The People’s Spring. The Future of the Arab Revolution.
By Samir Amin*
Pambazuka Press, 2012

Reviews **

Adam Hanieh (Development Studies, SOAS):

“Samir Amin has once again demonstrated why he is one of the most original, powerful thinkers on the politics of the Middle East and North Africa. This book outlines a remarkable historical framework for understanding the uprisings that shook the region in 2011 and continue to reverberate through 2012. Amin’s panoramic analysis covers the role of political Islam, the various phases of colonial and imperialist intervention in the region, and the evolution of a wide range of political and social movements. His core argument - that the peoples of the region need to reverse the paralysis of ‘depoliticisation’ - is presented through a deep appreciation of the region's development within the world system. A must-read for anyone concerned with the fate of the Arab uprisings!”

Hamid Dabashi (Columbia University, author "Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism"):

“These are the times when we need to hear from the wisest, most judicious, most daring intellects of our time--those whose visionary insights have guided us through the thick and thin of despair. For decades Samir Amin has been one of those few voices--in tune with our rebellious history--and how precious are his words today as a yardstick of how to think about our world in transcontinental uprising. In The People's Spring: The Future of the Arab Revolution, Samir Amin is jubilant, judicious, mindful, principled. I have read his book by way of adjusting my own vision as to how to see these world-historic events more clearly.”

Immanuel Wallerstein (Yale University):

“Samir Amin has given us another of his refreshingly intelligent, deeply historical, and structurally analytic books. Even when one doesn't agree, one is forced to rethink one's assumptions. This is an indispensable guide to the political struggles of the contemporary Middle East.”
«... The uprising of Arab peoples as of early 2011 was not unexpected, at least by many Arab activists, if not by the Western powers.

During the Bandung and non-alignment period (1955-80), the Arab countries were in the forefront of the struggles of the peoples, the nations and the states of the South for a better future and a less unequal system. ...»

«... These regimes achieved whatever they could within a short time frame, say 20 years, and thereafter ran out of steam, as a result of their internal limits and contradictions. This, coinciding with the breakdown of Soviet power, facilitated the imperialist neoliberal offensive. The ruling circles, in order to remain in office, chose to retreat and submit to the demands of neoliberal globalisation. The result was a fast degradation of social conditions and the loss within a few years of all that which had been achieved in the era of the national popular state, to the benefit of the popular and middle classes, with poverty and mass unemployment being the normal result of the neoliberal policies that were pursued. ...»

«... The degradation produced by contemporary capitalist globalisation has brought a breathtaking expansion of so-called ‘informal’ activities which, in Egypt, provide the means of survival of more than half the population (60 per cent, according to the statistics). The Muslim Brothers are in a strong position to take advantage of this degradation and to perpetuate it. Their simple ideology gives a legitimacy to this primitive bazaar economy. The fabulous amounts of money put at their disposal (by the Gulf countries) enable them to carry out effective actions: financial advances to the informal economy and charity work (health care centers and others). This is how the Brothers have insinuated themselves into society and rendered it dependent on them. But this success would have been difficult if it had not responded perfectly to the objectives of the Gulf countries, Washington and Israel. These three intimate allies share the same concern: to dismantle the recovery of Egypt. A strong Egypt standing on its own feet, would mean the end of the triple hegemony of the Gulf (submission to the discourse on the Islamisation of the society), of the United States (a compradorised and impoverished Egypt that remains in their fold) and of Israel (a powerless Egypt that leaves Palestine alone). ...»

«... What I have wanted to show in this book is that depoliticisation has been decisive in allowing political Islam to come to the fore. This depoliticisation is certainly not confined to Nasserite Egypt. It has been the dominant practice in all the national popular experiences in the first awakening of the South and even in the historical socialism after the first phase of revolutionary fervor had passed. The common denominator has been the suppression of democratic practice (which I do not reduce to the holding of multiparty elections), in other
words the lack of respect for the diversity of opinions and political proposals and, possibly, their organisation. »

«... In the case of Muslim societies, this depoliticisation is the principal form of the apparent ‘return’ of Islam. The articulation linking the power of reactionary power of reactionary political Islam, comprador submission and impoverishment through the informal bazaar economy is not specific to Egypt. It is already to be found in most Arab and Muslim societies, as far as Pakistan and beyond. The same articulation operates in Iran: the triumph of its bazaar economy was clearly, right from the start, the main result of the ‘Khomeini revolution’. »

«... The strategy of contemporary imperialism for the region (the ‘great Middle East’) does not aim at all at establishing some form of democracy. It aims at destroying the countries and societies through the support of so-called Islamic regimes which guarantee the continuation of ‘lumpen development’ (to use the words of my late friend A.G. Frank), that is, a process of continuous pauperisation. Eventual ‘high rates of growth’, praised by the World Bank, are meaningless, being based on the plunder of natural resources, associated with fast-growing inequality in the distribution of income and pauperization for the majorities.

Iraq provides the model for the region. The dictatorship of Saddam Hussein has been replaced by no less than three (perhaps more) terror regimes, in the name of religion (Sunni and Shia) and of ethnicity (the Kurds), which are associated with the systematic destruction of the infrastructures and industries and the planned assassination of tens of thousands of the elite citizens, in particular engineers and architects, as well as the destruction the education system (which was not bad in the time of Saddam) so that it is reduced to the teaching of religion and business. These are also the aims for Syria.

The next target is Iran, under the pretext of its nuclear development, using to that effect Israel, which is unable to do the job without the active involvement of US forces. Iran, whatever one may think of its regime (association the rule of Islam and the market economy) does constitute an obstacle to the deployment of US military control over the region, so this country must be destroyed.

The final real target of contemporary imperialism is containment and thereafter rolling back the pre-emptive war of the most dangerous emerging countries (China first). Add here Russia, which, if it succeeds in modernising its army, can put an end to the exclusive military power of the US. »

«... The question of political politicisation is, in the Arab world as elsewhere, the central theme of the challenge. Our era is not one of democratic advances but, on the contrary, of regression in this field. The extreme concentration in the capital of the generalized monopolies permits, indeed demands, the unconditional and total submission of political power to its orders. The accentuation of presidential powers seems to be highly individualised but in fact it is integrally subordinated to servicing the financial plutocracy. This is the form taken by the drift that is annihilating the defunct bourgeois democracy (which was once reinforced by the conquests of the workers), replacing it by a democratic farce. »
«... Democracy implies the arrival on the scene of citizens capable of formulating alternative projects for society and not just envisaging alternance (alternation, with no change) through meaningless elections. As citizens who have creative imagination have disappeared, they are being replaced by depoliticised individuals who are passive spectators of the political scene, consumers modeled by the system, who (wrongly) believe that they are free individuals. ...»
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* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samir_Amin
http://monthlyreview.org/author/samiramin
http://www.zcommunications.org/zspace/samiramin
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ac8Fsu0WVKg

** http://fahamubooks.org/book/?GCOI=90638100029100&fa=reviews