



PYRO TERROR: FOREST ARSONS

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Stereotypes and pre-justice are human traits. It seems that they accompanied humanity since its beginning when people saw or met somebody, and had to judge him as an enemy or as a friend.

In this view, these traits are part of the evolution of human kind, hence, they should be important and valued. Is it? As we will show these traits may destroy the life not only of a person, but those of communities that are different in their origin, nationality, gender, skin color and age. People may be labelled as dangerous to society in accordance to their born status, and they may find themselves at the lowest strata of their society or culture (Adams-Quackenbush et al. 2019; Barlow & Barlow, 2002; Deskins et al. 2017; Park & Wittenbrink, 2002; Plous, 2003). Our article addresses stereotypes and pre-justice as an attitude, conscious or unconscious, among the public in relation to forest arsons in Israel. These attitudes are common among the police, and the judicial system. The personal of these systems are members of the culture, influence by it and influence back on it. In other words these personal are mirror of the attitudes which are common in the society they serve and influence this society until there is a loop of attitudes between culture, society and the judicial system. Many studies found out that police officers, prosecutors and even judges use the notion of profiling to mark certain marginal groups as more dangerous to society. This so-called profiling justifies arrests, prosecutes, and more severe punishment in the name of society's security. As a result, the mass media and the public accept this profiling and develop stereotypes and prejudice against these groups. In many countries these traits address against immigrants, women, young people, black skin color and other characteristics, which make them more vulnerable to media hype, being arrested more easily and punished more severely. As a result, they become more exposed to negative labels and pre-justice. Our article addresses these issues in relation to arson in Israel and show how stereotypes and pre-justice among the public make the media and the public to believe that and to blame Arabs in eco-terrorism of forest arsons, while the data shows that only 2% of the arsons are motives by national ideology (i.e., Terror).

KEYWORDS : Forest Arson, Terror, prejudice, profiling

Stereotype and prejudice

A dictionary definition claims that stereotype is a widely held fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing (Oxford dictionary). Stereotypes use to address racial groups, political groups, genders, demographic groups. Social science pertains stereotypes only to social groups. It views stereotypes as fundamentally incorrect and over-generalize of group traits, reflective of the stereotype underlying prejudice, or other internal motivation (Bordalo et al. 2015).

Social groups that have been mistreated in the past, like racial and ethnic minorities, continue to suffer negative or bad stereotyping that perpetuate false beliefs against them (Glaser, 2005; Steele, 2010). For example, the stereotypes against black people are rooted in the history of slavery but continuing discrimination against them until today.

Other scholars (Schneider, 2004) view stereotypes as special as special cases of cognitive schemas or theories. These theories are intuitive generalizations that individuals routinely use in their everyday life, and entail saving on cognitive resources.

Hilton and Hippel (1996) claim that although stereotypes are mental representation of real differences between groups, but they are selective in that they are localized around group traits that are the most distinctive, that provide the greatest differentiation between groups.

Prejudice

Prejudice and stereotypes are notions that goes hand in hand. Prejudice is defined as bias which devalue people because of their perceived membership of social group (Abrams, 2010). The main issue in prejudice is the way that people in different social groups view members of other groups. According to Abrams (2010), prejudice is more likely to develop where groups have different or conflicting values; others are seen as different; people see their identity in terms of belonging to group, and their groups discriminate against others.

If we look at stereotypes and prejudice, we can understand how these notions may be connected to other negative consequences like labeling, discrimination of people belongs to marginal groups and sketch them and identify them as negative and even dangerous to society. In other words, stereotypes may invoke negative prejudice against members of marginal groups and as result, profile them as dangerous to society. As we will see, this in turn may cause more severe action against these people by the police, the prosecution, and the courts. It is important to say that the mass media is attributing a lot to these negative perceptions of marginal groups. This phenomenon connected to notion like moral panic (Cohen, 1972) or media hype (Vasterman, 2005).

Eco and Pyro terror

The prime objective of terrorism is to create chaos and destabilize the social and political order (Baird, 2005).

During the last decades eco-terrorism has emerged as a new threat to society.

The impact of eco-terrorism can be severe, leading to loss of life, property damage, and environmental degradation.

One of the weapons of Eco terrorism is pyro-terror, using forest fires as an act of terror to create fear and to demoralize the public (Sorieso & Guerr, 2014).

The use of fire as a weapon dates to ancient history. The ancient Greeks and Romans used fire as a weapon to destroy enemy ships and castles. The use of fire as a weapon continued throughout the ages, where armies burned down enemy cities and castles during siege. However, the phenomenon of pyro-terror is relatively new. The modern term of pyro-terror emerged in the end of the 20th century, with the use of the Irish republican army (IRA) in arson attacks against British organizations.

In the 21 century, pyro-terrorism has become a global phenomenon, in which terrorist organizations use fire as a weapon (Awan, 2007).

Many reasons contribute to the rise of pyro-terrorism in recent years. One of the primary factors is the easy accessibility of combustible materials, which can be used to start fires. Terrorists can use simple objects like flammable liquids to start fires, making it difficult for law enforcement agencies to prevent such attacks.

Another main factor is the low cost and high impact of pyro-terrorism. The environmental and property damages and the loss of life, caused by arson attacks and wildfires can have severe economic and social consequences.

The cost of fighting mass forest fires can be enormous, and it can drain resources of the affected countries (Fighel, 2009). Pyro-terrorism also provides an opportunity for terrorist organizations to gain mass media attention. The widespread coverage of wildfires and forest fires in the media can help terrorist organizations to convey their message and create fear among the public (Besenyo, 2017).

Terrorist organization and the media

The Islamic State demonstrates how terror organization integrate terror and media. This militant group uses the media to show vile acts of inhumanity that range from human slaughtering to public beheadings and suicide bombings.

In 2014, a member of ISIS London cell's, tweeted: "Message to America, the Islamic State is making a new movie. Thank u for the actors" (Crone, 2015).

The ISIS's member comment gained much attraction, a month later, when James Foley, a Western journalist and video reporter who was held hostage by ISIS, was beheaded.

The attack on the twin towers in New York (September 11, 2001) is one of the most widely documented acts of terror in history.

The attack was broadcasted live on television. The time between the first and second attack on the two towers, generated huge coverage of the events by the media that arrived on the site and witnessed and filmed the second attack live. The terrorist organization gained the worldwide attention it requires to promote its agenda-setting goals (Weimann, 2006).

By gaining such attention, the terrorists achieve their main target of exploiting the media to spread fear and have their motives recognized by authorities and the public at large (Awan, 2007). Terrorist organizations seek to be in the media as long as possible and as often as possible.

To prevent compassion fatigue, every act of violence is more and more extreme than the last one.

While it can be argued that forest arsons that do not inflict injuries often do not attract public attention (Baird, 2005), a vast array of forest fires have gained attention on a global scale (such as the "Mt Carmel forest fire").

Terrorist organizations aspire to change political situations by using large-scale eco terror acts and the media to instill fear and terror.

Moral Panic

Moral panic is an exaggerated reaction of the media, the police, or the general public to the activity of special group in society or the attribution of a negative behavior to one of these groups (Marsh & Melville, 2011). The salient characteristics of moral panic are: falsification and stretching the negativity and importance of specific occurrence (i.e. forest arson) through sensational head lights in the mass media, using

melodramatic vocabulary and the construction of "folk devils"-groups of young adult that threaten the social values and are dangerous to the "ordinary people" (Johnson, 2000).

Cohen (1972) which coin this notion claim that societies are subject to periods of moral panic in which situations, a person or social group, are define as a threat on society's values, to its interests and to its moral boundaries. The nature of these people and their behavior is labelled by the mass media, while the moral boundaries are drawing by editors, religious leaders, and right-wing politicians. In addition, many experts in social affairs claims their views and solutions to the social problem on issue (Garland, 2008).

In modern and post-modern society, the focusing of the mass media on specific social problem by arousing moral panic, cause the recruitment of the police, the courts and other agencies of social control (young, 2009). This process creates mass labelling of special group, which may cause self - fulfilling prophecy.

A similar approach claims that moral panic is part of a process to impose social control over marginal groups that at=re trying to protect some of their traditional values (Critchler, 2009; Yeomans, 2009).

Young's idea (2009) is that some crimes become significant media's stories when and if they fit the interesting and mode that exist in a specific period like the murder of children and adolescent in Britain, or using Alcohol in the U.S. Another example is the focus on Pedophilia by stranger, while most of the cases occurred between family members and acquaintances. The mass media plays the central role of enlargement and distortion of actions and occurrence, while creating devil folkways. In this the media defines the facts, focus the public attention to special occurrences and people, and hence, create a culture of control to stop the social problem (Cohen, 1972).

The mass media is the most beneficial from social problems. She makes provocation, sensation that enlarge its selling, entertain its audience, and create new interpretations of its own, and "makes a story from a story" (Garland, 17). In doing so the mass media grows its income. But a precondition to the media and politician's investment in moral panic, is the existence of emotional energy and the collective excitement, when the crowd can become rage together with an opportunity that these feeling can provide (Young, 2009). We must keep in mind that although the events are real, the way they reported in a sensational way, cause a panic that includes concerned and anxiety among the audience concerning these events (Marsh & Melville, 2011).

As a result, the way the mass media reports on a deviant group and on a deviant behavior of the deviant group, will influence the social reaction to this group and its behavior (Marsh & Melville, 2011). Young (2009) claim a similar argument that our knowledge on deviants is based on a wrong and stereotyping view because of the distortion that the mass media is doing. As a result the social reaction will also be distortion (Young, 2009).

Moral panic and media hype

Our society is no longer homogeny even in its values. The diverse of values and norms does not enable the use of moral panic as before. Today scholars prefer the notion of "media hype" (Vasterman, 2005). A media hype or news waves develop as a result from an occurrence that get the media attention for a long time. In this process news department are trying to "hunt" up to date news every day until there is an impression that a social problem become a real crisis. It is important to note that there isn't accord between these news

waves and the reality which the mass media should review. In this context a main question arise is the media report objectively about important events or that the media turn events to news, or is the media review events or create them? (Johnson, 2000).

In order to make these phenomenon moral panic and media hype are working on the same principle: An event should be defined as a social problem. This definition is not given but it is a result of politics, interest groups, social movement, and the like. The attraction of the media to the occasion aid to percept it as a social problem

The conclusion is that moral panic or media hype are very similar in that they both construct the reality that arise fear and anxiety among the public. On this reaction the mass media will report immediately repeatedly.

In the Israeli society there is a consensus, which is stereotypic and prejudice upon forest arsons. Each time when a forest arson arise the blaming is pointed to philistine people which use it as a terror attack, i.e., eco terror.

While the facts that there is a forest arson is true, the media use to make a moral panic or media hype by looking for the Cohen's folk devils.

In order to react to this social problem, the media, police, and politician must find somebody to blame.

Moral panic and profiling of devils

Moral panic and negative profiling are connected. Negative profiling of deviants and criminal is a byproduct of moral panic and vice versa. The negative results are that some groups in society will profile as dangerous while the real deviant and criminals will not be heart or blame at all. This negative profiling will position them at the marginality of society for many years if not for ever. There are multiple examples how marginal groups in society are profiling as criminal and deviants (Adams-Quackenbush et al. 2019). A specific example is the racial profiling (Barlow & Barlow, 2002), and how stereotype influence prejudice (Deskins et al. 2017; Park et al. 2002).

While this phenomenon is saliant among African American in the U.S. it has its parallel in Israel society against Palestinians, there is a big different between the two.

In Israel there is a fact that most if not all terrorist actors are Palestinians while in the U.S. not every crime performs by Afro American. If we look on forest arson as eco terror, then the blaming of Palestinians by moral panic and media hype is more rational than what's happened in the U.S. in relation to Afro American. But, as we will show, most of the forest arsons in Israel in oppose to the media hype and moral panic.

Method

To examine our argument that moral panic or media hype effects stereotypes and prejudice, we examine mass media reports in Israel in the last five years. Our assumption is that the media will report forest arson as pyro terror done by Palestinian terrorist, while these arsons were the result of un responsibility behavior of travelers and/or vandalism acts made by Jewish youth.

When analyses the mass media reports for the last five years, the only theme was:

Forest arsons is a terror act made by Palestinians:

"Israeli military says it thwarted pyro-terrorism plot."

"Pyro-terrorism fears: Israel deploys drone squadrons to combat wildfire threat."

"As Israel battled pyro- terrorism, experts warn of bigger threats to come."

"Israel arrests 23 Palestinians suspected of arson attacks". It is important to note that this citation is from "Haaretz" which is a newspaper that identified with left wing ideology in Israel.

RESULTS

Israel sufferers every year from thousands of forest arsons, that result in wounded and property damage. Sometimes there is a need to evacuate a whole settling to save lives. People are suffering from a loss of their houses and many important belongings.

Between 2020-2020 there were 40,000 arsons in Israel. 10% of all arsons were deliberate or arsons. Most of the criminal files were closed (87%), and only 6% of the files were accused and punished. Only 615 cases were forest arsons as pyro terror. These are only 2% of all forest arsons in Israel in these years (Schwartz, 2022).

DISCUSSION

Forest arsons are one kind of pyro terror which may cause casualties and damage. In Israel particularly, forest arson creates moral panic and media hype. The reason is that Israel suffers from a lot of terror attacks, and pyro terror can be one of them. Pyro terror is easy to commit since nobody can see you, you don't need weapons and one man can cause a disaster.

The mass media, and we believe that other networks as well respond to the occasion. The one major answer we are looking for is "who", because if we know the who we will know the "why". In Israel the almost automat respond is to see the forest fire as pyro terror and then the mass media will transparent the public stereotypes and pre judice addressing the arson to terror made by Palestinians. As a result, the media perpetuate these stereotypes among the public as evidence truth.

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