



"Thus to the walls constructed by Zionism have been added dogmatic, almost theological brand of Arabism."

Edward Said

\*SouthWest And North Africa (none of that 'Middle East' bullshit)

**ARAB NATIONALISM**  
Began as a reaction to divide and conquer tactics by western powers  
Asserted reunification of SW/ANA\*  
Region as anti-imperialism  
Reality: confronted racist exclusionary ideology with own to policies of conformity and division  
Regimes feared actual unity because it would detract from own power

# WHERE ARE THE ARABS?

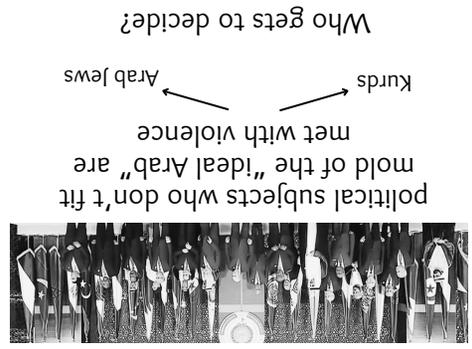
on the limitations of Arab nationalism and charting an alternative path to liberation

**NOPE, IT'S JUST OBI WAN KENOBI IN BROWN FACE.**

These are not the Arabs you're looking for.



a zine by lizar\_tistry on the video essay "Where are the Arabs?" by Ayman Makarem



Nations are not organic facts but "imagined political communities" (Benedict Anderson)  
an active violent process designed and developed by certain individuals with something to gain politically or economically  
Regimes feared actual unity because it would detract from own power

## THE NATION LIMITATIONS OF

"The forces of reaction have penetrated so deep not only in our streets, but in our dreams as well. But as painful as it may be, we need to wake up."

We need to first abandon nostalgia, abandon the myths of the past. Only then might a new rupture emerge. We have to find a way to dream, to have hopes, while keeping our eyes wide open, looking always ahead."

Ayman Makarem, Politically Depressed



Full video essay on YouTube at @fromtheperipherymedia.

Such class-based analysis provides a tool to understand regimes beyond nationalists, religious or mythic boundaries

Ghassan Kanafani, 1971  
"We consider the Arab governments two kinds. Something we call **reactionaries** who are completely connected with the imperialists, like King Hussein government, like Saudi Arabian government, like Moroccan government, Tunisian Government. And then we have some other Arab governments, which we call the **military petite bourgeoisie governments**, that's like Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, and so on."

## WHY THE ARAB BOURGEOISIE ARE TRASH

### STARTING ON THE LOCAL LEVEL FIRST TO CHANGE THE WORLD

"Do you guys ever wonder why you're trying so hard but making no moves?"

About a decade ago someone asked me, "What can we do for Palestine?"

I said, '**Work with your community.** Make sure your community is well taken care of. Make sure your community is educated. Make sure your community is healthy and well.'

Do you know why I said that? Because you can't fight when you're unwell."

Mariam Barghouti



These regimes have espoused Arab socialist economic policies but are functionally state capitalist - no attempts to abolish or collectivize private property. Instead, created carceral, militarized surveillance states that enriched small group of neocolonial elites while exploiting and dispossessing masses of people.

In their 1969 manifesto, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or PFLP, warned against the petite bourgeoisie:  
"The petite bourgeoisie is antagonistic to colonialism and reaction but at the same time wants to keep the privileges which it enjoys."

The petite bourgeoisie are like middle class - they own some means of production (vs. peasants or workers) and their class interests are to become part of the higher bourgeoisie.

## PETITE BOURGEOISIE 101

### ABANDONING ARAB NATIONALISM'S FOCUS ON A TOP-DOWN STRATEGY

"We can't at the end of the 20th century return to some earlier ideal. A, because the ideal is irrecoverable, and B, because all such returns involve a new politics of domination, essentially authoritarianism, dogmatism. Whereas I felt the role of the intellectual, the Palestinian movement, was effectively to present a new critical understanding of the contemporary world."

Edward Said



Leftist Arabs need to learn from and reckon with own history as Arabs to diagnose the roots of the problem.

Leftists need to move past old and tired strategies and tactics of past - including sentimentality for Soviet Union.

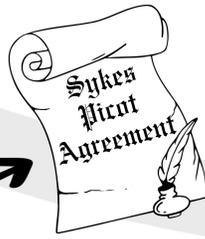
FROM NASSER TO NASRALLAH

# WHO ARE "THE ARABS"?

1918

## WWI ENDS

Arab locals help Britain and France defeat Ottoman Empire in exchange for independence



Britain and France renege on promise and carve up region

heavily repressed independence struggles

state formation with strong links to empire

1940s TO 1960s

## POLITICAL EXPERIMENTATION

Arab Nationalism, Arab Socialism, Third Worldism, Islamist Nationalism

1942

## MILITARY COUP OVERTHROWS KING IN EGYPT

followed by LIBYA, SYRIA, IRAQ, SUDAN

all influenced by Arab nationalism

1967 NAKSA

Israel expands occupation to West Bank and Gaza Strip, Egyptian Sinai peninsula, and Syrian Golan Heights



## PAN-ARAB LEADERS TURN INWARD TO CONSOLIDATE POWER WITHIN OWN STATES

## "GOLDEN AGE OF ARAB NATIONALISM"

Often looked back on with apolitical nostalgia that lacks any serious acknowledgement of limitations and failures of Arab national project



## 1957 NASSER NATIONALIZES SUEZ CANAL

- Israel invades Egypt, followed by Britain and France
- Victory for Nasser and Arab national projects
- Failure for European powers

1948 NAKBA

- Zionists expel >800,000 Palestinians
- 1st Arab Israeli War - Israel uses myth of extermination by "Five Arab Armies" to justify but no real threat
- Arab regimes were uncoordinated and uncommitted



## LEBANON CIVIL WAR

1920

### GREATER LEBANON

state formation mirrors how Herzl described Jewish state, i.e. a colonial project to satisfy imperial interests in the region

1943

Lebanese elite declare independence & establish **SECTARIAN SYSTEM\*** w/ disproportionate power to Maronite sect

1960s

"GOLDEN AGE" but only wealthy elites benefit while wealth inequality skyrockets

coalition of progressive and leftist Lebanese forces allied w/ Palestinian groups based in Beirut

### L.N.M. PROPOSES MODERATE REFORM PACKAGE

"The principle tactics of the LNM were to impose a new superstructure on the Lebanese oligarchy: 'bourgeois', modern and non-sectarian instead of its 'feudal', sectarian and underdeveloped' superstructure." -Fawwaz Traboulsi

1975

### WAR BREAKS OUT OVER SECTARIAN SYSTEM

LATE 1960s PROTESTS AND STRIKES as contradictions of proto-neoliberal economy surfaces

### PROPOSAL MET WITH INTENSE VIOLENCE

by hegemonic Phalange Party to protect status quo; also antagonized other regional powers

1976

Assad regime invades to support far right Phalange and attack Palestinians

1978 & 1982

Israel invades to support Phalange and attack Palestinians; co-occupies with Syria

1989

formal end to war with Taif Accord - no core issues resolved but codified sectarian system

\*the sect, as a political entity, was a tool for local bourgeoisie to take over from French and continue system of domination (Mehdi Ahmel)



"The foremost obstacle [to the sectarian system] was the mass of toilers who belong to the downtrodden 'sects' and live either in the countryside or in the clutches of poverty in the capital."

Mahdi Ahmel

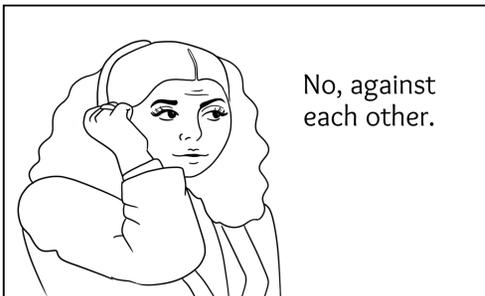


"Lest we forget, the abolition of political sectarianism, secularizing the country, will explode all the Arab regimes, progressive and reactionary. Thus the Lebanese National Movement is a danger to all the Arab regimes."

Kamal Jumblatt, LNM leader

## SIMILARITIES LEADING UP TO THE 2019 REVOLUTION

- Same sectarian system and economic model, even more entrenched, with many of the same leaders
- Protests were not just against specific government, but the decades-long system of exploitation and oppression
- Similar core demands to those of the L.M.N.
- Arab regimes proved more willing to kill protestors than to reform themselves; to kill Arabs than do anything to resist Zionism or Israel



Kassel Ya Watan (1978) dir. Mohammad Maghout

You may have seen this clip of  
Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani:

*“You don’t mean exactly peace talks,  
you mean capitulation, surrendering...  
That’s a kind of conversation between  
the sword and the neck.”*



But did you know in the same interview,  
he also said this?  
[lift flap]

