Osama's death: Delight or dilemma for the U.S.A?

Suchismita Datta

May 1st, 2011, will always go down in the history of the United States as a red letter day. Indeed, the day has several implications for millions over the world and a reason for celebration for many regaling the demise of the leader of Al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden. Ever since the news broke about Laden's death since the early hours of dawn and President Barack Obama's announcement at the White House at a press conference, there has been incessant outpouring of speculations, anticipation about this fact, confirming Bin Laden's death. Operation Geronimo carried on by U.S Navy Seals was successful in tracing Bin Laden's hideout in Abbotabad, a suburb in Islamabad, Pakistan, finally killing him in a gun fight and burying his body in the sea. Considering the damage and destruction which followed post 9/11, it was victorious event for the U.S especially along with other nations as well, and President Obama confidently said that “Justice had been done”.

However the million dollar question is whether anybody is aware of the consequence that will follow post demise of the Al Qaeda leader. His death of course won't eradicate terrorism from the face of the world, rather intensify it, already sparking outrage among his followers and besides Ayman Al Zawahiri of Al Qaeda has already taken up the mantle of spreading terrorism in his hand a few years back, bypassing Osama given his health considerations raids, and manhunts for him. Killing him was only a minor part of America's mission accomplished. Other issues involve countering Taliban in Afghanistan as well as Lashkar e Taiba in Pakistan, there are many loose ends to be taken care of. Further, the fact that Pakistan, America's closest ally in countering terrorism
was silent about sheltering Bin Laden in close proximity to the Pakistan Military Academy and even more conflicting remarks made by President Obama feigning ignorance of Pakistan in this operation makes matter worse, affecting U.S ties with other countries including India. This worsens the situation even more as it affects India-Pakistan joint dialogue and partnership for countering terrorism in Asia. Media reports are also divided in stating Pakistan's involvement in capturing Osama Bin Laden as well as talks of ISI aid to America during the 40 minute firefight.

It is true that Bin Laden's death acts a major blow for the terrorist groups, nevertheless they are not yet out of sight and vision. They might be shaken but might put up an active resistance against U.S in retaliation and U.S is on high alert zone since the death news created ripples across the world. President Obama may be happy with his trump card but he is still miles away from reaching the final lap. American Foreign Policy will have to undergo sea change to tackle the new confrontations as well as taking some drastic steps against Pakistan regarding its role in housing an international terrorist for so long in its vulnerable land. The entire operation was so controversial regarding burial of Osama and not revealing his pictures or videos to the media, it might have an adverse effect on U.S and its citizens spread all over the world prone to risk and attack from vulnerable sections of the society who hailed Osama and condemned his death with mass protests. Recent reports claim that Osama's son also raises an objection to killing his father who was unarmed and his burial as criminal offense although he had earlier condemned the terrorist activities of his so called father. They might even take legal action against U.S for such a secret mission carried out and claiming his body and burying it contrary to their rituals and customs. It's been 10 years since 9/11 and hardly a week has
passed since Osama died, and the hunt has often been like a wild goose chase as curiosity was always high on whether he is alive or dead. His death confirmation will of course silence the speculations worldwide, but the anger, after effects of the mysterious operation Geronimo will continue for quite some time. And the striking tactics of Al Qaeda have always been sudden and unexpected so it is difficult to predict the outcome of Osama's death so soon.

President Barack Obama while addressing the Press Conference in White House and even while visiting Ground Zero in the after hours of Bin Laden's death didn't appear content or rejoicing too much. Probably he is aware of the consequences and dilemma's from a gruesome fact like this. True President Obama will be hailed for giving nod to such a firefight to eliminate the great leader of Al Qaeda but he is still reeling from the conflicting situation regarding America's safety since May 1st 2011. When dictator Saddam Hussain was assassinated, there was still proof of his death but current scenarios there is only report about Bin Laden's DNA report and not a single picture which can act as evidence to substantiate his death claim. The greatest mistake committed by U.S was to maintain silence regarding release of his photos which could have evaded endless speculations of his actual demise. Only future can foretell what's in hold for the U.S.

[Suchismita Datta is a Research Associate with the Institute of Foreign Policy Studies, Calcutta University.]