

Osama's Dead, But How Much Does It Matter?

By Robert Kaplan

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The effects of bin Laden's death on al Qaeda and the Middle East will be profound, but the most surprising could be in Washington.

In war, the issue of morale is critical. To break the enemy is to break his morale. The killing of Osama bin Laden by U.S. Special Operations forces in a firefight north of the Pakistani capital of Islamabad delivered a pivotal boost to American morale and a blow to the morale of al Qaeda, with repercussions that are being felt worldwide. Bin Laden did not mysteriously fade into oblivion, simply never to be heard from again, fueling conjecture about his fate, and thus giving hope to the radicalized Sunni Muslim faithful; nor did he die a natural death. He was hunted down and killed. This fact cannot be overestimated. The following number among the salutary results.

President Barack Obama has proved for evermore that Democrats are a party of national security: This is good for his re-election prospects, but, more importantly, healthy for American democracy. The country has thus returned to the pre-George McGovern Cold War-era in which national security was less of a partisan issue because both parties were perceived to be good at it. And now with deeply symbolic national security credentials, it will be easier politically for Obama to cut the defense budget -- something which needs to be done.

While in the short run there may be greater tensions with Pakistan, this might structurally ease the relationship. The United States never demanded a fundamental shift in how Pakistan does business -- only more assistance in some key specific areas, such as the hunt for high-value targets of al Qaeda. Now that the most important of these high-value targets has been killed -- with the possible connivance of the Pakistani authorities -- the relationship gains the possibility to normalize. A looser relationship with Pakistan could actually be healthier for both countries. Tangentially, it should be easier to deliver up intelligence assets in the hunt for al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and his Taliban accomplice Mullah Omar.

The killing of bin Laden also boosts American prestige in Afghanistan, perhaps giving the Taliban a greater incentive to make a deal with the government in Kabul. At the same time, it makes it possible for America to substantially draw-down troops in 2014 while claiming victory in the war on terror. The war will go on, to be sure, in far-flung places like Yemen and Somalia, where al Qaeda has spawned franchises. But the morale of those franchises themselves will suffer from the death of their leader.

Albeit indirectly, bin Laden's death will help the struggle for democracy in the Middle East, as it has delivered such a symbolic morale blow to extremism. The struggle for better governance in the Middle East will be slow and tumultuous, with periodic bouts of chaos here and there. But the combination of revolts against calcified tyrannical regime

and the killing of al Qaeda's No. 1 has to augur well for the region. Also, this is bad news for Hamas and the aspirations for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Syria, which, while not affiliated with al Qaeda, benefitted from its example of challenging the West. Al Qaeda was already weakened by the democratic uprisings across the Arab World; now it is weaker still.

Bin Laden's death is part of the process of healing the instability and extremism that, because it has so plagued the Middle East, has drawn American troops into the region. Likewise, it now helps the process -- which is part of Obama's grand strategy -- of shifting American attention somewhat to East Asia in the long run, which is developing as the real center of the world economy and naval-maritime activity. Take a step back and think for a moment:

Obama has substantially withdrawn from Iraq, positioned America for a 2014 withdrawal from Afghanistan, killed bin Laden, avoided war with Iran (even as industrial espionage slows Tehran's drive for nuclear weapons), and overseen a more vigorous and creative foreign policy towards East Asia than did President George W. Bush, particularly in the way that he has reassured our allies in the South China Sea. Yes, there is uncertainty surrounding Libya -- but without boots on the ground there, a quagmire is unlikely. Thus, despite all the criticism he gets from the elite, this could well end up as the most competent foreign policy administration since President George H. W. Bush.

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William McCants: A Gaping Hole

Bin Laden's death will have profound implications for al Qaeda -- and for U.S. engagement in the Middle East.

After the United States and the world absorb the startling news of Osama bin Laden's death at the hands of U.S. Special Operations forces, speculation will quickly turn to what this means for his organization. Equally important, however, is what this means for U.S. counterterrorism policy now that its enemy No. 1 has fallen.

As for al Qaeda, it has lost a powerful symbol of resistance to the United States. Bin Laden embodied the jihadi ethos and history. He was a wealthy man who had turned his back on the world to save his community from the godless communists and then the Great Satan. Every time he appeared on television was further proof to his followers of his divine mandate. They may hail him as a martyr now but they will no longer draw comfort from his intermittent statements.

On an operational level, we still do not know enough about bin Laden's role. Based on press reports about the way he ran the organization during the last decade, bin Laden was

probably consulted before al Qaeda Central or its affiliates carried out high impact attacks.

As for financing and friends, bin Laden attracted a lot of money from wealthy donors and he had longstanding ties to influential militants along the Af-Pak border, particularly the Haqqani network. Those donations and ties are now in jeopardy. Moreover, if it is true that the Haqqani network was protecting bin Laden, as some in the press have reported, it has lost a major card to play against their opponents and allies. The network will likely be more vulnerable now to pressure. If the Haqqanis are also protecting Zawahiri, his protection is now more tenuous.

Bin Laden's death leaves a gaping hole at the top of the organization that will be difficult to fill. Both Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Yahya al-Libi are well thought of in the militant community, but they are not of bin Laden's stature. They are also likely going to go even further underground now. Perhaps the center of gravity will shift to al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which has an ideologue that transfixes Western media -- Anwar al-Awlaki -- and an external operational capability that rivals or surpasses that of al Qaeda Central.

Whatever the case may be, one need only look at the damage done by demise of Abu Musab al Zarqawi to start gaming out some of the implications for al Qaeda Central. Many analysts deemed his death to be of little consequence to al Qaeda in Iraq and indeed they continue to carry out attacks. But without his charisma and vision, the group has lost its way strategically and now fails to influence the trajectory of politics in Iraq. Bin Laden's death may also have far reaching implications for U.S. counterterrorism policy. There has been declining American public support for the war in Afghanistan, whose primary mission is defeating al Qaeda. The administration will likely argue that that mission is not accomplished but the American public will increasingly feel there is little reason to remain when our primary enemy is dead. The pressure to bring the troops home will become immense.

The convergence of bin Laden's death with the Arab Spring and the end of the U.S. combat presence in Iraq also provides a pivot point for reframing the basis of U.S. engagement in the Middle East away from counterterrorism and toward building democratic states with security forces who are primarily responsible for protecting their citizens, not indefinitely detaining opponents of corrupt regimes as terrorists. The administration is already headed in that direction but bin Laden's death completes the arc of the storyline.

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David J. Rothkopf: The Death of Osama Changes Little

But what it may change is ominous.

Once the heartfelt emotion unleashed by the death of Osama bin Laden and the deserved appreciation for the accomplishment of the U.S. military, intelligence community, and Obama and Bush administration officials who made this possible passes, what will we be left with?

First, we will be left with the uncomfortable realization that what has happened is the most important event of 2001. It changes almost nothing about today's world. That which was a threat, remains a threat. The risks we faced in the Middle East and elsewhere remain roughly as they were. We are still leaving Iraq, still edging to the exit in Afghanistan (albeit with a clearer "mission accomplished" sense about us...even if the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other new extremist threats remain in the region). Countries rocked by unrest such as Libya and Yemen, still contain threats from al Qaeda cells within and near to their borders. And the biggest most important national security concerns we have are totally unrelated to al Qaeda in whatever form it exists today.

Second, I said it changes almost nothing. One thing that has clearly changed, whether we are willing to acknowledge it or not, is our relationship with Pakistan. Given the location in which bin Laden was found, literally right under the noses of the Pakistani military and the government, in a large, suspicious facility not an hour away from the capital, our already dwindling trust for the Pakistanis, and in particular for their intelligence service must now be acknowledged to have evaporated altogether. While no doubt a number of heroic and dependable true friends in Pakistan helped with this operation, clearly others in very high places were behind protecting bin Laden for years and years.

Further, the fact that we struck independently deep into the heart of Pakistan will not sit well with many in that country, further worsening the relationship.

Given that during the past few years Pakistan has reportedly very dramatically increased their nuclear weapons arsenal, and that at best, they are a schizophrenic ally -- and it is very hard to use that word without gagging on it, we must today acknowledge that the greatest threat to U.S. security was not killed yesterday but instead remains as it was, the country in which he died. That's not to say that it is the government of Pakistan per se or even the majority of the Pakistani people, but rather the threat lies with the tens of millions who are deeply hostile to us, the extremists they cultivate, shelter, fund, and facilitate, and the elements within the government who are perilously close to weapons that, should they ever fall into the wrong hands, would pose a threat that will make us forget today's celebrations very quickly.

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Adam Lankford: **Martyr Complex**

How will bin Laden's supporters interpret his death?

Upon hearing the news that Osama bin Laden had been killed by U.S. special forces, many Americans began to celebrate. And understandably so: The al Qaeda leader declared holy war on the United States more than a decade ago, authorized a series of terrorist strikes -- including the tragic September 11, 2001 attacks -- and brazenly defied international attempts to apprehend him ever since.

But what does his death really mean? Is it a major victory in the global war on terrorism? Or is it actually a useful development for al Qaeda, which can now label bin Laden a "martyr" and exploit his death to recruit more terrorists, wage more attacks, and ultimately kill more Americans?

Most people are unaware of the fact that in the aftermath of 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden actually considered suicide to avoid capture by the Americans. As his former chief bodyguard Nasser al-Bahri explained on al-Arabiya TV in 2007, bin Laden commanded his followers to kill him if capture seemed imminent. "He said: 'If we are besieged, do it....I'd rather be shot in the back by the bodyguards than be arrested alive by the Americans.'"

Although this order seems to directly contradict Islamic prohibitions against suicide, when probed by an interviewer the bodyguard insisted that bin Laden's self-orchestrated death would not be suicide, and would instead constitute "martyrdom." As he explained, with pride in his voice, "Saddam Hussein was not willing to die in the days preceding his capture, but Osama bin Laden never considered the possibility of being captured. Being captured was not even an option."

But this is simply propaganda. Someone who would kill himself to escape punishment and avoid being brought to justice is neither courageous nor heroic. In fact, this is one of the most common reasons perpetrators of murder-suicide kill themselves: They are bold in their moments of violence, but terrified of the consequences. Around the world, many people commit suicide because they fear future events, and whether it's going to the high school prom without a date, facing their family after losing their job, or being arrested for acts of terrorism, there is nothing courageous about their avoidance of those fears.

There are several similar examples of terrorists attempting to kill themselves in order to escape capture -- none of them offering much support for the connection between suicide and courageous martyrdom. For instance, a recent WikiLeaks cable details suicidal behavior by 9/11 facilitator Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, who along with two other terrorists was arrested at a safe house in Karachi, Pakistan in 2002. During a four-hour standoff, all three individuals held knives to their own throats and threatened to kill themselves rather than be taken (he was, however, eventually captured and taken to Guantánamo Bay). Separately, seven suspects from the 2004 Madrid train attacks blew themselves up when they were besieged in their apartment by police. Notably, not all of the terrorists in the room were suicidal; one apparently tried to survive the blast by hiding under a bed. And all of them chose the relatively easy route of suicide over mounting an all-out attack on

the Spanish police sent to apprehend them, something that could have made capture more likely.

In the days to come, we may see bin Laden described as a "martyr" by his supporters. Regardless of the facts, some people who viewed him as a brave hero in the past will continue to do so in the future. Likewise, many still view all suicide bombers as martyrs, although I am one of several scholars who have conducted studies showing that these individuals are not simply motivated by desires to sacrifice themselves for the cause. They are often suicidal in the conventional sense, and they carry out their suicide attacks due to a range of personal crises, such as mental health problems, financial struggles, divorce, unwanted pregnancies, inability to get married, physical disabilities, or the death of a loved one.

However, those terrorist leaders who try to portray every member's death as "martyrdom" are losing credibility among those who are paying attention. Similarly, bin Laden's own commitment to the cause has come under doubt from some followers, suggesting that the martyr label may not stick in his case, either. Rather than kill himself for the cause in a strike that would harm the enemy, bin Laden had been choosing to avoid the fateful moment of punishment or death for years. As former terrorist Khalid al Jhani told *60 Minutes* in 2009, when bin Laden was personally faced with the threat of being captured or killed in Tora Bora, Afghanistan, "he left everybody behind him, you know." Since that time, al Jhani has begun to see bin Laden in a new light: "I call him 'flip flop.'"

Suicide bombers are not true "martyrs" any more than bin Laden was, but at least they could claim that their deaths harmed the enemy. By contrast, bin Laden went out with a whimper, and not a single American had a scratch to show for it. This should raise major questions among terrorists and terrorist sympathizers. Those who once believed that bin Laden enjoyed success because "Allah wills it" can no longer be so certain. Terrorist leaders and operatives who were in denial of the risks they faced must now confront the fact that no one is invincible. In turn, given the undignified nature of bin Laden's death, would-be Islamist suicide terrorists who comforted themselves with the notion that Allah supported their missions and would reward them in paradise must now question the very core of their beliefs.

Ultimately, killing bin Laden remained extremely important for symbolic reasons. As long as bin Laden evaded capture (or worse, died in his bed of natural causes), terrorist sympathizers could use him as concrete evidence that Allah supported al Qaeda's mission against the West. As the reasoning went, without God's help, how else could one man evade the mighty United States, which put a \$25 million dollar bounty on his head and pledged to take him "dead or alive"?

But even if bin Laden had been captured, tried, and executed, he may have been able to remain defiant, as Saddam Hussein largely did. Furthermore, the prolonged ordeal of an imprisoned bin Laden may have provoked hostage-taking and violent demands for his release by al Qaeda terrorists worldwide.

As I wrote in 2009, "the best *scenario might be if he is killed by soldiers in a surprise attack, leaving a clearly identifiable corpse*. It would be quick, degrading of his lofty image, and could shake al Qaeda terrorists' confidence in their system and its goals."

This time, maybe we can say it: Mission accomplished.

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Sumit Ganguly: ***What about India's Enemies?***

The United States has taken down its Enemy No. 1. But New Delhi's tormentors still run free in Pakistan.

Osama bin Laden's violent end has been greeted with understandable glee in New Delhi. India, which has long borne the brunt of terrorist attacks from Pakistan-based terrorist organizations, has justifiable reason to delight in bin Laden's demise. Both former and current Indian policymakers have also lost no time in underscoring that bin Laden was killed in the bowels of a major Pakistani military cantonment. To them, this is further evidence of Pakistan's continuing dalliance with terror.

That said, does his killing really make much of a difference for New Delhi's security concerns that stem from its irksome neighbor? Much really depends on how the United States follows through with other actions that seek to end the terrorist-state nexus within Pakistan. If the United States continues to dissemble about Pakistan's evasive approach to counterterrorism Indo-U.S. relations could hit a reach a stalemate.

Thus far, however, there has been remarkable Indian restraint. Had this felicitous development taken place even five years ago many in the Indian popular press, and perhaps even some in government, would be chortling with satisfaction that Washington had finally come to terms with its own credulity regarding Islamabad as ally. On this occasion, however, India's leadership has only emphasized the obvious, namely that bin Laden had been killed "deep inside Pakistan." They have also characterized his death as "a decisive blow" against al Qaeda.

The difference in the tone and substance of the remarks of key individuals both within government and in India's attentive public are striking versus what they would have been just several years ago. India had long been at odds with the United States during the bulk of the Cold War. Much of India's annoyance stemmed from the U.S. military relationship with Pakistan (forged as early as 1954) and Washington's ambivalence toward the vexed question of the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir.

Since the Cold War's end, U.S.-Indian relations have improved, albeit fitfully. Atavistic distrust of the United States still lingers in India's policy and intellectual circles. Such

doubts linger despite the emergence of a viable commercial relationship, an incipient but limited defense nexus, and a marked expansion of civil society contacts. These misgivings notwithstanding, the dramatic absence of finger-wagging at the United States for having so long trusted the intentions and claims of the Pakistani military is a striking indicator of the progress that has been made in U.S.-Indian relations in recent years.

But while the United States has now neutralized its Enemy No.1, India's tormentors are still out there, just across the border. Virtually any erstwhile policymaker or political commentator has publicly called for Islamabad to bring to book three known terrorist masterminds who continue to lurk within Pakistan: Hafiz Mohammed Sayeed, the head of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT); Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM); and Dawood Ibrahim, the founder of the criminal-terrorist network known as D Company. All three individuals are still at large and their respective organizations have been implicated in major terrorist attacks on Indian soil.

The LeT, as is well known now, was responsible for the swarming terrorist attack on Mumbai in late November 2008. This brazen attack, which had caught Indian authorities utterly unprepared, resulted in the deaths of 164 people. Almost a decade earlier, on Dec. 13, 2001, JeM (possibly in concert with the LeT) attacked the Indian parliament in New Delhi. Fortunately, thanks to the presence of mind of an unarmed guard who managed to close the doors to the Central Hall of Parliament, this siege ended with a minimal loss of innocent lives. However, it plunged the region into a major crisis as India chose to resort to a strategy of coercive diplomacy against its errant neighbor. A combination of factors - notably American intervention -- finally brought the crisis to a close but not until October of the following year. Finally, in 1993, Dawood Ibrahim's D Company set off a series of across much of Mumbai, killing over 250 individuals in retaliation against the Hindu-Muslim riots that had wracked the city earlier in that year.

All three individuals are either known to be living scot free within Pakistan or are believed to have safe havens within its borders. Sayeed, it is commonly known, has a substantial estate in Muridke, outside the provincial capital of Lahore, from where he continues to spew anti-Indian and anti-American venom. Ibrahim, according to Interpol reports, lives in the port city of Karachi. Azhar, who was released from an Indian prison in exchange for hostages of a hijacked airliner, was released from house arrest within Pakistan and remains unaccounted for.

In the days and weeks ahead, New Delhi will carefully follow what transpires in Islamabad and Washington while continuing to press its case that Pakistan once and for all end its complicity with terrorists in global diplomatic circles. Whether or not India's anguished pleas about redress will be heard and acted upon remains an open question.

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Gayle Tzemach Lemmon: *What Does His Death Mean for America's Longest-Ever War?*

In Afghanistan Western officials expressed relief at word of Osama bin Laden's death -- and concern that Sunday night's news would turn up the considerable pressure they already feel to convince the American public to stay the course in Afghanistan now that the man who led America to invade the country is dead. The most pressing question is, how does bin Laden's death matter for the war in Afghanistan and the 'war on terror'? And will it change the way Americans view the country's longest-ever war?

On Monday morning Gen. David Petraeus and his staff at NATO's headquarters delayed their morning meeting to watch the news stream in on BBC and Al Jazeera while the press operation at the U.S. Embassy translated the President's statements into Dari and Pashto. Afghan President Hamid Karzai went on Afghan TV to urge the Taliban to learn from the bin Laden killing, a development he called "important news," and lay down their arms.

While Americans poured into the street in jubilation in Washington and New York, those prosecuting the war in Afghanistan say that they do not want to take their focus off the difficult spring fighting season ahead of them. They are waiting to see whether Congress will see bin Laden's death as vindication that the current strategy is working -- or reason to declare victory and send American troops home as quickly as possible.

The American public is increasingly ready to reverse direction when it comes to Afghanistan policy. In the most recent ABC News/Washington Post polling nearly two-thirds of the public said the war was no longer worth fighting.

"This is a resilient network and he was only one part," said one senior Western official, who expressed worry that the public would see Osama bin Laden's death as reason to end the increasingly unpopular war sooner rather than later. U.S. troops are scheduled to begin withdrawing from the country in July 2011, though numbers and details have yet to be determined. "The problem is that there is a misperception that these two things (bin Laden's death and the war in Afghanistan) are related. They are interrelated as part of a broader war on terror but at the same time the objective here was to make sure this was no longer a safe haven, and that requires a comprehensive counterinsurgency effort of which this was only one part."

The push to reassure Afghans that bin Laden's killing does not mean an end to America's commitment to their country has already begun.

U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry released a statement Monday pledging that "this victory will not mark the end of our effort against terrorism" and vowing that "America's strong support for the people of Afghanistan will continue as before."

But it is not clear that Americans agree. Coming weeks will tell whether they will be willing to see the war through now that bin Laden, al Qaeda's most visible symbol, is

dead. Can American leaders prove that it is worth continuing the fight to make certain Afghanistan provides no sanctuary to al Qaeda leaders like him? Or will the end of the bin Laden hunt mark the last of a restless public's patience with the war effort?

President Barack Obama's administration has struggled from the beginning to explain the rationale behind the Afghanistan war. They now face the task of convincing the public that the killing of al Qaeda's figurehead does not mean the fight is finished, only that it has moved into a next phase. The war against terrorism is far larger than any one leader. And it is a battle in which the phrase "Mission Accomplished" may never be heard.

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Arif Rafiq: *Pakistan Caught in a Web of Lies*

With great passion last year, Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik said, "I categorically deny the presence of Osama bin Laden, his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri, and even Mullah Omar in any part of Pakistan."

Now, with the capture of bin Laden in Pakistan -- only 40 miles from Malik's office - it's more difficult than ever to consider his statements, and those of his civil and military counterparts, credible. Since 9/11, Pakistan's leaders have been lying to the United States, neighboring countries, their own people, and even to one another about fundamental elements of the war on terror.

On 9/11, Washington told Islamabad it was faced with a choice: you're either with us or with the terrorists. Islamabad hedged its bets and basically chose both. Pakistan's military and intelligence services remain allied with Afghanistan's three major insurgent groups: Mullah Omar's Quetta Shura Taliban, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i Islami, and the network of longtime militant Jalaluddin Haqqani. Yet the same military and intelligence services have played an essential role in preventing major attacks on Western targets since 9/11, saving the lives of countless non-Pakistanis.

Pakistani troops have fought valiantly in their own war on terror -- a civil war that has resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Pakistanis, security personnel, innocent civilians, as well as militants and terrorists.

Chief of Army Staff Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani commemorated his military servicemen's sacrifices at the third annual martyrs' day this weekend. As he supplicated for the thousands of fallen Pakistani servicemen, the usually emotionless Kayani fought back his tears. Kayani told the audience that Pakistan would not sell its national integrity -- by inference, to the United States -- for prosperity. But the real focus of his address was this: Pakistan faces a long-term fight against terrorists from within.

Since the launch of major counterinsurgency operations in Swat in 2009, the Pakistan Army has launched a persistent information operations campaign to pit its populace against the set of militants it fights. But it is dependent on stoking anti-American, not anti-al-Qaeda, sentiments. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and allies -- in the language of the army and its allies in the Pakistani media -- were not waging jihad, but *fasad* (mischief). They were fighting the Pakistan army not for its support of the United States in the war on terror, but because of an outside campaign to destabilize Pakistan, legitimize the seizure of its nuclear weapons, and potentially even break up the country. And the terrorists were not simply sons of the soil motivated by revenge and poisoned by a bastardization of their religion - no, they were witting or unwitting agents of a CIA-Mossad-RAW [Indian intelligence] nexus aimed at destroying Pakistan. Al-Qaeda, an organization whose leaders have openly declared war on the Pakistani state, was rarely mentioned.

And so today it remains unclear what exactly happened during the fatal raid yesterday. Were some elements of Pakistan's military-intelligence apparatus aware of the operation? Did they give their consent? Did they even cooperate? Reports that the U.S. helicopters took off from the Ghazi airbase in Tarbela, where American Special Operations Forces have been training their Pakistani counterparts, suggests that there was some Pakistani involvement in the operation that captured and killed bin Laden.

However, U.S. officials state that no other country was aware of the operations (a position now backed up by Pakistan's military), in which bin Laden was caught hiding less than a mile away from Pakistan's West Point and a short flight away from the capital. And so it's possible that Pakistan was caught with its pants down, having failed to stop or even spot the American incursion.

Publicly, U.S. officials are not aggressively putting pressure on Pakistan, though it will face tough questions from Congress and the media about how the world's most wanted terrorist could live for years in the shadow of major Pakistani army institutions, in what is essentially an army garrison town. Privately, one can expect greater pressure from Washington on Islamabad and Rawalpindi to "do more." Will Pakistan be able to continue its dual policy of supporting some militants and also partnering with the United States?

Inside the Pakistan Army's ranks, one can expect greater pressure on Kayani, Inter-Services Intelligence chief Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha, and possibly even Air Force Chief Marshal Rao Qamar Suleman. Kayani has already been lambasted since the mid-March release of Raymond Davis, a Central Intelligence Agency contractor who shot dead two Pakistanis in Lahore in January. Given the record of attacks by radical serving and retired officers against the military leadership and other officers since 9/11, it's highly likely that threats against the military from within will rise. And al-Qaeda and its affiliates -- including the TTP and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi -- are certain to lash out in anger against the Pakistani state and civilians.

Irrespective of whether it helped capture bin Laden, having both aided and worked against the United States and Islamic militants, and with the killing of bin Laden in mainland Pakistan, the Pakistani military-intelligence apparatus is now caught in its own web of lies. Getting out of it won't be pretty.

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Michael Cohen: *Casus Pax*

The killing of Osama bin Laden could be just the opportunity to end the war in Afghanistan.

In December 2009, the Obama administration used the threat of al Qaeda and the specter of another 9/11 to justify escalating the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. Afghanistan "is the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al Qaeda," President Barack Obama told an audience of cadets at West Point. "It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new attacks are being plotted as I speak. This is no idle danger; no hypothetical threat."

With the killing of Osama bin Laden on Sunday, this argument now seems a lot less persuasive. Almost overnight it has become that much harder to make the case that a 100,000-strong U.S. troop presence and a full-fledged counterinsurgency operation in Afghanistan is needed to safeguard U.S. national security interests. If ever the opportunity existed to wind down the U.S. role there, as well as the decade-long war on terror, bin Laden's death is it.

To be sure, the argument that the current war in Afghanistan was a vital national interest - - and that it was necessary front in the battle against international terrorism -- has always been a dubious one. After all, it has been more than nine years since al Qaeda has had any significant presence in Afghanistan and, as recent scholarship suggests, the links between the Afghan Taliban and al Qaeda are more tenuous than popularly assumed. The notion that a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan would result in al Qaeda reestablishing a safe haven there -- and, in turn, launch further terrorist attacks on the United States -- has always been a bit like the 1 percent doctrine on steroids.

But now, Osama bin Laden's death renders these arguments even more hollow. As this weekend's event confirms, the real fight against al Qaeda was always in Pakistan; Afghanistan was a sideshow. This will likely increase the political pressure on Obama to wind down a war that has cost thousands of lives and has gone on, with seemingly no end in sight, for nearly ten years. It's hard to imagine that Americans will accept a continuation of the conflict at current levels -- particularly when the biggest prize, bin Laden himself, has already been bagged.

As New York Congressman Jerrold Nadler noted on Monday in an argument that will likely gather currency on Capitol Hill, "We ought to stop wasting our troops and our money and our lives and get out. This shows that should al Qaeda establish a base there [Afghanistan], we can go in and take it out as we just did in Pakistan. It just shows how superfluous everything we're doing in Afghanistan is. Pakistan is more dangerous, and look what we did." It appears to be a view shared, in part, by Armed Services Committee chairman, Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI).

This pressure may be just what Obama needs to end the Afghan war. The escalation in Afghanistan has always seemed, in part, to be motivated by the desire by a Democratic president to not be seen as weak on national security. But now that Obama has the political wind at his back, he has the opportunity to shift course in Afghanistan. It may also strengthen his ability to push back against those in his own administration who want to maintain the fight against the Taliban -- and are resisting political negotiations.

The president now has the political space to open a political track between the Taliban, NATO, and Afghan government officials, with less reason to worry about GOP barbs or complaints from the military that he is weakening America's national security. With t-shirts now circulating around Washington reading, "It Took Obama To Catch Osama," it's hard to imagine those attacks will, in the near-term, do much political damage.

At the same time, Obama can begin to follow through on his promise to begin bringing troops home from Afghanistan this summer -- his original date for the beginning of withdrawals announced in December 2009. Finally, with Pakistan having some serious questions to answer about how the world's most wanted man was living only a few miles away from its domestic version of West Point, Obama should have added leverage for putting pressure on Islamabad to be more supportive of U.S. political and military objectives in Afghanistan.

Quite simply, the death of bin Laden has opened up substantial political space for Obama to finally end a war in Afghanistan that is not only failing spectacularly, but has increasingly become tangential to U.S. national interests. He must seize the opportunity.