

Constantine Zreek. President of the Syrian University

By: Prof. Dr Moustafa El-Abdallah Al Kafry



Dr. Constantine Zureik, a Syrian Arab thinker and historian and one of the most prominent advocates of Arab nationalism, was born in al-Qamriya neighborhood in Damascus on April 5, 1909, received a bachelor's degree in literature from the American University of Beirut, received a professorship of arts at the University of Chicago, and then received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from Princeton University. He served as Syria's minister commissioner in Washington in 1946, and was later appointed president of the Syrian University in Damascus in 1949 until he resigned in 1952,¹

Constantine Zureik was awarded the Syrian Order of Merit in 1956, after his resignation, went to Beirut to work

* The Arab Thought Foundation published an article by Ahmed Farhat entitled: Constantine Zureik ... Arab League Reference, Wednesday, January 8, 2020.

¹ - Constantine Zureik resigned from the presidency of Damascus University on March 8, 1952, when there was a confrontation between him and the military, when he prevented them from entering the campus in search of a student who refused to receive his university degree from the then head of state Colonel Adeb Al-Shishkli. The soldier slapped him in the face and forcibly entered Damascus University, in a painful incident that Constantine Zarek remained avoiding until his death.

as a professor at the American University and served as vice president of the American University and president in charge from 1955 to 1957, Dr. Constantine Zureik died at the American University hospital in Beirut at the age of about 91 on August 12, 2000.

Constantine Zureik was preoccupied with the national issue in his daily, professional and academic life (he looked at it, wrote in its horizon, charted the policies of unifying Arab countries, renewing Arab awareness , resurrecting the forces of the nation from the gate of science and technology and directly engaging in their space, visions and innovation. His books are successively in this context. ²

(Constantine spent his childhood and youth in Damascus, and his family moved into a house surrounding the cathedral and Orthodox schools, adjacent to Islamic neighborhoods.

Zureik completed primary and secondary school in Orthodox schools. Despite their sectarian association with these schools, they included a good number of Muslim students and were known for their high level, especially in Arab sciences. ³

² - Ahmed Farhat, Constantine Zureik. Arab League Reference, Arab Thought Foundation, Wednesday, January 8, 2020.

<https://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=08012020&id=e25228e2-a672-4a7e-96ee-06fd4820d758>

³ - Constantine Zreek, <https://www.asharqalarabi.org.uk/center/rijal-zraiq.htm>

Because of his scientific excellence, he received a scholarship at the American University of Beirut, which was awarded to him by Dr. Philip, even a professor of history at that university. ⁴

Constantine Zureik mastered Arabic and English and wrote books in both languages, and he mastered French and pain in German. (This is one of the advantages of the thinker Constantine Zureik, although he spent all stages of his university studies in foreign institutions, and during most of his years of work was associated with foreign educational institutions, he chose to constantly address the Arab reader and go on his writings The topics he chooses to write should be directly related to the situation in the Arab world and its future. ⁵

[Constantine Zureik is a senior adviser to the Syrian Commission in Washington:](#)

(In March 1945, he was summoned to Damascus to meet with President Shukri al-Quwatli, who appointed Constantine Zureik as first adviser to the Syrian Commission in Washington and a member of the Founding Syrian Delegation of the United Nations, headed by Prime Minister Fares al-Khoury, and when Ambassador Nazim al-Qudsi was summoned to

⁴ - Aziz al-Azma, Constantine Zureik: 20th Century Arab, Center for Palestinian Studies, Beirut, 2004, p. 18.

⁵ Previous source.

Damascus, Constantine Zarek became minister delegate to the government of U.S. President Harry Truman, who presented his credentials to him on 13 February 1946. Dr. Zarek spent a great deal of effort defending Syria's independence and the Palestinian cause he believed in and worked so much for throughout his life. ⁶

Constantine Zarek distinguished himself from his contemporaries of political leaders, as the founder of an idea, not the founder of a party entity, but he went through a fleeting partisan experience in his early youth, where he founded with some of his colleagues in 1932 the "League of National Action", for which he established a charter and Plans to reach the leadership of the Arab party movements called it the "Red Book" because of the color of its cover not because of its content, and does not know during the life of Dr. Constantine Zreek an organized party work other than this transient experience, except his embrace of the "Association of The Trusted Lug" During his time as a professor at the American University of Beirut, she was encouraged to build a national consciousness against colonial influence in the region, such as the Baghdad Alliance or western

⁶ - Constantine Zreek,
<https://www.wikiwand.com/ar/%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%B2%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%82>

influence hostile to the Arab nationalist movement during the Nasserist nationalist tide in the 1950s and early 1960s.⁷

Dr. Constantine's writings and intellectual contributions:

Constantine Zureik is one of the most prominent Arab nationalist thinkers, a current that began to grow since the beginning of the 20th century, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, where a group of nationalists known as the Red Book Group turned around Zarek. The most important principles in his book (The Red Book) try to answer the following questions:

- What is the Arab idea?
- What is Arab nationalism?
- Who are the Arabs?
- What are the Arab countries?
- What is the need for Arab nervousness?
- What organization composes and guides national endeavours.

⁷ - Salah Zaki Ahmed, Constantine Zureik. Arab thinker who lived and died on National Hope, Ars 24, 2020

<http://aswatonline.com/2020/03/24/%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86->

The first article of the principles mentioned by Constantine Zreek in the Red Book answered the following question: What is the Arabic idea?⁸

(The Arab idea or issue is an absolute expression of the movement by the Arabs to free themselves from colonialism, slavery, poverty, ignorance and other forms of weakness, to unite them and unite in a strong and civilized Arab national State, thereby preserving their physical and moral entity, raising their profile and continuing to carry out their human mission and global civilization.)

The second article is the question: What is Arab nationalism?

(It is the set of qualities, characteristics, characteristics and wills, which were composed among The Arabs, and formed a nation such as the unity of the nation, language, culture, history, ambitions, pain, constant jihad and the common material and moral interest. Arab nationalism is the place of reverence and pride among the Arabs because they have distinguished themselves from other nations, excelled in them during the ages, and have risen to their present glory and ensured for themselves to grow and survive forever.)

Article 3 on the question: Who are the Arabs?

⁸ - Constantine Zreek, <https://www.asharqalarabi.org.uk/center/rijal-zraiq.htm>

(Arabs were the ones whose Arabic was their language, or those who live in Arab countries and in both cases have no nervousness that prevents them from integrating into Arab nationalism.)

Article 4 answered the question: What are the Arab countries?

(The Arab countries are all Arabic-speaking territories in Asia and Africa, i.e., these territories are located on the following borders: from the north the Taurus Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea, from the west to the Atlantic and Mediterranean, to the south by the Arabian Sea, the Abyssinia Mountains, the Sudanese level and the Sahara, and to the east by the Chtako, Bakhtiaria mountains and the Gulf of Basra.)⁹

During his long life, Dr. Constantine Zreek has written a large number of books, researches and studies, in Both Arabic and English. His first book, "National Awareness," was published in Beirut in 1939, in which Constantine Zureik laid out the first features of his intellectual project. His most recent book, "What to Do," was also published in Beirut by the Center for Arab Unity Studies in 1998.

- The Meaning of the Nakba (1948).
- Tomorrow (1957).

⁹ - Constantine Zreek, <https://www.asharqalarabi.org.uk/center/rijal-zraiq.htm>

- Us and History (1955).
- This Explosive Age (1963).
- In the Battle of Civilization (1964).
- The Meaning of the Nakba Again (1967).
- Us and the Future (1977).
- Demands of the Arab Future (1983).
- From afar and from nearby (articles and speeches 1994).
- Red Book Chairs (1932)
- What to Do (1998)

The book "The Meaning of the Nakba", published after the Arab Nakba in Palestine in 1948, is the book that launched Constantine Zureik's fame as a major national thinker who introduced the phrase "Nakba" into the Arabic tongue in the sense that became familiar. Surprisingly, a man known for his knowledge, but who did public work with the insistence on resisting the desire to love to appear, was not surprising in his second book, "The Meaning of the Nakba Again," which followed the defeat of June 5, 1967. The political, military and social ill-health, loss of immunity and ability — historical — we have the 20th-century Arabs, allowing others to desecrate our lands, economy and societies. The author found that the positions of ill-health and incompetence lie in a number of factors that collectively constitute the

phenomenon of historical backwardness and mortality: the most important of these factors are the weakness of internal ties, the backwardness of mental aspects, economic, scientific and technological dependency, and the closure and rhetorical singing of heritage and the great past).¹⁰

His historical political work pioneered the courses of Both Arab and global crises, publishing in 1963 his book "This Explosive Age: Looks at Our Reality and the Reality of Humanity", and concluded this stage of his work with his 1968 english-language book "The Greatest of Victors", but between these two works Constantine Zarek left important sources of Arab nationalist thought such as "We and history in 1959, the battle of civilization, in 1964, and the meaning of the Nakba again, in 1967, and then looked to the future with three leading books, "We and the Future, 1977." The book "The Demands of the Arab Future: Concerns and Questions of 1983", concludes his intellectual life with his wonderful book "What to Do?: A Talk to Future Arab Generations", published by the Center for The Studies of Arab Unity in 1998, which serves

¹⁰ - treasured Greatness, I am Press- Hanan Aqeel, <http://anapress.net/a/319055302991612>

as a farewell message to his nation, the world and arab youth...).¹¹

Four years before his death, Constantine Zreek's work had been compiled in four volumes by the Center for The Study of Arab Unity in Beirut in 1996.

Constantine Zureik says:

(There is no denying that we are going through difficult times today, and we are suffering from a heavy intensity and a serious crisis. Wherever we look at aspects of our national and human life, we are confronted with difficulties and adversity, and we are confronted with problems and conflicts, and all these facts are manifestations of a fact that no longer needs proof, that the whole world, and we from it, are suffering an intractable crisis in the foundations of its thinking and organization, a crisis that, if not addressed firmly and with visionary access, has gone to the entire human community and led to destruction and annihilation.)¹²

What is the role of the thinker, the pioneer and the reformer?

¹¹ - Salah Zaki Ahmed, Constantine Zureik. An Arab thinker who lived and died on National Hope, Ars 24, 2020.

¹² - Salah Zaki Ahmed, Constantine Zureik. Arab thinker who lived and died on National Hope, Ars 24, 2020

<http://aswatonline.com/2020/03/24/%D9%82%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%86%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86->

(The first duty of the thinker, but his basic duty, in times of crisis, is to feel and live the crisis, not to be preoccupied with it, but never to live under it, the crisis is a reality only when he feels it and realizes its meaning and danger....) There is no doubt that Constantine Zreek, in his speech, was addressing himself, before others, and that he carried it with its national concern.

Despite the series of defeats that we Arabs have suffered, and the culture of frustration that has afflicted us, Constantine Zarek remained optimistic about the future of the Arab nation and the Arab unity that future generations will build. (He is sure that the Arabs, as they were able in ancient times to digest the civilians of Greece, romans, Persians and India and absorb them with their active minds, thirsty souls, and then bring them out into the world a harmonious unit, rich in material, brilliant in color; Arabs in the coming times, to drink the flag of the West, and gather to it the different elements that arise in the West and the East as a reaction to it, and compose them all in a new unit that will be the title of the future life, overflowing the Arabs on the world, as they have destroyed it with their sciences, manners and philosophies and their remarkable civilization in the past centuries).¹³

¹³ - Salah Zaki Ahmed, Constantine Zureik. Previous source.

Dr. Constantine Zureik was the focus of the trust of all his glass and discussed with him on the various issues that were put before him, notably the latest developments in the Palestinian issue, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the situation of arab societies that are unenviable, politically, economically and developmentally, as well as public and private freedoms, all from the point of view of a deep and transcendent Arab civilization.

Perhaps that's why they gave him titles such as "Arab Reference," "Advocate of Rationality in Modern Arab Thought," "The Guide of The Unitarians," "Typical Arabism," "Knight of Arab Consciousness"; and the last title came to him, according to the thinker Dr. Ragheed al-Solh, shortly after the news of his steadfastness in Beirut during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the occupation of the first Arab capital in 1982.¹⁴

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¹⁴ - Ahmed Farhat, Constantine Zureik. Arab League Reference, Arab Thought Foundation, Wednesday, January 8, 2020.

<https://www.shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=08012020&id=e25228e2-a672-4a7e-96ee-06fd4820d758>

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3. Aziz al-Azma, Constantine Zureik: 20th Century Arab, Center for Palestinian Studies, Beirut, 2004.