

Instead of the vague and general demands for administrative and political reforms they stressed the desire for autonomy and eventual separation from the Ottoman Empire.⁸ It is significant to note that the evolution of the Arab nationalist doctrine in this period was greatly influenced by the Christian Arabs of Lebanon who had more contacts with the West than the rest of the population. As recipients of modern Western culture, the Arab Christian intellectuals did not feel "at home" under traditional Ottoman rule.⁹ Thus they stressed the nationalist bond as the most fundamental factor in building up a modern state.

The seeds of nationalism that were sown earlier by the literary clubs accomplished a considerable amount of growth by the turn of the century: From an idealistic movement confined to a small elite of intellectuals nationalism evolved into a liberal movement joined by an increasing number of people. However, this should not lead us to imagine that the nationalist movement came to include the largest segment of the population or that its thought held sway amongst them.

In spite of the evolution of the nationalist movement, the tenets and traditions of Islam continued to shape the political and intellectual life of this period.

⁸H. B. Sharabi, Governments and Politics of the Middle East in the Twentieth Century (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand, 1963), p. 110.

⁹Zeine, loc. cit.