

Beijing Reaction to Osama Operation inside Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

No doubt, Pakistan and China are the closest strategic allies and they have supported each other on a number of issues. However, the most outstanding Chinese support to Pakistan was rendered when in the aftermath of Abbottabad incidence (2011) Beijing thwarted US pressure on Islamabad by explicitly declaring any attack on Pakistan as an attack on China. This study analyze the response and deep concerns of China to its most reliable ally Pakistan about any possible and expected threat posed by any major or regional power. Although China has serious concerns over the terrorist activities of Al-Qaeda in the region but they spoke when they feel a serious threat to Pakistan after the US operation in Abbottabad to kill the notorious Al-Qaeda head -Osama bin Laden in 2011. China also warned those nations who blamed Pakistan for providing safe heaven to Osama and his family. For the Americans, it was the first warning issued by a major power since 1960. It shows the commonality of interests that linked both China and Pakistan with reference to US-India relations and the US presence in Afghanistan post 9/11. Eventually, both China and Pakistan build up a framework for conducting their foreign relations at regional and international level.

KEYWORDS: Osama Bin Laden, China, Pakistan, Operation, Al-Qaeda, USA

INTRODUCTION

The tragic incidence of 9/11 gave impetus to the US efforts to eliminate terrorist outfits. The most notorious terrorist group *Al-Qaeda* was held responsible for bringing down the twin towers in America. To annihilate that group the US-led NATO forces invaded Afghanistan and Pakistan not only provided logistic, intelligence and moral support but also let them to use the airbases of Pakistan. The presence of the US troops in the post-9/11 Afghanistan raised many questions for China to comprehend from political, economic and strategic perspectives (Litwak, 2007). If the sole objective of the US involvement and continuous presence in Afghanistan were to annihilate *Al-Qaeda* and wipeout terrorists, then it would have definitely been welcomed by China. But, China took it differently as it was taken by Chinese leadership as a strategic move on the part of US policymakers to contain China. In this backdrop, Beijing was not only interested in protecting its interests in Afghanistan but also safeguarded the interests of its most reliable ally in the region – Pakistan (Shannon, 2009).

China and Pakistan are two neighboring countries and both have developed a framework for handling the developments that happened in the region and international politics as a whole. With reference to the US war on terror, both China and Pakistan have different terms of relations with US and some divergent policy responses but overall Chinese perception is to recognize Pakistan strategic interests in Afghanistan (Van Ness, 2004). Responding to the Operation Enduring Freedom, China avoided its involvement in the military intervention but they were the first who contributed to the reconstruction of Afghanistan along with the other stakeholders. China also provided US\$500 billion to the US as a loan for fighting the war on terror in Afghanistan. Beijing muteness on the drone attacks inside Pakistan are linked to the Chinese economic oriented policies aim at expecting the same response from the US when China will use drones against the separatist Turkistan Movement in its Xingjian province and sell technology of drone to other countries who need it (Kronstadt, 2009).

The presence of Osama bin Laden near a renowned military academy in Pakistan and the successful operation Neptune Spear against the said leader of Al-Qaeda was an unpleasant episode in the US-Pakistan relations. This operation exposed the double Pakistanis standard in the War-on-Terror and tarnished the image of Pakistan as a sincere partner in uprooting terrorism. Following the unilateral US Operation in Abbottabad district of Pakistan, the US was willing to press Pakistan for harboring bin Laden. Facing serious threat from the West, Pakistan turned its eyes for help from its strong ally China. The Chinese seriously understand the situation post Osama operation and responded very coolly that, any attack on Pakistan would be considered as an unfriendly act against

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China. In another words Chinese warned the US that any attack on Pakistan would be construed as unfriendly act against China.

Thus, Beijing officially conveyed this message to Washington that any planned threat against Pakistan would be interpreted aggression against Beijing. This was the first time in the history of China when they issued warning against the US for neighbor state. The US also received warning represents the first known strategic provocation received by the United States in half a century, going back to Soviet warnings during the Berlin crisis of 1958-1961, and indicates the grave danger of general war growing out of the US-Pakistan confrontation. (Singleton, 2001).

Osama Bin Laden and *Al-Qaeda*

Osama Bin Laden was born in Saudi Arabia in 1957. During university time he was deeply interested in religious study and believed that Islamic law was the only way to follow for Muslims. Bin laden being a rich and religious educated enriched his education more through the visiting of Muslim states. During the visit to Afghanistan he interacts with the US authorities to liberate Afghanistan from the clutches of communism. Furthermore, initially he was against the communism for that cause he joined the war against communism in Afghanistan in 1979 and supported the Afghan Mujahedeen. After the collapse of USSR in 90's he left Afghanistan for Saudi Arabia due to Afghan Mujahedeen in fighting. There he demanded from US to withdraw its forces from Muslim States and stop supporting Israel against the Muslims. The US declared Osama a mastermind for the attacks of 9/11 2001, and announced war on terror to Punish Al Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan. He was the most wanted terrorist for the American post 9/11 but for the majority of the Muslim world he was a hero who fights against two super powers. At last after ten years of searching he was killed in a house near to military camp at Abbot Abad in Pakistan on May 2, 2011 (Chossudovsky, 2001).

After the collapse of USSR, Osama bin laden formed Al Qaeda organization in 1988 which involved in the Anti-American and Anti-Western activities in the decade to come. The organization was founded on the bases of Quran specific interpretation that to calls for the rise of the Muslim civilization once again and reduce the influence of Western in the Muslim world. According to this doctrine the Muslim are in a open and total war with the West and American and all the available resources should be utilize to defeat the enemy and make the Sharia as a dominant way of life for the whole world (Coll, 2004). Bin laden was different from other Islamic leaders and wanted pan-Islamic society under the principle of united one Muslim *Ummah* who stand together and fight against the western nations. With the above mentioned doctrine Al Qaeda became the powerful Islamic organization and pose threat to the western and American interests in the Islamic world. Being a leader of such a strong organization bin laden declared war against the US and call for the Islamic solidarity to fight a common cause.

The nature of *Al-Qaeda* was different from other Jihad organizations as it enjoyed financial and political independence and do not desire to control state authority but due its anti Western/American activities around the world compelled it to establish its base in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda the combination of the Arab Mujahedeen and Taliban Religious students residents of Afghan refugees camps and graduated from the Islamic Sunni Deobandi Schools in Pakistan, both were holding the similar ideologies (Scheuer, 2002).

Bin laden providing financial technical support to Taliban for training their soldiers. In addition, the ties became stronger when *Al-Qaeda* soldiers fight alongside the Taliban in their continuing campaign against the northern Alliance and in offensives to suppress the Shiite Hazaras of Afghanistan. Externally Al Qaeda was continue in its aim to harm the US interests in the Islamic world that made bin laden wanted to US authorities. The Taliban leader *Mullah Muhammad Umer* refused to hand over him and hide him in *Kandahar* from expected US covert operation. Only three Islamic countries Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE recognized the Taliban government. Among them Pakistan's security agency ISI was supporting the Taliban government due to its strategic depth military doctrine in Afghanistan. Eventually the Al Qaeda and Taliban posed serious threat to the US and Western Interests in the Central Asia, Middle East, South Asia, Africa and even in the US as the world seen in 9/11 2001 (Bergen, 2006).

Osama and *Al-Qaeda*

Osama was not the founder of *Al-Qaeda* but also the sole financier at the initial time. He not only established the organization but made it as one of the modern resisting group to the US policies in the Muslim World by providing modern technology of communication. He also got enough experience with the CIA and ISI during the Afghan war against the Red Army. For the World he was the most wanted man on earth but his fellows and other Muslim world he was considered to be the man who stood against the US imperialism and became a hero. *Al-Qaeda* is not like a dictatorial organization but it is based on the Islamic law on democratic values that make a sense that he was just a leader and one individual in the whole organization (Coll, 2004).

There are so many factors that will prove the presence of *Al-Qaeda* after the death of Osama. One, when he was found and killed the popularity of Osama increased in the Muslim World. Secondly, *Al-Qaeda* was the only one group but the combination of different groups and small organization who are engaged in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Arab world, East Asia and Europe and their leadership are still has the ability to deter and hurt US and Western domination in Muslim World. Thirdly, these organizations were created as reaction to the US biased policies in the Middle East, Russian policy in Chechnya, Indian policy in Kashmir and the inhuman behavior of US with Muslim in Abu Gharib. All these counted are the main force behind the establishment of *Al-Qaeda* and still is working after the killing of the founder (Chossudovsky, 2001).

Pakistan & Abbot Abad Operation

Most of the conspiracy theorists question about the Osama presence in Pakistan for the last ten years. This may be true that they have very limited study about the international organization that came as revenge to fight international jihad against those who are hurting the Muslims and their properties. In such type of organization there is a commitment and determination from top to bottom that trained everyone to fight and face the most challenging environment and situation. Osama was one of them who was prefer to live in caves and hills and being a highly educated and well trained, that was a challenge for the World security agencies to kill. So it should not surprise for the World that how could he live there in Pakistan because he and his organization *Al-Qaeda* knows better the region from their inhabitants. The credits go to the Afghan war of 1979 that made enable Osama to understand each and every rout of the Central Asia and South Asia region (Chossudovsky, 2001).

In response to 9/11 attacks the US administration opted the option of declaring war on Afghanistan to punish Al Qaeda for challenge the US power. Pakistan tried it best to motivate Taliban to hand over Osama bin laden as the US demanded him but they refuse to do that due to its push ton culture to respect and even die for those who become guest. The defeat of Taliban in 2002 compelled many Al Qaeda members to hide in the Pak Afghan border and some of the important Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders were assisted by the Pakistani well wishers who seek Afghanistan to be ruled by pro Pakistan Taliban. Being one of the military powerful Muslim state possessing the Nuclear bomb had deep concerned about Pakistan links to Al Qaeda and Taliban due to Nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction (Fu Xiaoqiang, 2011).

Under the US heavy pressure the *Musharrf* government took many steps regarding the supporting US policies in Afghanistan post 9/11, operation against the Al Qaeda and Anti Pakistani Taliban and handed over to US officials, reforming the network of Islamic Schools and banned all the soviets time Jihadi organizations. What Pakistan did not or not able to handle stopping Taliban from insurgency against the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan using Pakistani land. Bin laden was one of them who took secret refugee in Pakistan and spent millions of dollars in building guest houses in Peshawar which benefit bin laden after Taliban defeat in 2002. Bin laden also constructed its deep relation with Pakistani religious leaders and scholars through the intelligence agency ISI (Chossudovsky, 2001).

The relation with *Al-Qaeda* and Taliban made Pakistan's image as a center of terrorists and safe haven for terrorists. Externally every act of terrorism happening around the world has some direct or indirect links with Pakistan. Internally the changed International environment post 9/11 forced Pakistan to act according to the demands of International community and make a drastic change in its Afghan policy of alliance with the USA. The established relations among the Al Qaeda Taliban and Pakistani past government was paralyzed due to this shift in policy and as a response to it the Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) pro *Al-Qaeda* was established to hit Pakistan's

Interests and compel her to withdraw its support from the USA. They announced a war against Pakistan and launched a deadly suicide attacks killing a large number of Pakistanis both Civilians and Security personals. What Pakistan cost for the 1980,s war externally blamed for double game and lost image as a safe haven to terrorists and internally lost its billion dollars of property due the complex nature of war on terror. Fortunately or unfortunately what went wrong in the world found its connection in Pakistan which gravely damaged its image in the international community and made suspected its frontline State. We can say that the real cost of 9/11 incident paid by Pakistan (Jandora, 2006).

The Operation

Osama bin laden was found and killed in Abbot Abad, Pakistan by Americans on May 2, 2012. It's not only a simple incident it has a lot of repercussions to come after this and some background and developments that led to this operation. The first question is that to what extent this operation was legal violating the sovereignty of an independent state? After ten years of searching out the US administration and the special intelligence agency CIA captured and killed in Abbott Abad, Osama bin laden near to the capital of Pakistan and very close to the military training academy Kakool. The operation was conducted at mid night of 1st and 2nd May 2011. The American special

force raided on a two story compound where he was hiding from an unknown time. They found and killed him and took his body to Afghanistan but could not show to the people and media (Naftali, 2005).

The whole operation was completed within 40 minutes with loss of one US helicopter. One thing is very clear that it has been done unilaterally and very secretly without taking help from Pakistani security agency. It raises so many questions about the sovereignty of Pakistan, its role in war on terror as a front line state, the image of Pakistan in world community and lastly the criticism on Pakistani security and intelligence agencies. This incident strengthens the foreigner perception about Pakistan double Game in the war on terror. It also brought the relations between both the States at the lowest level (Jacob, 2011).

Justification

To answer the question of to what extent this operation was legal? Many US administration officials legalize it in such words:, president Obama said on 1 May 2011 that “Justice has been done”. This statement shows clearly that it was a legal responsibility of the US administration to punish Osama bin Laden for what he did in the 9/11 and before that to perish the American interests, property in the Holy land and throughout the world. In another occasion the US Attorney General, E. Holder talked about the legal justification of this incident and told to the US House of Representative Judiciary Committee that, “Osama bin Laden has been brought to justice”. He insisted that it was totally a legal operation. He further added that the justification for killing the Osama bin laden was an act of our National Self-defense (Jacob, 2011).

The US Congressional Research Service conducted a general consensus about the legality of operation and concluded that it was legal in the Law of United States of America. the killing of bin laden was justified the US administration I their defense of the law of Armed conflict, human rights law, customary International law and in the Law of US domestic Law but the question of conducting operation inside Pakistan where the US was not in a status of war. Regarding Pakistan this operation generate two serious issues on both US and Pakistan sides (Shahzad, 2011).

For Pakistan it was the violation of its sovereignty and a huge criticism on its intelligence and security agencies that how a covert operation was conducted on its land without its prior consent. For the US and International Community it proved their allegations about Pakistan double game policy in Afghanistan. It also marginalized the position of Pakistan in the war on terror as a front line state (Hoffman, 2008).To use force by the US on Pakistani soil against Bin laden would be legal in only three conditions:

- If Pakistan consented
- If the UN Security Council authorized it.
- The US was acting in self-defense and assessed that Pakistan was “unwilling or unable” to stop the threat to the US and its allies unilaterally (Bakshi, 2002).

To justify operation inside Pakistan, Ashley Deeks pointed out that If the U.S. conflict with al Qaeda is limited to war declare zone, Afghanistan then the United States could not lawfully have targeted Bin Laden inside Pakistan, and If, the U.S. conflict with al Qaeda is not limited to “hot battlefields,” then the United States could make a determination that Bin Laden was a lawful target under the laws of armed conflict, even when unarmed and at home in his compound in Abbott Abad, Pakistan. Ashley added that the United States clearly made the latter determination. As a summary the US justifying its operation of Osama bin laden inside Pakistan that the U is a at war with Al Qaeda and it is therefore lawful to treat Bin laden as an enemy where he was found (Fu Xiaoqiang, 2011).

Beijing Reaction to Osama Operation

The response of China to the new event of Osama operation in Pakistan was unlike the response of drone attacks inside Pakistan. Unlike other states of the world china avoided criticizing Pakistan for keeping Osama near the Capital and the Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Jiang Yu stated that,

“China holds that the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of any country should be respected” (Panzeri, 2014).

It was an official and very diplomatic response of China while keeping both the states relation intact. The response was basically reflecting the Chinese foreign policy principles that avoiding direct clash with the west and US but on the other hand the spokesman also stated that the international community should do more to assist Pakistan in its efforts for the contribution of war on terror. She also emphasized that the world community should give more understanding and support to Pakistan. China showed support for Pakistan after Osama operation when Jiang Yu further stated in state statements and said that,

“We will continue to support Pakistan in instituting their own anti- terrorism strategies and carrying them out based on their domestic situation, and we appreciate Pakistan's active participation in the international anti-terrorism cooperation” (Panzeri, 2014).

Despite the fact that china fully supported Pakistan in its post Osama challenges but Beijing has its own list of priorities in their post 9/11 foreign policy. Among them the most important is the Sino-US relation that includes the bilateral relations between the two powers and intensely connected through economic interdependence. On the second hand it has also military relations with Pakistan that tied both the neighboring states politically connected. The operation also pointed out a question mark for Pakistani defense failure that also concerned the Chinese because Pakistan receiving most of its defense equipment from China after US. Keeping in mind both the option Chinese adopted a realistic approach to handle the post Osama scenario (Goodson, 2014).

Post Osama developments concerned China in four perspectives with its relations to US and Pakistan. Due to its high profile, post Osama challenges could not change the Sino-Pak relations that had been exist for the last sixty year. Firstly, China concerned Pakistan about the transfer of extremism into its western province Xinjiang that destabilizing the region. To achieve that end, China has to work with Pakistan to stop the insurgency of extremism and cut down the support of *Al-Qaeda* and the Taliban for the Uighurs separatists. Secondly, China also concerned Pakistan's instability for its huge investment in Afghanistan which needs security and peaceful environment that has been threatened by the Taliban and the forces from Pakistan (Chung, 2002).

After the expected withdrawal of US and NATO from Afghanistan this fear of instability in Pakistan will increase tension for the protection of Chinese investment in Afghanistan. Thirdly, the Chinese also have great concerned with Pakistan about its Sino-India bilateral trade relations that exceed from the Sino-Pak relations. It has keep in mind Pakistan while improving its relations with India. Lastly, after the global in second categories it may the responsibility and the Chinese best interest to stabilize Pakistan for its own purpose also and for the peaceful environment of the region. To complete this objective Chinese has to work with the US to make Pakistan stable and peaceful country in the region (Chung, 2002).

This operation has raised some serious questions for the Chinese. Unlike the Washington and New Delhi who considered Pakistan role in the war on terror an s double game, the Chinese do not believe that perception but they do believe that the military establishment of Pakistan supporting the extremist elements in the region which can also threatened the Chinese citizens within Pakistan and the people in the western part of China also. The operation also worried the Chinese when they come to conclusion that if Pakistan was unable to detect and stop the US raid inside Pakistan, how it can will serve a reliable counter to India or US in the current situations. The Beijing also observing the US-Pak relations were too much complicated that it could not be change due to the hiding of Osama in Pakistan (Fu Xiaoqiang, 2011).

The most important consequences of the Osama operation inside Pakistan was to make the US speeding up in withdrawal from Afghanistan and will leave Afghanistan like during the Post cold war era. The Chinese were not too much involved in 1990s as they are now. Their investment in Afghanistan will be insecure from the Taliban and forces from Pakistan. On the other hand the American can run and leave from Afghanistan closing the chapter of the war on terror but the Chinese cannot run from its own war on terror in its western province of Xinjiang. It has more interests to stabilize Afghanistan and Pakistan so that it can achieve two objectives, to save investment in Afghanistan and stop the insurgents from both Pakistan and Afghanistan to Xinjiang province for putting an end to the Turkistan movement (Jacob, 2011).

Despite of all these questions the Chinese will continue to play its traditional role in supporting Pakistan for its efforts against the terrorism and extremism and also avoided public criticism on the Osama hiding in Pakistan. The death of Osama would not alter the relations between the China and Pakistan completely.

Conclusion

Osama was an Arabic nationality holder and counted as one of the richest family member who got education in Wahabi School of thought. Being a sunny Muslim he took part in the Afghan war of 1979 against the Red Army. Keeping in mind Islamic teaching he found the US and West more exploiter of the Muslims resources than the USSR and launched an international Jihad against the US imperialism. The US declared Osama and *Al-Qaeda* responsible for various attacks posing threats to the US interests in the Middle East. He was also made responsible for the master minding the 9/11 attacks on US.

Post 9/11 incident marked Osama the most wanted man on earth for the American and CIA was searching for him to find dead or alive. After ten years of continues struggle he was found and killed near the capital of Pakistan. Most of western and Indian media blamed Pakistan for hiding Osama and question marked the role of Pakistan as a front line state in the war on terror. For Pakistan it was a tough time to prove its sincerity with the American

supporting the war on terror. About the Osama presence inside Pakistan, it should be clear to everyone that *Al-Qaeda's* leader always prefer to live in caves and hill rather than well furnish buildings and kept himself isolate from the modern communication technologies that mark him expose to their enemy.

After the Osama Operation inside Pakistan, Chinese response was supportive and demanded from international community not to isolate Pakistan, but it should be encouraged for its contribution in War on Terror. China also pressed international community to respect territorial integrity of Pakistan. On the other hand for Pakistani policy makers it was the hardest time to prove its noninvolvement of hideout of Osama bin Laden, to communicate its transparency over its intelligence sharing agreements, its protest over unilateral operation and to deal with extremist groups.

Some of the American reported to attack on Pakistan for hiding the most wanted man on earth but the Chinese used the right card by issuing a warning to the US declared attack on Pakistan equal to attack on Beijing. China also pressed international community to respect the territorial integrity of Pakistan. It was a sign of deep and close relations between the two states. The recent visit of Chinese president to Pakistan ensure the world about the friendship of China and Pakistan when Chinese announced 46 billion\$ in an unstable state and envision its future role in the region that ultimately benefit China by connecting it to the Arabian Sea and the rest of the world.

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