

Optimised Study Guide — Palestinian Nationalism & the Intifadas

Optimised, exam-focused study guide for the development of Palestinian nationalism and the Intifadas (Unit 4, Elective 3, Component C04-U4E3). Grounded in the 2020–2025 SCSA exams and marking keys, especially the 2021 Q19 evaluating the role of terrorism in shaping the region. Covers the transformation from refugees to a national movement, the rise of the PLO and Arafat, armed struggle (PFLP hijackings, Black September/Munich), the shift to diplomacy, the First and Second Intifadas, and the rise of Hamas. Leads with exam priorities and marking-key expectations, using neutral language.

The Palestinians began the period as scattered refugees and became, by its end, a recognised national movement with a governing authority. This topic traces that transformation — through the rise of the PLO, the turn to armed struggle, the shift to diplomacy, and the two Intifadas. It is examined heavily through the lens of "terrorism" and resistance.

The marking-key steer. The 2021 essay — *"Evaluate the role of terrorism in shaping the region"* — asks candidates to judge whether violent tactics were **effective**, either in achieving their movements' aims *or* in influencing the international community. The marking key's verdict is nuanced: tactics like hijackings and the Intifada were often **effective at drawing international attention** to the Palestinian cause but **ineffective at directly achieving change** — and it was the shift to **diplomacy** that ultimately delivered gains. Use precise, neutral language; "terrorism" is the exam's term and is contested.

How this content is examined

- **Essays.** The role of terrorism/armed struggle in the region; the development of Palestinian nationalism; the significance of the Intifadas.
- **Source analysis.** Sources on the PLO, Arafat at the UN, or the Intifada require precise knowledge of tactics and their effects.

Answer the verb. Evaluate the role of terrorism = judge its effectiveness, weighing what it achieved against what it failed to achieve. The best answers distinguish *attention* from *outcomes*.

1. From refugees to a national movement

- The 1948 Nakba and the 1967 occupation left Palestinians stateless and scattered (in the territories, Jordan, Lebanon and beyond).
- The Six-Day War (1967) discredited Arab states' ability to "liberate" Palestine and triggered a **surge of distinctly Palestinian nationalism** — Palestinians would pursue their own cause.

2. The PLO and the turn to armed struggle

- Under **Yasser Arafat** (and his Fatah faction), the **PLO** adopted a strategy of **armed struggle** from 1968 (the PLO Covenant) to achieve liberation.
- **High-profile tactics:** the **PFLP's** plane hijackings (1970), and **Black September's** attack at the **Munich Olympics (1972)**.
- **Effect (the examinable judgement):** these acts **drew enormous international attention** to the Palestinian refugee cause — the Arab League recognised the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians — but were **largely ineffective at directly achieving** change in the territories.

3. The shift to diplomacy

- After 1974, Arafat began moving toward diplomacy — symbolised by his **address to the UN**, signalling that negotiation, not only violence, might advance the cause.
- This trajectory ultimately led to mutual recognition at Oslo (see the Peace Attempts guide).

4. The First Intifada (1987–1993)

- A largely **grassroots Palestinian uprising** in the Occupied Territories — strikes, protests, stone-throwing — met with a harsh Israeli response.
- **Hamas** and Islamic Jihad emerged as significant Islamist players, rivalling the secular PLO.
- **Effect:** international opinion turned more critical of the occupation; the **1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence** and growing recognition of Palestinian aspirations followed — helping create the conditions for Oslo.

5. The Second Intifada (from 2000)

- The collapse of the 2000 Camp David Summit triggered a far more violent uprising, with suicide bombings and heavy Israeli military responses — devastating the peace process and hardening both sides.

6. Historical perspectives

- **Did violence work?** The central debate: armed struggle won *attention and recognition* but arguably *not* statehood — and the gains (Oslo) came through diplomacy. Some argue the attention generated by violence made diplomacy possible.
- **"Terrorist" vs "freedom fighter":** the contested labelling of Palestinian resistance — the exam expects you to handle this analytically and neutrally.

7. Recurring exam question patterns & what high answers do

- **"Evaluate the role of terrorism in shaping the region."** High answers: distinguish drawing *international attention* (effective) from achieving *concrete aims* (largely not), and credit the shift to diplomacy — covering Jewish insurgency pre-1948 as well for balance.
- **"Examine the development of Palestinian nationalism."** High answers: trace refugees → PLO/armed struggle → diplomacy → Intifadas.

Recall self-test. Can you:

- Explain how 1948 and 1967 produced a distinct Palestinian nationalism?
- Explain the PLO's turn to armed struggle under Arafat (1968) and name key tactics (PFLP hijackings, Munich)?
- Explain the shift to diplomacy after 1974 (Arafat at the UN)?
- Describe the First Intifada, the rise of Hamas, and the 1988 Declaration of Independence?
- Explain the Second Intifada and its impact on the peace process?
- Argue whether violence was effective — distinguishing attention from outcomes — in neutral terms?