to the Middle East peace process?

It was a political error made by Ismail Haniyeh to mourn the death of bin Laden.

The Hamas leadership then downplayed

his statement as if to recognize that he

made a mistake. Clearly, Haniyeh made

"It was an error by Ismail Haniyeh to mourn the death of Bin Laden."

a mistake because Hamas has historically tried to distance itself from Al Qaeda and has tried to present itself as a Palestinian Islamic organization with territorial aspirations separate from that of Al Qaeda. We know that Hamas is a radical Islamic organization; so maybe the end goals between Hamas and Al Qaeda are identical. This means that establishing an Islamic state may be the common denominator between the organizations but this is a long-term strategy, whereas in the short-term, the policy of Hamas is much more pragmatic Islamic-nationalistic oriented. Therefore, I think that at this point the death of bin Laden will not directly influence Hamas' policy and it will continue in the same path according to their ideology. I think that the slip of Haniyeh's declaration is reversible and correctable. Hamas will be able to deny supporting Al Qaeda, thus showing that bin Laden's death to Hamas was not significant.

Now, in regards to Global Jihad affiliated groups in Gaza - "Jaljalat", I think that they are very much related to other organizations around the world which are locally active and identify globally with the Global Jihad ideology. I think that



they are influenced basically on the psychological level and not on the day to day operational basis or even the goals that they want to achieve through terrorism. This means that the Global Jihad ideology did not die with bin Laden, and "Bin Ladenism", if we may call it that, still exists. The same organizations in Gaza will continue in their effort to perpetrate more attacks against Israel if they are capable, totally independent on whether or not Hamas turns a blind eye to avoid responsibility for such attacks. Because of this, I do not see any direct influence due to the death of bin Laden regarding the security situation between Israel and these groups; and I think that Israel should be as concerned with their activities as it was before the bin Laden killing.

Do you think that these pro-global Jihadist groups in Gaza will take advantage of the death of bin Laden? For instance, will we see more recruits joining the movement towards these Jihadist groups resulting in Hamas moving towards them, especially because it looks like Hamas will be joining a partnership government with Fatah?

It is premature to predict what will exactly happen but I cannot exclude the option of what is known as the "revenge project" of Al Qaeda through its proxy groups. We cannot exclude this option that Al Qaeda will take the advantage of a responsibility claim glorifying the death of bin Laden and of the group that takes the revenge. A vengeful attack has the ability to make an impact on a global scale everywhere from Chechnya through the Philippines, in Europe, the U.S. and in Gaza towards Israel. They will search for a kind of operation that will be labeled as retaliation for the killing of bin Laden. Within this mindset, the Jaljalat groups in Gaza may be part of this initiative.



Now, Hamas is very much - courting the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the PA is courting Hamas and this reconciliation agreement is still very fragile. I do not think that they will come to an agreement that is accepted by both organizations,

"A vengeful attack has the ability to make an impact on a global scale..."

which will put Hamas and Fatah on one side and the Salafi groups on the other side. It is premature to think that there will be a political block of the PA in Gaza with Hamas and the oppositions would be Jaljalat groups. What may be a possible result is that if Hamas ultimately joins the government, to some extent they will work in a more domesticated sphere and perpetrate less forceful attacks against Israel. This may lead disappointed Hamas supporters to desert Hamas and join the Jaljalat groups (Salafi Global Jihad groups) in Gaza. This is exactly the mechanism that started in 2005 and later in 2007 when Hamas, according to their disappointed supporters, became more pragmatic. We have witnessed Ezzedeem Al-Qassam Brigades operatives deserting Hamas and joining the Salafi Jihadi groups like the Tawhid and Jihad group in Gaza. This trend of disappointed or disenchanted individuals may find a rescue for their ideology and activism in these Salafi Jihadist groups if there is a construction of a Fatah and Hamas government.

Do you think it is relevant to the West Bank as well?

Not so much. These Salafi Jihadi groups do not have a substantial presence in the West Bank as far as I know. A careful watch is needed on Hizb ut-Tahrir



group and the potential developing cells and infrastructure of other global Jihadi oriented groups.

The big question is whether the targeted killing of terrorist organizations really diminishes the capability to continue their activities? Once again, I think the killing of bin Laden will demonstrate that targeted killings, at the end of the day, have a very limited period of influence and we can see from the Palestinian arena, especially looking to the Hamas leaders that have been targeted and killed over the years, that Hamas' political and military power has not been diminished.

Will there be a "boomerang" effect?

You do not need to search for the "boomerang" effect because it is an inherent ingredient within the equation. As early as the day after bin Laden's death, Al Qaeda supporters called for retaliation. This is not unexpected and is nothing new. Along the years we have witnessed retaliation operations perpetrated by terrorist groups after assassinating one of their prominent leaders (Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah. The big question is whether their motivation for revenge can be translated to action. In cases where the motivation existed and was accompanied with operational capability, the revenge attack was successful.



Interview with Dr. Ely Karmon



Dr. Karmon is a Senior Research Scholar at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya, Israel, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Policy and Strategy at IDC. He lectures on Terrorism and Guerrilla in Modern Times at The IDC, Herzliya, at the IDF Military College, and at the National Security Seminar of the Galilee College. Dr. Karmon serves as an advisor to the Israeli Ministry of Defense, is a member of The Atlantic Forum of Israel, and is involved in NATO workshops on terrorism and on the Mediterranean Dialogue.

What is the United States new role in the Persian Gulf after the death of Osama bin Laden? What will change both in terms of their diplomacy and their military involvement regarding the deployment of troops, assistance, training, etc?

The United States has a vested interest in first, defending the security of the Gulf States and secondly, in dealing with Iran. This is in terms of stopping Iran's nuclear project but also seeing Iran

"If Iran was to affect the United States it would be after a retreat from Iraq."

as an opponent in the region, especially in Iraq. If Iran was to affect the United States it would be after a retreat from Iraq. This will be seen in how much the Iranians are involved in supporting Iraq and if there are some internal upheavals in the various Iraqi provinces. If this happens, the U.S. would have to change its strategy. This position is not influenced by the death of bin Laden because Al Qaeda has been quite weak in Iraq ever since the surge strategy of 2005-2006.



The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has condemned the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and called it an "assassination." How will this affect their outcome in the following elections?

It will help them because the Muslim Brotherhood is the only organized group present in the elections. They were the ones who supported the referendum in spite of opposition by the leaders of various other groups and movements.

"We can also see an assertiveness and aggressiveness on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood..."

We also have seen an assertiveness and aggressiveness on the part of the Muslim Brotherhood since then. For instance, at the beginning they said they would only put up candidates for 30% of the Parliament and now it's nearly 50%. They said they would not put up a candidate for President but an independent candidate is actually a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. Also, an independent political party was formed by the Muslim Brotherhood. This, however, is a front. I do not think they are afraid of the Americans in this sense, and on the contrary, when they condemned the operation against bin Laden, I think it was really well thought out in order to get support from their constituents.

Let's now move to Turkey. The Turkish Authority called the death of bin Laden "a warning to terrorism" yet at the same time about 200 people rallied in Istanbul in order to protest his death. How do you evaluate Al Qaeda's support in the country, especially in relation to potential domestic changes in the Turkish government?

In principle, the Turkish government is opposed to Al Qaeda. You can see that they continue to fight them from time to time via various arrests and attacks, especially against Israeli targets and for some time against British targets. But



we will see what happens in the near and longer future under the umbrella of the Islamization in Turkey, which in my opinion will be more profound and more rapid after the June elections in which the AKP will probably take a great majority in the parliament, thus meaning they can do whatever they want to the constitution. But we see it in other parts of the Muslim world as well, with Islamist fundamentalists in Iran, Afghanistan, and Hamas.

The Salafist terrorist groups are proliferating because they have a kind of legitimacy. In these cases, the Taliban did not fight Al Qaeda until the American war against them. Also, the Iranians, although they are separate from Al Qaeda, sometimes cooperate with them or keep them under protection on their territory. In the case of Hamas, since they took power in Gaza, there has been a proliferation of these small Salafist groups and they are dangerous because they can be active even against the will of Hamas. I am afraid that if the Islamization of Turkey after the elections deepens, the Salafist or Jihadi groups will also find a more prosperous field for activity in Turkey. From there they can find more support for Kurdish terrorists. There is some worry that the situation in Turkey could also give Al Qaeda some breeding ground because of the Islamization process.

"The Salafist terrorist groups are proliferating because they have a kind of legitimacy."

Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

What we have seen in Pakistan with the recent attacks is that the main target of terrorism in the Pakistani government is its military. Since the assassination of bin Laden, we see a stream of very successful and dangerous attacks, including the last one against a naval base. This last attack is a grave warning because like



in the case of Mumbai, the attackers sent a big team that fought for several hours. Also, there is worry that these groups can attack nuclear targets in Pakistan and get their hands on some nuclear device. I think that, although it is quite possible that somebody in the military and intelligence apparatus protected bin Laden, these groups, especially the Pakistani Taliban, see the Pakistani military as the main target to avenge the killing of bin Laden.

There is another thing that is perhaps not very much spoken about, but there is more and more information that the Americans and Pakistanis are looking for Mullah Omar, the leader of the Afghani Taliban. According to more and more information, he is also hiding in Pakistan. Perhaps the Pakistani Taliban are sending a message to the Pakistani establishment telling them that they should not have allowed for the killing of bin Laden and are warning the Pakistani government to not allow the same to happen to Mullah Omar. Mullah Omar may even be more important because of his religious importance.



Interview with Dr. Assaf Moghadam



Assaf Moghadam is Senior Lecturer at the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel, and Senior Researcher at its International Institute for Counterterrorism (ICT). Previously, he was Assistant Professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, where he served as Senior Associate at the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) and subsequently as Director of Terrorism Studies.

How does the death of Usama Bin Laden modify USA-Pakistan relations?

The relations between the United States and Pakistan have always been based on the perception of shared interests rather than the reality of shared values. Even before a U.S. special forces team identified and killed Usama bin Laden in the heart of Pakistan last month, there has been a lively debate among U.S. government and policy circles about the merits of this relationship. Neither side, however, has placed much trust in Pakistani intentions, and whatever trust there was has eroded since May 2011. Critics of this relationship have long argued that elements within Pakistan's intelligence services have aided and abetted terrorist groups, including jihadi groups such as Al Qaeda. These critics now see themselves vindicated—the fact that bin Laden's compound was located in the heart of Pakistan, and within one kilometer of Pakistan's military academy, supports their argument. Defenders of the U.S. Pakistani alliance believe that the benefits of this relationship continue to outweigh the costs. They cite U.S. dependence on Pakistan to manage the insurgency in Afghanistan as

"These weapons, the United States fear, could end up in the hands of jihadi groups..."



well as Pakistan's tacit agreement to allow the United States to target terrorist leaders with drones as ongoing reasons why this relationship should be upheld despite the high costs of this relationship—a staggering \$20 billion that the United States has funneled to Islamabad since 9/11. There is little doubt that it is the advocates of strong U.S.-Pakistani relations who prevail, despite the high likelihood that elements within Pakistan protected the emir of Al Qaeda. The reason, however, has less to do with the incentives that both countries have to maintain these ties, and more with the fact that the two countries are in a stranglehold. Both countries perceive a break in relations as the worst of all options. For the United States, a break raises the specter of a destabilized Afghanistan, an even laxer Pakistani counterterrorism approach, Pakistani rapprochement to China, and most importantly a potentially weaker government in Islamabad that could lose its grip on its nuclear weapons arsenal. These weapons, the United States fear, could end up in the hands of jihadi groups whose motivation to make use of these weapons few people doubt. Pakistan, on the other hand, would lose vital U.S. economic assistance and would likely witness a warming in relations between the United States and Pakistan's arch-enemy, India. Based on these potentialities, and unless there are strategic changes that will force a recalculation of basic national interests of one or both countries, the United States and Pakistan will therefore continue to deal with each other.

What will change now in Pakistan's approach in the fight against Al Qaeda?

The fact that bin Laden's hideout was located so close to the political and military power centers of Pakistani means that Islamabad, which has long claimed that



bin Laden was not in Pakistan, was either lying about its intentions of fighting Al Qaeda or woefully incompetent in doing so. In any event, in the aftermath of the U.S. detection, and subsequent killing, of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, Islamabad will, in the short run, feel obliged to 'prove' to the United States that it is now serious about hunting terrorists. In the short terms, it is therefore likely that we will witness a growing number of Pakistani announcements of arrests of various militant leaders, as has already begun to happen. Pakistan will also amplify its claims that it, too, is a country targeted by terrorists, and it is therefore likely to step up highly publicized information campaigns that portray itself as the victim, especially after terrorist attacks on its soil. Once the Pakistani government believes that the tempers of U.S. officials, which have heated up after learning of bin Laden's long presence in a Pakistani compound, have cooled, we are likely to see a return to Pakistan's double game. This double game will not end as long as pro-jihadi elements within Pakistan's Interservices Intelligence continue to sponsor militant jihadi groups such as al-Qaida. And importantly, it is no longer merely al-Qaida that threatens the West. Other groups active in Pakistan and especially the tribal belt, such as Lashkar-e-Taibeh, Tehrik-e-Taliban, the Haqqani network, or the Islamic Jihad Union pose a growing threat to Western interests, in part due to the influence that al-Qaida's global jihadi ideology has had on these groups. Given this variegated jihadi threat, what Pakistan does regarding jihadi groups at large—as opposed to Al Qaeda in particular—is the real question.

"[w]e are likely to see a return to Pakistan's double game."



Does the death of Usama Bin Laden affect the War in Afghanistan? How?

To the Afghan Taliban, the loss of Osama bin Laden is troubling. Despite tensions in the past between Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, the Afghan Taliban perceived bin Laden as a jihadi who stood up against the forces of disbelief. His death is not only a symbolic setback to Al Qaeda members, but also to Al Qaeda allies such as the Taliban. From a tactical perspective, the Afghan Taliban must surely worry about the well-being of their emir, as it is possible that the United States possesses better information about Mullah Omar's whereabouts after seizing files from bin Laden's compound. Should Mullah Omar be killed by U.S. special forces in the near future, the United States will score important points in their ongoing battle against the Taliban.

The death of bin Laden also affects the debate on the war in Afghanistan in the United States. To the U.S. public, and especially to the families of the 9/11 victims, the death of Usama bin Laden provided a modicum of closure. Once the passing of bin Laden has been digested, it is inevitable that the debate in the United States over the purpose of the war in Afghanistan will be reinvigorated. Calls to withdraw troops from Afghanistan have been made by both liberal and realist quarters in the United States even before the killing of bin Laden, and these calls are undoubtedly going to grow. If the U.S. economy will continue with its downward trend, domestic pressure on the U.S. government to declare a formal end to the war in Afghanistan will intensify. Much, of course, will also depend on the actions on the part of the terrorists, especially whether Al Qaeda and its associates will be able to strike again at

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American targets. Should jihadi groups based in Afghanistan or Pakistan manage to deliver another painful blow to the United States in the form of an attack on the U.S. homeland, advocates of a withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan will face heated resistance.