

America's Reaction to the Death of Osama Bin Laden



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1. Introduction

1.1 General introduction

On May 1 (Eastern Daylight Time), two Black Hawks, armed helicopters, were reaching the building in Abbottabad, Pakistan. The armed crews fell down from the helicopters to the building by the ropes and assaulted the residents. After 40 minutes of intense gun battle, five people were killed by intruders, including Osama Bin Laden. It was the American Army who killed Bin Laden.

1.2 Background

This is the outline of the death of Osama Bin Laden. The news of the death was covered in many media reports all over the globe and shocked the world.

According to the article “Washington, NY and Shanksville mark Bin Laden death” published May 03, 2011, by Andrew North, Barbara Plett, Jonny Diamond, In Washington and New York, thousands of people gathered and celebrated the death in the streets. They shouted “USA, USA” loudly and stringed US flags. There were a lot of celebrations and people strongly felt patriotism. The authors believe that most Americans view Bin Laden as “public enemy number one.” People said that they wanted to be there and celebrate the death. They were in a festival mood, but they also said they were concerned about the revenge by al –Qaeda.

In Shanksville, where United 93 fell down, however, there weren't many people and not in festival mood because it is a rural area of Pennsylvania. A clerk said she was surprised that people in the capital celebrated the death and she didn't think celebration is good way to describe their feelings. The mood here is a little depressed and people are worried about the future. But others in Shanksville also said they felt happy and cried with joy.

The Author suggests there are two things that everyone agrees with. One is people mourn the fading out of unity which US perceive in the immediate after the attacks. And "they do not think the war is over".

On the other hand, according to the article "My take: Why partying over bin Laden's death made me cringe" published May 03, 2011, by Stephen Prothero, some Americans were very opposed to the celebrations of Bin Laden's death. The author was a scholar at Boston University and his students complained about the celebrations. They felt "uneasy" and "uncomfortable" with the celebrations. The author also pointed out that people whose friends or families died on September 11 were more sober and reflective than people who were excited on the street in May 1. The author believed that anyone's death should not be celebrated even if it was Bin Laden's death.

Even though there were some people who were against the celebrations, the man

who criticized people who celebrated the death on Twitter was punished by the society. He was Rashard Mendenhall, a famous American football player, and he was cancelled his contract with Champion, a big famous sports company, because of his tweets about Osama Bin Laden's death and September 11th. The article "Rashard Mendenhall loses Champion endorsement over Bin Laden tweets" published May 06, 2011, by The Associated Press said that he wrote it was strange to celebrate someone's death and we didn't know what really happened on September 11th. His tweets were criticized by many American people on Twitter and finally he was urged to apologize for his tweets. In addition, his team, Pittsburgh Steelers, didn't protect him and insisted they have nothing to do with his tweets. Champion said they "strongly disagree" with the tweets and eventually cancelled his four-year contract with him.

1.3 The present study

By means of this research, I want to know how the American people think about the death and why. In my opinion, there was strong patriotism and social pressure that prevented people from insisting on their own opinions which were against major opinions. Moreover, people didn't celebrate the end of the war because they didn't think the war had ended. So what did they celebrate?

In other words, my question is do Americans think it should be justified to kill Bin

Laden. According to my view, all of the people who celebrated the death thought and believed Osama Bin Laden must be revenged. In short, they thought there was a need for justice.

2. Method

2.1. Data collection instrument

I conducted a survey at Stanford University. The survey contained 11 questions, including 2 multiple choice questions, 7 yes/no questions, 1 ranking question, and 1 open-ended question.

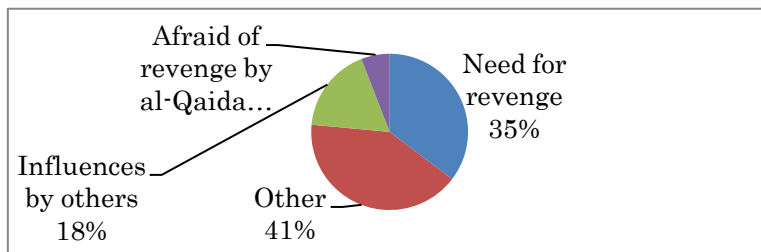
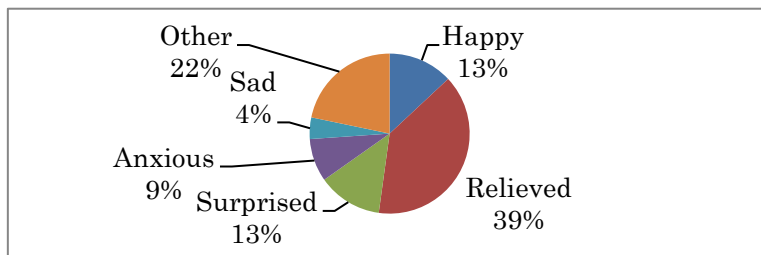
2.2. Data collection

I gave the survey to people who were in the Stanford Bookstore and on Union Square on August 17, 2011. I asked people to fill out my survey questions and I asked 20 people consisting of 10 males and 10 females. And there were seven 15-25 aged persons and eight 26-40 aged persons, four 41-60 aged persons and one person was older than 60.

2.3. Data analysis

As the result of my survey, 39% of the people felt relieved, 13% of the people felt happy, and also 13% of the people felt surprised when they heard the news of

Osama Bin Laden's death. And more than one third of the people thought need for revenge/justice made them feel so. In addition, 18% of the people thought they were influenced by other people. 80% of the people believed there was social pressure that prevented people from against major opinion.



How many people agreed with and wanted to join the celebration is below: 32% of the people agreed with the celebration, but only 10% of people wanted to join the celebration.

Also the survey showed 68% of the people did NOT agree with the war in the Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, all of the people did NOT think the war was over because of Osama Bin Laden's death.

3. Discussion

The survey suggests many interesting matters. Firstly, most people did not feel

happy but relieved when Osama Bin Laden was killed. I thought the reason why the Americans celebrated the death was that they felt happy or hatred, but it was not true. Besides, as I expected, the survey proved that the people didn't believe the war had ended. It is still not clear why they celebrated and what they celebrated from only this result. Some kind of evidence is needed.

Secondly, before I conducted the survey, I believed there was strong patriotism or hatred when people rushed to celebrate the death of Osama Bin Laden, but they didn't make people celebrate according to the survey. In my survey, a need for revenge and justice was the most popular reason to celebrate Osama Bin Laden's death.

And the number of the people who wanted to celebrate the death as in Washington and New York is lower than the number of the people who agreed with the celebration. This result shows us that people might feel more reluctant to celebrate than to agree with it. In other words, people might understand the feelings of people who celebrated the death but did not want to celebrate by themselves.

Next, many people thought there was social pressure prevented people from insisted on their own opinion. They might have faced or seen such pressure. Interestingly, 18% of the people felt they were affected by other people when Osama Bin Laden was killed. Some people thought they were forced to sympathize with other opinions.

Finally, it is the almost same percentage of people who agree with the celebration and people who think the war is right, but people who agree with the celebration do not always think the war is right. This result proved that my idea that people who agreed with the celebration believed the war was right was wrong. Even if people thought the war in Iraq and Afghanistan was wrong, they would agree with the celebration. It is because people thought Osama Bin Laden's death and validity of the war were different things.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to suggest two questions: what made people celebrate and why did people celebrate the Osama Bin Laden's death?

The answer to the first question is clear from my survey. It was a need for revenge and justice and social pressure. People still remembered the feelings that they felt when they saw the terrorism on September 11th. Americans had really wanted to revenge to the mastermind of the terrorism. In addition, there was social pressure to sympathize with the major opinion. If you have your own opinion against major opinion, you may not assert your opinion because society can force you to bend your opinion. Even in America, where is often said the country of freedom, sometimes minor opinions are

killed.

On the other hand, the answer to the second one is not so clear. There were so many aspects. One reason is related to first question. People celebrated the death because of accomplishment of justice. One of the most important Americans' desires was completed by Osama Bin Laden's death. They thought it is valid to kill him. Another reason was people just wanted to enjoy the time. As I mentioned in the introduction section, the people whose families or friends died on September 11th were reluctant to celebrate the death. Most of the people who were excited in the streets might not be directly related to the victims on September 11th.

However, there still remains to be cleared because this is very controversial and sensitive problem. Why people disagree with the celebration or did not want to celebrate the death is converged in that people should not celebrate anyone's death, but why people celebrated is very complex.

Therefore, since too many factors are related to this problem, I cannot answer or reveal the whole thing briefly. There is the social pressure, a need for revenge, excitement, anxiety, relief and justice. If I want to reveal whole aspects of this problem, I believe I have to answer the next question: what is the justice?

5. Appendix

How did Americans react to the death of Osama Bin Laden?

Survey Introduction

I am a Stanford student from the VIA American Language and Culture Program, and I am working on a survey project for one of my classes.

These questions are about the reaction to Osama Bin Laden's death. If you can spare a few minutes to answer these questions, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

I Respondent's Personal Data

(1) Ages

☐15-25 ☐26-40 ☐41-60 ☐more than 60

(2) Gender

☐Male ☐Female

(3) Backgrounds

☐White ☐Asian ☐African American ☐Hispanic ☐Other:

II Survey Questions

1. How did you feel when you heard the news about the death of Osama Bin Laden?

☐ Happy ☐ Relieved

☐ Anxious ☐ Sad ☐ Other: _____

2. What made you feel so?

☐ Patriotism ☐ Hatred

☐ Need for revenge/justice ☐ Afraid of revenge by al-Qaida

☐ Influences by others ☐ Other: _____

3. Do you know many Americans who celebrated the death of Bin Laden?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Do you agree with the celebration?

☐ Yes ☐ No

5. Why do you agree or disagree with the celebration?

6. Did you want to participate in the celebration?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Do you know Rashard Mendenhall, a famous American football player, who was punished because he criticized the celebration on Twitter?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. On a scale from 1 to 5, how much do you agree with Rashard Mendenhall?

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Somewhat 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree

9. Do you think similar pressures prevent people from going against major or common opinions?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Do you think the war against terrorism such as in Iraq and Afghanistan is right?

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. Do you think the war is over because of the death of Bin Laden?

☐ Yes ☐ No

End

This is the end of my survey. Thanks for participating.

6. References

Author (the name of publisher): The Associated Press

Title: Rashard Mendenhall loses Champion endorsement over Bin Laden tweets

http://www.nj.com/jets/index.ssf/2011/05/rashard_mendenhall_loses_champ.html

Publication year: May 06, 2011

Author: Andrew North, Barbara Plett, Jonny Diamond

The name of publisher: BBC News

Title: Washington, NY and Shanksville mark Bin Laden death

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-13257628>

Publication year: May 03, 2011

Author: Stephen Prothero

The name of publisher: CNN

Title: My take: Why partying over bin Laden's death made me cringe

<http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/05/03/my-take-why-post-bin-laden-partying-made-me-cringe/>

Publication year: May 03, 2011