

**SAMIR AMIN**

## **L’Egypte en mouvement**

### **Egypt in movement**

**Extraits d’interviews donnés entre le 5 et le 13 février 2011**

**Some interviews given between 5 and 13 february 2011**

**Partie en français et partie en anglais**

**Partly in English and partly in French**

**AAA**

**(BBB is an English translation of AAA)**

L’Egypte est une pierre angulaire dans la stratégie états-unienne de contrôle de la planète. Washington ne tolérera jamais que l’Egypte sorte de sa tutelle, qui permet à Israël de continuer la colonisation de ce qui reste de la Palestine. C’est l’unique but que poursuit Washington en s’investissant dans l’organisation d’une « transition pacifique ». Dans cette perspective, les Etats-Unis pourraient être amenés à considérer que Moubarak doit se retirer. Le vice-président récemment nommé, Omar Soliman, chef du renseignement militaire, prendrait ainsi le relais. Pour préserver son image, l’armée a pris garde de ne pas être associée à la répression.

Baradei arrive dans ce contexte. Il est toujours davantage connu hors d’Egypte que dans le pays, mais pourrait vite corriger ce défaut. C’est un « libéral ». Il n’a aucune conception de la gestion économique autre que celle qui prévaut. Il ne peut pas comprendre que c’est là que se trouvent les causes du désastre social. Il est « démocrate » au sens qu’il revendique de « vraies » élections et le respect de la légalité (l’arrêt des arrestations arbitraires et de la torture, etc.), mais rien de plus.

Il n’est pas impossible qu’il devienne un partenaire dans la transition. Mais l’armée et les services de renseignement n’abandonneront pas leur volonté de conserver la position dominante dans la gestion de la société égyptienne. Baradei l’acceptera-t-il ?

En cas de « succès », et si des élections devaient se tenir, les Frères musulmans remporteraient probablement beaucoup de sièges au parlement. Les Etats-Unis s’en accommodent. Ils ont d’ailleurs qualifié la confrérie de « modérée », ce qui signifie en fait docile, disposée à accepter la soumission à la stratégie états-unienne et à laisser Israël libre de poursuivre son occupation de la Palestine. Les Frères musulmans sont aussi acquis à un système économique basé sur le marché et totalement dépendant de l’extérieur. Ils sont en fait une composante de la bourgeoisie « compradore ». Ils ont d’ailleurs pris position contre les grandes grèves de la classe ouvrière et les luttes des paysans pour conserver la propriété de leur terre.

Le plan états-unien pour l’Egypte est très inspiré du modèle pakistanais : une combinaison entre l’« islam politique » et le pouvoir militaire. Les Frères musulmans pourraient compenser leur alignement sur une telle politique en jouant la carte de la « non modération » vis-à-vis des

Coptes. Pourrait-on délivrer un certificat de « démocratie » à un tel système ?

Ce mouvement est celui de la jeunesse urbaine, des diplômés chômeurs, appuyés par des segments des classes moyennes instruites et par des démocrates. Le nouveau régime fera peut-être quelques concessions – en élargissant par exemple les recrutements de fonctionnaires -. Pas plus.

Bien sûr, les choses peuvent changer si la classe ouvrière et le mouvement paysan s'engagent dans les luttes en cours. Mais cela ne semble pas encore à l'ordre du jour. Tant que le système économique restera soumis aux règles du jeu de la mondialisation capitaliste, aucun des problèmes soulevés actuellement ne sera résolu.

### **BBB**

**(AAA is the French version of BBB)**

Egypt is a corner stone in the US plan of control of the Planet. Washington will not tolerate any attempt of Egypt to move out of its total submission, also required by Israel in order to pursue its colonization of what remains from Palestine. This is the exclusive target of Washington in its “involvement” in the organization of a “soft transition”. In that respect the US may consider that Mubarak should resign. The newly appointed Vice President, Omar Soliman, head of the Army Intelligence, would be in charge. The Army was careful not to associate with the repression, thus preventing its image.

Baradei comes in at that point. He is still more known outside than in Egypt, but could correct that quickly. He is a “liberal”, having no concept of the management of the economy other than the on going, and cannot understand that this is precisely at the origin of the social devastation. He is a democrat in the sense that he wants “true elections” and the respect of law (stop arresting and torturing etc), but nothing more.

It is not impossible that he would be a partner in the transition. Yet the Army and the Intelligence will not abandon their dominant position in the ruling of the society. Will Baradei accept it ?

In case of “success” and “elections”, the Moslem Brotherhood will become the major parliamentary force. The US welcome this and have qualified the MB of being “moderate”, that is docile, accepting the submission to the US strategy, leaving Israel free to continue its occupation of Palestine. The MB is also fully in favour of the ongoing “market” system, totally externally dependent. They are also, in fact, partners in the “compradore” ruling class. They took a position against the working class strikes and the peasants struggles to keep their ownership of land.

The US plan for Egypt is very similar to the Pakistani model : a combination of “political Islam” and Army intelligence. The MB could compensate their alignment on such a policy by precisely being “not moderate” in their behavior towards the Copts. Can such a system be delivered a certificate of “democracy”?

The movement is that of urban young, particularly holders of diplomas with no job, supported by segments of the educated middle classes, democrats. The new regime could perhaps make some concessions – enlarge the recruitment in the State apparatus – hardly more.

Of course things could change if the working class and peasant's movement moves in. But this does not seem to be on the agenda. Of course as long as the economic system is managed in accordance with the rules of the "globalization game", none of the problems which resulted in the protest movement can be really solved.

**CCC**

**(French only)**

**Les événements qui secouent la Tunisie et l'Égypte relèvent-ils de simples « révoltes populaires » ou signent-ils l'entrée de ces pays dans des processus révolutionnaires ?**

**Samir Amin.** Il s'agit de révoltes sociales potentiellement porteuses de la cristallisation d'alternatives, qui peuvent à long terme s'inscrire dans une perspective socialiste. C'est la raison pour laquelle le système capitaliste, le capital des monopoles dominants à l'échelle mondiale, ne peut tolérer le développement de ces mouvements. Il mobilisera tous les moyens de déstabilisation possibles, des pressions économiques et financières jusqu'à la menace militaire. Il soutiendra, selon les circonstances, soit les fausses alternatives fascistes ou fascisantes, soit la mise en place de dictatures militaires. Il ne faut pas croire un mot de ce que dit Obama. Obama, c'est Bush, mais avec un autre langage. Il y a là une duplicité permanente. En fait, dans le cas de l'Égypte, les États-Unis soutiennent le régime. Ils peuvent finir par juger plus utile le sacrifice de la personne de Moubarak. Mais ils ne renonceront pas à sauvegarder l'essentiel : le système militaire et policier. Ils peuvent envisager le renforcement de ce système militaire et policier grâce à une alliance avec les Frères musulmans. En fait, les dirigeants des États-Unis ont en tête le modèle pakistanais, qui n'est pas un modèle démocratique mais une combinaison entre un pouvoir dit islamique et une dictature militaire. Toutefois, dans le cas de l'Égypte, une bonne partie des forces populaires qui se sont mobilisées sont parfaitement conscientes de ces visées. Le peuple égyptien est très politisé. L'histoire de l'Égypte est celle d'un pays qui tente d'émerger depuis le début du XIXe siècle, qui a été battu par ses propres insuffisances, mais surtout par des agressions extérieures répétées.

**Ces soulèvements sont surtout le fait de jeunes précarisés, de diplômés chômeurs. Comment les expliquez-vous ?**

**Samir Amin.** L'Égypte de Nasser disposait d'un système économique et social critiquable, mais cohérent. Nasser a fait le pari de l'industrialisation pour sortir de la spécialisation internationale coloniale qui cantonnait le pays à l'exportation de coton. Ce système a su assurer une bonne distribution des revenus en faveur des classes moyennes, mais sans appauvrissement des classes populaires. Cette page s'est tournée à la suite des agressions militaires de 1956 et de 1967 qui mobilisèrent Israël. Sadate et plus encore Moubarak ont œuvré au démantèlement du système productif égyptien, auquel ils ont substitué un système totalement incohérent, exclusivement fondé sur la recherche de rentabilité. Les taux de croissance égyptiens prétendument élevés, qu'exalte depuis trente ans la Banque mondiale, n'ont aucune signification. C'est de la poudre aux yeux. La croissance égyptienne est très vulnérable, dépendante du marché extérieur et du flux de capitaux pétroliers venus des pays

rentiers du Golfe. Avec la crise du système mondial, cette vulnérabilité s'est manifestée par un brutal essoufflement. Cette croissance s'est accompagnée d'une incroyable montée des inégalités et du chômage, qui frappe une majorité de jeunes. Cette situation était explosive, elle a explosé. Ce qui est désormais engagé, au-delà des revendications initiales de départ du régime et d'instauration des libertés démocratiques, c'est une bataille politique.

### **Pourquoi les Frères musulmans tentent-ils désormais de se présenter comme des « modérés » ?**

**Samir Amin.** Parce qu'on leur demande de jouer ce jeu. Les Frères musulmans n'ont jamais été des modérés. Il ne s'agit pas d'un mouvement religieux, mais d'un mouvement politique qui utilise la religion. Dès sa fondation en 1920 par les Britanniques et la monarchie, ce mouvement a joué un rôle actif d'agent anticommuniste, antiprogressiste, antidémocratique. C'est la raison d'être des Frères musulmans et ils la revendiquent. Ils l'affirment ouvertement : s'ils gagnent une élection, ce sera la dernière, parce que le régime électoral serait un régime occidental importé contraire à la nature islamique. Ils n'ont absolument rien changé sur ce plan. En réalité, l'islam politique a toujours été soutenu par les États-Unis. Ils ont présenté les talibans dans la guerre contre l'Union soviétique comme des héros de la liberté. Lorsque les talibans ont fermé les écoles de filles créées par les communistes, il s'est trouvé des mouvements féministes aux États-Unis pour expliquer qu'il fallait respecter les « traditions » de ce pays. Ceci relève d'un double jeu. D'un côté, le soutien. De l'autre, l'instrumentalisation des excès naturels des fondamentalistes pour alimenter le rejet des immigrés et justifier les agressions militaires. Conformément à cette stratégie, le régime de Moubarak n'a jamais lutté contre l'islam politique. Au contraire, il l'a intégré dans son système.

### **Moubarak a-t-il sous-traité la société égyptienne aux Frères musulmans ?**

**Samir Amin.** Absolument. Il leur a confié trois institutions fondamentales : la justice, l'éducation et la télévision. Mais le régime militaire veut conserver pour lui la direction, revendiquée par les Frères musulmans. Les États-Unis utilisent ce conflit mineur au sein de l'alliance entre militaires et islamistes pour s'assurer de la docilité des uns comme des autres. L'essentiel est que tous acceptent le capitalisme tel qu'il est. Les Frères musulmans n'ont jamais envisagé de changer les choses de manière sérieuse. D'ailleurs lors des grandes grèves ouvrières de 2007-2008, leurs parlementaires ont voté avec le gouvernement contre les grévistes. Face aux luttes des paysans expulsés de leur terre par les grands propriétaires fonciers, les Frères musulmans prennent partie contre le mouvement paysan. Pour eux la propriété privée, la libre entreprise et le profit sont sacrés.

### **Quelles sont leurs visées à l'échelle du Proche-Orient ?**

**Samir Amin.** Tous sont très dociles. Les militaires comme les Frères musulmans acceptent l'hégémonie des États-Unis dans la région et la paix avec Israël telle qu'elle est. Les uns comme les autres continueront à faire preuve de cette complaisance qui permet à Israël de poursuivre la colonisation de ce qui reste de la Palestine.

## DDD

(en anglais seulement)

SA: In the short paper, I wanted to stress the strategy of the enemy, that is, the strategy of the USA and the ruling class of Egypt. Many people do not understand this. Now I would like to discuss the components and the strategies of the movement.

There are four components of the opposition. One is the youth. They are politicized young people, they are organized very strongly, they are more than one million organized, which is not at all a small number. They are against the social and economic system. Whether they are anti-capitalist is a little theoretical for them, but they are against social injustice and growing inequality. They are nationalist in the good sense, they are anti-imperialist. They hate the submission of Egypt to the US hegemony. They are therefore against so-called peace with Israel, which tolerates Israel's continued colonization of occupied Palestine. They are democratic, totally against the dictatorship of the army and the police. They have decentralized leaderships. When they gave the order to demonstrate, the mobilization was one million. But within a few hours, the actual figure was not one million, but fifteen millions, everywhere throughout the whole nation, and in the quarters of small towns and villages. They had an immediate gigantic positive echo in the whole nation.

The second component is the radical left, which comes from the communist tradition. The young are not anti communist, but they do not want to be put in the frame of a party with chiefs and orders. They do not have bad relations with the communists. Absolutely no problem. Thanks to the demonstrations, there is a coming together, not of leadership, but of interaction.

The third component is the middle class democrats. The system is so police and so mafia that many, including small businessmen, were continuously racketed in order to survive. They are not part of the left; they accept capitalism, business and the market, they are even not totally anti-American, they do not love Israel but they accept it. But they are democrats, against the concentration of power of the army, police and the gang mafia around. El Baradei is typical of them, he has no idea of the economy other than what it is -- the market. He does not know what socialism is, but he is democrat.

The fourth component is the Muslim Brotherhood. Even if they have a public political popular echo, they are ultra reactionary. They have not only religious ideology, they are reactionaries on social ground. They have been openly against the strikes of the workers, standing with the state. They think workers should accept the market. They took a position against the peasants' movement. There is a strong middle peasant movement, they are menaced by the market, by the rich peasant, they struggle for the right to maintain their property. Muslim Brotherhood took position against them, saying that land property is a private right, and market is sacrosanct in Koran. Muslim Brotherhood has been in fact complicit with the regime. The regime and Muslim Brotherhood are in apparent conflict, but in fact they are combined. The State has given up to Muslim Brotherhood three major institutions: education, justice, and state TV; these are very important state institutions. Through education, they have imposed the veil first for the girls in school and then for society. Through justice, they introduced the Islam law shari'a. Through the media, they influence public opinion. The leadership has always been a corrupted political leadership made of very rich people. They have

always been financed by Saudi Arabia, which means by the USA. But they have two big influences, one in the sectors of the middle class which are pro capitalist, anti-communist, afraid of the people, and they think Muslim rule is not a bad thing. These are spontaneously with them. They are very influential among teachers, medical doctors, and lawyers etc. At the same time, they have a lumpen support in which they recruit their paid militias. In Egypt, extreme poverty is large scale. We have 5 million in Cairo that can be totally deprived among a population of 15 million. Among the very poor with very low political understanding, Muslim Brotherhood has this army that they can mobilize.

What happens is the following. The movement was started by the youth, joined immediately by the radical left, and joined the next day by the bourgeois democrats. Muslim Brotherhood boycotted for the first four days because they thought the movement would be defeated by the police. When they saw that the movement could not be defeated, the leadership thought they could not stay out, and they moved in. This fact must be known.

We come to the strategy of the USA. The system is not Mubarak, but the people started with one symbol, which is Mubarak. A few hours after Mubarak nominated Omar Suleiman as vice president, the slogan shouted by the people was "No Mubarak, no Suleiman, they are two Americans." Obama said we want a soft transition, which would be something like in the Philippines. The people say, we want to get rid of not one criminal but all criminals, a real transition not a farce, so there is a very high political consciousness. Yet the USA target is a soft transition. How? By opening negotiation with the right and the centre, with Muslim Brotherhood and eventually some bourgeois democrats, they would isolate the left and the youth. That is their strategy. With or without formal concessions, they say soon Mubarak will be out. An invitation to so called "negotiation" was initiated by vice president Soliman. The Muslim Brotherhood leadership is clever, they did not surrender. But they accepted the principle of negotiations with the system.

The conference of the movement, which is discussing everyday, is establishing the rules for a real transition:

First, the immediate dissolution of the fabricated assembly

Second, the immediate lifting of the martial law and allowing free demonstration;

Third, starting the project of a new constitution;

Fourth, the assembly elected should be a constitutional assembly;

Fifth, not immediate or fast elections, but allow for a long time of freedom. If it is immediate elections, many people will vote for the Muslims because they are organized, they have the media, and so on. But if you allow for a year of real freedom, the left and the youth can then organize themselves.

It is the beginning of a long struggle. Egypt is a country of long revolutions. From 1920 to 1952, with ups and downs. In the long run, the youth and the left are the majority, with capacity of action. But a bad possible scenario is the possibility of Muslim Brotherhood attacking them. They have tried. The system is very vicious. It had opened the prison and released 17,000 criminals, given them pro-Mubarak badges, arms, money, and the guarantee that they would not return to the prison, for them

to attack the demonstrators. These criminals could not have escaped from the prison if not with the protection of the police. Nobody from the movement opened the prison.

WH: You think the young people are for the left. But it seems likely that the right and Muslim Brotherhood will try to divide the young people. I think it is important that the youth, even the democrats, are not for the Americans.

SA: Many democrats are neutral, not against the Americans. El Baradei is rather naïve that the Americans are for democracy. We continue repeating that the target of USA is not democracy.

LKC: What has been the role of the workers and the farmers?

SA: Three years ago, there was a wave of strikes in Egypt, the strongest in the African continent, South Africa included, since 50 years. The official trade unions are completely controlled by the state, since the time of Nasser, like the Soviet model of state control of the trade union. The strike did not start from the trade union leadership, but from the bottom. We can say it was spontaneous in terms of it not being initiated by the leadership. It was a success, a gigantic success. The regime three years ago wanted to send the police. The companies said no, it was impossible, because we could have all the factories destroyed. They negotiated. The strikes won very small concessions, 10% or 15% increase of wages, which was less than what had been eaten by the inflation of those years. However it won something important for dignity, and for trade union rights, such as no one would be dismissed without the knowledge of the trade union. They established themselves as new independent trade union. They are there now in the movement.

The peasant movement is much more difficult in connecting. There has always been a radical movement since 1920. You have the latifundias, but there are also the rich peasants which are very strong in rural society since they are not the absentees, and they have relations with the government, the lawyers, the doctors. There are the middle peasants, the poor and the very poor peasants, and the landless. The situation of the landless, curiously, has not deteriorated in the last 30 years, because they have out migrated to the Gulf countries for work, and they have made some small money which allowed them not to buy back land, but to establish themselves in the grey, informal economic activities. The very poor are menaced, because the neo liberal market allows and facilitates them to be expropriated by the rich peasants, new capitalist landowners, and modern Egyptian companies associated with agrobusiness. They are very radical, they are not anti-communist, but they do not know what communism is. They simply do not know. It is the weakness of the communists that they have never been able to integrate them. The only people who went to discuss with them were the communists, not Muslims, not bourgeois democrats. But nobody has influence on them. But they have continued their struggles.

LKC: Have the workers and the peasants participated in the recent mobilizations?

SA: The peasants have mobilized in the small villages, but there are no links with the global movement. They do not participate in the conference that is discussing the transition.

WH: Are the movements mostly urban?

SA: Yes, also in small towns.

WH: How would you explain their spontaneity?

SA: The people are fed up with everything, with the police. If you happen to be arrested, even if it is only because of the red light, you will be beaten and tortured. There is the daily torture and repression from the police. Absolute impunity. Most ugly. People are also fed up with the mafia system. The entrepreneurs that the World Bank says are the future, are gangsters. Where do they have their fortune? From selling land of the state given to them by the state for nothing, for building projects; wealth accumulated by dispossession. They are squeezing the real entrepreneurs.

People are also fed up with the American dictates. Egyptians are good nationalists. We ask, how can we be so low, that the American ambassador and president dictate everything everyday? There is also the social degradation. Unemployment and poverty is growing for the majority, inequality is gigantic. So all that combined. The government has no legitimacy. Now that is no more. Sudden explosions. People got killed. But they know that if you struggle, you may die.

WH: What is the impact on solidarity on Arab countries?

SA: It will have an echo, but each country is different. Tunisia is a small country, with a higher level of education and of living, but it is a small country and vulnerable in the global economy.

WH: It seems people are more organized in Tunisia, and it is more spontaneous in Egypt. There would certainly be an impact on Palestine?

SA: Sure, also impact on Syria which is very complex. It is very difficult to know the impact on Iraq. South Yemen is nationalist populist left and with Marxist rhetoric and some thinking of the radical left, the strong feeling for one nation. But it is like Korea, with a backward north and an advanced south. Yemen may split again, because the south cannot accept unity.

LKC: Please comment on the latest developments.

SA: What has happened is that firstly, Mubarak has not resigned. He has been dismissed by a coup d'état of the head of the army, and he and his fellow vice president Omar Suleiman have been dismissed. This new official leadership of the army is claiming that it will hold power until new elections, and then the army will go back to the barracks. In the meantime, they are responsible for the transition.

But the conference of the movements has continued its work, to push for its demands for a new democracy with all freedoms such as organization and access to the media.

Secondly, this conference will deliberate on a concept of new constitution, so that the assembly that will be elected will be a constitutional assembly, not a legislative assembly, even if the government makes its soft amendments to the present constitution.

It is too early to know how this new government will manage the condition. We will know in the coming days. The movement has not completed its project. The leadership of the army wants a strong transition with an election in which of course the Muslim Brotherhood will be highly represented. We want a slow transition in order to allow for the new political, democratic forces to organize themselves, to elaborate their programmes and projects, and to have access to the public opinion, before the elections

**EEE**

**(in French only)**

## Les Frères Musulmans dans la révolution égyptienne

La révolution égyptienne en cours illustre la possibilité de la fin annoncée de ce système dit « néolibéral », remis en cause dans toutes ses dimensions politiques, économiques et sociales.

Ce mouvement gigantesque du peuple égyptien associe quatre composantes : les jeunes « re-politisés » par leur propre volonté et dans des formes « modernes » qu'ils ont inventées ; les forces de la gauche radicale ; celles rassemblées par les classes moyennes démocrates ; des segments des Frères Musulmans.

Les jeunes ont été le fer de lance du mouvement et ont initié ce mouvement, immédiatement rejoints par la gauche radicale et les classes moyennes démocrates. Les Frères Musulmans qui avaient boycotté les manifestations pendant les quatre premiers jours (persuadés que celles-ci seraient mises en déroute par la répression) et qui restent minoritaires dans le mouvement, n'ont rejoint les cortèges que plus tard. Les jeunes et la gauche radicale poursuivent trois objectifs communs : la restauration de la démocratie (la fin du régime militaire), la mise en œuvre d'une nouvelle politique économique et sociale favorable aux classes populaires (la rupture avec la soumission aux exigences du libéralisme mondialisé), et celle d'une politique internationale indépendante (la rupture avec la soumission aux exigences de l'hégémonie des Etats Unis et du déploiement de son contrôle militaire de la planète). Ils font de cette révolution démocratique une révolution démocratique anti-impérialiste. Les classes moyennes se rassemblent dans l'ensemble autour du seul objectif démocratique, sans sérieusement remettre en cause le « marché » (tel qu'il est) et l'alignement international de l'Egypte.

Les Frères Musulmans constituent la seule force politique dont le régime avait non seulement toléré l'existence, mais dont il avait soutenu activement l'épanouissement.

Les Frères Musulmans n'ont jamais été, et ne peuvent être « modérés », encore moins « démocratiques ». Leur « chef » – le « *mourchid* » (traduction arabe de « guide » – « fuhrer ») est autoproclamé, et l'organisation repose sur le principe de la discipline et de l'exécution des ordres des chefs, sans discussions d'aucune sorte. La direction est constituée exclusivement d'hommes immensément riches (grâce entre autre au soutien financier de l'Arabie Saoudite, c'est-à-dire de Washington), l'encadrement par des hommes issus des fractions obscurantistes des classes

moyennes, la base de gens du peuple recrutés par les services sociaux de charité offerts par la confrérie (et financés toujours par l'Arabie Saoudite), tandis que la force de frappe constituée par les milices sont recrutés (et payés) dans le lumpen.

Les Frères Musulmans sont « modérés » dans le double sens qu'ils ont toujours refusé de formuler un programme économique et social quelconque et que de ce fait ils ne remettent pas en cause les politiques néolibérales, réactionnaires et qu'ils acceptent de facto la soumission aux exigences du déploiement du contrôle des Etats Unis dans le monde et dans la région. Ils sont donc des alliés utiles pour Washington (y a-t-il un meilleur allié des Etats Unis que l'Arabie Saoudite, patron des Frères ?) qui leur a décerné pour légitimer cette alliance le titre honorable de « démocrates » !

Mais les Etats Unis ne peuvent avouer que leur stratégie vise à mettre en place des régimes « islamiques » dans la région. Ils ont besoin de faire comme si « cela leur faisait peur ». Parce que par ce moyen ils légitiment leur « guerre permanente au terrorisme », qui poursuit en réalité d'autres objectifs : le contrôle militaire de la planète destiné à réserver aux Etats Unis – Europe – Japon, l'accès exclusif aux ressources. Avantage supplémentaire de cette duplicité : elle permet de mobiliser « l'islamophobie des opinions publiques. L'Europe, comme on le sait, n'a pas de stratégie particulière à l'égard de la région et se contente de s'aligner au jour le jour sur les décisions de Washington.

Il est nécessaire plus que jamais de faire apparaître clairement cette véritable duplicité de la stratégie des Etats Unis, dont les opinions publiques – manipulées avec efficacité – sont dupes. Les Etats Unis (et derrière eux l'Europe) craignent plus que tout une Egypte réellement démocratique, qui certainement remettrait en cause son alignement sur le libéralisme économique et la stratégie agressive des Etats Unis et de l'OTAN. Ils feront tout pour que l'Egypte ne soit pas démocratique et, à cette fin, soutiendront par tous les moyens, mais avec hypocrisie, la fausse alternative Frères Musulmans qui ont montré n'être qu'en minorité dans le mouvement du peuple égyptien pour un changement réel.

## FFF

Phone interview with Samir Amin, 110222.

KC: The military has maneuvered to take power, and you are among the first to bluntly call this a coup d'état. It seems the euphoria of the overthrow of Mubarak overshadowed this hard fact. Now the army has cleared the Tahrir Square, arrested over 100 protestors that refused to leave the Square, not lifted martial law, not released political prisoners, and endeavoured to present an image of "normalcy". A period of uncertainty and a tag of war is unfolding. On the one hand, the people

continue with their assemblies in the street, advancing the revolution. At the same time, for sure, the reactionary forces are trying all means to turn the tide of the people's revolution, and they never lack the means of power and violence to do so. What are the strategic and tactical moves by the forces of revolution at this critical juncture to connect and consolidate?

SA: Let me explain to you how the movement is developing. The army is part of the system, and the Muslim Brotherhood is also part of the system. They have been associated since the time of Sadat and Mubarak. They continue to be associated. They appear to be dissociated because they have different constituencies, hence they need to look separate. The strategy of the US is to maintain the system, with minimal concession to democracy. Their example could be like the Philippines or Indonesia, you have change of the leader, but not the system. Later, there will be a government with Muslim Brotherhood and the army. The army has been corrupted, the enormous US aid to Egypt was not to reinforce the military capacity of the army at all, but to allow the army to buy off with this money 40% of the Egyptian economy. That is purposely done, in order to capture the army as ally of the US. This must be taken into account.

The challenge is in front of us. We had a first victory, which is of course very important. But there would be the role of the Muslim Brotherhood. I have written a paper on the Muslim Brotherhood in French. The Muslim Brotherhood is not a democratic organization, and cannot be so. It is a top down military organization with the least democracy. It is a quasi fascist party, and it has different constituencies. The leaders are multi billionaires funded by Saudi Arabia. The cadres are backward segments of the petty bourgeoisie, mostly religious. The masses are poor chaps, recruited through social activities financed by Saudi Arabia. The militias are lumpen. We should insist on the duplicity of the US in preparing for the role of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Secondly, the movement is the majority of the people, there are millions and millions. They are fully aware of the problems. Every Friday there will be gigantic mobilizations, each time with more political maturity. They say, we do not want a government aligned with the US. They will continue demonstrating and mobilizing. They will use the margin of freedom of speech now allowed to raise the political awareness of the people.

KC: How was the Conference formed at the Tahrir Square, and how does it work?

SA: The Conference continues to work, and it operates at all levels, at the central and national level, and also at the level of towns and villages. The Conference has now on the agenda how to get a new transition government in which the opposition is represented.

KC: How did the Conference start, how does it operate? There is very little report about the Conference in the mainstream mass media.

SA: There is nothing reported in the Western media purposely. The western media want to pretend that people are happy with the transition. The people have applauded the fall of Mubarak. On the other hand, the people of the Conference are too busy. They are well known inside Egypt, though not outside. How do they operate? They sit together for hours and hours to discuss how to proceed. It started very early, around the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> day of the demonstration. It started not spontaneously, but at Tahrir Square, with a good number of representatives of the three components of the

movement. Then they moved out of the Square to go elsewhere in order to be able to discuss seriously. Then they feel there should be similar conferences at different levels.

The agenda has changed. First, it was the removal of Mubarak. Now, what do we want in transition and as final target. The economic and social system should deliver for the popular classes. They say literally, go to hell, for the World Bank and IMF.

Second, independent foreign policy of Egypt, not be tied to the US and Israel.

Third, a transitional government that includes them. Now the focus is on the transition government.

KC: About how many people are there in the Conference?

SA: A few hundreds.

KC: The military is said to own 40% of the economy. They are therefore defender of their own interests and not only an instrument of the state in defending class rule. Do they own it in private forms, or in so-called "state-owned economy"?

SA: The state-owned economy has been privatized, and in the process of privatization, the army has gained ownership. In some areas, a group of officers owns this or that; in some cases, the army (nobody knows what this means) has the ownership.

KC: In some media reports, the people who urge for market economy complain that the military is obstacle to a free, open market economy.

SA: That is duplicity. They have given money to the army, as part of concessions of the compromise between the US and the army.

KC: Egypt saw a wave of prominent workers' strikes three years ago. How do you think the workers would wield their strength as workers and not just anti-dictatorship protestors? Can you say something more about the independent trade union federation? There have been many worker strikes after Mubarak was gone. Are these strikes now taking on political forms?

SA: The new independent trade unions are participating in the Conference. Indeed, there are a number of economic and social demands, and so there are strikes.

KC: The people's revolution cannot but address the question of redistribution of wealth and change in property relations. Do you see any prospect of economic struggles going beyond demand for increased wages and welfare, or protests against inflation and unemployment, to articulate a socialist or communist agenda? Are there such programmatic discussions and debates in Egypt? Skepticism about a vanguard party is one thing, aversion to programmatic debate is another thing. The radical left may not be organizationally strong, but it can play a prominent political role in the intervention of radical thought.

SA: In the movement, there are people with higher understanding and are socialist, and they think economic demands should go in the perspective towards socialism. But there are also those who are not fundamentally critical about capitalism, they are only against this particular capitalism, so they demand only social welfare etc.

Wang Hui: How would the Egyptian revolution impact on the Middle East, with what is going on in Bahrain and Libya? How do you see the similarities and differences between the movements in Egypt and the other countries?

SA: A domino effect, no doubt, after the movement in Egypt. But each country has absolutely different conditions. In Libya, as you can see, it is terrible, because the Khadafi regime is bombing the people with real bullets, and kill. I have no idea of the components of the movement and their demands. Bahrain is a very small country, but the majority being Shiite, and the monarchy being Sunni, there have always been tensions. The popular demand is only for constitutional democracy, and equality between the Shiites and the Sunnis in the kingdom. In Yemen, the movements in the north and the south are different; the north is relatively moderate, whereas the south is much more radical because the trade unions and the communist party are stronger. Each country has its different conditions.

WH: How is Israel's attitude towards the changes in these countries?

SA: Israel is nothing more than the US, it is the enemy. US and Israel will combine their strategy, for sure, to minimize the radicality of the movements. Israel does not do anything without the permission of Washington.

WH: Do you think the "strong transition" can be completed, and what sort of corresponding measures are the people taking? What are your views on the future political changes in Egypt?

SA: You ask a question that cannot be answered. I cannot tell you what is going to be the future, just like you cannot ask the Chinese Communist Party in 1925 if it will win the revolution. It is a long process, and I do not know how this transition will continue, or if the government will give more concessions to the opposition. But what I can say is that Egypt is a country of long revolutions. The people are accustomed to it. The 1920 revolution continued for 30 years before the Nasser compromise. Everybody knows in Egypt that nothing much has been won, but we shall continue the process of struggle.

KC: Alain Badiou wrote about the accumulation of the people's processes. I think that echoes with your views, that the people's revolution is a long process of accumulation. The eruptions may come with more frequency and intensity. In Egypt, what just happened was not too much of a surprise because of the 1977 bread riot, the 2008 wave of strikes...

SA: The difference between Egypt and Libya is that the movement in Egypt is not chaos, and the movement is growing as a strong political movement. It is relatively well organized. That is very positive and important. During the first days, there were a number of attempts to create chaos by the government releasing criminals, and setting buildings on fire, but these attempts had failed. The people had behaved maturely, not beat up prisoners, etc.. It was maturity, not chaos.

KC: What has contributed to this maturity? Is it because the youth are educated, or there are some cultural traditions in Egypt?

SA: It is a combination of many things. The Egyptian political culture has been shaped by bourgeois liberals and by communists. The bourgeois liberals are anti-imperialist and democratic. And there are the communists. Their references are the French revolution, the Russian revolution, and the Chinese revolution. No reference to the US congress. It is deep in the Egyptian political culture. If you speak of liberty, equality, fraternity, the people would say, yes we know. If you speak of the red star, the worker and peasant alliance, the people would say, yes we know. If you speak of the US congress, nobody responds. This is in the political culture: bourgeois democratic, and communist. Our revolutions are long, and not chaotic.

KC: So the people are critical about parliamentary democracy?

SA: Of course. Of course. After the revolution of 1920, there was the parliament, but the first parliament could not govern.

KC: There are tensions between bourgeois democracy and communism. Which would you say has more influence among the young generation?

SA: I do not know. To answer the question, we need to meet and talk to many people. My guess is there is a wide range of the young. Some are more radical. Some are from the lower middle class, and some from the upper middle class. But they are homogenous on three things: 1, social justice; 2, independent international policy; 3, democracy and respect of rights.

KC: The Muslim Brotherhood was not a legal organization yet it was tolerated, and in fact was complicit with the government. The communist party was repressed and kept underground. Were communist activities tolerated?

SA: The government has never tolerated the communist party. They have killed or imprisoned Communist Party members, but have not eradicated them.

KC: How have communist ideas been maintained?

SA: That is a long story. The communist movement has gone through stages. For a long time, it has been limited by Moscow, then split into Maoists and Moscowites. Then they have roughly come back to confluence without being completely united. This is a long story. I have written about it in my memoirs.