

WHERE ARE THE ARABS?

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



a zine by lizar_tistry on the video essay
"Where are the Arabs?" by Ayman Makarem

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

These are not
the Arabs you're
looking for.



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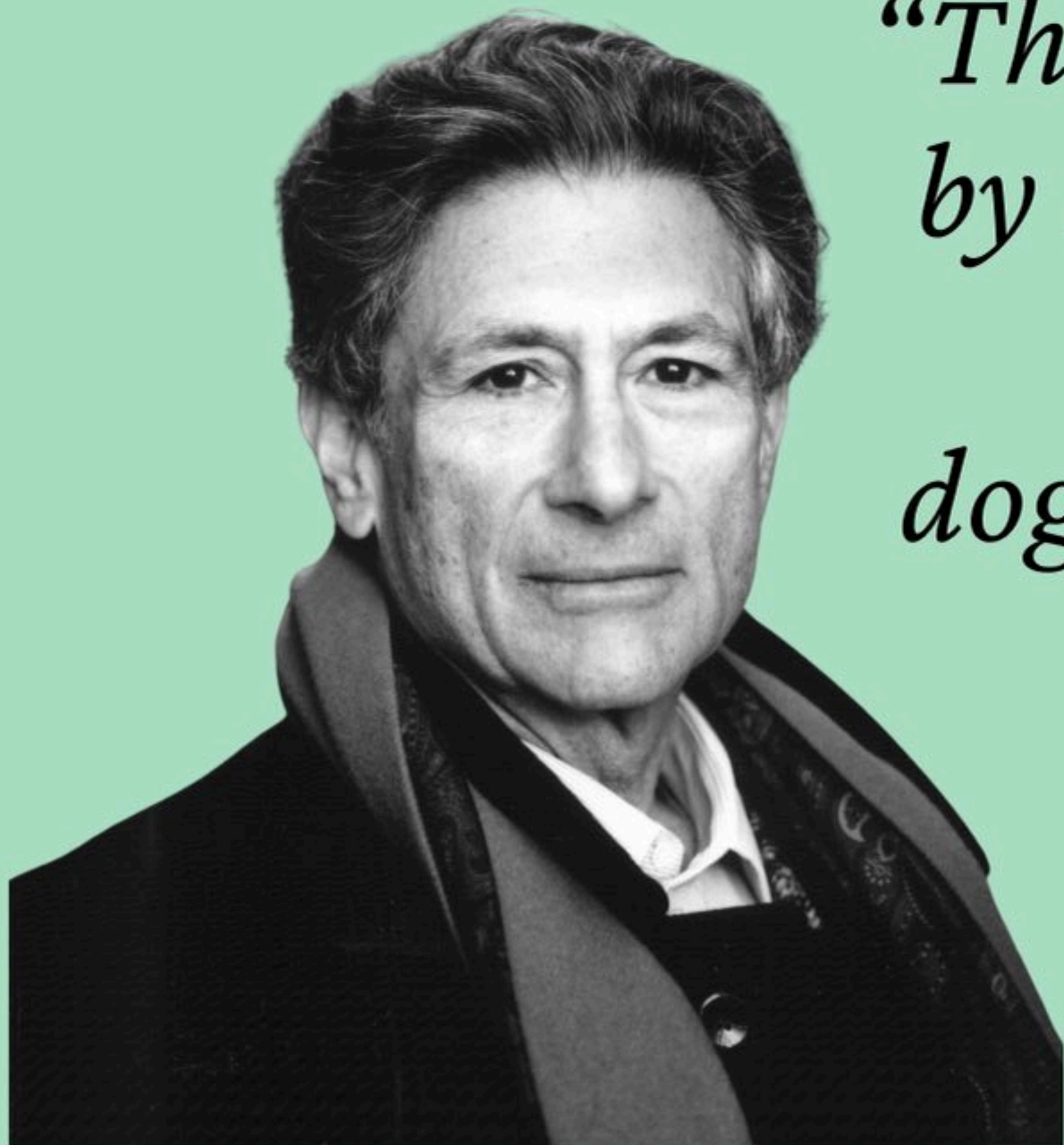
ARAB NATIONALISM

Began as a reaction to divide and conquer tactics by western powers

Asserted reunification of SWANA* 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



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

Edward Said

*SouthWest And North Africa
(none of that ‘Middle East’ bullshit)

LIMITATIONS OF THE NATION

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



political subjects who don't fit
mold of the “ideal Arab” are
met with violence

Kurds



Arab Jews

Who gets to decide?

WHY THE ARAB BOURGEOISIE ARE TRASH

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?

WHY THE ARAB BOURGEOISIE ARE TRASH

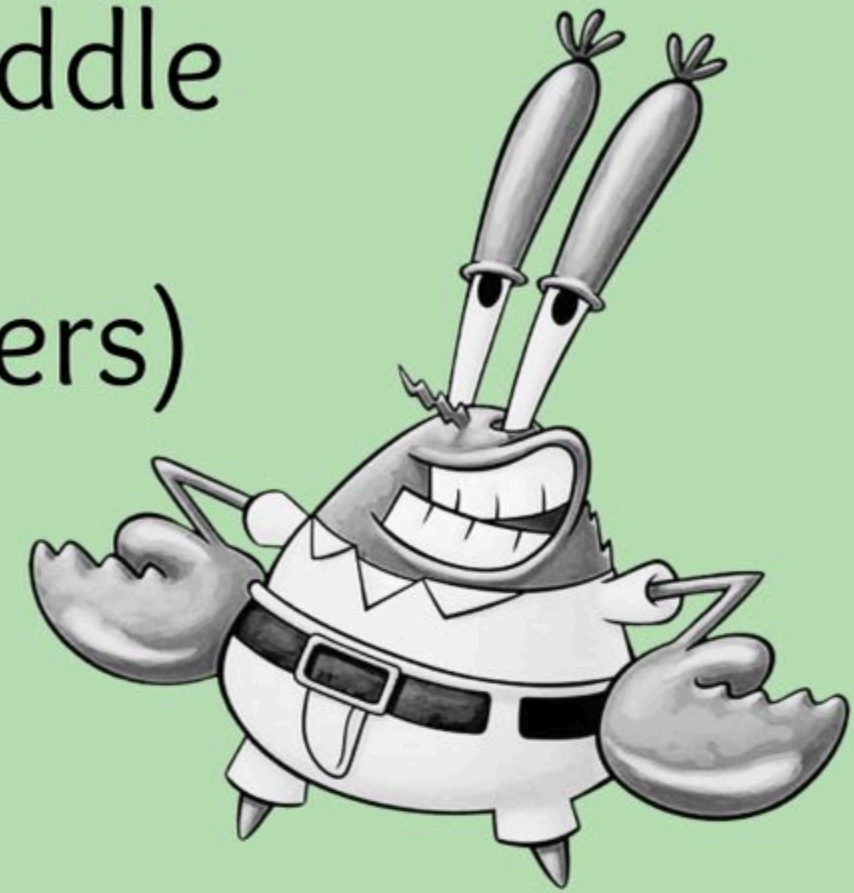
*“We consider the Arab governments two kinds. Something we call **reactionaries** who are completely connected with the imperialists, like King Hussein government, like Saudi Arabian government, like Moroccan government, Tunisian Government. And then we have some other Arab governments, which we call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

Ghassan Kanafani, 1971

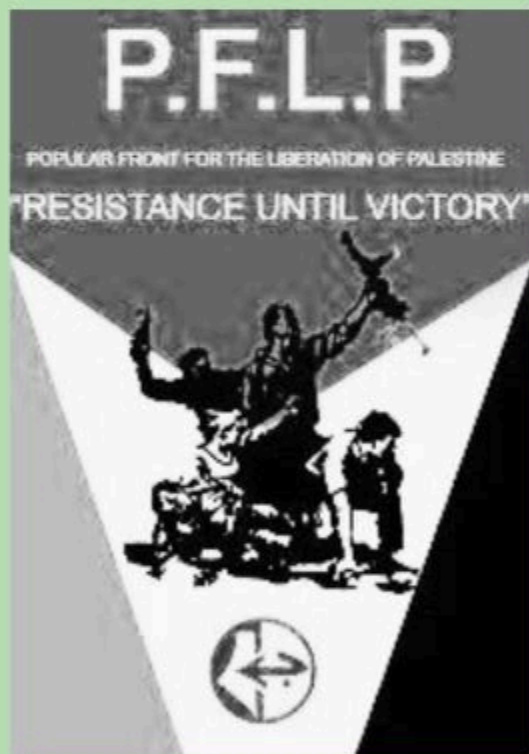
Such class-based analysis provides a tool to understand regimes beyond nationalist, religious or mythic boundaries

PETITE BOURGEOISIE 101

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.



In their 1969 manifesto, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or PLFP, 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."

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.

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 the Soviet Union.

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**



“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

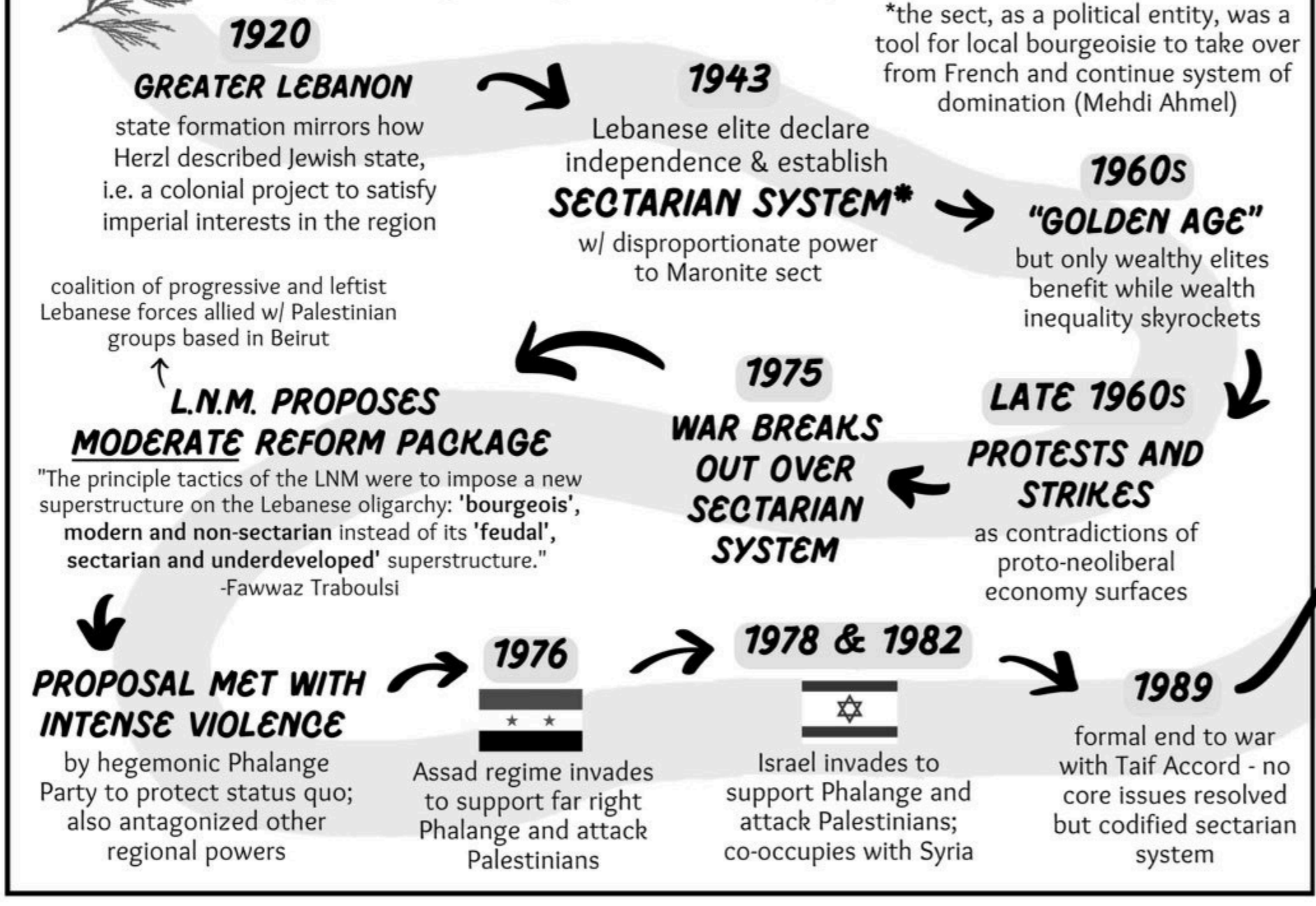


Full video essay on YouTube at
[@fromtheperipherymedia](#).

WHO ARE "THE ARABS"?



LEBANON CIVIL WAR



"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