Protests leading to violent crimes against public property: An analytical study of the most important factors and causes

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Abstract:
Protest actions that escalate into violent crimes against public property reflect a deeply rooted hostility within the Algerian mindset. This is marked by a mutual conflict that has evolved into active violence in political and social life between the ruling group and the wider society, The phenomenon is intensified by the nature of crowds, which tend to destroy rather than build; This occurs through a process of intellectual contagion and suggestion, where ideas flow from the top of the social hierarchy to its base, governed by a group mentality that diminishes individual awareness, dissolves personal identities, and releases repressed emotions under the guise of collective behavior. The study addressed this issue by analyzing theoretical literature and applying it to the Algerian context. It concluded that there is a strong correlation between deprivation, pressure, frustration, alienation, marginalization, violence, and aggression; These factors result from the failure to achieve social goals, provoking anger toward those seen as responsible—namely, the state, ruling class, political forces, and public institutions.
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1. INTRODUCTION

accompanied the project to modernize the Algerian state politically, economically, and culturally, and its inability to provide for and meet the needs of all social classes and groups in Algerian society, led to the adoption of a fragile development policy that resulted in a structural crisis that created several rifts, It expanded due to the intensification of the conflict between the superstructure (the "dominant class") and the infrastructure (the "marginalized groups"), creating a sense of social alienation, pressure, marginalization, frustration, and social, psychological, and economic accumulation.... This produced a series of deviant and violent practices, which found their outlet in the Algerian streets, Therefore, protests leading to violent crimes against public property began to spread, intensify, and gain momentum due to the failure to satisfy basic needs, and the emergence of new needs and demands for change and participation in shaping it. This necessitated a sociological approach to the social phenomenon as a current reality that imposes itself strongly on sociological knowledge bearers before politicians, Those involved in the process of protest action, systematic research, and field surveys on the motives behind protest action and the phenomenon of protest can raise the following central question:

What are the factors and causes that lead to protest actions resulting in violent crimes against public property?

To answer this central question, it must be divided into three sub-questions:

1- What is the history of protest actions in Algerian society?

2- What are the characteristics of the Algerian personality and its relationship to violence and aggression?

3- What is the reality of the current protest situation (its causes and implications)?

Before answering these questions, we must address the conceptual treatment of the subject under study, which has been presented as follows:

1. Conceptual treatment

1.1. Protest:

Protest is defined as various forms of objection, in which protesters use tools they devise to express rejection or to resist or circumvent pressure (Al-Shuwaiki et al., 2011, p. 41) ; Protests are often characterized by violence and rioting, with young people being the most active participants. Protest movements are at the forefront of unconventional methods that bring about radical changes in the existing political system through the use of violence; They aim to achieve the public interest or reach common goals by working outside existing frameworks and institutions (Gadner, 2005, p. 487)

We can say that violence is one of the fundamental characteristics of protest. These movements rarely occur without protesters resorting to rioting and violence against anyone who attempts to sabotage their protest movement. This violence is not specific to one society over another, but exists in all societies. Protesters, especially young people, believe that the use of violence in protests is the most successful way to bring about change and achieve their demands (Sawakri, 2014, p. 108) Charles Tilly defined protests as a series of continuous performances, oppositions, and campaigns carried out by ordinary people to raise a set of demands (Telli, 2005, p. 44)

Protests have also been defined as “an act of objection by one group against another on a specific, limited, and urgent issue, and as such, they fall within the historical framework of action, not within the framework of social organization” (Al-Shuwaiki et al., 2011, p. 151) Protest as an act is nothing but a reflection of tension in social, economic, and political structures, where its intensity increases with the increase in imbalances in these structures, leading to the fueling of protests and their adoption as a countermeasure against institutions that have failed to respond to the basic demands of a particular group; This imbalance leads to widespread feelings of alienation, frustration, injustice, and discontent.

1.2. Public property:

Public property refers to assets such as land and buildings owned by public authorities and governments, which are often used for public purposes (Al-Hanfi, 2000, p. 292) Public property differs from private property in that it is accessible to everyone, unlike private property. Examples of public property include streets, parks, libraries, hospitals, schools, and universities, These assets are built with public funds collected from taxes and dues (Al-Rosa, 2020)There are several types of public property, including:

- Parks, gardens, and lakes.
- Essential landmarks such as monuments, museums, and sacred sites.
- Everyday properties such as streets, buses, and roads.
- Public properties have several characteristics, including:

- Accessibility to all members of society.

- They cannot be seized or blocked, and their use in loan and financing transactions is not permitted.

- They are owned by public authorities, and their ownership cannot be transferred to other persons or entities.

- They must be monitored periodically by the responsible authorities.

The importance of public property lies in the significant role it plays in achieving a society that is satisfied with living within the state, by providing service facilities, such as health, education, and entertainment, in order to facilitate the lives of citizens and thus make it easier for individuals to carry out their daily tasks; Government institutions are responsible for regularly monitoring and maintaining these properties in order to ensure quality of life within the community, All of this is done by allocating tax funds specifically for these facilities, which must be preserved and cared for; The state has sought to achieve this by imposing deterrent penalties on vandals, including

fines and imprisonment. Public property is a right for all members of society and is not exclusive to one group over another.

1.3.Crime:

Crime is an everlasting act that has existed since the dawn of humanity, The term "***crime***" is widely used, especially in legal and behavioral sciences, to refer to certain behaviors that are considered anti-social or reprehensible by a particular group, It is well known that crime is considered by members of society to be a threat to its existence and continuity.

Herbert Smith defined it sociologically as "*a form of deviant behavior aimed at disrupting the existing social order.",* As for "***Rafael Garofalo*** they consider it to be" *an antisocial act, or any act that prevailing trends or opinions in society deem harmful, or any act that conflicts with prevailing ideas and principles in society, or any act that involves an infringement of a right or a violation of a duty, or any act that conflicts with morality".*

Mohammed Ibrahim Zeid defines them as "*any act that violates the basic needs and main interests of a particular society, or poses a threat to society, or makes it impossible to achieve coexistence and cooperation among the individuals who comprise it*." (Belayour, 2008, pp. 119-120)

1.4. Violence:

Violence is harmful behavior in the field of conflict with others, based on denying others as beings worthy of life and respect, and focused on excluding others from the field of conflict, either by keeping them as subordinates, removing them from the social field, or eliminating them morally or physically; Thus, violence is the non-recognition of the other, rejecting them and turning them into something suitable for violent needs. Non-recognition does not mean a certain acceptable knowledge that depicts and imagines them in a way that is appropriate for painting a picture of the victim and controlling their image through a conceptual image: a political, religious, ethnic, ideological image, etc ; Thus, most cases of violence are based on abstract knowledge of cultural heritage, embodied in models designed by others;

Undoubtedly, individuals and groups in Algerian society acquire violent behavior through the culture that frames and governs Algerian society. (Semouk, 2006, pp. 34-44)

Violence is often a reaction to structural imbalances within social systems, which cause social instability, leading to insecurity; Violence manifests itself in various forms, including symbolic, verbal, and physical. Below, we will discuss the various forms of violence in detail:

1.4/1. Symbolic violence:

This is violence whose manifestations are evident in written insults and abuse that are hostile to society and the state.

1.4/2. Verbal violence:

Any statement that conveys hostility toward a specific person, entity, or system and is expressed in the form of spoken words or offensive language directed at a specific party.

1.4/3. Physical violence:

This is the most severe form of violence, where tangible harm is inflicted. Physical violence is directed at a specific person, taking the form of beating and wounding, or at an organization, system, or institution, taking the form of vandalism, arson, and destruction. It leaves psychological, physical, and material scars on the victim.

2.The history of protest in Algerian society

The ruling clique that took control of the state after independence adopted a model of "centralized dictatorial development" that enabled it to monopolize the profits from oil nationalization and rapid, haphazard industrialization concentrated in the major cities, along with universal education, free healthcare, full employment, and the right to housing. etc. Under the guise of slogans promoting unrealistic rights and hopes, and in the

absence of any real criticism or opposition, the ruling clique believed it was capable of achieving everything; At the end of the 1970s, Algerian oil prices tripled, but the new political coalition was unable to continue the development process it had begun in the 1960s, considering it to be exhausting, complex, and socially and politically unpredictable, as it could lead to a reevaluation of the ruling coalition itself by bringing new groups to the fore, such as:

"Factory workers, new managers, students, farm workers, and miners" Under the influence of high incomes, these groups chose the easiest path (consumption) at that stage, which was widely accepted by most social groups, especially the lower classes. However, this coincided with a sudden halt in investment, and with the restructuring of public institutions, the first signs of their subsequent privatization began to appear, Oil prices began to fall, making oil revenues unable to meet the ever-increasing demands of a growing population. The dismantling of the productive apparatus, coupled with record unemployment, coincided with new and numerous hopes and needs that were opened up by a period of chaotic consumption. This revealed a flaw in the political system's ability to distribute wealth for two main reasons:

- ✓ Shortage of sources of wealth, goods, and material service .
- ✓ Unequal distribution of wealth among social classes due to inefficient distribution policies that favor certain groups over others.

This is where the crisis became apparent and escalations began to widen due to the intensification of the conflict between the dominant faction on the one hand and the growing demands of marginalized groups on the other; At a time when deviations were deepening, intensifying, and accumulating, protest movements were gaining strength, expanding, and becoming more radical due to the failure to satisfy basic needs, the emergence of new needs, and demands for change and participation in shaping it, he ruling political system closed in on itself and did not allow political pluralism. In addition, the spread of nepotism and racism resulting from the monopoly of power, unequal opportunities, and the absence of social justice led to the emergence of opposition and protest movements, which were more prevalent in urban

areas than in rural areas for several reasons, including higher levels of awareness and the adoption of a culture of shared interests, even though this approach was not secretive, in addition to inflation, rural migration to large cities, and the decline of the agricultural sector, with production and service institutions unable to absorb it.

3. Characteristics of the Algerian personality and the problem of violence and aggression

Several ethnic and racial groups have lived and settled in Algeria, the most famous of which are the Berbers or Amazighs, who adopted a tribal clan system based on blood ties and kinship. Several anthropological and historical studies have classified them as the indigenous people of Algeria.

The Berber tribes were characterized by strong organization and natural cohesion; They established a set of social values and customs that determined the social path of individuals, derived from the simplicity and spontaneity of farmers and their customs, traditions, and laws inherited from their ancestors, which were governed by social appreciation and acceptance or condemnation and rejection ; Through social, cultural, and economic transformations, technological developments, openness to the world through the Internet and social media, and security issues, particularly wars, specifically from the French colonial period to independence, several changes have occurred in the Algerian mindset, or what is popularly referred to as the "Algerian mentality," in terms of behavior, culture, knowledge, and society; "***Customs and traditions***" and economically, "*abandoning farming as a primary occupation, rural migration to large cities, resorting to working for national companies, adopting handicrafts and professional activities... etc*." In addition to the attempt to change the lifestyle from rural to urban while maintaining tribal roots, this led to a kind of internal conflict that characterized the Algerian personality with many unique traits that distinguish it from other societies, as explained in the following elements:

3.1. Sensitivity and intolerance of criticism

The reasons for this trait go back to historical origins in which the tribal system played an important role, dominated by male rule, in addition to the psychological scars left behind by wars and colonialism, which made Algerians always on the offensive, sensitive, and intolerant of others. This has been confirmed by the latest studies in genetics, which show that just as humans inherit biological traits from their ancestors, they also inherit behavioral traits.

3.2. Impulsiveness, emotionality, and quick temper

This Algerian personality trait is distinctive, if not unique, compared to many other national societies in general, given the pressures suffered by Algerian society during colonialism, including killing, violation of rights and sanctities, siege, fear, suppression of freedoms, and tyranny even after independence; This has left Algerians in a constant state of attack, alertness, and impulsive behavior, not to mention the volatile climate from one region to another, as the ecological factor plays an important role in their mood.

3.3. Complaining and playing the victim

Given the long historical trajectory of the Algerian character, particularly the psychological repercussions of wars, Algerians have been left in a semi-unconscious emotional state that manifests itself in psychological behaviors that cast them as victims, even when they are in the wrong.

3.4. Demagoguery and vulgarity

Given the rapid pace of social change in Algerian society, from a nomadic to an urban civilization, which has affected its heritage (social, and cultural) and its opening up to the world through social media and media content in an ill-considered and uncontrolled manner, society has paid a structural cultural and social price that has created a destructive culture for all its diverse heritage, especially the *"values and morals"* that society had adopted for

decades with the aim of breaking the social order and freeing itself from social constraints.

3.5. Arrogance and thirst for power and authority

This trait is usually associated with excessive sensitivity and intolerance of criticism, and is deeply rooted in the historical origins of society as a Berber nomadic society dominated by a patriarchal tribal system of government; In addition to what it suffered during the long decades in which a culture of violence, force, and oppression prevailed, it left behind a thirst for power derived from deep-seated fear and intolerance of individual opinion, distrust of others and their opinions, deeply rooted tribalism, and a lack of civility; From this perspective, it appears that Algerians possess certain emotional traits that provoke aggressive impulses, caused by various historical, cultural, and political factors rooted in the social structure of Algerian society.

4. the sociology of the current social situation, "its causes and implications"

The current protests are nothing more than a reflection of the structural crisis that Algerian society has been experiencing since its independence and the failure of the ruling elite to establish a modern nation state and lay the foundations for a contemporary society based on the principles of justice, citizenship, and political participation in government; This has coincided with major regional and global transformations: "*political, economic, social, cultural, security..."* These transformations have profoundly affected the system of values, rules, patterns of behavior, and behavioral practices...

This has left a broad social class (especially frustrated and marginalized youth) emerging amid various contradictions, protests demanding new goals, and radically contradictory goals that conflict with those of the ruling class or generation (the independence generation) that experienced attempts at social construction and pragmatic practices that believe only in the tangible, They used violent protest in various forms:

- Vandalizing and closing public property (municipalities, departments, state headquarters, hospitals, etc.)
- Blocking public roads with various random obstacles, such as burned tires, rocks, solid materials, etc.
- Chanting in stadiums and using violent slogans against the authorities and their symbols.
- Strikes, violent sit-ins, and gatherings not authorized by the competent authorities.
- Suicide migration.
- Suicide by various means, primarily self-immolation.
- Online protests.
- Graffiti.
- Intentional throwing of various objects and materials at members of the security forces and law enforcement agencies: stones, hard objects, Molotov cocktails, as symbols of the regime.

Protest as a form of cultural expression requires the state to respond quickly to demands, as this culture has succeeded in fulfilling its social functions, where violence and poverty are two fundamental characteristics. Poor, marginalized slums hostile to large cities and some rural areas (shadow areas) are considered their ecological environment. The origin of these groups can be attributed to several fundamental factors:

First: The disintegration of social control institutions.

Second: The widening social gap between the ruling class and social groups or classes that have been brought together by poverty, creating a form of similarity in their miserable situation that incites violent protest.

Third: Ethnic, social, cultural, and political differences combined with shared poverty or low economic status have led to aggression becoming an outlet for self-actualization and the elevation of marginalized identities and their false symbols of the concept of the state and hostility toward it.

Fourth: The situation of the majority of social groups, frustrated by failed reform and modernization policies and long waits, created the idea of resorting to violence as a means of pressure to elicit a rapid response to their demands.

As for the implications of the protest, they were evident in the deteriorating relationship between the state, represented by the ruling elite, and Algerian society, characterized by mutual conflict that turned into active violence in political life and the way the state and society functioned, This had material and symbolic implications that, with the accumulation of contradictions, turned into organized and planned violence that fell within the framework of action and reaction; It suffices to count the extent of the destruction that befell the structures and institutions of the state during the movements of 1980, 1982, 1986, 1988, and 1991 to confirm the extent of the hostility that had been building up for many years. The violence was destructive to public institutions and their symbols, and therefore we cannot deny the relationship between this violence and state policy, as it is historically and politically certain, being a phenomenon deeply rooted in Algerian history; It is a hostility rooted in the mental structure, which has created a tradition of constant violence in the relationship between the state and Algerian citizens, as concluded and confirmed by numerous historical and sociological studies. It should be noted that the relationship between the authorities and society was not based on the rationality of rights and duties, It means that the logic of equality but to oppression in its various forms and ugliest manifestations. What has fueled protests in recent years are the failed attempts at reform that have led to the adoption of a savage liberal system that has benefited the regime, prompting political and social forces to express themselves outside the political, economic, and cultural framework dominated by the state, in line with the realistic basis of the problem ; In addition to expressing feelings of discontent and dissatisfaction with the social and economic situation and the psychological state of the population.

Through repeated observation and continuous analysis of protest actions and riots in Algerian society, it has been noted that the most important causes of such actions can be summarized in the following elements:

- Professional reasons related to professional rights such as compensation, wage increases, retroactive effects, and demands for employment.
- Social reasons, most importantly housing.
- Economic reasons related to livelihoods, such as providing job opportunities or micro-projects.
- Service-related reasons such as electricity, water, and roads.
- Political reasons.

Conclusion:

After researching, analyzing, interpreting, and reconstructing the study data, we can highlight the most important findings, which can be summarized as follows:

- There is a correlation between psychological social pressures and frustrating situations and the phenomenon of protest leading to crimes against public property.

- There is a correlation between acts of vandalism against public property and social deprivation, which indicates a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations of reality and the capabilities of the social environment, leading to the dominance of frustrating situations that trigger the impulse to attack.

- The disadvantaged are the most resentful toward social, economic, and political systems, which drives them to organize themselves in an attempt to force the authorities to improve their conditions.

- The psychological support provided by the crowd and the prevailing collective spirit allow individuals to indulge in their violent tendencies and give free rein to their frustrations, such as vandalizing and burning public property, hiding behind the collective appearance.

- Algerian social action appears complex, and this complexity shows that it is inseparable from the complex structure of Algerian society.

- Algerian protests are predominantly violent due to the nature of the Algerian character, which is characterized by roughness, emotional reactions, and other deeply rooted traits.

- Protests are limited in time and place, with major cities often serving as their epicenter.

- Social demands dominate protests, while political and cultural demands have declined.

- The combination of the structural crisis, the legitimacy of authority, the failure to build a nation state, the lack of opportunity for alternative elites to emerge, and the lack of justice in the distribution of social capital has contributed to fueling protest and leading it to take more radical violent forms, such as the destruction, breaking, and burning of public property.

- The hidden patterns of protest leading to the destruction of public property reveal a deep-rooted hostility in the mindset of Algerian society.

- The destruction of public property is one of the most important forms of protest in Algerian society.

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