

Research on the Contribution of Zemiology to the Understanding of Global Crime and Insecurity

-- Taking the The State Crime in Hurricane Katrina 2005 As Example

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Abstract: With the development of human civilization and democracy, the subject of crime has developed from individuals to groups, from people to enterprises. As a vital social participant, the possibility of state crime is often ignored. It is worth noting that once the state commits crimes, the scope of social influence and harms are far beyond the mainstream individual crimes. Therefore, recently, state crime has also become an important research object of global crime and insecurity. Unfortunately, criminological analysis is too conservative to analyze it, while zemiology, which uses a broader social harm analysis structure, makes up for its deficiency. This paper will take the state crimes in Hurricane Katrina 2005 as the example, study it through Criminology and Zemiology, specifically compare the two approaches, and then summarize the advanced feature in Zemiology, so as to provide a fresh and positive direction for the research of global crime and insecurity.

Keywords: Zemiology, Social harm, State crime, Hurricane Katrina.

1. Introduction

Since the 20th century, state crime has occurred frequently in the world and its danger to the whole society is continually growing [1], so that it belongs to one of the significant research objects of global crime and insecurity. But at present, criminologists pay more attention to the research of street crime, so some scholars have found the omission of state crime research in global crime and insecurity and began to consider whether the application of zemiology can make up for this deficiency. Zemiology is defined as a study of social harm, which not only goes beyond the concept of traditional crime, makes a comprehensive study of criminal and non criminal acts, but also is no longer limited to individual delinquency [2]. This essay will attempt to explore that the zemiology could help the understanding of global crime and insecurity by analyzing the state crime in Hurricane Katrina 2005. This essay begins by briefly introducing the facts of Hurricane Katrina 2005 in America. It will then analyses the case from the perspective of criminology and discusses the defects of state crime research. Finally, it uses zemiology to study the case and summarizes the reasons why its application can be conducive to the study of global crime and insecurity.

2. The State Crime in Hurricane Katrina 2005

In the week since August 23, 2005, Hurricane Katrina has repeatedly hit the Gulf coast of the United States. Due to the failure of flood control system, sea water flooded into the city. Consequently, more than 1.5 million people were directly and negatively affected and were unable to maintain their daily life, even over 800000 people were forced to leave their homes [3]. Although the National Hurricane Center [4] had correctly predicted the severity of the hurricane and provided warning before the disaster, the United States has not formulated an effective evacuation plan and prepared sufficient materials in response to the disaster, which has

exacerbated the plight of the victims. Specifically, the New Orleans Superdome and the Convention Center have taken on too many victims as temporary shelters, during which people also had to face the difficulties of power failure and lack of food. Thus it can be seen that the victims lived in an inhumane and unhealthy environment and they even lived in this environment for a long period [5]. Therefore, when considering the causes of social damage in the hurricane, in addition to the uncertainty of natural disasters, the U.S. inaction is also the crucial cause of excessive sacrifice, it violated the crime of state inaction.

3. Studying State Crime in Hurricane Katrina 2005 Through Criminology and Zemiology

According to the concepts of criminology, the United States obviously does not constitute the crime of state omission in this case. The most fundamental reason is that criminology only focuses on the criminal acts stipulated by law and proposes that the core elements of state crime is violation of domestic criminal law or international public law [6]. However, the United States and even the world have not established articles to regulate state omission. Besides, most traditional criminologists prefer to study the ordinary individual crime rather than state crimes, because there is a complex relationship between Criminology and the state and the dependence of criminology on state power makes it selectively ignore the negative influence of state crime [7]. Therefore, in this case they attributed the social harm to the uncertainty of hurricane as a natural disaster and laid emphasis on the crime rate after the disaster. The inaction of American government has been neglected. But in reality, nearly 100000 victims gathered in the Superdome and the Convention Center, waiting for weeks to be evacuated without adequate necessities and proper lodging [8]. More importantly, the disaster had been predicted by relevant professional agencies 6 days before its occurrence, which showed that the US did not actively take rescue measures and

formulate effective plans in the sufficient time and its inaction aggravated the physical and mental suffering of the victims. As a special social participant, the social harm brought by state is far more than that of individuals, so state crime is one of the most important hazards in global crime. Nevertheless, the definition of crime and research object in criminology is too limited, which makes restrictions on the study of global crime and insecurity as well as the construction of a harmonious society.

Zemiology is considered to be a development and extension of criminology. By adopting zemiological approach, the omission of the U.S. in Hurricane Katrina constitutes a crime of omission. Since under this lens, the research angle of crime becomes wider, which is embodied in the following three aspects. First of all, zemiology goes beyond the definition of traditional crime and extends it to social harm. It also emphasizes the research on harmful behaviour of special subjects such as the state and enterprises. The harm includes both criminal and non criminal acts [9].

Therefore, even if state crime has not been explicitly convicted in legislation, as long as it reaches a certain degree of social harm, the state could constitute a crime. In this case, according to the documents of the National Hurricane Center, the National Weather Service, the United States could clearly know the danger and development of Hurricane Katrina, but the government has not made a comprehensive and effective response plan, so that plenty of victims still trapped in avoidable risks. The United States should be responsible for the extra sacrifice, instead of neglecting the profound and giant impacts on people and society from the state omission on the ground of legislative omission. In addition, from the perspective of social harm, the construction of harm is determined by people's self-evaluation perception, rather than by the state like crimes. With regard to comments of the cases [10], almost all the victims and others expressed deep dissatisfaction with various state acts and omissions during the disaster [11]. Finally, its research scope is no longer restricted to the analysis of harm result, begins to explore the background and looks for the sources of harm. Before the disaster, in 2004, the United States already understood the possible problems if the New Orleans was hit by the PAM hurricane simulation test which was similar to the Hurricane Katrina. So some relevant experts put forward countermeasures based on the simulation results, but the U.S. government still did not adopt it, blindly and disorderly responded to the disaster. Throughout the process of disaster, in addition to the shelters with terrible living conditions, more than 2000 prisoners were abandoned in the Orleans Parish Prison system, some of them have not even been convicted. At the same time, the prison environment was even worse than the Superdome. Ultimately, some prisoners even disappeared in the evacuation process [12]. All these reflect that the U.S. government is unprepared to suppress the disaster and protect the people in the whole process of fighting against the disaster, from planning to implementation. So the U.S. is thought to violate the crime of state omission and need to bear certain responsibilities.

4. Benefits of Approach in Zemiology

As a result, the dominant contribution of zemiology is to enrich the perspectives of crime research and its structural harm analysis approach benefits the understanding of global crime and insecurity. There are three reasons. Firstly, the

definition of crime is more flexible, no longer limited by the legislative framework, but based on the actual social harm. It may better adapt to the changing society and harmful behaviors as the law often omits to regulate some harmful behaviors because of its hysteresis. The new standard could be analyzed according to specific cases, which is more likely to fit the principle of judicial justice. Secondly, zemiology realizes the danger of studying state crimes. The state is a vital participant in society, even its slight act might affect a large number of people around the world. Moreover, it emphasizes that the study of state crimes possibly help to arouse the public's awareness of supervising state behaviors, thus forcing the state to be cautious in words and deeds as well as avoid dereliction of duty or other harmful behaviors.

Finally, the comprehensive analysis of the behavior background and process is beneficial to create effective solutions like policy. In the long term, compared with the short-term deterrent effect of criminal justice, social policies based on the source of harm can prevent the recurrence of harmful acts from the root [13].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, zemiology has positive effects on the recognition of global crime and insecurity. Particularly, it and criminology are separately used to analyze the actions of American government in Hurricane Katrina, which reveals that criminology lags behind and zemiology may be a development and remedy for it. Zemiological approaches provide more angles for crime research, such as new definition of crime, special social actors and background analysis. It also promotes the research of global crime and insecurity to be more holistic and structured. Therefore, on the basis of zemiology, it deepens the understand of the global crime and insecurity, it is also hard to ignore non-criminal social harm behaviors when studying global crime, especially those with severe harmful consequences from state omission, so as to prevent the recurrence of excessive unnecessary sacrifice.

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