

bin Laden euphoria miss terrorism roots

Mario T. García | May. 2, 2011 NCR Today

Like most other Americans, I was stunned last night of hearing of the killing of Osama Bin Laden by U.S. special forces in Pakistan. I think most Americans like myself had not given much thought to bin Laden and had accepted that he might never be captured or killed. I have some quick thoughts on this major development.

One is that if the death of bin Laden helps to lessen the threat of future terrorist attacks such as 9/11 that his death will serve a purpose in saving lives.

Second, I don't believe at the same time that there should be euphoria over bin Laden's death because he and Al Qaeda only represent the symptoms of what causes terrorism. The causes as is being exemplified in the political rebellions in the Middle East have to do with poverty, modernization, rising expectations, and, at the same time, the lack of political self-determination for many especially in the Third World.

We should also recognize that these causes are also exacerbated unfortunately by historic U.S. policies that have led to support for repressive and authoritarian governments in regions such as the Middle East based on American desires for oil and imperial power. Unless we address the underlying causes that give rise to terrorism, the killing of bin Laden will only be treating the symptoms.

Third, and finally, I am concerned from a Catholic perspective about the morality of any U.S. involvement in assassinations. I am not saying that the killing of bin Laden was a deliberate assassination but the fact is that we had targeted him for assassination.

How do we reconcile this with the Catholic reverence for life? Is the killing of bin Laden part of a just war? And even if we can morally justify it what about the collateral damage of the killing of innocent civilians, for example, as a result of the use of drones in Pakistan? I don't have the answers to this but I do know that war and military campaigns will not effectively deal with the many problems in the world related to poverty, the uneven distribution of wealth in the world, and the continued exploitation of Third World resources by the stronger powers.

I would like to see, but I doubt that I will, our pastors and priests at masses next Sunday in their homilies address the moral issues surrounding the killing of bin Laden and the U.S. strategic use of targeted assassinations. We need to hear this from the Church and our priests should have the courage to address this issues rather than fearing alienating parishioners.

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