

impression upon, even the most malicious of learned Egyptian observers, such as al-Jabarti. They also aroused among a small group of shiekhs from al-Azhar a genuine eagerness to learn, a craving which was not, however, satisfied until the reign of Mohammed Ali.⁴ It was through such channels that the idea of nationalism, which had much earlier become the dominant political theme in Europe, found its way, for the first time into the Arab world. This initial impact of modern political thought and administration was nurtured by Western-educated Arabs and Western institutions at a later stage.

European and American missionaries played an increasing role in meeting the demand for education and learning in the Arab provinces of the Empire. The Syrian Protestant College (later the American University of Beirut) and the University of St. Joseph founded in 1866 and 1875, respectively, assumed an important role in transmitting the ideologies and techniques of the West.

Students and graduates of the above institutions were very active in the literary clubs and learned societies which played a role in the development of nationalism by reviving the language and history of the Arabs. These

⁴ Jamal Mohammed Ahmed, The Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 2-8.