

Preface

The current process of resolving the Middle East question has at its core the grounds for a total restructuring of the Middle East regional order. This important settlement in the Middle East will also stimulate a remodeling of the international order. The old global order has been undergoing a process of decline, and a new one is beginning. The immediate result of this is to place the whole world in a transitional stage in which a single great power dominates the entire order. In other words, the political settlement has come at a time when instability and uncertainty envelop the world reality in general and the Middle East in particular.

This state of confusion represents a serious challenge to Middle Eastern countries in their attempts to recreate their earlier established mutual relationships. The concern of the Palestinian people for their fate is more serious now, because they are in the delicate process of fully establishing a political identity. They are also engaged in building a network of foreign relations worldwide and in the Arab region, considering the fact that they are trying to establish a state their own. For historians, this provides inspiration for the study of Palestinian national interests. It encourages the analysis of existing relations and the evolution of the equation encompassing those relations. Such study aids in understanding the historical development of the processes, which have led to the current circumstances.

The history of Palestine, especially of the Palestinian Arab-Israeli conflict, the Western colonizers, the Zionists and the Arab leadership in neighboring Arab countries, played an instrumental role in shaping the course of the Palestinian struggle. The assessment of the role of all these elements combined, or even of any one of them individually, may constitute the core of a scholarly work.

The Palestinian connection with the Arab *ummah*, the topic selected for this work, has always been characterized by the theme of Palestinians in crisis. Conversely, the struggle with Zionism has always been viewed in terms of its wider Arab contexts. Furthermore, the Palestinian national

movement has always been looked upon as an offshoot of the Arab liberation movement.

This work will center on the foundation and evolution of this relationship. This study will not consider just what is the obvious in history and consequently adapt a superficial approach. It will rather examine in some detail the fact that Palestine and the Palestinians are part of the Arab *ummah* and region. I will consider cultural ties as well as heritage in the formation of this relationship. Furthermore, the socioeconomic factors in the mid-19th Century Arab East were also crucial in shaping this relationship, and I intend in this study to address the issue under focus in terms of the economic transformations and social change of the time. In other words, the study will examine those transformations and changes through their role in the formation of the Arab liberation movement and its offshoot, the Palestinian national resistance. The effects of these early foundations played importantly in the Arab-Israeli conflict leading up to 1939.

It has been my hope that while teaching modern history at Birzeit University, a study of this kind would give me the opportunity to look into primary and secondary material beneficial to my work as a scholar and educator. I feel that my hopes have been realized. However, they could not have come to fruition without the enormous encouragement and support I received from the university administration and from my colleagues. The Birzeit librarians provided unlimited help, for which I extend them my gratitude, and I also thank all the Birzeit students who offered their voluntary assistance. I cannot thank them by names because they are very many, but their help in reading the needed material to me, taking notes, and transcribing and proofreading the manuscript facilitated my work in bringing this study in its final draft to light.