

## **LAW AND DISORDER**

On 2 May 2011, American special forces unilaterally crossed into the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, a United Nations member country, with the intent of removing Osama bin Laden as leader of the militant Islamist group al-Qaeda. In the subsequent 40-minute ground operation, an American soldier killed bin Laden and military personnel evacuated his body to the North Arabian Sea. In the Resolution on Unilateral US Forces Action in Abbottabad on 2nd May 2011, the Pakistan General Assembly swiftly condemned the attack as “a gross violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” Gerard Powers, Director of Catholic Peacebuilding Studies at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, later insisted that such violation of sovereignty is “subject to moral review.”

Although the public may never know the exact details of the operation that resulted in bin Laden’s death, American officials have provided enough information about the raid to lead many to believe Mr. bin Laden could have been captured. Although some voices from the European Union, which does not sanction capital punishment, have tepidly condemned the killing, prevailing world opinion has generally come down on the side of the American action. British author N.T. Wright, however, chastised the world for not holding America accountable for the killing of Osama bin Laden. He blamed this state of affairs on American exceptionalism. We have, contends Wright in the 6 May 2011 Pangea Blog, accepted the myth that “the forces of law and order are inefficient...[that] the bad guys are getting away with [their misdeeds and a]... powerful hero [i.e., America] has to act outside the law, under cover, to perform the redemptive violence that will restore order to the embattled community.” Americans themselves often rely on a similar view of their country’s uniqueness to assert immunity to international law.

Another brand of American exceptionalism holds the United States government accountable to a higher standard of conduct. Political observer Michael Moore, speaking as an American to the Daily Mail shortly after the attack lamented, “We’ve lost something of our soul here in this country...[I] believe...in the American justice system, something that separates us from other countries. We say everybody has their day in court, no matter what sort of person, no matter what piece of scum they are. After World War II, we didn’t just go and put a bullet through the head of all the top Nazis, we took them to Nuremberg, we put them on trial.” On the lessons we should have learned from Nuremberg, but didn’t, Glenn Greenwald of salon.com attacks the hypocrisy of America by paraphrasing Benjamin Ferencz, a prosecutor at the Nuremberg Trials. “Nuremberg is so pre-9/11.”