



Aida Seif El-Dawla



Amr Khaled



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Hossam Badrawi



Amr Hamzawy



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THE CAIRO REVIEW INTERVIEWS

INSIDE EGYPT'S UPRISING

Few imagined such a scene, such defiance: in Tahrir Square, a million Egyptians protested with a huge banner that read “PEOPLE DEMAND REMOVAL OF THE REGIME.” Young activists used social media tools such as Facebook to organize the first protest on January 25, the country’s Police Day. Eighteen days of mounting demonstrations later, with the country increasingly paralyzed, President Hosni Mubarak resigned after a thirty-year rule.

Mohammed Bouazizi, a twenty-six-year-old street vendor in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, is the one who lit the match that ignited the revolts against dictators throughout the Arab world. His self-immolation last December 17—after a government inspector confiscated his fruit and slapped him for trying to resist her authority—set off protests all over Tunisia and drove President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali from power on January 14. Before long, uprisings also posed threats to longstanding regimes in Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, and Syria.

The Arab revolutions of 2011 are a turning point in Middle East history. Why did they occur? Why now? What comes next? In the *Cairo Review* Interviews, nine key figures give an inside look at the causes and effects of Egypt’s uprising and discuss the challenges now facing the country and the region.

Amr Khaled: *How to rebuild Egypt*

Esraa Abdel Fattah: *The new youth activism*

Hossam Badrawi: *Revolution viewed from inside the regime*

Alaa Al Aswany: *Artists and protests*

Essam El-Erian: *Future of the Muslim Brotherhood*

Nabil Fahmy: *Arab foreign policy shift*

Amr Hamzawy: *Challenge of transition*

Aida Seif El-Dawla: *Ongoing human rights abuses*

Rami G. Khouri: *Middle East awakening*

FAITH AND HOPE IN EGYPT

Populist Muslim preacher Amr Khaled argues that economic development, religious coexistence, and international partnerships are keys to the country's future

Amr Khaled is an Egyptian preacher who reaches millions of Muslims through televised sermons on Arab satellite channels, and is the founder of development organizations such as Life Makers and the Right Start Foundation. Originally an accountant by training, Khaled began giving talks on religious topics in the mid-1990s to small groups gathered in private homes. Soon, his sermons in mosques were drawing thousands of Egyptians and his innovative development projects were getting results. Pushed out of Egypt by President Hosni Mubarak's regime, Khaled won legions of new followers with regional television programs that encouraged young arabs to improve their prospects. Khaled has been active in Egypt's transition and says he does not rule out running for president. The *Cairo Review's* **Ethar El-Katatney** interviewed Khaled in Cairo on February 23, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is your strongest memory of Egypt's January 25 Revolution?*

AMR KHALED: I think the word and concept of "peace." Of how much our youth did this revolution without any blood, how much they understood that Egypt has always been peaceful like that. This was a very important point. What our army and youth did in Tahrir is Egyptian civilization. My expectations were that there wouldn't be blood. It was a critical time though. Anything could go a different way. I'm so happy [about] what happened.

CAIRO REVIEW: *A specific moment that touched you?*

AMR KHALED: How the army dealt with me. The last day, it was not simple. [President Hosni] Mubarak's speech was unexpected and the people were so angry. At that time I was in Tahrir, so I met with one of the leaders of the army and he talked to me and said, "My sister [is] here, and my brother [is] here, I'm here. All of us are here. I will not shoot any of those [people], because all of them are my family." His words were very warm. And I believe that he was trying to say he, too, is one of the people.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How will Egyptians change?*

AMR KHALED: The expectations for their future became very, very high. People in Egypt now believe in freedom, democracy, youth empowerment. In 2006, I talked to the youth. I told them, please send me your dreams for the country, what you want [to see] in twenty years from now. In one month, I got 1.4 million replies. You know what was number one? “We want and need jobs.” We need to respect ourselves, dedicate ourselves to work, create something.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Will dreams come true?*

AMR KHALED: To be honest with you, we need partners to create these huge numbers of jobs, after thirty years with no movement and the society the way it is now. We need to work. We need to move. We need to find solutions for problems. And the first challenge is to create jobs. So I believe we need partners. We need to feel that the West will not do injustice to us. There’s a deep feeling that the West took our raw materials to the West, and left us. The Egyptian youth gives the West evidence that our quality is very good. We don’t need [you] only to go to India or Singapore to start work and establish your programs and manufacturing. Come to Egypt. Give these youth opportunities. Open markets. We need buildings and projects. Give youth the opportunity to work.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you view the role that the United States played during the events?*

AMR KHALED: After the revolution, I’m not going to [make] speeches and talk about the past. Let’s talk about the future. Now, the word hope for the Egyptian youth became very important. If no one extends their hands to help the youth in freedom and economic issues, these expectations they have will transfer to the opposite. It’ll be depression. And I’m afraid if people don’t reach out to the youth, there will be problems. They will be ready to go to the extremes. So for all of us, we need to talk about coexistence through projects. Not words. Projects.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why did the youth revolt now?*

AMR KHALED: Actually, they’re very patient. Thirty years is not a short time. It’s a huge time. But we said it too many times, we have a problem. And no one listened and respected people. The average age is twenty-two. Can you imagine those people? No one respects them? No one gives them hope? So much energy, but nothing to do? No freedom. No jobs. No place to play even football. Where will my energy go? So we can’t say “Why this day?” It was always going to happen. Many people were saying that.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the revolution for?*

AMR KHALED: Freedom. Just one word: freedom. Before January 25, for me to breathe freedom was impossible. I took the plane from Egypt to London to breathe the freedom. But now I can breathe the freedom in Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How have Egyptians changed?*

AMR KHALED: It changed [the] youth. For example, now religion is talked about [in] a different way. Not religion for religion. There's a huge difference. Before January 25, because there was nothing to do in society, they were talking about faith. At that time, I was talking about faith for development. Faith for faith could lead to extremism. But to talk about faith to make you build, create, do something for society, people wouldn't think like that. Now, people don't talk about faith just for faith. Faith to do something for Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What else?*

AMR KHALED: The world of coexistence changed since January 25. People would ask, "What do you mean by coexistence? Christians, Muslims? With the West?" Now it's an acceptable word, because in Tahrir, Muslims and Christians were together and had the same dream. Coexistence comes from us having the whole dream: the freedom of Egypt. But how can we use this energy and build a new dream? We need a new economic Egypt. Egypt could be one of the top ten in the world. The last thirty years, what was the dream of Egypt? Turkey has a dream, Israel has a dream, Malaysia has a dream. What does Egypt dream? Nothing in the last thirty years. Where do we start? The dream has to be to build Egypt. Develop this country. We deserve to be one of the best countries in the world. We need partners. Let's deal with the world. We don't want to be isolated any more.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is your role in Egypt?*

AMR KHALED: I had this role before, but now it will be bigger, *insha'allah* (God willing), to empower civil society through many organizations, like Life Makers or others. To work for the sake of this country, to empower the youth. Because I believe the straight line to solve a lot of the problems in our country is empowering youth in civil society, to do something to build Egypt. That's my role now. And I will build it. A lot of youth organizations, Muslim and Christian, are working with me now. Ten million people are illiterate in Egypt. That can't be.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did the Mubarak regime restrict your activities?*

AMR KHALED: You have to ask me? They stopped all my activities. They feared that civil society would be active or achieve something, the basics of democracy. They understood that. They knew I didn't talk about political issues. But what I was doing was the

root of democracy and politics. They tried to ban anything like that. My microfinance project was stopped in 2008, the 'Improving Lives Project.' The aim is to give projects, not money, to families in Upper Egypt, in Mansoura, in many places. On one condition: your kids have to go to school. Each family would have five youths to support them to do the project. The aim is not only the microfinance or the kids, but these youths would be leaders in the future. And the project was for seven thousand families which means [about] thirty-five thousand youths would work with them. After we started with that, two hundred families, 80 percent, succeeded. They started to work, and so on. The British Council gave us support to train the youth who would work with the families. And suddenly, in one day, they [the government] stopped this project. We tried, but they stopped us. So we went to other countries with our Egyptian youth, to do it in other countries, in Jordan, Algeria, Sudan, Yemen. We succeeded with one thousand families. And we felt so sorry we had to [do] this outside of Egypt and not [in] our country. But now they have all come back to establish this project with a huge number of families and youth, to work in Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Will you stay in Egypt?*

AMR KHALED: I'm back to Egypt. No more UK. I'm based here. We have two new projects, the literacy project for ten million people in five years, which we'll do with Vodafone. And the other project will be [the] 'Improving Lives Project.' We started this last week, not next month. We'll work on it for one year. The number of youths who will work with us as volunteers is about seventy thousand.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Are you going to get involved in politics?*

AMR KHALED: I believe I have a political role since I started, to make the civil society more active. Now I think that I have a deeper role in political issues. But in the right time. With the right image. I'll go to this role for sure, but step by step in the right way. It's too early to talk about this now. Leave it at the right time and come back to me at another time to make another interview with me and I'll tell you. Soon. Yes, I'm going to this role. But how much? When? Leave it to the right time.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Do you consider running for president?*

AMR KHALED: All the options are now open to us, it's a matter of choosing where we can be of most benefit. One way might be through the creation of a political party, but not a religious party. A party which is based on social development through politics. There's also the potential of taking other political steps that are bigger than creating a political party.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are your priorities?*

AMR KHALED: Development, work. We have to pay the invoice of this revolution.

It's a great revolution. We did a great thing. All the world is watching. Egyptians are proud. But there is a great invoice [to be paid]. We need to create, work, make development. Egyptians have to prove, as we did with this revolution, we can make it different.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are your concerns?*

AMR KHALED: Again we have to be patient. Thirty years. You want to change thirty years in five days or months? You need time. We need to support this economy. And to wait and be patient. It'll take time. We have to talk to the people and trust the country. Trust the economy. We have to give a message to the world: Come to this country. Invest in this country.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What else?*

AMR KHALED: The challenge now can be coexistence between Egyptians—Muslims and Christians. I'm not very worried, but I hope [coexistence] will stay very strong like the time of the revolution. This is one of my hopes and dreams in the future. But what worries me still is the economy. This is the only obstacle I see. I believe and trust the army. I don't think any threat will come [from] the army. And after five months, there will be civil society. Some people say, "They're not ready for democracy." How can you say something like that? All the world said, "We should take notes from Egyptians!"

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you move from a revolution to a democracy?*

AMR KHALED: My son is ten years old. He was talking to me yesterday about the constitution. Can you imagine? Ten years old. We have to put the constitution in our houses. Kids, youth, must talk about our rights, our roles in society. Everyone's talking about [that]. No one is talking about sports. I mean, I believe in football, but now people are talking about politics. It's a new world in Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Who would be a good president?*

AMR KHALED: I believe that there are many people in Egypt, but no one would talk, in the past. They didn't have a chance. Most of these people, you will find them, starting in the next months, talking to the people. So I believe that we have numbers of people. Not a few. Many. They will start to take their role. It's too early to say this name or this name. Wait for two or three months. I know a lot of them. In the past, we were worried about minorities talking on behalf of the majority. Like the Muslim Brothers, and so on and so on. Now all society became active. We're not worried about any minorities pushing all over the society. Many names mean the right democracy. And everyone in this society in Egypt can think and listen. Many opinions.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are your thoughts about the Muslim Brotherhood?*

AMR KHALED: We're talking about a civil country and government. Religion is very important for the people in this area of the world. But faith for what? Faith for development would be helpful for the future. I believe we are talking about faith, and faith for all, Muslims and Christians. Faith can encourage and motivate the people to build a country. This is what I think will be the future and role of faith.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How does Islam affect democratic practice?*

AMR KHALED: The model I choose to put is faith for the sake of the country. Maybe some people have another model. And maybe I don't accept it, or find it's not the right time for the country. But I think my model is needed right now. But I told you, after the revolution, the majority became active and positive. In the past you had to choose [between] government or Muslim Brotherhood. And people don't like the government. But now a lot of players have new ideas, good ideas. All people want everything to change. I don't think there will be a fear. You can go now to the Internet and read what Egyptians and youth are saying. They've changed. Revolution is not a simple word. It did a lot to change the minds. Especially the youth. They're ready to change very quickly.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Your view on the Muslim Brotherhood?*

AMR KHALED: During the time of the revolution, they didn't try to do anything against the mainstream of the people. They were part of Egyptian revolution and they didn't try to take it for themselves. And at same time, they said "We won't run for presidential elections." I think they won't do anything against the sake of Egypt. This is in the past. Now, wait and see. This is a very critical [issue], so let's see. But there's no fear. People became very positive. I can't tell you that now. Wait and see what will happen. I was in Tahrir Square. Supporting youth through my Facebook page. More than two million youth followed us on this page. We have to listen and accept what our youth want. This is their freedom and country. We have to support it.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you label yourself?*

AMR KHALED: I'm a reformer. My role is of a reformer using faith, using and talking about hope. My role is to give hope and big dreams. To talk to [young people] about their dreams in the future. Send me your dreams. Hope and dream. I want to believe in them and give them. I have a message for the Arab youth, especially now in Tunis, Algeria, Yemen, Libya. All of us have to respect your dreams: you are a treasure. You're the treasure— not the oil, the gas. You have to dream and think. You will change your country and make a better future. And at the same time, you have to accept others. My message to Arab youth, you need others. You need coexistence. Extend your hands.

“I WANT A DEMOCRATIC EGYPT”

“Facebook Girl” Esraa Abdel Fattah appeals to members of her generation to become active in political parties for the sake of rebuilding their nation

Esraa Abdel Fattah, twenty-nine, is a coordinator for the Egyptian Democratic Academy, a nongovernmental organization promoting democracy and human rights. Born the year after Hosni Mubarak became president, she was an unlikely heroine in the fall of Mubarak’s thirty-year regime. She started as a campaign volunteer with the opposition Al-Ghad party, whose leader, Ayman Nour, was later jailed by the regime for three years. She rose to prominence in 2008 as co-founder of the April 6 Movement, a group organized on Facebook to support industrial strikes, and became a leading activist in the January 25 revolution. The *Cairo Review’s* Lauren E. Bohn interviewed Abdel Fattah in Cairo on February 27, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How did you become an activist?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I started my activism in 2005, during the presidential election and when Ayman Nour was arrested. I feel that I should be involved in the political life. I wanted to send a message to the government that you can’t arrest anyone who just says their opinion. I wanted to say my opinion. I’m not happy with being silent about all the corruption around me. I started to be an activist through the Al-Ghad party because I thought it was a young party, caring about the young people, and the majority of the members of this party were my age. I like [Ayman Nour’s] courage. I like that he insists on his rights, insists to be active to send a message to the people that the president should be changed, not just one person this whole time.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You were detained for two weeks after the April 6 campaign. Then you made a public statement renouncing activism. Why?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: Yes, my mother told me, in front of a lot of cameras here, that you should be away from activism. At this moment, I can’t say no to her. Yes, I will be away, yes mom, but after a while I can’t be away. I needed some time to refresh my mind, establish my thoughts and then I returned to activism. I returned

to Al-Ghad party for some time, then I left the party in 2009. I was involved in online activism, saying my opinion through the social media. I created a group calling for a general strike in Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How have your views about activism changed over the years?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: In 2005, I had a low profile. After 2008, I found myself as one who sends the message to people, “We can change our country, we can change Egypt to what we want.” I think it’s better to be an independent activist. I think the change should be through the system of elections so I became involved in a campaign called “My Vote is My Right.” This campaign is specialized in changing the election system. Then, I had a very big role in monitoring the election. I was a consultant with a program on how to use the social media, and Google Earth, in monitoring elections. I worked in this project for a year, then after that we worked in the [Mohamed] ElBaradei campaign. I supported his right to be a presidential candidate. I also participated in all campaigns for Khaled Said [a young Egyptian killed in police custody in Alexandria in 2010], and the last [campaign] is the revolution on 25 January.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How did you participate during the eighteen days of the revolution?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: Before the revolution, I publicized the event on Facebook. I was in the Al Jazeera Forum, and this forum is live, and I called on all Egyptian people to say we refuse to celebrate Police Day because policemen are killing people. I recorded a video for about two minutes in this forum, to encourage people to join us in the street. In the days before the revolution, I specialized in how we can raise the money for the logistics for the things we need, and what we can write in the signs we used in this revolution. In the eighteen days, I helped using Facebook and Twitter to provide coverage for what happened in Tahrir Square. I participated in a lot of TV shows to say my opinion.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the role of social media?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: Yes, I think this social media had a great role. We used this tool to organize people, to prepare what to say, when to move, when to stop. We used social media to organize ourselves in a very active way. To publicize the event the way we want, and to make coverage for the events that happened in the street. And when we broadcast what happened, at the same time we encouraged them to join us in the street.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What sparked the January 25 revolution?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I think the first thing is the revolution in Tunisia. It helped us to think, “We can change.” This is the energy of what we felt at this time. Then, we

tried to rethink our demonstrations. They were not active and always the same people. We thought that now we should go to the other streets and to walk in them so the numbers increase and we can meet and arrive in the main square. I think these two things—rethinking our previous demonstrations and the Tunisian revolution—are the energy for us to make the 25 January revolution.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What made you frustrated and so angry?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: We have a lot of bad things in Egypt. We don't have anything good before 25 January. We have corruption in every field. We have corruption in elections. We have no democracy, no freedom of expression. All my colleagues are in prison and I was in prison, just for expressing my opinion on a Facebook page. I see the raising of prices without any consideration for raising peoples' incomes. There is no discipline in any place in Egypt. The system of punishment is not found in any institution or any ministry. No one can say what you did was wrong and what you did was right. Everyone just does whatever they want, without any reference to the law or the constitution. The corruption before 25 January, you can find it in every place in Egypt, I think the cause of the revolution. You make a lot of pressure with what happened to Ayman Nour, the pressure of raising prices, the bad education system, the bad economic system, all these pressures are on the people on 25 January.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the role of the youth?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: The youth started the energy for this revolution. But after 25 January, all the other people with different ages participated in this revolution.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Who are your leaders?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: No one can be a leader for this revolution. We started calling for revolution and all Egyptians participated in different ways. There is no leader that says we should go to Tahrir Square and we should leave Tahrir Square. The people led this revolution automatically, without anyone saying anything.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Who do you favor in a presidential election?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I support ElBaradei to be the president in the next election. I think he is the suitable one for this period. But I care more for the system for how we choose. I don't care about the person. I care about the system.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What do you want for Egypt?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I want a democratic Egypt. I want to feel that the people

who come in the parliament are chosen by the people, not by corruption. I want to say that the president is coming by the will of Egyptians and he will leave by the will of Egyptians.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are Egypt's priorities now?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: Security returned to the streets, the change of the government, the punishment of all the old people who made corruption or killed people in the revolution. And the system of elections.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What will be your role in the next year or so?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I will participate in a party. I will participate in a liberal party. I will be I think one of the leaders of this party. Maybe I can run in the parliamentary election.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What problems should be addressed immediately?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I think after the transition period, we need a new constitution, a democratic one valid for the democratic country.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did you see the revolution coming?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I felt what happened on 25 January will come, I know this day will come, but I don't expect it will be on 25 January. I just think this day will come before the [presidential] election in September.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you feel now?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I am proud to be Egyptian. But I am worried about achieving all our list of demands after the departure of Mubarak. I am worried about how we can achieve them.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Before the revolution, was it difficult to teach young Egyptians about democracy?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: Yes. Some people have a good background about politics and they wanted to participate. Others said, "There is no space to participate in political life and no democracy. Mubarak will stay and his son will come after him."

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did the government prevent you from establishing your democracy organization?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: No, but when we were making some events, we found that the regime canceled them.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you view the position that the U.S. government took during the revolution?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: In the first part of the revolution, I was disappointed by the reaction of the U.S.: “We trust the regime and we want to establish stability in Egypt.” I was disappointed. But when they saw that the people had more power than Mubarak, the U.S. started to change to support the people.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is the view of young Egyptians toward issues like the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty, the influence of Hizballah’s Hassan Nasrallah or Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: We don’t care about all this in this revolution. We didn’t care about what Hassan Nasrallah said or what the other people said in Iran, because we are very pissed about what happened in Egypt. We talk about what Mubarak said and what Mubarak did. We think they have no influence in Egypt. They just talk, they just mention something for the people, they have no influence on what happened in Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you address these other issues?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I think this is not the time for this. We have no stable situation in Egypt. We care about what’s inside and don’t find time to talk about the foreign relationship between us and the others. This time will come after we choose a president. Then we will talk and say what the Egyptian role is in these situations, but there is no time for that now.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is your message to young people who look up to you as a role model?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: I advise them, not only after 25 January, that we should participate in all political affairs in Egypt. We should participate not only by talking, but by actions. We should be a part of political parties. We should participate in elections. We should have the courage to say there is corruption, and the courage to stop everything wrong we see. We should participate in all fields in Egypt and then the people will build the new Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Are people ready for that?*

ESRAA ABDEL FATTAH: We need time to make them more aware. We need time for workshops, for training on what policy means, what elections mean.

“I DIDN’T SEE IT COMING”

*Former National Democratic Party Secretary General
Hossam Badrawi tells how the Tahrir revolution
looked from inside the regime*

Hossam Badrawi has served as a member of the Egyptian parliament and is a professor of medicine at Cairo University. He joined the ruling National Democratic Party in 2000, telling the media that he hoped to play a role in reforming Egypt from within the system. He became a member of the NDP’s Policy Secretariat, headed by Gamal Mubarak, and in February 2011 amid mass protests against the Egyptian regime he replaced Safwat El-Sherif as NDP secretary general. He held the job for only four days before resigning from the post and the party. *Cairo Review* Managing Editor **Scott MacLeod** interviewed Badrawi in Cairo on February 21, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What happened in Egypt?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: It’s a revolution. It changed the status of Egypt and it will definitely affect the future. Unexpectedly, it is the middle-class, educated people that made the change. Other sectors of the society have joined in. Some sectors are benefiting more. But the major move of the people: it is much more effective than in the revolution of 1919. And definitely more credible than 1952, because it’s from the people, not the army. Egypt is making history for the Middle East.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Looking at it from the inside, did you see it coming?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I didn’t see it coming in that way. But the ceiling of my expectations was much less than what happened. In 1990, we were many people working for reform in Egypt from outside the government. The structure that had all of us was the New Civic Forum, led by Dr. Said El-Naggar. Some of us decided we can make the change from inside. I represented that group. Others decided to make the change as opposition. Some others stayed independent. But there is a network between us. Because we are looking for liberal thinking. We were all for a free economy, democracy, human rights. We decided to play different roles from different positions.

And, I used to tell my friends, the most difficult position is mine. It is easy to be an opposition from outside. It's much more difficult on the inside and keep your credibility by saying what you want to say. And bear in mind the fact that you're not implementing what you want.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What did you think would happen?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I thought by accumulated pressure, we could change Article 77 [in the constitution] and have limitations on the president's terms, and change Article 76 for the way the elections can be done. And at the same time, remove the emergency [law] situation. And make the changes that implement human rights issues in the right structure. There's a document coming from me as a responsible person for the UPR, the Universal Political Review, of Egypt in early 2010 [and] stated all these facts. I presented it to the United Nations despite the fact that I was in the NDP, which put me in conflict with the party at the time. If Article 77 was going to change and limit the president's term, I was going to be so happy. I thought it would be an opening for everything, for political reform. I would have been satisfied if I'd seen limitation of terms and implementation of human rights. Obviously, what happened [in the revolution] is much more than that.

CAIRO REVIEW: *And you didn't see it coming?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: No, I didn't see it coming. I expected change, but I didn't see it coming. Not that way. I thought with the change of the president, the whole country would be changed. I thought [President] Mubarak should have announced he wouldn't run again. I was advocating that. I thought by just changing that, most changes would happen by default.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So you didn't see a popular protest movement coming up to effect change?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: No, I didn't see it that way. I didn't expect the middle-class people to come together that way and be that effective. It was a good surprise.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Was that a common perception in the party, the president and others didn't see the wave coming?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I think so. I realized on the first day, some people didn't realize what was happening even at the time it was happening. Every response from the president was too little too late, all the time. As I was given the post to direct the NDP in those four days, I had access to him and the group around him. I didn't have it before. I didn't have it afterwards. But during that time, I realized that they are responding

always too late and too little. They don't evaluate the magnitude of what's happening. My role in those four days was to open everyone's eyes, that this reality has to be respected and that the president has to step down now. That "now" was not accepted, day after day after day.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Were you able to say that personally to the president?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Personally, yes, the first day I met him. I told him he has to respect his promises to the people by amending the constitutional term [limits] and move all his authority to his vice president. I thought this is going to be more constitutional and that has to be done in the way people believe it. So he has to be clear about that, that he is not going to practice his presidency, except for one issue: to call for the referendum on the constitution, and that people should see and believe that is happening and it should be real. The delivery of his speeches did not give the impression that this was real. That was the defect. Until now I still think that moving the authority to vice president and his stepping aside from the presidency would have led the country in a more constitutional way than what is happening now.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did you mean that he resign, or hand over power?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Hand over the power to the vice president, and to respect the constitution, so that he would have only one role, calling for the referendum. His role will be only one thing to do.

CAIRO REVIEW: *But he should remain as president?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Remain as president outside of the circle of authority. So he passes all his authority, gives it to the vice president, and moves geographically somewhere else, so he is not part of making decisions. And have things done constitutionally, and call for early elections once the constitution was amended. That was my opinion that I told him face to face.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did you ever just ask him to completely resign the presidency, as he did on February 11?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: No, I didn't advise that. But every day that passed, I realized even the advice [I gave him] wouldn't be accepted [by the revolution]. On the last day, I told him that even if you take my advice now, it can be successful only 10 or 15 percent. You're late. People do not believe there's an honest desire to step away and have the constitution be amended, and elections to be done as early as possible. That was the safest way the country can go, in my opinion.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was President Mubarak's reaction to that advice? Did he deny there was a problem?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Actually not. We had meetings more than three times. On Wednesday, I was not giving him advice. I was giving my statement as the secretary general of the ruling party, a position he assigned me to have two days before. I told him that from the meetings I had from different political parties and with the people in Tahrir—I had many people there with the young people—that my political understanding was that the problem isn't in taking the action. The challenge is that they don't believe that you are taking the action. It wasn't advice. It was a request. And when the request was not met the way we agreed upon, I resigned.

CAIRO REVIEW: *He disagreed with the request?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: No, he agreed. He understood it. He brought his legal people to make his statement on Wednesday. When I left, I was expecting him to give his statement on Wednesday, and he didn't give it. So it was clear to me that somebody else had called him. On Thursday, I made another attempt, that he should give his statement. It is already coming to be late. He told me that he is going to give his statement by the end of the day. Then they waited and waited until 10 p.m. or something like that. The statement came in my opinion with the worst delivery, in spite of the fact that it has all the content. But the delivery was not believable to the people. At that level I was cut from communication. I could not be part of the decision making anymore. I waited. I tried to communicate and couldn't. So I resigned.

CAIRO REVIEW: *In the speech, he followed the advice?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Yes, it followed my advice. But we had an agreement that the core of his speech should be that he was giving away his authority, clear cut. This was said in three seconds. If you look somewhere, you might not even have noticed. The delivery of the speech was not coinciding with the meaning. He started talking about himself and gave the impression that he is there. This was a big mistake. He gave his sharing of the grief of the young people who died. This was a request of the young people I met and I asked for. He separated between the revolutionary and the criminal acts. That was a request, that he has to give it to the people. But at the end of the day, if history looks at the core without the delivery system, then you realize he gave away his powers, and gave the order for constitutional amendments. So he's not needed as a president anymore, only to call for the referendum. He didn't say that, he didn't press on that, he didn't give the impression that this was the situation. The content was there, but the meaning and understanding was not there.

CAIRO REVIEW: *He was not in denial about what was happening in Tahrir? He had already dismissed the leader of the party and even Gamal Mubarak.*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: That was my request, by the way. That was my request. When he assigned me as secretary general, I said everyone has to resign. I have to have full authority to reform the party.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So you think he was trying to remain part of the system, not to exit?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I think the circle around him was putting him to that situation. I had the feeling that he really wanted a constitutional path. And that he's stepping down anyway, anytime. But again, the decision and timing is part of the formula. And I think they were not—his advisors—were not helpful to let him take the right action at right time.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I'm not sure, but probably they were in denial more than him.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why did the president finally resign on the Friday?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I saw it coming. After his speech on Thursday, and what happened Thursday night and Friday, it was clear that it is the point of no return. I think he had no choice.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did the army go to him and say he had to step down?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: All theories are possible. I was cut completely after I left the president's house on Thursday. On Thursday evening and Friday, I was like you, listening to news and seeing it on TV. I was cut. I was not connected. I tried but I couldn't. I came on TV [and resigned]. The only way for me was to give a statement to the BBC so it becomes public. At the end of the day, the publicity is the reality.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why do you think the revolution happened?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I think the reaction of the police was one of the factors to create the movement. Because the excessive use of violence was part of the accumulation of other people to come in. At one level, the fear has gone. The numbers made it possible for the fear of the security forces to go away. Everybody underestimated the capacity of the youth to represent their opinion. There was underestimation of that capacity by the whole society, even by their parents, who joined them later.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What led to January 25?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: It was the accumulation. I think it's the human integrity and the human rights, more than anything else. It was not those who do not have

employment. It was people with good employment in the streets. I think it was humiliation. I call it chronic anger, a chronic state of anger. In medicine, the chronic situation, you get adapted to the pain until it becomes acute. The acute exacerbation made all chronic anger come up. Part of it was, in my opinion, the way the state was dealing with the people, humiliating them in everyday activities. The relationship of the individuals with the police. The way you get your services from the state, from the cabinet, from the public officials. Everything had to do with whether you have a *wasta* (connections) or pay a bribe. Everybody was telling their kids, “If a policeman stops you, don’t argue.” These situations were elevating the dissatisfaction and anger. Not acute enough to revolt, but it’s there. Triggered by something, everybody came together.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the trigger?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: The excessive use of violence within the police. Khaled Said [a young Egyptian killed in police custody in Alexandria in 2010] was part of it. And the excessive use of violence in Tahrir on the first day. On the first day everyone was calling for freedom and justice. It was not about food or unemployment. That was a collective request of everyone. As they got larger and larger, the line of fear has gone. And then with the late response, and the little response, objectives went higher. If on January 25 the president had come out to the people and said, “I’m dissolving the government and not running [for re-election],” probably everyone was going to be happy. As you go day after day, and people get hurt and die, and you are not seeing the leader of the country coming to talk to the people for three days, this was cumulative bad management of the crisis. It made the chronic stage into an acute stage.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Was the “succession issue” a factor? The 2010 parliamentary elections? The Gamal Mubarak question?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I add it as a factor to the chronic anger. There were no clear-cut announcements [about Gamal Mubarak] that people could protest against. But it created the feeling that something weird was being cooked. The president should have come clearly and said that he wasn’t going to run, and that no one from his family was going to run, to give that kind of satisfaction. The parliamentary election in 2010 was another important factor. In a meeting after the election, in the party they were announcing we had the largest victory any party had. I raised my hand and said, from a limited party point of view, it might be true. But from a political point of view, I think this is the largest defeat we’ve had. Because if you do not have opposition in the parliament, you will have them in the streets. And if it was in my hand, I would definitely have worked harder for the opposition to have them represented in the parliament. And I had that conflict with the administration, because I was sure that

playing alone is not in the benefit of the country. And having the parliament unilaterally ruled was not going to be accepted by anyone. In spite of the fact that they had so many proofs that they won fair and square against the Muslim Brotherhood. It was a disaster and added to the chronic anger.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was your assumption about Gamal Mubarak's intentions?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I was there for eight years, and this was never discussed between me and him, never raised as an issue in the party. But actions give different impressions. I don't know if there was a smaller circle talking about that and I wasn't a part of it. His presence and his leading of the party and his appearances and visits to different areas of the country, gave the impression that he's politically portraying himself. He never talked about this with me, maybe with others. I once told him in the party, that the relationship of the party with the government is not [correct], because if it was [correct], it should not depend on the president or the son of the president. It should depend on the dynamics of politicians. There was so much implementation of policies that we worked out that was not done. And I cannot make any difference. It is always going back to the president, whether he gives instructions to the government or not. It is all a relationship between the government and the president's house.

CAIRO REVIEW: *The NDP is not a real party?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: It was a real party, but very centralized. There were very good people. Excellent policy papers were done with lots of efforts from intellectuals and politicians, learning from the experiences of other countries. But that stops here. Whether that was being taken seriously by the government was something else.

CAIRO REVIEW: *In the upper levels of the NDP, was it your assumption that Gamal was being prepared to become president?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Yes. It was an assumption, yes.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Was this ever an issue to raise that this was not a good idea, and could damage the president and the country?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Yes. But sometimes when you say that to the person, he says "No, I'm not intending," then the discussion becomes "Who said I want to do that?" And the president says "My son is just helping me." The discussion stops.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was going through your mind when you saw the NDP headquarters being burned?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Actually, I wasn't only looking at the NDP being burned,

but all police stations being burned down across the country. And all prisons being opened for prisoners to go away. And the NDP locations in eleven governorates being burned, and synchronized in the same way: we get in, steal contents, burn papers, get the hard disks of the computers. I don't think this was the revolution in Tahrir. It was much more organized than that. You have to think that there is a master-mind. I cannot assume [who is responsible] because I don't have any evidence. Don't tell me people in the streets going for their dignity and freedom organized that. It cannot be. We have to see who is going to benefit. The story did not come to the final chapter. So let's see who will take power, and then we'll know who's the beneficiary.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What happens next?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I want a transition to take place in a secular, civil structure. However, if the parliamentary elections are being held early, I think Egypt won't come to a stable situation for a long time. If we do not give time for parties coming out of the revolution to establish themselves and be a part of the coming elections, we're not giving them equal opportunity with others who are already structured and ready for those elections. The army has played a neutral role. I think they're overwhelmed with responsibility they are not trained to do. And I believe they would like to pass authority as fast as possible. But I hope "as fast as possible" doesn't affect the right decision. We have fragmentation now. We need one and a half to two years.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Would the Muslim Brotherhood win the election?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: They would be the only party inside the parliament. The NDP isn't there. So other members would be individuals, independents running without a cover.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is the NDP finished?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: No, I don't think so, but I think it needs years to recover with new branding. It used to depend on being a part of the ruling structure, so it lost its magnet for people who want to become part of the government. But it is still the only structure that exists other than the Brotherhood. The NDP will need three or four or five years of working hard to change the image. There's a very negative impression. You have to rebrand.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is the political role of the Mubaraks in Egypt now over?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: Yes, it is.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Does Gamal Mubarak have any chance to be part of the rebirth of the NDP?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: No. I don't think he has any role in the future.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are your plans?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I'm just listening to people, analyzing, and giving my fair opinion. I meet with all political sectors. And I think in the turbulence that exists, people have to wait and see. If there is a party that can come from down up, I'll join.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How has Egypt fundamentally changed?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: There is great opportunity for Egypt to move forward politically. It will affect the economy. I'm an optimistic person by nature. I see the opportunity there. But there are huge risks. If we fall into linear thinking that does not accept differences of opinion—either a military or a conservative religious one—neither would be best for the country.

CAIRO REVIEW: *There's a risk the military might take control completely?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: I don't know. They are there now.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You're worried about the Brotherhood?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: My intellectual structure is to be an open person, respect diversity, and accept differences in opinion. I have nothing against a woman president, or a Coptic Egyptian president, so long as it's through a democratic process. I definitely would like to see citizenship rights regardless of any religious belief. I see that that path might not be the path of the Muslim Brotherhood for the time being. Yet, they have good things to offer. This is the only thing that makes me worry. I have so many friends in the Muslim Brotherhood, good people and excellent people. They have good intentions. They should be part of the political scene, but they shouldn't impose their style on me.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Should the future system hold the former regime accountable?*

HOSSAM BADRAWI: That worries me very much, the fact that everything is being taken now by impressions. The rule of law should be the rule of law. We cannot accuse any person and accuse and incriminate and judge at the same time. That's very scary. I'm afraid of a sort of McCarthyite attitude, that once you're different in opinion, you'll be taken hostage by the fact you're different. As if we are moving from one kind of dictatorship to another kind of dictatorship.

NARRATING THE REVOLUTION

*Egyptian novelist Alaa Al Aswany
explains how a nation rediscovered itself
by rising up against dictatorship*

Alaa Al Aswany is the author of the acclaimed *The Yacoubian Building* and other best-selling works of fiction. He is also a longtime political columnist for independent Egyptian newspapers and one of the founding members of the political movement against the Mubarak regime known as *Kifaya* (Enough). His new book of nonfiction is *On the State of Egypt: What Made the Revolution Inevitable*. *Cairo Review* Managing Editor **Scott MacLeod** interviewed Al Aswany in Cairo on February 16, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *In The Yacoubian Building and Chicago, despite the Egyptian decay and misery you portrayed, your characters contain a spark of hope.*

ALAA AL ASWANY: I was always optimistic, I was accused of being too optimistic by some friends. I believed that at some point there would be a revolution in Egypt. I said that in many interviews, including with the *New York Times* in 2008. I tried to understand the Egyptian people as a novelist. I read carefully the history of this country. The 1919 revolution was not expected. The British embassy [thought] that the Egyptians weren't going to react to the decision to send Saad Zaghloul into exile, but all of a sudden there was a revolution. Any country at some point is already in a revolutionary state, waiting for a stimulus to make the revolution. That is exactly what happened on January 25. Forty thousand bloggers called for the manifestations. It came at the right time. The whole of Egypt was waiting for any stimulus, and they gave the stimulus.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why now?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: There is a critical moment. Egyptians could tolerate poverty. You can live with poverty as far as you think it's fair, as far as you think it's going to improve if you work hard. But what is intolerable is the injustice, when you believe what is happening is not fair and there is no hope for the future. I believe that at some

point you become really prepared to revolt. Why this revolution? First, because of the masses. We're talking about twelve to fifteen million people. And second, the demand was not a local or professional demand. They were demanding the end of the whole system.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Authoritarian regimes from Iraq to Egypt to Morocco to Libya have been so durable, and you've had injustice for so many years.*

ALAA AL ASWANY: One deep lesson of what happened in Egypt is that we don't need an American invasion to get rid of a dictator. We can do it ourselves without all the casualties or occupying another country. And we did that in eighteen days. This is the end of an era of the post-independence dictatorships, which were the model for the region. It's a matter of time for the other dictators. I could give an exception for the Gulf countries because they have enough money to make their people satisfied or to delay the revolution.

CAIRO REVIEW: *After thirty years of the Mubarak regime in Egypt, were there specific factors that helped reach this point?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: The situation in the last ten years. I was against this regime from the very beginning. When I wrote during the 1990s, there were people defending the regime. They were saying, 'Look, [President Mubarak] is doing his best.' But during the last ten years, it became impossible to defend the regime. You have a person who is over eighty years old who is still in power and he doesn't feel that this is a strange situation. Also, it was really unacceptable to Egyptians that during the last ten years he started to push his son [Gamal Mubarak as a potential successor]. This was very insulting to Egyptians, that they are going to be inherited as if we were chickens. Egyptians are very proud. We felt in the last ten years there was a real deterioration of the value of Egypt, inside and outside. And, the police brutality has become unbelievable. It's not only for political purposes. Khaled Said [a young Egyptian killed in police custody in Alexandria in 2010] was a very good example. Egyptians are forced to go to work in the Gulf countries, many times in inhuman conditions, and you have no government to look out for you.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Were there recent sparks?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: Of course, the Khaled Said story was very, very, very significant. The people became angry, like never before. Second, there is network of organizations that was not present during the 1990s. We were lacking the network that could organize all the people together and we could [announce] the schedule of the revolution. This happened through Facebook. The Khaled Said Facebook group reached

four hundred and fifty thousand people. [The parliamentary elections] were unbearable. They didn't bother to hide what they were doing. They are telling you as an Egyptian, you are nothing.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Would the revolution have happened if it hadn't happened in Tunisia with the ouster of President Ben Ali?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: Yes. The Tunisia revolution accelerated the Egyptian revolution. It gave you a model and showed to you, yes, it is possible. But the objective reasons for a revolution were present. We began to call for the change of the regime in 2003, so I think it would have happened anyway. But we were inspired by the Tunisians.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Where were you on January 25?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: I knew from the very beginning it was going to be a revolution, from the moment I saw the manifestations. I have a Spanish friend, a journalist who covered the Eastern Europe revolutions. He told me that if you can move these masses—and I could see in their faces how determined they were—the fall of this regime is a matter of time. That day, I knew there would be a manifestation, but I didn't expect it to be the revolution.

CAIRO REVIEW: *When did you realize what it was?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: I participated in many demonstrations. So I said fine, I will finish my work on my novel and then after finishing this chapter I will eat and then I will go to salute my friends. I was expecting four hundred people in front of the syndicate of journalists—I know all of them—with ten thousand soldiers. But when I saw them, I realized there was a historic moment, that it was very different. I joined the revolution on January 25 at 5 p.m. I had once written that if we have five hundred thousand protesters in Cairo, the regime will fall. I found myself with one million people.

CAIRO REVIEW: *There were hard times after January 25.*

ALAA AL ASWANY: Yes, eighteen days. In the first speech of Mubarak, he tried to blackmail the Egyptians emotionally, saying “I defended this land and I will die [in this country].” There were many parents and many other people who became really confused. At 2 a.m. I talked for about thirty minutes [in Tahrir Square], trying to explain to people that we are asking for our rights. We are not acting impolitely with anybody. What was very helpful to the revolution was that the next day, the regime sent the thugs [into the square] and people were killed. So the influence of the speech was erased in a half hour. You can't say you are the father of Egyptians and at the

same time send thugs. Two people were shot to death next to me on January 28. The next speech, the people were really angry. He was very arrogant, like I don't care about you. People raised their shoes [an Arab gesture of disrespect]. You could see female and male shoes everywhere.

CAIRO REVIEW: *That was the end?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: It was a matter of time. On Friday [February 11], I heard people crying, "He resigned! He resigned!" That was an unbelievable moment. Everybody was dancing. I was very, very happy. I was very happy, and very proud of the people. I felt that I am in a moment where a new Egypt really begins.

CAIRO REVIEW: *But Egypt was left in a bad state after thirty years?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: They are trying to blackmail us by the story of the economic crisis. Fine, for thirty years there was no revolution and there were thirty-five million people living under the line of poverty. This is what they did. What we are going to do is much better. The country has been paralyzed by the dictatorship. People who are efficient rarely get the post. You give the post to the people who are loyal. You don't care if they are efficient or not. They were a bunch of friends of Gamal Mubarak who were the rulers of this country. I think the stolen money is quite enough for a good start for Egypt. We have very efficient people in all domains. If you have a democratic country, a democratic cabinet, and you work hard, we could make out of this country a very strong country in no time.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How will Egypt change?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: I believe that the revolution itself is an achievement. The political results are very important. But the revolution as a human phenomenon is an achievement. The revolution makes much better people. When you participate in it, you regain your ability to say "no." You're not going to accept what you used to take before. You could see the difference between the Egyptians in Tahrir Square from the 25th to the 11th. You see two million people, one third of them are females, and not one single sexual harassment. You have everybody, the rich people and the poor people. The mood was very liberal. When the time of prayer comes, the people who don't pray gave space for the people who pray. On Wednesday when there were thugs attacking us, the Christians protected the people who were praying.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How will Egypt change now?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: Egypt regained its identity. One major consequence of dictatorship is that you lose your identity and you're no [longer] loyal to your country.

And you don't believe that it's really your country and you become frustrated and aggressive and desperate. And I believe that the personality now of Egyptians is very different. I think we regained what we lost in the thirty years. This is going to be very positive.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are the demands of the revolution?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: Wanting Mubarak out was a very relevant point. The president here is the regime. Now you have remnants of the regime, and they should really be kept away. You must build a new country with new concepts. Even the police are going to be very different after what happened. We will have a new country, a democratic state where the rights are preserved and where you get really what you deserve.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You refer to the remnants. How do you translate the victory in Tahrir to a democratic state?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: I'm talking about the heads. I mean the ministers. These people are dangerous. These people were appointed by Mubarak. They believe in the Mubarak regime. They were absolutely defeated, so I can't really ask them to apply the reforms. That's a joke. And also many of them are accused of corruption and committing crimes. The army made a very good start. By insisting that [they] are not ruling, [they] are not in power politically. [They] are trying to maintain the security inside the country and abroad. During the transition, this is the role of the army and it's very important because if you don't have such a power you could have real troubles during the transition.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you ensure that the power of the people is translated into democracy?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: We have our plans. The most important thing is to keep your ability to go to the street. You were able to make manifestations and Mubarak was obliged to step down. This is your real power. If you lose this power, you are going to lose everything. I know personally the leaders of the revolution. There are many. They are confident that at some point they can make the same manifestations, and even more, if they find what has been done [is] not satisfactory to them.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Who are the true leaders of the revolution?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: If you're talking about a kind of historical political leader, we don't have one. But you have leaders of groups and these leaders are very significant. You have the leaders of the workers, the leaders of the bloggers, many people. When they call for manifestations, they know what they are doing.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What role do the old political parties have in Egypt's future?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: Conventional parties like Wafd and Tugamma are very badly viewed because they were manipulated by the government. Other parties are decoration, fabricated by the security state to be used at some point.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What about the Muslim Brotherhood?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: They have acted since they acted in 1928. One of the best results of this revolution is for Western analysts to finally know that the Brotherhood is not really a threat to Egypt. I answered this question at least five thousand times: don't you think if you have democracy the Brotherhood will take over? It's unbelievable. I am very happy I won't have to answer this question anymore. They participated like anyone else but they were not controlling. They are Egyptian citizens and despite the fact that I disagree with their ideas, they have the absolute right to practice their political rights in the democracy. They are mysterious, sometimes they compromise too much, but they are sincere.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are the revolution's priorities?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: To get the efficient people [into the government] and study the potential of Egypt, which is tremendous. You are going to see the difference. The priority is building a democracy. You must make sure your car is efficient before you think about your destination. We must build a real democratic state and after that I think we will be on the right track. Egypt is going to regain its role.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you hold the former regime to account?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: The day before yesterday, you could smell the odor of burning papers all over the state television building. They took out the documents and burned them. There were fights because the employees tried to prevent them from doing it. There is a group of lawyers. They are gathering documents. Money is stolen from the Egyptian people and we are going to bring this money back.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What role have artists played in preparing for this revolution?*

ALAA AL ASWANY: Art by nature is a defense of human values. If you see a movie, or read a novel, then you will find in the core of the art the human values of freedom and equality and justice. You don't create art for nothing. I don't think the art is separated from the revolution. I believe that art is revolutionary by nature. We have the most important generation of writers and filmmakers in the history of Egypt. The revolution makes a sort of renaissance for the whole nation, and artists are no exception. I believe this is going to be a real inspiration. I was inspired. I have many ideas to write about the revolution.

RISE OF THE BROTHERS

Muslim Brotherhood spokesman Essam El-Erian says that with new political opportunities in post-Mubarak Egypt, the group seeks to “participate, not dominate”

Essam El-Erian is a spokesman and political strategist for the Muslim Brotherhood, founded as a political and social movement in Egypt in 1928. Known for its slogan “Islam is the Solution,” the group increasingly speaks the language of democracy and compares itself to Islamist parties in democratic nations like Turkey. El-Erian has spent numerous periods in prison as a leader of a movement formally banned from politics since Egyptian independence in 1952. In 1987 he won a seat in parliament, and in 2005 he helped organize a campaign in which eighty-eight Brotherhood members captured parliamentary seats running as independents. *Cairo Review* Managing Editor **Scott MacLeod** interviewed El-Erian in Cairo on February 21, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What happened in Egypt?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: A surprise. Till now, it is not yet completed. We are going on the run till now. What’s happening is going on, it’s still continuing. When the last election [in November and December 2010] was totally rigged, the only place for discussion between the people was the streets. They were pushed out of the parliament. Their representatives were pushed out of the parliament to the street. Then it resulted [in this]. It was delayed one month or one and half months.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Not the first time you had a bad election in Egypt.*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: But this was a very vulgar one. It was not only the rigging of the election. It was the insulting of the people and the comic scene done by the president himself. He said to the people, “Let them have fun.” The people got the lesson and they got to the street “to have fun,” enjoy their time. The people were enjoying their time since Tahrir Square.

CAIRO REVIEW: *The Brotherhood has been a banned organization in Egypt.*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Outlawed.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Yet you tried to make politics in Egypt anyway.*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Not trying. We did politics.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How would you describe the Brotherhood's role in Egypt before January 25?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Before, during and after, the same role: We are working with the people. Our target is the people. Not the power.

CAIRO REVIEW: *But politics is about power.*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: No, this is your philosophy. This time, now, it is the power of the people, not the power of the regimes.

CAIRO REVIEW: *But what were you doing before January 25, in politics in Egypt as an outlawed organization?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Our structure is the same. Participate, not dominate.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did you have a party?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: What's the role of the party? The role of the party is seeking power, mainly according to the Western theories. But here we are not a party. We are still keeping our mind about our role that we are not only a party. We can practice politics but we are an organization, institution, group working for the people in all aspects of life, not only politics by the narrow perception.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Meaning politics and what else?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Everything, everything you can imagine. We believe in Islam as a way of life: individual, family, societal, social, economical, educational. Everything.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why do you need an organization for Egyptians to live their lives?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: This is duty for all Muslims. It's a duty for all Muslims in the Holy Koran, to advise, to educate, to be with the people. The people need each other. We are with the people, they learn from us and we learn from them.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why do you need an organization for that if it's not a political party?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: But this is our duty also, to organize ourselves. We are not individuals. To keep your Islam, you must be organizing with others.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did you regret participating in the last election?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Never, never. The prize came on the 25th of January.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Some people urged you to boycott the elections .*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Okay, they don't understand.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the advantage of the election?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: To discover the reality of the regime and to encourage people to be against the regime. There are two ways: to participate according to the state of law, or to be out and the people can determine their fate.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What part did the Brotherhood play on January 25?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Part of the scene, participating in the events, guarding protesters, supplying them by all means they can, organizing them, everything. We are part of the protest.

CAIRO REVIEW: *On a political level?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: It's not political. Politics mean parliament, cabinets, this is politics. This is a revolution. It's not politics.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Did you formally call your people, your members, to the streets?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: We never call anybody. The people themselves come according to Twitter or Facebook. The masses in the street, they were invited.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So, as an organization you didn't play any role.*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: You can go back to our statements or announcements, which seemed to be daily. We say only that we are part of this event. We are not leading. We are not organizing. The people organize themselves by themselves, in the square, in the streets, in Alexandria, in Aswan, in Mansoura. The people do everything and we are with them, voice among voices.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is it only the latest election results that sparked the revolution?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: It was the straw that broke the camel's back. It was because of corruption, closing any window for free expression.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What has this revolution achieved?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Changed the people. This is the most important.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Changed the Egyptians. The Egyptians changed themselves and broke the fear inside themselves. They rushed in the streets, and when they discovered

their abilities, discovered their original nature, discovered they can do anything, they can clean the square, clean the streets, organize themselves, sing, dance, pray and dance, they discovered they are Egyptians, Christians, Muslims. There is no split in the society. Muslims and Christians are united. Not according to the regime's "national unity," the [Coptic] pope and sheikh of Al Azhar coming together, no. The ordinary people discovered they are not frightened by Muslims and there is no ghetto for Christians. There is the new discovery of the Egyptian nature.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What else?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Mainly democracy, real Islamic democracy.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You have it now?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: No, not yet. This is Egyptian democracy with Islamic flavor, Egyptian flavor. They discover they can make their present and future alone. There is no need for any help from anybody, from any foreign policy. The debate now in the United States is, "Was Bush Junior, or Obama, behind what happened?" You are still thinking that you are mastering the globe. The Egyptians discovered that they—according to their abilities, according to their power—can be independent. So, it's not only democracy, it's independence. This is a new independence for the Egyptians. I hope that America can discover also itself, that is not the overwhelming sovereignty in the whole world. It's not the Allah, the God, for the world. That it can live beside others. We are not of course as strong as America, economically, militarily, but the power of the people is the same.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What else has the revolution achieved, since it's not finished?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: The president stepped down. His men are still in power, they must step down also. A new cabinet must come, a new parliament, a new president, a civilian one. This transfer of power to civilians is very important. They discover that the army can be a guard, not a political army. It will take time, maybe five years to bring a democratic system and to train the people to vote. Trial and error. It can take time, but we are on the right path and this is very important.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are the next steps?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: The next step is transfer of power, of course.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How will this happen?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Look, sir, surely you studied the history of revolutions in France, in America. I think you had some time from George Washington until the constitution. How long? Ten years? Twenty years? We need time.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What's the next step?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: I don't know. There is still debate between the military, cabinet, the media, the intelligence and the people. The debate is still going on.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What does the Brotherhood see as the best solution for going forward now?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Cleaning the country, by the political meaning, because [officials of the former regime] are corrupt. They need to be brought to justice, the stolen wealth needs to be restored, the people who are still in power from the last regime must be out, and this needs of course pressure. The people are ready. They are still not indoors. They are ready to be pouring to the streets again if there is no meeting with their demands.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So you want them all [from the regime] to be arrested?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Of course, it can be step by step. But people want to see something. The media are still controlled by those people, all the media. No changes till now.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there active resistance on the part of the regime?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Is this history or is this investigation? You are asking as a prosecutor. If an American comes to interview us as Muslim Brotherhood, he knocks at the door and we say yes or no. America is doing fatal mistakes as America, and you know what I mean. It must review its strategy and listen to the people, not listen to the regimes. You are biased till now, biased. You are hypocritical. This is not beneficial for America. The people here need to listen to American people not American administration. Please, that's enough. People here said enough to Mubarak and they are ready to say enough for everybody. That's enough.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Are you saying that America is interfering in this revolution now?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Of course, it was a fatal mistake to be hesitating from the start, and till now they are hesitating. They don't get the message till now.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is America against the revolution?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Look, it's an international game. It was between intelligence and government and military. Now the people are in the game. There is no leadership to negotiate with, to satisfy them by anything. It is demands of the people. This is a revolution. Now the people need to have democracy, a real democracy. And democracy is not an American invention or French invention, it's a humanitarian principle. Islam is compatible with democracy. You are still in your country, in your media, literature, in your news, still speaking the same old language. This will create catastrophic consequences

for the whole region. Why are you silent about what's happening in Libya now, a massacre in Libya now. Your new friend Gadhafi is killing people in the streets. Bush junior said that, "We committed a fatal mistake when we supported dictatorships for sixty years," but you came back to the previous support. Why? It's time now to discover that Israel is not the only democratic oasis in the region. We can have many democratic oases. Can you deal with all as the same? This is an historical moment. I hope you can review yourselves. It's not advice. I'm a very little man in a very little organization in a little country and you are mastering the globe. But it's time to discover realities, not to run the same way, to go the same way. And we can be friends, the people of America, people of Egypt, Arab people, Muslims. You know, there is the fall of the legend of Al-Qaeda. The legend of 11 September also has fallen. There is the fall of false theories about terrorism, about Islam, about many things. This is a moment of truth. I hope we can discover ourselves, all of us.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is the Brotherhood creating a political party now?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: We are ready. We are not going to run in the presidential elections with a candidate. We are not targeting to have a majority in the coming parliament. We are not speaking on behalf of the people. Our demands are the same demands of the people. We don't have a special agenda. We are not going to negotiate anything for our own interests. Our prisoners still in jail. We are not looking to bring them out alone. All detainees must come together. We are not going to have party for ourselves alone. All Egyptians are to have the same rights. We are not to dominate. We are going to participate. All of this is not to send message, it's our policy. We do it and we believe in it.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Are you suggesting that if you fielded candidates in all constituencies, you could win a majority?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: We are not targeting such thing.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why not run candidates everywhere?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: This is not our strategy. Why not? It's up to us, not to others.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What's the reason?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: I told you from the start, we are not just a political party. We are not seeking power. I say that frankly. Believe us.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What's your program?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: We said to them all, wait and see, wait and see. Our program will be in the proper time.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Will it endorse a civil state?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Of course. Islam never talked about a religious state. Islam from the start is pro-civil state, in which the nation is the source of power, the nation elects the president, elects the parliament. Accountability, transparency and multiplicity. This is a civil state.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why did the Brotherhood propose an ulema council for this civil state?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: We in that debate said that this council is cancelled. It was a wrong idea, written in a wrong language.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What about disallowing a woman, or a Christian, to be president?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: Everything can be reviewed. It's one interpretation of many interpretations.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You agree that this will be an important signal if this remains in your Brotherhood program.*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: The election of president is not our opinion only. It's the rule of the people. If the people elect women, if the people elect Christian, it's up to them. We cannot stop this.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why not be in favor of it?*

ESSAM EL-ERIAN: We are not going to have a candidate, neither men, neither Muslim, neither women. We are not going to have a candidate now, at all.

A MORE ASSERTIVE ARAB FOREIGN POLICY

Former Ambassador to the United States Nabil Fahmy believes that a democratic Egypt will not abandon its strategic commitment to peace but will pursue a more pro-active approach in international relations

Nabil Fahmy is the dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at the American University in Cairo. A career diplomat, he served as Egypt's ambassador to the United States from 1999–2008, and as ambassador to Japan between 1997 and 1999. He has also been a member of Egypt's mission to the United Nations in New York as well as a senior government advisor on nuclear disarmament. After Egypt's revolution began on January 25, he became a member of the informal group of "wise men" who met with government officials and demonstrators. *Cairo Review* Managing Editor **Scott MacLeod** interviewed Fahmy in Cairo on February 22, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How did you get involved as one of the "wise men"?*

NABIL FAHMY: January 25 was a holiday, Police Day. I live close to Tahrir Square and was very curious to see whether the announced demonstration was going to actually develop. It turned out to be even larger than expected even by the youth organizers of the event. So that was sort of the first surprise. The large presence of the police also tended to heighten the tension on both sides. This was a very strange beginning.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What did you encounter?*

NABIL FAHMY: Against all odds, it remained peaceful from the side of the demonstrators. Whether they were faced by violence or not, they did not take the initiative of using violence. They only defended themselves in certain circumstances. To have this size of a demonstration is not normal for Cairo. You normally have economic and social topics being the genesis of the demonstrations of much smaller size. I have young children and the youth were the voice behind the protests, so as a father I had an eye on what is happening here. That was really my first reckoning of how serious these kids were.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What happened?*

NABIL FAHMY: My son came in with eight or nine of his friends who were demonstrating after the curfew was announced. They came to have a meal. Because I was a father, I said, “Okay, why don’t you all sleep over.” They said, “Why?” I said, “Because there is a curfew.” They said, “Who decides there’s a curfew? We own the country.” That kind of statement could be taken as naïve. For me, it was an indication that they wanted to own the country. This was a commitment they were making. It wasn’t a passing comment that was made rhetorically. Within an hour, they were all back on the street demonstrating again. Was a societal change being made here, led by the youth? That was really the beginning of my personal involvement in it. I wanted to see how this was going, and to make sure that rational minds remained the ultimate deciding factor. I also felt that these kids actually needed to find fulfillment and satisfaction in their aspirations. Otherwise we were going to have a generation that was going to be tremendously disappointed.

CAIRO REVIEW: *That was a personal turning point?*

NABIL FAHMY: The second turning point, on a personal level, was the day when the hooligans went into Tahrir Square on horses and camels and had a pitched battle that was broadcast on television. Watching peaceful demonstrators battle hooligans for twelve hours with no one intervening, for me, was just simply a shock. At that point, I thought, “How could we, as a generation with this set of values, hand over a country to the younger generation?” That’s really the moment I decided that I cannot remain just a passive supporter of the objectives of the demonstrators.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So how did you become involved with the “wise men”?*

NABIL FAHMY: On that same day, coincidentally, a group of independent public figures, from different walks of life, some lawyers, some engineers, architects, former diplomats, and businessmen, released a statement that essentially called for the president to hand over power to his vice president. He could remain in office as a titular president for the remainder of his tenure, provided that he handed over power, and a number of other steps were taken: dissolving the parliament and Shura Council, establishing a transitional committee for changing the government, changing the leadership of the majority party, ending the state of emergency. So they set forward a seven-point plan, to start the process of ending the Mubarak rule in a dignified fashion. Not only ending it, but beginning the rebuilding of Egypt constitutionally, legally and politically. That evening, I contacted them and said I had been informed of the statement and, if they wanted my support, I would join. They did, and consequently a group of about twelve was established and became the signatories of what

others called the “Wise Men Group.” It was an informal, independent group. No one had any party affiliations of whatever sort, in the former majority party or any of the minority parties. We were not all men, in spite of the name. There were women in the group.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What did the group’s work entail?*

NABIL FAHMY: The group mandated two of our members to go and meet the vice president [Omar Suleiman], and convey to him the proposals. He listened attentively, but his response on the issue of the president mandating authority to the vice president was that this was a non-starter. Then he discussed the other suggestions, regarding the parliament and constitution, and said he would look into those, although he did get into an explanation of why these things could not happen quickly. We then went to meet the prime minister [Ahmed Shafiq], who basically said the same thing. After that, we were very careful to continue to support the demonstrators, and to continue to look for solutions. We were not trying to find a compromise between the two sides. We were trying to actually help build the new Egypt, but do it in a fashion where the demonstrators came out with results rather than simply lost.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the group’s relationship with the protesters?*

NABIL FAHMY: We started to meet with the representatives of the demonstrators. They had many representatives, but nobody really mandated to speak on their behalf. There were at least five different groups. They all came speaking for their own group and it was interesting because you had the groups like the Muslim Brotherhood youth, not the elders, but the youth movement, which are of course religious in inclination, and secularists also there.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What did they tell you?*

NABIL FAHMY: They were unified in their demands for what had to happen now, and committed to working together, in spite of their different opinions about how to build Egypt in the future. They said that openly: “No, we don’t necessarily agree on what Egypt should look like, but what is required now is the president leaves, and then [implement] all of the other six points that we had made.” They asked us to convey these opinions to the government, but not to negotiate on their behalf, which was fine with us. Since they weren’t mandated, we didn’t feel comfortable getting a mandate from those who were not mandated. These were extremely insightful and enlightening to us, youth from different walks of life. Some were affluent, some were less affluent. The majority was from Egyptian public universities. Some had gone to university abroad, but not that many. They were all extremely well educated politically, and they

knew exactly what they wanted. They wanted a new system, they wanted a new way of governance, and then they had specific targets in the short term. For example, the president had to leave. Then you would address all the constitutional and legal issues, but without the top target, they would not move. Our approach was a bit different, in terms of the first target, but they at least respected our integrity, and believed we would convey their message as told to us.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What happened next?*

NABIL FAHMY: At the same time, the vice president was meeting with a larger group of opposition leaders that he chose. It did not include anyone from our group, except businessmen. So there were many different processes going on here. What was very amusing and interesting was that the vice president was essentially meeting the “political parties plus” but the political parties had no influence whatsoever in Tahrir Square, in the demonstrations. He should have been meeting “demonstrators plus some of the parties,” rather than meeting the parties plus some of the demonstrators. That in many ways reflected the lack of sensitivity to what had actually happened. One of the demonstrators we had met at the end of our meetings had mentioned, “Oh, the vice president is meeting opposition leaders from the parties and people he has chosen. They are trying to control the agenda. We will.”

CAIRO REVIEW: *And they did?*

NABIL FAHMY: And they did. They increased the pressure in different parts of Egypt systematically in the next few days. In all candor, they were strengthened and supported by mishandling on the government side at every point in time. If you look at the sequence of the president’s speeches, substance-wise he actually gave quite a lot even before he resigned. But it was done piecemeal, always late, and always in a form that made it very difficult to accept, and very easy for those who did not want to accept it to say, “You shouldn’t believe this.” As I mentioned, [the regime] rejected our proposal for the president to hand over power to the vice president. He finally announced he would accept that proposal fourteen days later, the day before he resigned. At that point, you couldn’t even convey that to the other side. It was dead on delivery at that point.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there anything President Mubarak could have done?*

NABIL FAHMY: There is the issue of when the President announced that he would not run for office again and that he would not leave Egypt, he wanted to die in Egypt. Egyptians are emotional. Egyptian society was actually divided on this, not the demonstrators, but the society. Many people said, “Well, this is a respectful way out. Why don’t we accept?” President Mubarak for his first ten to fifteen years had a very

good record as president. Most of the criticisms and arguments came in the second half of his tenure. The president made the speech at night. The next day, by about two o'clock, you had the hooligans going into Tahrir Square with the camels and horses. To have the violence go on for twelve hours on live television. It turned the most passive Egyptian against the system and in support of the demonstrators. That killed the president's offer that he would not run again and he wanted to die in Egypt. That killed all of the emotional support that he could have gotten from the public. It was those supporters of the majority party that organized, financed, and encouraged the hooligans to go in to Tahrir Square, and those that remained passive allowing these battles to go on for twelve hours, who turned the tide in terms of the political support of society for the demonstrators. There was no return from there on. There simply was no return.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Where did that put the wise men group?*

NABIL FAHMY: We went down to Tahrir Square the day afterwards. It took us forty-five minutes to cross the square because of the crowds and we received a tremendously warm welcome, but very loud chants: "He leaves! He leaves! He leaves! He leaves!" One was touched by this. On the one hand, they were open to dialogue with people who were looking for a way out and not necessarily completely responsive in the short term to their emotional desires. They welcomed us very well, but they were sending us a strong message: "He leaves." None of us going into the square that day, after the violence, was ready to ask for less.

CAIRO REVIEW: *That was a turning point for Egypt.*

NABIL FAHMY: Another turning point is ironic, but anybody who understands Egypt should recognize this. The minute the army went down in the streets, the government lost control. Let me rephrase that: the minute the army hit the street, it was clear that the demonstrators had won, because the Egyptian army does not shoot at Egyptian civilians. It has never done it, and its code of honor is that it will not. They are now between you and the people. If the choice is put to them, "You have to make a choice," they've already announced that they will go with the people. That's always been their position, so rather than be a source of stability and strength for the government, it actually was a source of stability and strength for the demonstrators. So you had the army, and the chant of "we and the army are one" from the demonstrators. This was confirmed in all the public statements from the army. There was not a single reference to the president in the first statement, not a single reference to the government. It was always the army and the people and that's a continuous message. Then the army issued a statement, "We as an army high commission have met and we are

in constant session.” For analysts of army statements, that means, “We are watching. We are no longer a passive participant here. We are watching as an active participant.” In that same statement, they say, “We support the legitimate demands of the demonstrators.” So you see a political shift here. The first mistake was sending the army down, but [the regime] had to do that because of what happened with the police. But that actually strengthened the demonstrators. Towards the end, when it became closer to the army being asked, “Well, you’re going to have to use force,” they knew they would not. But they did not want to disobey an order. So they issued a statement saying, “Okay, we are watching, and we will make our own decisions.”

CAIRO REVIEW: *So the army role was decisive here?*

NABIL FAHMY: You had in the last twenty-four hours an expectation of a statement from the president. But it didn’t come out as “I will mandate Omar Suleiman”—which is what we had suggested much earlier—and the army saying “We will guarantee that he does that.” Instead, you had the army waiting to watch the people in the street, and when the people in the streets said, “No,” the army said, “Enough is enough.”

CAIRO REVIEW: *What lessons do you see in your efforts?*

NABIL FAHMY: You can draw three conclusions from this. One, it’s a wonderful case study in how not to manage a crisis. I mean, all of the elements of what not to do were exercised. Second, it clearly showed that there was this huge gap between what the presidency thought was reality and what was the reality on the ground. That’s a function of long-term government and age and isolation. Thirdly, it shows you the true limitations of power. In other words, the tank on the street was less effective than mobile phones and Facebook. The tank was there but it couldn’t be used, they couldn’t shoot. It is a testimony to what constitutes power in this day and age. Military power is, and will continue to be, important. But the power of communication, the power to network, the power to organize—because we live in a transparent world and you can’t simply react without ramifications worldwide—is extremely important to take into account here.

CAIRO REVIEW: *And, as you said, the Egyptian youth showed a great deal of political maturity.*

NABIL FAHMY: How did they have such clarity of thought? I remember once in our discussions, just to understand the limits of how far we could go, I asked one of them a couple of questions. He responded “We have just undertaken revolution. This is not about technicalities. It is about a revolution, and you all should understand this. We want to change the system. Help us develop the mechanics to change the system, but nothing less than changing the system will serve us.” We talked about everything

from constitutional reform to the reconciliation process, and so on, and one of them shot back—they shot back in their emotion, but not once did they lose tempers, did they speak impolitely or inappropriately, these were truly admirable kids—one shot back and said, “Gentlemen, my friend was standing right here at my shoulder when he was killed. So don’t get lost. This has to be commensurate with the loss that I have and that his family has.” It was actually quite touching.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You have faith?*

NABIL FAHMY: Egyptians are retaking ownership of their own country. Now, that will have implications. If you engage them in building the politics and legal system of the new Egypt, you will have progress. If you don’t, you are going to have problems, because they will not back off.

CAIRO REVIEW: *The challenges ahead?*

NABIL FAHMY: The military has been exceptionally astute politically from day one, to my astonishment. How subtle they’ve been, and how careful they have been. Now that they are also the governors of the country, the leaders of the country, they are going to have to satisfy the political leanings of everyone, and that’s a much more complicated situation. They, on the one hand, have announced a program to hand over in six months civilian rule and hold four elections—three elections and a referendum. They need to be continuously transparent and they need to be continuously inclusive because this is not about changing the president, it’s about changing Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why do you think the revolution came now?*

NABIL FAHMY: We were going toward a political confrontation in the summer of 2011 because we would have an election for president in the fall. There was a big question whether President Mubarak was going to run again, or nominate his son, and who else, so there were a lot of questions here about that. Add to that that we have a population where 56 percent is younger than twenty-five years old, an anxious population, an impatient population, a vigorous population, looking for their own future, trying to determine their own future. One had to expect that we were going to reach a boil at one point. Did I expect a revolution? No. But, yes, I expected political tension. Why did it reach the point that it did? The first thing is that the demographic mix is ripe for that. Secondly, there was this blatantly arrogant result in the last parliamentary elections in November where the majority party got 97 percent of the seats. You have to be a political amateur to even want to achieve that kind of majority, because it means putting all of the opposition outside of parliament against you, even though they differ from each other.

CAIRO REVIEW: *That was a trigger?*

NABIL FAHMY: So the oil was spilled out there on the street waiting for it to be lit up. It was lit up by Tunis. What lit it up in January rather than June was basically the events in Tunis. Had it happened differently, it could have possibly have led to a compromise of the president not running for office again and without everybody being thrown out of government.

CAIRO REVIEW: *As an Egyptian diplomat, how do you see the international dimension to the political change in Egypt?*

NABIL FAHMY: I've always criticized fundamentalists because they don't think rationally about certain things. But on foreign interference, I'm a fundamentalist. I simply do not encourage foreign players to get engaged as long as violence is not used against civilians. The reason is not because I have a problem with the moral issues, quite the contrary. I understand people raising questions about violence and human rights and all that. And expressions about violations of human rights are completely understandable as long as the facts are there. It's just because all countries have their own challenges, they have their own political calendars, and their own interests, their own priorities. And they may not be consistent with ours. I don't like to determine, define, or even calibrate my own domestic agenda with a domestic agenda that is foreign.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you evaluate the U.S. posture during the days in Tahrir Square?*

NABIL FAHMY: Initially, it was clear they were lost and completely surprised. Lost, they should not have been. Surprised, I can understand, because we all were, but only on timing. For years, the U.S. body politic has had no respect for Arab public opinion. When we would convey the public sentiment to our American interlocutors they would ignore or snicker! I am sure this will stop now. Nevertheless, I think President Obama's last comments about being inspired by the youth touched the square tremendously. When Obama said, "I was inspired by these kids," they felt they were heard. Everything in between that, they frankly were not focused on.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Could the U.S. have done anything differently to better influence events?*

NABIL FAHMY: I did not want them to influence events. Even if we failed, this had to be an Egyptian thing. I didn't want it to be tarnished by a foreign element. But let me add to that. Frankly, sending [former U.S. ambassador to Egypt] Frank Wisner was a big mistake. I understand why America would feel obliged to do that. But, in

fact, it was over by then. It again reflected to you that they did not understand what was happening in the street. The minute the army went into the street, the demonstrators won. At the end of the day, President Mubarak was leaving, one way or the other, the minute the army went into the street. So sending the emissary here, and then you had contradicting reports about what he actually said, and then conflicting reports about Frank's opinion and the administration's opinion, that was frankly a weak point. I'm not criticizing Frank himself, I'm simply saying that was the weakest point of the process. I know that they have been constantly in touch with the presidency and the military and with anyone that they could get in touch with here to keep emphasizing to them, "don't use force." Generally speaking, President Obama's statements were much better than any European statements where he focused on Egypt's demonstration and Egypt's rights, whereas some of the European statements immediately jumped into "You have to respect your agreements with Israel." They brought in the Israeli debate even though this was a purely Egyptian thing.

CAIRO REVIEW: *We didn't see anti-American or anti-Israel messages in Tabrir.*

NABIL FAHMY: It's an interesting point that in all of my discussions with everybody here, foreign policy was not mentioned once by the demonstrators, not once. They didn't argue about it, they didn't reject it, they didn't send any messages to anybody. When the army took charge, the army said that they would respect international agreements, just to calm people's nerves. After the demonstrations ended, the demonstrators said that they were changing Egypt domestically and that they would respect international agreements and discuss these later. So this was not about foreign policy. What's important now, frankly, is to build a better Egypt. We will need some time.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Will the revolution reorient Egypt as a more nationalist society with a more nationalist foreign policy?*

NABIL FAHMY: The people have taken charge of the government. They are going to hold their government officials more accountable in the short term. In all of our actions, including foreign policy, while we will have strategic agendas, they are much more sensitive to urgent tactical concerns and pressures. I'll give you an example. I don't see the situation on the borders in Gaza—I never did and I still don't see—being a tenable situation. That's not that I support Hamas, or that the revolution supports Hamas. But we need to find a creative way to ensure that the border breathes and preserves security at the same time. It is not viable politically to say, "They have done wrong, therefore we will apply a blockade." Yes, you will see a much stronger Egypt in responding to double standards, in responding to, for example, Israel's settlement policy, and in emphasizing the interests of developing countries in the World Trade

Organization. These kids, this youth, and this society have taken charge now and they want to be engaged and they are holding public officials accountable.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So that is bound to affect Egypt's foreign policy posture on some issues?*

NABIL FAHMY: If we do it right, we will be under the same pressures that everybody is under in a democratic country. Where, yes, we have strategic goals and you need to find a balance with your people of what you can do in the short term and what you can do in the long term. But you can't ignore short-term concerns. [American officials] would come very often to me when I was in Washington and say, "Oh, we can't do that, we have congressional elections." Well, now *we'll* have them, too. So, you can stop giving me that, or you're going to start hearing it from me at the same time. When we would say, "The Israelis need to go back to the 1967 borders," [American officials] would say, "Well, the Israelis have a coalition government, and there is this small, minute, political party that is way off the wall here but holds the seat in some subcommittee." Well, we have it too. So yes, you are going to see a much more assertive Egypt, an Egypt that is not less concerned with strategic objectives—they won't change—but much more concerned with immediate short-term things. That's good, if you go back through the history of the Middle East. Egypt always led the region by being the trendsetter in ideas, in political, economic, and social trends. That's where we are going to be now again. We may not be raising the flag of pan-Arabism, but we will be raising the flag of a stronger, more proactive, better Arab world. We won't fall back in history, but we will go forward. Frankly, I have been annoyed by this for a number of years, and I said it when I was in service: we have to be less reactive and more proactive. When you are reactive, especially for a medium-sized country in a global society, there are so many things everywhere in the world you get dizzy reacting to all of these things. You have to, especially in your region, be one of the forces that determine the agenda. We will be a more useful, more valuable [partner] to the U.S. than ever before, because we will have more influence in the region than ever before. Will we dance to your music all the time? We actually never did.

CAIRO REVIEW: *So Washington has to get used to a different Egypt?*

NABIL FAHMY: I think it's a different region. If you [Americans] look at it only from the perspective of the Arab–Israeli conflict, you will lose. With the Arab–Israeli conflict, frankly, you have not been particularly effective in pushing it forward. Look at the region differently. It's not the same region that can swallow anything as long as you keep looking at the longer perspective. Whether it's those in government dealing with government, or the analysts writing about what's happening in Egypt from Massachusetts Avenue, they don't understand what's actually happening in Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How will the revolution affect Israel and the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty?*

NABIL FAHMY: This revolution actually serves Israel as well. It may not serve the Israeli right. It definitely will not serve those who do not want peace between Israel and the Arab world, those who do not want a two-state solution. They will hear our voice much louder when they hear the Arab voice. It will be much louder when they enter east Jerusalem and try to place Jewish settlers in that part of town. Therefore, the Israeli public will realize how wrong these steps are from the Israeli right and how this will lead to postponing peace. Yes, it may worry people initially, but I think it will energize the peace movements on both sides, give a strong message to the right that if you go too far, your own people will push you out, not us.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How will the new Egypt affect the Arab world?*

NABIL FAHMY: Parts of the Arab world will worry, because once again they will see us ahead of the curve. But more and more, we will try to take them with us, rather than try to do it alone. If we do this properly and if [political change] slowly seeps into their systems, then they can actually do this without the confrontations that we had to go through.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Considering that Islamist groups antagonistic to Israel may be in the government for the first time, what is the risk to the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty?*

NABIL FAHMY: The Islamist movement had a role without having any responsibility in the past. They were in parliament, in the press, but they didn't have the responsibility of governing. They have both won and lost from this process. What will determine their weight, is, will the secularists continue to be activists, continue to be engaged, continue to turn this energy into political action plans and parties? That's what will determine the Muslim Brotherhood's role. The Muslim Brotherhood was not the leader of these demonstrations, but they were there, and they were significantly there. How would this influence the effect on U.S. relations or relations with Israel and the Israeli peace agreement? The only statement mentioned throughout this process was made by some spokesperson from the Brotherhood. He said Egypt would respect all of its agreements both internationally and regionally, but review them at the same time. I don't see anything wrong with that position. The Muslim Brotherhood has always made their position clear. Their agenda is mostly domestic, it's not based on foreign policy. If I was a foreigner watching from abroad, I would be applauding that somehow, something got all of the Egyptian middle class and the secularists to come out and be activists. So I'm not following things with too much anxiety.

FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY

Political analyst Amr Hamzawy says that Egypt's new challenge is to transform the "protesting citizen" into a "participating citizen"

Amr Hamzawy is research director and a senior associate at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, and a political science professor at Cairo University. He also serves on the Middle East Advisory Council of Human Rights Watch. He is the author of the recent books *Between Religion and Politics* and *The Arab Future: Contemporary Debates on Democracy, Political Islam, and Resistance*. *Cairo Review* Managing Editor **Scott MacLeod** interviewed Hamzawy in Cairo on February 19, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What does the revolution mean for Egypt?*

AMR HAMZAWY: Let's start chronologically, with the significance of January 25. I guess the major, major point of January 25 was that citizens for the first time regained the street as a political arena. [This] entailed the fact that the barrier of fear was [made relative], at least to the extent that citizens could express themselves freely, they were able to express themselves in big numbers freely, and to try to stand their ground in front of brutal security apparatus. The numbers which took out to the street in Cairo, Alexandria, and elsewhere were not the numbers which we expected. No one expected it to turn that way. Everyone was expecting to see the same familiar faces of [the Egyptian opposition group] *Kifaya* and a couple of activists who we have been following in the last years. January 28 was the real beginning of the citizen's revolution in Egypt in different ways. We did not only have young members of protest networks and movements, we had cross-cutting representation of different social groups, highly representative. We had a massive increase in the numbers of demonstrators and we had an increase in the nationwide nature of what was going on. The last time Egyptians took to the streets in similar numbers was 1919.

CAIRO REVIEW: *The political meaning of that?*

AMR HAMZAWY: Regaining control over the streets meant that people were giving up on whatever they invested hope in, in terms of reforming Egypt and democratizing

Egypt. Some people had invested hope in the reform orientation of the NDP (ruling National Democratic Party), others invested hope in opposition parties and movements, be it the Wafd or the Ikhwan (Muslim Brotherhood). It was [a testament] to the failure of not only the ruling party but of the opposition parties and movements in pushing reform. It was a constituency of Egyptians coming together in a sustained manner to push democratic demands in a non-ideological manner, in a peaceful manner, and in a clear manner, which really did not need any additional articulation by a leadership. To my mind that was one of the most impressive aspects of the citizens' revolution in Egypt. It was based on a national consensus that emerged in the 'free public space.'

CAIRO REVIEW: *This was surprising?*

AMR HAMZAWY: I was always in favor of doubting how significant 'free public debates' are in Egypt, with whatever 'red lines' we had been having. But it seemed that they had an impact. They created a national consensus where they took that out to the streets, they built on that in articulating their demands. We started with Cairo, Alexandria, and Suez and then in the last days Upper Egyptian governorates coming, like in Minya and Sohag. It developed gradually in terms of sectoral representation, young people, poor segments, middle class, workers, industrial workers, peasants. Finally, we had the urban/rural divide which was transcended in the last days, in the third week. The sheer number who took out to the street to demand Mubarak's resignation was by far more than those who voted for Mubarak in all elections between 1981 and 2005. He never got more than four million, and what we had was definitely more than that.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What were the demands of this national consensus?*

AMR HAMZAWY: The demands of January 25 were at least [Interior Minister Habib] El-Adly's resignation. The demands of January 28 were the removal of the regime. And then around that we moved in a very rational manner between different versions. Well, let him delegate to the vice president. He delegated too late. We are now to the phase of trying to see if we could put Egypt on a safe path towards democratization.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Many were astonished by the events.*

AMR HAMZAWY: The assumption that Egyptians are not willing to challenge authority is based on wrong reading of Egyptian history. Egyptian history has never been a history of submission to rulers. And although no one of us expected it to turn the way it turned, many of us saw the ingredients, with the political backsliding, the socioeconomic crises, and sectarian tensions everywhere, that a change was going to come.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Then what accounts for how the regime was able to maintain such a tight control for thirty years?*

AMR HAMZAWY: The regime went through different phases. The real failure of the regime or the collapse of its legitimacy started in 2005. Up until 2005, Mubarak was not a hated figure. Some people never liked him, some liked him, but the overall performance of Mubarak one could say was more balanced [compared] to [Anwar] Sadat and [Gamal]Abdel Nasser. We had a degree of freedom of expression, a bit of freedom of association. Human rights violations were of course there but they were not as bad as they were under Abdel Nasser. We had more of a market economy, some cases of corruption but not massive-scale corruption. The father-son succession scenario was rumored but was not a reality. But after 2005, Mubarak started to lose track of what was going on in Egypt. He distanced himself from the population, which always appreciated his frankness, his ability to address them and their concerns. Corruption became wide-scale and embedded in the ruling establishment. Gamal Mubarak's succession scenario became a project and was implemented. [There was a] complete backsliding on political freedoms and freedoms of association and expression. [There were] disastrous elections for the Shura Council and People's Assembly. We had growing rates of economic development but they never trickled down. So this was a bleak picture, and add to that the illness of an ailing president who was no longer in charge. The arrogance of the regime reached a point where even an opposition representation in the People's Assembly was no longer tolerated. This pushing out socioeconomically and politically meant ultimately pushing them out to the street.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the spark?*

AMR HAMZAWY: Even if you go to the young members of the protest who organized January 25, no one of them expected to see that turnout, no one of them expected to see fifty thousand Egyptians demonstrating. They expected much more modest numbers. So there was an element of surprise, which was definitely related to Tunisia, the discovery by many citizens of Egypt of how weak those authoritarian, autocratic regimes are.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Was there a leader of this revolution?*

AMR HAMZAWY: No. This is something I increasingly find frustrating in our public debate. [People] are trying to substitute the question of institutions and mechanisms with leaders, which is why you are seeing now an increased debate about [Nobel laureate] Ahmed Zewail, and [Arab League Secretary General] Amr Moussa. What is really key as of now is to agree on what is going to happen not only to the constitution but to the political reengineering of Egypt. To open up the system, to create and sustain competitive elections. What will happen in terms of rebuilding and reforming state institutions,

rebuilding the security apparatus, reforming state media. What does it take? The right mix of procedures, mechanisms, institutions, structures, institutional traditions, precedents. This is not being discussed.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Who started the protest on January 25?*

AMR HAMZAWY: There were six groups, which are known, and all of them are now in the January 25 Revolution Youth Coalition, coming from different party affiliations: Al-Ghad (Tomorrow), El-Gabha (Democratic Front), Ikhwan (Brotherhood), and other groups that are liberal or leftist, the April 6 Movement. They coordinated. There was an unorganized segment which in fact starting on January 28 became even more crucial. [Without them] it would have failed. Then the last week, the decisive turning point was the industrial workers and professional associations, the railways, public transportation, basically on strike and [performing] civil disobedience. They were the ones who really pushed the military establishment to force Mubarak to resign.

CAIRO REVIEW: *That was the push?*

AMR HAMZAWY: Right. If he would have delegated ten days after the beginning of the revolution, he would have gotten away with the delegation formula. It was accepted. He always gave too little and too late. This has been Mubarak's recipe in the last five years. Basically, we would have had him as an honorary president and [Vice President] Omar Suleiman would have continued to manage what he was starting to get into: national dialogue, opening up. I was in Tahrir every day. It would have been accepted, to my mind. People would have wished to keep the military establishment out of the direct management of Egyptian politics. After all, we had the 1952 experience, and we had these two years between 1952 and 1954 where democracy was promised and we ended up going in a completely different direction.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What happened on February 10 and 11?*

AMR HAMZAWY: This was a country feeling as if it was going to disintegrate very soon. The army had been out in the streets trying to police a country, but not policing it effectively. The collective psychology by Thursday was expecting only "I resign." What happened was a massive escalation, once again. The march to the [presidential palace] Qasr Al-Oruba, different marches elsewhere, this was really like a country falling apart. So the military had to push him. That's what they did. We don't know much. We know that they gave him the chance to see how the delegation scenario will work out. Since it did not work out, they resorted back to the originally preferred [option] I guess on Thursday, which was for him to step down. And then they pushed him to step down.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How does the youth movement translate the revolution into an actual political system where they have a role?*

AMR HAMZAWY: That's one of the key challenges. Countries which undergo democratic transitions after citizens' revolutions have a very hard time the first years trying to get the right mix of processes, institutions, mechanisms, and safeguards. [These must] ensure the rule of law, the creation of democratic institutions, peaceful competition in the formal political sphere, citizens' participation. Basically, to transfer the protesting and striking citizen from being a protesting and striking citizen into a participating citizen. The key objective is to ensure having fair and competitive parliamentary and presidential elections and safeguarding the competitive and transparent nature of the elections. A whole new set of challenges [is] coming up.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Such as?*

AMR HAMZAWY: How to organize in a meaningful way that gives citizens a chance to participate. One, you go into political parties, you create effective political parties which can claim to represent, which reach out in constituency-building activities, and lobby around platforms and create interest for citizens. Or you depend on civil society. The challenge is key because Egyptians took out to the streets, were out in the streets for three weeks, and now no one knows if they will come back when there are elections. The second challenge: is the constitution, after the amendments, enough to secure peaceful transition to democracy in Egypt? My answer is no. This is a presidential constitution, which gives a president so many prerogatives, does not make him accountable, and would create an autocratic ruler of sorts out of every Egyptian president. I do not believe that presidential systems are best equipped to manage transition periods to democracy. Parliamentary systems are much, much better. This is based on comparative experience. You look at Latin America, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Spain, Greece, Portugal. The elected parliament will have to start a new discussion about the constitution and whether we can push successfully to a parliamentary system. A parliamentary system will ensure to my mind higher degrees of citizens' participation in parties and would activate the citizenry of Egypt.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What other challenges do you see?*

AMR HAMZAWY: How to let democracy, as an organizing principle for the Egyptian polity, trickle down to other arenas in society. To really influence each vital sector of society. Be it civil society, education, state institutions, the security apparatus, media, and so on. I mean, how to institutionalize democracy with its key procedures and values not only in formal politics but beyond. The next challenge is, what are you going to do with the military establishment? I mean they are managing Egyptian politics as of now.

But if we are going to build a democratic and civil polity, they will have to be pushed out. Of course, it will be misleading to imagine they will give up and say “you guys do it now.” Of course, they would like to retain some role in politics. I’m increasingly convinced that one way to manage it is to go in a similar direction like Turkey and give them a national security council or a similar body, a safeguarding role. In Turkey, they safeguard the republican values. In Egypt, they would have to safeguard democratic values and would have to ensure the civil nature of Egyptian polity, not only against an active role of the military, but also an Islamization of Egyptian politics. I guess they would like to retain that role, but how to devise the mechanism is going to be challenging.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How can you have parliamentary elections when the party system is discredited, you have no or few real political parties?*

AMR HAMZAWY: Existing parties are discredited as part of the autocratic formula of Mubarak. They were domesticated, they fought for minor shares and small gains. They are stagnant and decaying in their structures. They will have to work out a model and strategy to energize and reach out and do some constituency building. There are some active parties as well. Al-Ghad and El-Gabha, of Ayman Nour and Osama Ghazaly Harb, have young members. New parties will be established as well. Just today, the Islamist Al-Wasat party got finally its license. Ultimately, not a single society which transitioned from autocracy to democracy got it right in the first election. Look at what happened in Eastern European countries, you had communists reassembling and coming back.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How strong is the staying power of the remnants of the Mubarak regime?*

AMR HAMZAWY: They were so interwoven with the state institutions, probably one cannot discard the possibility of them reorganizing, reassembling under a new banner. They have the advantage of having representation everywhere in the country. This was a state party and the state party was represented everywhere. I do not expect them to do well in the elections. They will be discredited very soon, once you see the same figures who are well known to Egyptians. I have some good reasons to believe the military establishment does not like them and would really like to do away with that party and its legacy. They might let it participate, reassembled under a new banner, but will not favor it over its competitors.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is the Muslim Brotherhood’s future?*

AMR HAMZAWY: I guess they will have similar troubles like everyone else in the old opposition spectrum. You have real tensions between their young members and

the old guard. They will have to come to a choice if they would like to participate, and establish a political party, they would have to separate institutionally between the *dawa* (religious call) and the political component, which is not easy. This movement has sustained itself since 1928 by being two in one, a social/religious movement and a political arm. Separating will not be easy. On the other hand, they are an organized movement, they have a constituency, and they have a network similar to the NDP, branches which exist everywhere. Probably they will do well, but I do not see them getting a majority. Maybe they will take 20–30 percent if they contest that many seats. Even if they would run candidates for each seat, I don't see them getting a majority.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there an unreasonable fear about the Islamization of Egypt, an Islamist takeover?*

AMR HAMZAWY: The 'Islamist takeover' stuff is based on a wrong framing of what happened. It was not an Islamist revolution. There is not a risk of hijacking, but the risk of them being the only organized movement and lobbying democratically to get citizens to join them. If they do it democratically, I cannot say hijacking. They don't command the strategic majority, but if you leave the ground for them, and you do a poor job in organizing, you do not do your homework in terms of constituency building and getting out a convincing platform, then you never know what will happen. Not in the next elections, but in the one after. They are good at constituency building, we know it.

SEEKING JUSTICE

Longtime activist Aida Seif El-Dawla demands that Egypt's regime be held accountable for past—and ongoing—human rights abuses

Aida Seif El-Dawla is the cofounder of the El Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and of the Egyptian Association Against Torture. She is also a professor of psychiatry at Ain Shams University in Cairo. In 2003, she received Human Rights Watch's highest honor for her work to end torture and promote women's rights in Egypt. *Cairo Review* Managing Editor **Scott MacLeod** interviewed Seif El-Dawla in Cairo on March 12, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is the human rights factor in Egypt's revolution?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: It was crucial. It was an essential component of the revolution. All this is about rights. It was triggered by the Khaled Said case [a young Egyptian killed in police custody in Alexandria in 2010], which was clearly a case of human rights violation, and death under torture. But it is also a culmination of long years of struggle for all kinds of rights: right to organization, to gathering, to democracy, to social and economic rights, to a minimum wage, to the right to strike. At the end, it's all about rights. The right to have a dignified life and to live a decent standard. And to decide who rules and by which terms. Every revolution is about rights.

CAIRO REVIEW: *This is something all Egyptians felt?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: They might not know the human rights conventions inside and out. I don't either. But they know they were fighting, they were struggling, they lost their lives, because they wanted better life.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What part did the Khaled Said case play?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: It mobilized many people against the issue of torture. Khaled Said was a middle-class young man. He did not belong to the population that is usually subject to torture—the poor, the marginalized. He was a middle-class young man who used the Internet and was a computer fan. He used the Internet café and

posted YouTube videos like so many young people. And I think many young people identified with him. I think his class played a role. The extreme courage of his family. And the identification of young people with him. And the fact it also took place so much in public. And the pictures that were taken by his brother. All these elements put together put him in the center of the campaign against torture.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Was it an extreme case?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: No, it's the typical case. It happened so many times, in the previous regime, and in the current regime. We have been documenting cases of torture since January 25.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there a direct line between the Khaled Said case and the mobilization of people on January 25?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: No, it's not a clear linear line, of course not. But it was a trigger. People went on the 25th on the Day of Police to defy police. And to reject police policies. What happened between the 25th and 28th was extreme stupidity and brutality by the regime. No one thought that the 25th was going to develop into what it developed into. There was severe brutality by the regime and it seems that the young people were really fed up. The way they challenged and actually ran against those tanks. And the way they picked up the tear gas canisters and threw them back. That was an angry young people. Who by the way didn't belong to anything. The political groups and the familiar faces and names, they all appeared in Tahrir Square on the 28th. The clash of the demonstrations after midnight on the 26th and 27th, those were angry young people.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Your memory of January 25?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: There was the feeling that there is a defiance that I've not seen before. And a courage, incredible courage. And then at one point, it seemed that the security forces had given up for the day. Which happened before, on March 20, 2003, when demonstrations broke out [against] the invasion of Iraq. On March 20, people managed to take over the square. On March 21, it was a massacre. So this was also a concern. They were exhausted. People were coming from everywhere. And they'd retaliate the next day. Well, they retaliated the same night, and that was very brutal. The tear gas was incredible, people got shot.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What does the revolution say about the work of the civil society organizations over the years?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: I think that everybody played a role. I'm not sure that civil society organizations played a major role. You can't pick and choose now, who said

what. Nadim, for example, started talking about torture in 1993. But it never had the impact. It had a major impact on the lives of individual torture survivors and their families, but it never had this major impact on its own. Except when the bloggers joined, before the Khaled Said case. Once bloggers got involved and started posting videos on the Internet, the whole issue took on a whole different dimension. I can't say, yes, civil society organizations contributed to the revolution. But everything before contributed to it. I can't overlook, for example, three years of daily worker's strikes on the streets, occupying the street outside parliament, etc. I can't decide what is it exactly. It's just the injustice became too much. The revolution, this process, has toppled the head of the regime. There's still a lot more to be toppled before we can talk about the success of the revolution.

CAIRO REVIEW: *People around the world, in China, Vietnam, other Arab countries, will be looking at Egypt for lessons as a model.*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: We're looking at Tunisia for lessons. Tunisia is far ahead of what we achieved. Their president left the country. Ours is still in the country, receiving royal treatment. Okay? They have dismantled the state security apparatus. They have dissolved the ruling party. They have toppled one government and are not letting go except when their agenda was achieved. We have a different situation. We have many people now who are telling strikers in Tahrir to stop, saying "What else do you want?" And those people aren't just thugs. The violent aspect of it is to a great extent thugs. But these are politicized people, people whose agendas stop at the constitution, elections, etc. It's funny. A call for the Khaled Said situation provokes the 25th. Now, with all this torture going on, also taken on video, also the victims themselves testifying, nobody wants to hear it. So we still have a very long way to go.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is the situation now?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: You have one hundred and seventy people now in detention, receiving military trials, right now, right now, as we're talking. And the lawyers there, they have no access to detainees, they don't have access to the interrogations, they don't have access to the trials. And those people may receive very harsh sentences.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why is Tunisia ahead?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: I think because they have a different leadership. This revolution [in Egypt] did not have a leadership. At least not a clear one. I'm not interested in who was leading behind doors. What matters is who is leading in the square. Tunisia after a while had a leadership: the Tunisian trade union, which is very strong. And they have relatively strong political groups. In Egypt, the situation was different.

The leadership developed after the revolution started. People kind of self-appointed themselves as leaders or as negotiators or whatever. And always creating a lot of debate. Not always happy debate, regarding “who are you to represent us,” and stuff like that. For example, one coalition last week called [for] the ending of the sit-in in Tahrir. Who are you to decide whether the sit-in should end or not end? Who elected you? That’s a major difference. Also, the size of the country and the strength of the state is different. [Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine] Ben Ali was a tyrant, but so far as a Mafioso can be a tyrant. But Mubarak was heading a very powerful state.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What was the role of human rights groups in the protests?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: Our center is part of a coalition of organizations called the Front for the Defense of Egyptian Protestors. It was set up in 2006 to deal with demonstrations. They’d happen and people would get arrested. The lawyers would go to attend the interrogations. Another group would collect clothes and money and food and take it to the prison. It was all things that wouldn’t last longer than three or four days. But, this [revolution], we weren’t used to this. So as individuals, not part of organizations, we were in the demonstrations every day. My colleague and I actually stayed at the center for eighteen days because we received injured people. Our doctors went for a few days to the field hospital. We provided medicines. We transferred patients from the field hospitals to other hospitals when that was needed. Since things are quieter, we’re documenting. We’re receiving injured people and trying ways to treat them because some of them need sophisticated interventions. We are documenting torture and detentions.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Can you review the human rights violations since January 25?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: We have over six hundred and eighty people who died. The majority of them died with live bullets. We actually had a few people at the center who would come and bring the bullets as evidence that they had shot the injured. Thousands of injured. We’re far from documenting all of them. There are at least two thousand who went to the field hospital. There are problems with hospitals because in many cases hospitals would not give reports of the actual cause of death or injury. And that needed several interventions by doctors and lawyers we know. And then the disappearances, the arrests.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are the figures for disappearances?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: The figure that we have, at our center, is two hundred. Some of those might turn out to be deceased. The family of one went to the morgue every single day. They were always told he is not here. Then suddenly they’re asked

to go and identify a body with a face that had no features. So now they're going to do a DNA test which can exclude, but can't confirm. And that's frightening, considering that nobody sees the detainees. And there are stories of several collections of corpses with different stories on how and why they died. So anyway, it's scary. There's a lack of transparency and lack of information. The disappeared are one thing. And those in the court are different. We are, mind you, receiving the tip of the iceberg. And we are receiving Cairo complaints. What's happening in the governorates? We don't have the information on that.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What do you know about the the episode in Tahrir Square on February 2, when the horses and camels arrived?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: Our relationship to that event as a human rights organization was documentation of the injured and dead. Who died and where are they? And trying to help the families of the dead get certificates from the hospitals, to get the real reason for their deaths. There were different scenarios to disperse from Tahrir. There was tear gas, and firing, and there was beating and snipers, and there was this farce of the camels and horses. And then there were rumors. We entered a very strong psychological war of stories and rumors. You never know what is right.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is the evidence of the police and army using lethal force against the protestors?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: It wasn't Libya, okay? The army did not turn its tanks against the people and shoot at the people. The soldiers in the tanks let people use spray paint to write, "Down with Mubarak" on the tanks. The people were very passionate about the army. This is something the dates back to a long history in Egypt, but we have to understand the army and generals are one thing. And the soldiers in the tanks are another. It's not the soldiers in the tanks who take the decisions. But it was the same army which on the 28th opened up and let the thugs come into Tahrir to beat up the protestors. It was also the army that flew those F-16s for two days over the demonstrators. Terrorizing. At one point they flew very low. You had extreme vibration in your ears and some people lost consciousness. People need to believe in something. And of course the army is also clever. For example, in the first or second statement by the army, the general salutes the martyrs. This melts the hearts of people. Nobody wants to hear now about the army torturing or arresting. There is this message that's being propagated that those are thugs arrested by the army, for our safety and security. Many of them are not thugs. And even if they are thugs, you don't torture thugs, you bring them to trial. They're protestors. And it's funny that those people are brought in front of military trials, while the

big shots of the previous regime, including Mubarak, who is the high commander of the army, gets interrogated by the normal civil prosecution, and don't even have to show up.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why is this still happening in Egypt?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: There is a strong counter-revolution and there is a regime that is trying to maintain itself in power. There is no 'after the revolution' yet. And anyone who has the power and presence and police stations are going to use them. If this is what they use to hold on to power.

CAIRO REVIEW: *When you say the regime, who do you mean?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: That's a very good question. If I asked you before January 25, what would have been the answer? Mubarak is not the regime. He is one person. There is the regime, the old guard, the businessmen who are screaming the country is falling apart because of the strikes, that the economy is falling apart after the strikes. Who's ruling? I don't know. This is Mubarak's army. It's not a popular army. It's Mubarak's army.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do you move forward?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: As human rights activists, we have very clear demands. Apology, acknowledgement of torture, dissolution of the state security apparatus, people should be brought to justice. And then—only then—can we talk about reconciliation. But the state security apparatus is still there. The rest of the people, they want the minimum wage, they'll get the minimum wage. They want independent trade unions, and they'll get independent trade unions. That's what people struggled for.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is there any meaningful dialogue between the revolution and the army?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: No. Because the regime picks up who they talk to. There's the coalition of the youth. Can you imagine if you bring a young person and the high commander of the armed forces sits and talks with him or her as if they're buddies? Of course, it's very attractive. But none of those people are independent. Each of those people are representing something political. Be it [opposition figure Mohamed] ElBaradei, be it the National Association, be it the Muslim Brotherhood, be it El-Gabha. The regime is talking with the young people, it's a big lie. There have been calls on this coalition since the torture stories came out, to stop the negotiations until they stop the torture. Stop the negotiations until they release the detainees. Until two days ago, it didn't work.

CAIRO REVIEW: *You don't sound optimistic.*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: I'm worried. I don't think I was ever more worried in my life than I am now. Before, people were very aware of how the situation was. Maybe they felt helpless or weak, but they tried. They saw what was happening. Now people are so tired. And those eighteen days in Tahrir, those were so overwhelming, to the extent that this possibility of a savior in the form of the army, no one wants to question it. They have wiped away the graffiti of Tahrir. The things that should have been kept as reminders of the revolution. They removed the graffiti under the title "Let's clean our country."

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is holding the regime accountable important for the success of the revolution?*

AIDA SEIF EL-DAWLA: It's very important that people who did human rights abuses be held accountable and be brought to justice. The reason why torture was so widespread, why it became a policy, was that the regime could get away [with] the fact that those people were not accountable to anybody. The people that were released from state security, when state security would tell them we are the highest authority in the country, they were right. I'm not pessimistic but I'm worried. And I know it'll take long, but some people don't want it to take long. Some people are tired.

REGION IN REVOLT

Veteran analyst Rami G. Khouri predicts that the historic change sweeping the Arab world will lead to a secular rather than Islamist political order

Rami G. Khouri is the director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut. A widely published commentator on Middle East affairs, he is the former executive editor of the Beirut *Daily Star* and former editor-in-chief of the *Jordan Times*. Cairo Review Managing Editor Scott MacLeod interviewed Khouri by telephone from Cairo on March 6, 2011.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What are we learning about the Arab world?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: Two important things. Acquiescence and facility are not potential traits of Arab publics. For two generations, almost from the 1960s to now, the Arab world has put up with being the only collectively nondemocratic region in the world. Not a single Arab country was a credible democracy. They had traits of democracy, but very small and intermittent ones. And by and large it was a top-heavy, nonaccountable region. So we learn now that this is not something ingrained, that the Arab people were not comfortable with this and finally rose up to change this. The second thing we've found is that the only serious mechanism for democratization is Arab public activism. It's not well-meaning foreign aid, not small groups of civil activists in our country, trying this or trying that. And it's certainly not manipulating the public systems from the top. It's the public taking to the streets and demanding to change from autocratic to democratic systems. It's the only way to bring about that desired change. You have one common denominator, which is really constitutional change so that power is actually vested in the consent of the governed. People want constitutional change, they want principals and structures and values of governance—the exercise of power to be defined by the people through representative and accountable and equitable systems of participation and governance.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What is irreversible? What are the uncertainties?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: The uncertainties are many. The durability of these changes.

Will there be short-term regressions? What kind of systems will emerge? Will they be defined by Western-style democracy, or democracy colored with Arabism, tribalism, or Islamism? Will there be a major strain of urban cosmopolitanism defining these democracies? Will there be provincial, simple, rudimentary democracies? Will there be centralized or diffused power? The balance between presidential power and parliamentary power? The role of the judiciary? The issue of secularism versus religiosity. Fundamental systems remain to be defined. There are all kinds of really important issues. And of course we haven't had a single ideological issue raised yet. No one is talking about Israel, the U.S., Iran, secularism, women, foreign policy, tax policy. Not a single ideology has been brought up. This will come. But this is something that will be defined in the future.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What's irreversible?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: The only thing we can say is irreversible is that Arab citizenries will not put up with top-heavy security-anchored governments. They'll resist these. How? That depends on the country. But it's clear that we have awoken a sleeping giant. This is akin to the civil rights movement in the United States. Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia is our Rosa Parks. He's that one person, for that one moment, who undertook one act of great defiance and anger and self-affirmation. It happened, tragically, to be self-immolation. But it's that one act that captured the agony and indignities of the several generations of his citizens and his people. That one act sparked a rather brutal response from the Tunisian regime, then spread to ignite a protest movement that forever would change the modern Arab world. Just as Rosa Parks in her one act of refusing to give up her seat on the bus in Montgomery brought about ten years later the Civil Rights Act, and the whole change in the political system of the United States. That will never be reversed in the United States. And the same is the situation in our case in the Arab world.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How dangerous is the situation, in terms of political instability, economic costs?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: Any major national political transformation has risks. If you go back to the overthrow of the Soviet empire, there were problems afterwards. There still are. There was suffering, there was inequity, there was abuse of power. You still have great power imbalances, abuse of power by small elites. There are clearly dangers in the process. People will be hurt. People will suffer. Some people will do better than others. If you take a country like Egypt, where you have enormous economic and population pressures, it's impossible for the Egyptian economy to quickly generate the kind of numbers of jobs that will resolve the problems of youth unemployment and widespread low income. You need to do that while you're reconfiguring and relegitimizing

your entire political governance system. That's a tall order. The people will put up with pressures and problems if they feel that the system they are creating takes away the old indignities and humiliations.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Such as?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: The two things still driving the revolt are material pressures and intangible indignities. The material pressures are income, jobs, clean water, equitable delivery of health services. The intangible indignities are abuse of power, corruption. You feel as an ordinary citizen you are mistreated by your own government, by your own police, you don't feel your voice counts or is even heard. People will put up with tangible pressures like jobs for the entire population if the intangible issues are resolved. If police are not mistreating people, if you go to a government office for a routine service and you are not treated like an animal.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is the Arab world ready for democracy?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: There is no doubt that there is both the will and the logistical expertise available and the composure to be able to make the transition. You're seeing it already in places like Tunisia and Egypt. Where it's only been a couple of months but you can see this process unfold. Clearly the Arab world has both at home and among the immigrant community abroad all of the human expertise to do this. I think you're going to see tens of thousands of Arabs come back to the Arab world especially in places like Libya, Syria, Egypt, and Tunisia where people have left because they were dissatisfied with the political system and uncomfortable with the economic prospects. They gained tremendous expertise as bankers or engineers or scientists and also expertise in living as free citizens in democratic societies. This will be a tremendous injection of skilled managerial manpower and entrepreneurship and some money as well.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Do you expect broad changes in political orientation? Is this a victory for the Islamist parties ultimately?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: I don't expect radical changes. I expect some more limited changes. When the people start addressing ideologies and foreign policy issues, for example, you'll see a much stronger popular commitment to support the Palestinian people. I don't think the peace treaty with Israel will be abrogated. But people will say, we're at peace with Israel but we also support the Palestinians and will not allow Arab countries to be partners with Israel in the siege of Gaza or control of the West Bank. You'll see some changes in the rhetoric and you'll see some practical changes. You'll probably see a more clear and rational approach to dealing with Western powers, the U.S. and Europeans and others, demanding for instance that the Western powers be

less hypocritical, and practice double standards less frequently in their policies. You'll probably see greater understanding for the Iranian right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. You'll probably see a much stronger desire to cooperate with Turkey at a popular level. There will be a greater desire for people to cooperate and this will give birth to a new brand of pan-Arab cooperation and solidarity. It will be different from the rhetorical and emotional Arab nationalism of the fifties and sixties, but a European style of collaboration, integration, cooperation, and solidarity.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What about the Islamists?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: The Islamists will probably be the losers in the medium run. The Islamist movements, the Muslim Brothers and others, grew up in the last thirty or forty years and became the most important voice of political challenge. These movements developed because there was nobody else who was able to do this. The government put everybody else in jail, or kicked them out of the country, or killed them, or emasculated them, or bought them off. The Muslim Brothers and the Islamist movements were the only ones that could keep working because governments couldn't close the mosques. These Islamist movements became powerful also because they were the most courageous people and they were the only people challenging the government and they went to jail and they were killed. So I think people will recognize the debt they have to the Islamists for upholding that spark of freedom and dignity. But [now] you have other alternatives: secular parties, tribal groups, professional business groups, democracy movements, human rights, women, student, labor, students, and other groups. I think the Islamist groups will go back to playing the role that religious parties play in most societies, which is they reflect a small number of committed people. I believe the Arab world will be a largely secular political world. You will have Islamism as a player, one actor on the stage. But you essentially have five forces that will have to find a balance among themselves in terms of political culture: Arabism, tribalism, Islamism, urban cosmopolitanism, and the state ideology, the nationalism. Those five identities will interact with each other. I don't think any one movement will dominate society as the Islamists have dominated the opposition groups to the Arab regimes. So I believe that the Islamists will get weaker not stronger.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How widespread will political changes become in the region?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: I think political change as such will be widespread, but it won't always be as radical as it was in Tunisia and Egypt. There will be demands for measurable practical change in the constitutions and in the governance systems and the exercise of power in countries. In Bahrain and Jordan, people are asking for constitutional monarchies. So the monarchies won't be abolished but there will be change. In other countries,

people want the old regimes thrown out, they don't want a single remnant of the old regimes. It will vary I think in every country but I think there will be change in every single country. Throughout the region people are discontented with the nature of the political system they live in. They want them to be more democratic, representative, and accountable. How that happens will depend on local forces. Some countries will have just minor but substantive changes that actually change something in the system that is enough to satisfy the citizens.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why did this young generation revolt, and not the previous generation?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: What's different is the circumstances in which they found themselves living. The circumstances reflect the economic conditions, like population growth and job opportunities. Since the 1980s, the living standards have been declining. Parallel with that was the increasing police and security nature of the ruling regimes. Linked with that is the increasing unearned wealth of the ruling elite, the emergence of the kleptocracy in many Arab countries. And as citizens they are under increasing economic and social and environmental stress. On top of all that, they had to put up with continued defeats by Israel. Or finding themselves at peace with Israel even though they weren't at peace with Israel in their hearts because of what Israel was doing to the Palestinians and the Lebanese and others. And the humiliation of foreign armies, as in the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. All these things together brought us to this moment in the last ten years when more and more people became angry. What happened with Mohammed Bouazizi's death was a widespread sense of indignity and anger and humiliation and didn't come out of a vacuum. People in different forms and different countries have been constantly expressing their complaints and challenging their governments and have never been able to break through the incredibly powerful mechanisms of the Arab police state until Tunisia.

CAIRO REVIEW: *People have credited Facebook as a tool for the revolutions, but how important were the satellite news channels?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: I think Al Jazeera was the single most important force here. If you asked me what were the most important communication channel or tools that were relevant to this whole movement and still are, it's Al Jazeera television, and cell phones. Others are the mosque and public spaces. In Cairo, if you wanted to get a message out, you just got it to the mosques and by word of mouth the message would get out in twenty-four hours to ten million people. I think we have to study this more carefully. There is no doubt that Facebook and YouTube and blogging and websites played a

catalytic role in some places. But the real digital factors mobilizing human beings were cell phones and Al Jazeera television.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why different responses in different Arab countries?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: It's the nature of people's grievances [and] the nature of the political leadership. The way they subjugate people is different in every country. It's also about the degree of legitimacy of the ruling establishments. Some establishments like the Tunisian one and the Egyptian one were seen by their people to have zero legitimacy. That's not the case in every Arab country. That's certainly not the case in Saudi Arabia and Morocco, and Jordan, to an extent in Syria, and to some extent in Bahrain. So it's a combination of all those things, and partly the response of the regime. If the regimes are brutal, people might be less likely to go out and risk their lives. But that's the smallest factor, because we've seen pretty brutal responses in Tunisia and Egypt and now Libya and in Bahrain, and that increases the will of the people to get out there and change the system.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Why such a violent situation in Libya?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: I think that's largely a reflection of the nature of the regime. The Gadhafi regime is different. It also has to do with the structures that you have available to you. The role of the army in Egypt and Tunisia was critical in allowing the transition to happen quickly. The army ultimately went to the leaders and said, "The game is up, you have to leave. Your people no longer accept you. Spare them bloodshed and spare yourself." They were allowed to go and retire somewhere. They might be put on trial, we will see. In Libya, that's not the case. You don't have these institutions like the army that could mediate, that could go to Gadhafi and say, "The game's up." And the nature of his rule has been clear for forty-two years. This is an eccentric, oddball, violent man, and he's not hesitant to use violence against his own people. So partly it's personality-driven, and partly the structures of the ruling government systems that are in place.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Do you see a qualitative difference in the legitimacy of Arab republics versus Arab monarchies?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: My hunch is there is a little difference. Of course, republics over the years have become like monarchies trying to pass incumbency to their sons, and did so in some cases. Monarchies tend to be more sensitive to people's complaints. I don't know why that is. If it's in the nature of royalty, or simply they understand that because they are not elected, that people have to accept them, they have to actually earn their legitimacy by serving the people.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How is Jordan affected?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: The demands in Jordan are being expressed by a lot of people. It's fascinating, instead of saying "the people want to bring down the regime," in Jordan the phrase they are using is that they want to "reform the regime." They don't necessarily want to get rid of the monarchy and the king, but they want to change the way they exercise power. The king has made it clear that he understands this and is prepared to make some changes. He changed the prime minister and the cabinet but we'll see what difference that makes. He's done that many times without real change. Maybe things will be different this time. Clearly there is pressure on the king to change some aspects of how the governing system works. His problem is he keeps running into the Palestinian/Jordanian dichotomy. The Jordanians are always hesitant to open up the system, because there is a strong constituency of Trans-Jordanians, east bankers, who are fearful that if they really democratize the country, that the Palestinian-origin Jordanians, who are probably 60 percent, or something like that, would dominate the system. And that the Trans-Jordanians would lose some of their advantages, which they get because they are Trans-Jordanians. Perhaps this is the moment to get the Hashemite monarchy to go beyond that fear and truly open up the system in a serious way.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Are such regimes capable of reforming from within?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: Up to now, it's been obvious that they are incapable of meeting the demands. They've made superficial changes. They've talked a lot about reform, but not really done it. They only made very limited reforms, administrative reforms, increased efficiency of service delivery. They haven't done anything about the core exercise and accountability of power. They haven't been serious. But we are at a historic turning point. This is a completely new moment. You can't judge the years ahead on the basis of the previous years. The nature of citizen activism, the consequences of citizen activism, the nature of the demands being made, the public open nature of the calls for reform and change or to get rid of leaders, this is all unprecedented. This is a whole new ball game. I think we just have to wait and see if they can make the changes and stay in power or be thrown out, or in some cases make the changes and then later get eased out. You have cases in recent history, like Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, or F.W. de Klerk in South Africa, of leaders at the top who changed the system themselves. They saw that what they were living in was unsustainable and they took the initiative to change the system. And eventually it created better countries, more stable democratic countries, but they were pushed aside. It's possible that someone in the Arab world is a Gorbachev.

CAIRO REVIEW: *What about Syria?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: I think it has the same combination of popular grievances. People want change in different political and economic areas. The Syrians have the added dimension of the Arab–Israeli conflict. They claim they are leading the Arab struggle to demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories and give the Palestinians their rights, and that Syria leads the Arab side of the defiance and resistance front against Western hegemony. All these things resonate with a lot of people around the region. That probably has a grain of truth in it, but I think Syria at some point has to come to grips with the fact that the conditions that people are complaining about across the region are conditions that exist in Syria. They’ve shown signs of appreciating this. In the last year, they’ve talked at the top level about opening up civil society and have the private sector play a bigger role. But it’s been very limited in terms of changing the core issue which comes up in every single one of these countries: real constitutional change that modifies how power is exercised.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Does the Syrian regime have more legitimacy because of its role in the Arab–Israeli conflict, or are they just better at state security control over their people?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: Security control isn’t enough. The shah [of Iran] had pretty outstanding security control. Ben Ali and Mubarak had, like, nine-hundred thousand troops, or whatever it was. Security control doesn’t give you perpetual control in itself. The people will rebel against strong governments. Each country has its own factors that define how it moves.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Are the Arab revolts affecting the prospects of greater democratization in Lebanon, which experienced the Cedar Revolution?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: What happened in 2005 is not the same as what’s happening now. That was a movement by about half the country to push out what they saw as a foreign occupier, which was Syria. Now the question is whether the movement of change that’s happening all over the Arab world will get into Lebanon. I don’t think it will. If you look at the Lebanese system, it’s a system in which every group in the country, every sectarian or religious group, eighteen of them, have official slices of the pie. They all have a share of parliament, generals in the army, ambassadors, senior bureaucratic positions. The system is designed in a way to institutionalize power sharing and divide up the assets of the state among the different confessional groups. Therefore, there is a huge difference between what’s going on in Lebanon and what’s going on in the rest of the Arab world. In other countries, citizens are challenging a strong state that they believe is illegitimate and denies their rights. In Lebanon, you have a weak

state, but that weak state is the vehicle through which citizens are actually empowered and have access to the resources of the state and its services and its jobs.

CAIRO REVIEW: *How do the changes affect the Israeli–Palestinian conflict?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: It’s hard to tell. I think the only thing we can say right now is that a more democratic Arab world will naturally express more support for the Palestinian people. How is that expressed? Is it just rhetoric? Or is it security council votes, or sending aid? We just don’t know. But definitely there will be more support for the Palestinian people, which will create more stress on Israel. There will probably be more clarity and diplomatic vigor in the Arab countries saying to Israel, “Okay, we put this peace treaty on the table in 2002. We’re prepared to live with Israel as a predominantly Jewish state with a strong Arab minority. We’re prepared to live with you in peace and accept you like Egypt and Jordan have done. Let’s get off the fence and solve this conflict and Israel [must] do what it has to do to meet its obligations, end the refugee crisis, create a Palestinian state, and withdraw from the land it occupied in 1967.” So you’ll probably see this movement in Arab–Israeli negotiations. It might start unilaterally with Syrians, it’s hard to tell. If this Arab democratic wave reaches Syria, and Syria changes substantially, this will have huge implications. A change in Syria will have implications for Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran. So the geopolitics of the region will evolve in some form that we can’t predict right now. I don’t think it will lead to new wars. I think it will lead to intense new diplomatic and political pressures to end the conflict in equitable ways.

CAIRO REVIEW: *Is Israel capable of responding to a democratic voice from the Arab world?*

RAMI G. KHOURI: Under its present government, no. Israel is not capable of doing anything other than continued colonial oppression of the Palestinians in defiance of world legal norms. But the Israelis for fifty-five or sixty years have been saying that they are the only democracy in the region. If they are no longer the only democracy, that presumably should be a good thing for them. They presumably would welcome dealing with other democracies. I think they would. I think democracies would deal with each other in a more rational way. You’ll have the possibility to end the Arab–Israeli conflict in the way, for example, that the Northern Ireland conflict was resolved, through a democratic negotiation through equal partners. With no pussyfooting around, but by being more clear, making tough, courageous decisions and concessions, but concessions that are done by both sides that each side gets their basic minimum rights. I think that’s a possibility, but it’s not going to happen under the present leadership.