Reflections on Hopes and Aspirations in the Middle East

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The subject of my paper is drawn from the topic of the MED conference. The paper’s title is “Reflections on Hopes and Aspirations in the Middle East.” Its aim is to show that this is actually a more complicated and unsettling subject then one might expect.

The paper will consider three major contesting groups in the region reflecting radically different and competing hopes and aspirations: 1. Religiously inspired factions associated with either the al-Qaeda or Zionist legacies, 2. Factions, both religious and secular, seeking more democratically responsive governments and associated with the Arab Spring legacy, and 3. The general populous most of whom simply aspire to a peaceful environment in which to lead secure and basically apolitical lives.

As well as looking at the radically different hopes and aspirations of these groups, the paper will explain why there is nothing necessary about the hopes and aspirations of groups 2 and 3 prevailing. Indeed, in the short term the hopes and aspirations of group 1 seem the most likely to be realized over a large area of the region.

Finally, the paper will briefly explore the unstable nature of the prevailing hopes and aspirations of all the groups. There is certain equilibrium of power and distribution of resources that is needed to establish political and economic stability. Neither groups 1 or 2 seem able to achieve such an equilibrium, at least in a sustainable fashion. This may mean that, for the foreseeable future, the hopes and aspirations of group 3 cannot be realized in most cases.