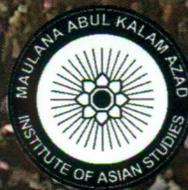


**The Mubarak Regime and Maslow's  
Need Deficit Theory:  
An Approach to Understanding the  
Protest at Tahrir Square**

**Suhita Saha**



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**MAULANA ABUL KALAM AZAD INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES  
(MAKAIAS)**

**OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION**

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## **A Note on the Text**

The popularly phrased Arab Spring began in late 2010 and early 2011. In the beginning, it was characterised by a huge and largely peaceful popular protest against long standing entrenched regimes. In Tunisia, it started out of frustration over the socioeconomic malaise and political repression. In neighbouring Egypt, the prevalence of some systematic maladies drew throngs of protesters who gathered at Tahrir Square in the centre of Cairo, Egypt. It eventually forced out President Hosni Mubarak from power. A series of protests sprang up elsewhere in the Arab world from the Persian Gulf to North Africa. A spectacular development was the death of Libyan President Muammar al-Gaddafi following a campaign of armed popular resistance supported militarily by NATO and the Arab League. Later, the regime in Syria also encountered strong mass protest, which, later, changed the geopolitical condition of the entire Arab World. All these momentous developments left an indelible scar in the dynamics of global politics in many different ways.

## **Bio note**

Suhita Saha is pursuing her PhD at the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She had been associated as a Researcher in MAKAIAS from April 2013 to October, 2015. Her area of interest lies in the field of International Relations, political theory and West Asia.

## Introduction

In Asian political dynamics, the Middle East or West Asia has a pivotal role in terms of geo-strategic importance. In India, West Asian Studies with special reference to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have been neglected. The think tanks like the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) or the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) have studied the region through the strategic prism with US interest in the Middle East or oil politics in this region assuming prime importance. Apart from that, the issue of the Israel-Palestine conflict has received wide attention in the spectrum of Indian academic discourse. The long standing vacuum in the academia to understand the dynamics of domestic politics, protest and regime change in the MENA region necessitates a deeper understanding. Domestic politics are not divorced from foreign policy and needs a deeper understanding for its bearing on the conduct of international relations and is increasingly substantive. This paper is a modest attempt to analyse the domestic circumstances and politics in Egypt that led to unprecedented transformation in one of the most significant countries of the Middle East.

The paper deals with the downfall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. Any significant development always invites many interpretations and perspectives. This paper draws from the theoretical paradigm of the 'Need Hierarchy' theory propagated by Abraham Maslow and contextualises it in the political and the economic spectrum of Egypt. The paper is divided into four sections: the theory of 'need hierarchy' propagated by Abraham Maslow; the background and situation in Egypt; the diverging relationship between the state and the felt needs of the people in Egypt and finally some findings and conclusions.

### **I. The Theory of 'Need Hierarchy':**

Abraham Harold Maslow (1908-1970) was an eminent American sociologist and is known for his conceptualisation of the 'hierarchy of human needs' and regarded as the father of humanistic psychology. He developed the 'need hierarchy' as part of his theory of human motivation during the 1940s (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

The Motivation theory was first presented in 1942 to a psychoanalytic society; it was an effort to integrate into a single theoretical structure what Maslow gleaned from the thoughts of Freud, Adler, Jung and Goldstein. The main question for Maslow was to analyse which earlier deprivations produce neurosis. The outcome of the theory was quite satisfactory in a clinical, social and personological way, but not in a laboratory and experimental way. It fitted very well with the personal experience of most people. Maslow considered that it is important to have direct, personal, and subjective plausibility even though it may lack experimental verification and support (Maslow, 1970).

His clinical experience as a psychologist enabled him to develop his five level theory of a 'need hierarchy'. According to him, human behaviour is a reflection of conscious and unconscious goals. It can be analysed from human actions and motives behind them. Analysing human behaviour through human needs and motives in the form of a 'need hierarchy' is significant in organisational research. Maslow's work provides the framework to study and analyse human motivation. As Maslow's theory is not synonymous with behaviour theory, the motivations are only one class of determinants of behaviour. While behaviour is almost motivated, it is also almost biologically, culturally and in terms of situation determined as well. Maslow's contribution to motivation theory lies in his simple and straightforward analysis of human motivation by taking human needs as the basis of behaviour (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

Human behaviour at a time is a reflection of more than one motive. All human actions are outcomes of several unfulfilled needs and motives. The human needs operate in an order of hierarchy of prepotency. A satisfied need gives place to another unsatisfied need and this process goes on in a continuum because a human being is a perpetually wanting animal. Maslow propounded his theory on the basis of several assumptions. Maslow arranged human needs in a hierarchy. The fulfilment of a lower order need is a precondition for higher order needs to surface. Unless the lower order needs are fulfilled, the middle or higher order needs would not surface (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

A description of the hierarchy of needs is as follows:

Physiological needs are synonymous with biological needs of human beings like hunger and thirst. The grip of these needs on human beings is so strong that unless these needs are satisfied, there is no room for other needs to crop up. For a person who has missed most of the basic needs in his life, the physiological needs are the main motivating force. Once a physiological need is satisfied, the human organism looks for social needs (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

According to Maslow, the physiological needs are the starting point for human motivation. Two recent lines of research make it necessary to revise our customary notions about these needs, first, the development of the concept of homeostasis, and second, the finding that appetites are a fairly efficient indication of actual needs or lacks in the body. Homeostasis refers to the effort of the body to maintain a constant and normal state of the blood stream. Maslow had referred to the work of Cannon to develop the process of homeostasis (cited in Maslow, 1970). If the body lacks some chemical, the individual will tend to develop a specific appetite or partial hunger for that food element. It is also important to mention on the one hand that all physiological needs cannot be identified as homeostatic. However, various sensory pleasures like tastes, smells and stroking have not been included but these are sometimes physiological and may become the goals of motivated behaviour (Maslow, 1943).

Human beings search for security and safety from natural calamities, and deprivation. In an orderly society, the safety and security is taken care of, to a great extent, by the government. In such societies safety need is no longer motivator (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

Maslow (1970) tried to understand the safety needs perhaps more efficiently by observing infants and children, in whom these needs are much more simple and obvious. One reason for the clearer appearance of the threat or danger reaction in infants is that they do not inhibit this reaction at all, whereas adults in our society have been taught to inhibit

it at all costs. Sometimes bodily illnesses seem to make the child unsafe. In this case, the central role of the parents and normal family setup get precedence (Maslow, 1970).

From these similar observations, Maslow viewed that the average child and, less obviously, the average adults in our society generally prefer a safe, orderly and organised society. The safety needs can become very urgent on the social scene whenever there are real threats to law. According to Maslow, it is more important for the people who are living near the safety line. They are particularly disturbed by threats to authority, to legality, and to the representatives of law (Maslow, 1970).

Once the physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, people seek affection, love and belongingness from other human beings and the society around. A person with social needs severely feels the absence of family, spouse and children (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

According to Maslow, very little scientific information about the belongingness need is available, although this is a common theme in novels, autobiographies and in the newer sociological literature. In a general way, people tend to point out the destructive effects on children of moving too often, of the general over-mobility that is forced by industrialisation. The tremendous increase in training groups and other personal growth groups and communities may in part be motivated by this unsatisfied hunger for contact, for intimacy, for belongingness to overcome the widespread feelings of alienation which has worsened due to mobility, by the breakdown of traditional groupings and the resulting shallowness of friendship. Any good society must satisfy this need to be healthy (Maslow, 1970).

People have a desire for respect and recognition from society and work place. They have a need for self-respect and self-esteem. They desire to work according to their own norms and beliefs. Maslow called this need deficit needs: the deficiency motivation occurs when we lack something and attempt to meet that deficiency (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

These needs may be classified into two subsidiary sets. These are, first, the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom. Second, we have what we may call the desire for reputation or prestige, status, fame and glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, dignity, or appreciation (Maslow, 1970, p.45).

Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy of being necessary in the world but, thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness. These feelings in turn give rise to either basic discouragement or else compensatory or neurotic trends (Maslow, 1970).

The term 'self-actualisation' has been coined by Kurt Goldstein. This concept was used by Maslow in a much more specific and limited fashion (Maslow, 1970).

It is considered to be the highest need in the hierarchy of needs and is directed towards searching the meaning and purpose in life. This specific form of need varies from person to person but, a prerequisite of self-actualisation is satisfaction of physiological, safety, love and esteem needs; at least partially. The self-actualisation is a basic force that drives a person forward and onward. Maslow adopted the biographical method to study the lives of famous people like Abraham Lincoln, Roosevelt, Gandhi and Einstein. He found several similarities in their lives and called those features self-actualising tendencies. Maslow also talked of the special and driving needs of self-actualisers. This includes truth, goodness, uniqueness, perfection, justice and meaningfulness. When self-actualisers do not get these needs fulfilled, they develop depression, despair, disgust and cynicism (as cited in Prasad, et al, 2013).

## **II. The Background in Egypt:**

A short historical picture can be useful to understand the situation in Egypt and its inner undercurrents. According to the 1956 Constitution, Egypt was declared an Islamic Arab

Welfare State. President Nasser was elected head of the state in the middle of 1957. In the aftermath of the 1967 Arab- Israeli war, President Nasser resigned. He had claimed in 1956 that he lost the Suez war because of the Anglo- French nexus with Israel but in 1967 he had nothing to say. Egypt went through a harrowing experience of defeat and the army was shattered. Income from the Suez Canal stopped. Anwar Sadat, founder of the Free Officers' Organization, which had provided a fulcrum for the revolution of 1952, succeeded Nasser at first temporarily and then permanently in October 1970. Egyptian-Israeli direct negotiation opened a new chapter in the history of the Middle East. President Sadat realized that without peace Egypt's future was not too bright and he needed the income from the Suez Canal to boost the economy. Egypt's economy depended on the subsidy of oil rich Arab countries. Though Egypt's relation with the western world improved with his peaceful approach, his usual dealings with Arab states deteriorated to a large degree. Arab states in general rejected Sadat's policy of compromise as well as his theory that the key to peace in the Middle East lay in the hands of the United States. At last, on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1981, a day which President Sadat regarded as a day to celebrate Egypt's successful crossing of the Suez Canal, assassins struck him. The group of murderers belonged to the Hashashin sect. As per the Constitution, the Speaker became acting president. National Democratic Party nominated Vice- President Hosni Mubarak as its candidate for the presidency. On 13<sup>th</sup> October, Hosni Mubarak was elected the president of the republic (Chatterjee, 1987).

After assuming power in the wake of President Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981, Mubarak extended police powers, legitimised censorship and suspended constitutional rights under a state of emergency which was enshrined in Law No 162. He strengthened the authoritarian system of party leading to bureaucratic security governance. He did not appoint anyone to the post of vice-president. He empowered himself as the sole arbiter of Egyptian policy under the constitutional amendment of 1971. He expanded the powers of the Interior Ministry and the intelligence services. Any form of political dissent was not allowed under his rule and he always tried to prove that alternatives to his regime will be detrimental as it will lead to a fundamentalist takeover, led by the Muslim Brotherhood (Solava, 2011).

The presidential and parliamentary elections under his regime were farcial as Mubarak was the only candidate. The Wafd party, the most popular liberal force between the two world wars, was literally reduced to a state of insignificance by Mubarak. The Muslim Brotherhood established in 1928 is a large, multifaceted, religious and social welfare organisation with dozens of affiliated organisations across the country. Feeling progressively threatened by the growing popularity and organisational strength of the Brotherhood, Mubarak frequently harassed its leaders and members. The Muslim Brotherhood managed to field independent candidates in parliamentary elections from 1984 onwards, but a major triumph came in the 2005 elections when it won 88 seats. However, in the 2010 parliamentary elections, the government made sure, through intimidation and fraud, that the Brotherhood did not win a single seat (Amin, 2011).

Mubarak maintained his strong political clout over the polity for around thirty long years. When the uprising erupted, many political analysts across the world were astonished as to the reasons. Many explanations for the protest movement in Egypt abound. According to Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, Egypt had been suffering from corruption, oppression and bad education. Roots of these problems were political. All the economic impediments stem from the way political power in Egypt was exercised and monopolised by a narrow elite class (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013).

An analysis of Egypt under Hosni Mubarak is possible from the analytical frame developed by Maslow. For example, if we analyse physiological needs and security needs, 42.8 per cent of Egyptians under Mubarak lived on \$2 a day or less, compared with 39.4 per cent in 1990. An estimated 13.7 million Egyptians or 17 per cent of the population suffered from food insecurity in 2011, compared to only 14 percent in 2009. The fast deterioration is captured in a report by the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). A joint policy paper released by WFP and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) also substantiates the growing chasm. The food subsidies in the form of the ration card system in Egypt are not designed to resolve all poverty related challenges. At the same time, this is a potent weapon in

the struggle against poverty and food deprivation. Nearly 70 per cent of the population received ration cards but 19 per cent of the most vulnerable population were excluded from the benefit. Moreover, corruption complicated the food distribution system and other ameliorative arrangements. Therefore, it was not surprising that under the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the position of Egypt deteriorated from 105 out of 180 countries to 127 out of 178 countries in 2010 (World Food Programme, 2013).

The 1991 gulf war had marked a turning point in Egypt's economic liberalisation process. The war made Egypt's financial crises much graver. In addition, public expenditure was reduced and the massive cut was primarily achieved through a reduction of subsidies on goods and services including health and education (Lofgren, 1993). As far as the state-labour relations of Egypt was concerned, workers' demands through the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Union (GFETU) was mostly overlooked and this also had a negative fallout on the overall cohesion and stability (Shehta, 2012).

### **III. Co relational Analysis between the 'Need Deficit' and the State Power:**

This paper intends to offer an additional explanatory framework for the Arab Spring with a special reference to Egypt. The analysis borrows from the lessons in clinical psychology to understand the current developments in Egypt. The analysis by David Apter as to how the 'need deficit' framework is connected with the uprising in the context of Egypt has also been undertaken.

Towing the line of Maslow, it is clear that the lower order needs were not fulfilled properly, so the fulfilment of higher order needs did not even surface in Egypt. Basic needs were under threats. According to statistics presented by the Population Reference Bureau female illiteracy is strikingly high in Egypt. It is noteworthy that 56 percent of the female population over the age of 15 were illiterate whereas 33 percent of the male population over the age of 15 were illiterate as per the details of the Bureau (Moghadam, 2003).

It is indeed important to notice how the proposition of Maslow with special reference to safety and security needs can be contextualised in the case of Egypt. Traditionally,

Egypt has been considered a traditional structure compared to the western society where each member of a family is assigned one particular work. The female members are supposed to perform domestic duties and their male counterparts are supposed to take care of family responsibility. This image is very significantly linked with the stability of family in an invisible way. In a globalised economy, countries with high rates of illiteracy and gender gaps tend to be less competitive (Moghadam, 2003). According to Maslow, a stable family set up is very important for the mental safety and security of a child.

It is indeed clear that upper level needs such as self-actualisation needs or esteem needs cannot be mitigated under this structure. All these factors together might have contributed to a large extent for forming an uprising against a regime which has been indifferent in fulfilling the needs of the citizen at the grass-roots level. This need deficit, in can be safely pointed out, led to the uprising in Egypt.

Generally, the protest movement revolves around the relationship between ruler and ruled, according to the work of David Apter. The relationship between ruler and ruled involves three analytical dimensions.

1. Cultural beliefs: - through which incumbent authorities often claim that the established system upholds moral values better than any other.
2. Structural condition: - it focuses on the power of government. In this context, the interaction between the protest movement on the one hand and the nation state represents a prime topic for investigation. Here, of course, the performance of the state authority based on the needs of people gets priority.
3. In the next stage, the behaviour of the individual shapes the operation in the political institution. They seek to uncover the impact of cultural values and socio-political structures on personal actions such as participation in a protest movement (Andrain, C. F and Apter, D.A., 1995).

In the case of Egypt, it can be said that need deficit has been persistent for a prolonged period of time. Participation in protest movement is juxtaposed in a spatial manner as

far as the eruption of the uprising is concerned. The interaction between the citizen and the nation state got very poor for a prolonged period of time under Mubarak. As people were deprived of their needs, the cultural beliefs and the structural conditions of the existing regime became vulnerable to the attacks by protesters. As a result, the general populace participated in the uprising automatically. For a prolonged period of time, people automatically expect their needs to be fulfilled from a regime in power for three decades. In this scenario, the Tunisian flashpoint case acted as a catalyst as Tunisia was also facing similar problems.

Reports by both the IMF and the World Bank on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region analysed the lack of productivity and economic diversification before the uprising. As per the analysis in the report, Arab states should increase labour flexibility and should not adhere to overvalued currencies in order that their exports might be more dynamic. Government – funded social protection networks should be rationalized to target exclusively the poorest strata of the population only (Corm, 2013, p. 34). However, these were the precise gaps and shortcomings that Mubarak regime failed to address.

There are some strong indicators of the underperformance of the Arab economies. International Labour Organization (ILO) showed that on average, the rate of the active population to the total population in the Arab countries is 45%. This contrasts sharply with the average world rate of 61.2%. The unemployment rate among the youth in this region hovers around 25%. In Tunisia, for example, the unemployment rate among higher education graduates jumped from 3.8% in 1994 to 17.5% in 2006. Arab economies have become highly dependent on external variables like oil prices, tourism revenues and rainfall to sustain growth rates. In countries with agricultural potential like Syria, Tunisia and Egypt, there has been a lack of water management programmes (Corm, 2013, p. 35-36).

#### **IV. Findings and Conclusion:**

From the above study, it can be readily seen that the regime of Hosni Mubarak dishonoured the needs of the people in several parameters. The statistical data has proved that the

living conditions of the mass of the people had worsened sharply. As a result, the lower order needs like physiological needs, safety and security needs as underlined by Maslow were in serious threat under Mubarak. Here, the fulfilment of higher order needs do not surface in the case of Egypt explicitly, but the craving for higher order needs like the self-esteem needs or the self-actualisation needs are very much prevalent in the minds of human beings as part of the 'need hierarchy'. The existence of these higher order needs is hidden and out of view in the context of Egypt but these also played a role from the standpoint of craving for changes in circumstances desired by people. The increased reach of internet and social media further accentuated the sense of deprivation and craving for a transformation that addresses the growing aspirations. In this context, the Tunisian protest, which made the people realise the importance of the higher order needs played a catalyst role.

It can be said from the above discussion that the analysis presented by Maslow's 'need hierarchy' is partially applicable to Egypt. However, the felt absence of fulfilment of lower order needs was accentuated by developments in Tunisia. The Tunisia protest movement made the Egyptians realise the significance of higher order needs as well, even while they were breaking free from the bondage of lower order needs in a country once economically self-sufficient but complete mismanaged by a regime over three decades.

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