

Optimised Study Guide — The Arab–Israeli Wars (Suez, 1967 & 1973)

Optimised, exam-focused study guide for the Arab-Israeli wars — Suez 1956, the Six-Day War 1967 and the Yom Kippur War 1973 (Unit 4, Elective 3, Component C02-U4E3). Grounded in the 2020–2025 SCSA exams and marking keys, especially the 2024 Q20 on the significance of the Six-Day War and the 2022 Q18 on the Suez Crisis. Covers the causes, course and significance of each war, the creation of the Occupied Territories, UNSCR 242 and 'land for peace', and the road to Camp David. Leads with exam priorities and marking-key expectations.

After 1948, the conflict erupted into a series of major wars that redrew the map and reshaped the politics of the Middle East. The three to master are **Suez (1956)**, the **Six-Day War (1967)** and the **Yom Kippur War (1973)**. The Six-Day War in particular is examined as the single most consequential flashpoint — the source of the "Occupied Territories" problem that drives everything after it.

The marking-key steer. The 2024 essay — *"Evaluate the significance of the Six-Day War (1967) on the struggle for peace"* — wants significance weighed across **short-, medium- and long-term**. The marking key states it "created more sticking points in the struggle for peace than any other flashpoint" (the Occupied Territories and settlements) *and* produced the main framework for peace (UNSCR 242, "land for peace"). The 2022 Suez essay wants **causes and significance**. Tie wars to their consequences for the peace process.

How this content is examined

- **Essays.** Causes/significance of a specific war (Suez, 1967, 1973); the role of the wars in shaping the region.
- **Source analysis.** UNSCR 242 and superpower-involvement sources recur — know the "land for peace" principle precisely.

Answer the verb. Evaluate the significance = judge how much it mattered, ideally across short/medium/long term. **Outline the reasons and assess significance** (Suez-style) = give causes, then judge impact.

1. The Suez Crisis (1956)

- **Causes:** Egyptian President **Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal** (after the US withdrew funding for the Aswan Dam); Britain, France and Israel secretly agreed at Sèvres to attack. Israel invaded Sinai; Britain and France intervened "to separate the combatants."
- **Outcome:** US and Soviet pressure forced a humiliating Anglo-French withdrawal; a UN Emergency Force was deployed.
- **Significance:** **Nasser emerged as the champion of Arab nationalism**; British and French influence in the region collapsed; the **US and USSR** became the dominant outside powers — Cold War rivalry now overlaid the conflict.

2. The Six-Day War (1967) — the pivotal flashpoint

- **Causes:** rising tension and brinkmanship — Palestinian guerrilla raids, Nasser's expulsion of the UN force from Sinai and closure of the Straits of Tiran, and superpower backing (US–Israel, USSR–Egypt/Syria).
- **The war:** Israel launched a **pre-emptive strike**, destroying Arab air forces and rapidly defeating Egypt, Jordan and Syria.
- **The decisive outcome — the Occupied Territories:** Israel seized the **West Bank and East Jerusalem (from Jordan), the Gaza Strip and Sinai (from Egypt), and the Golan Heights (from Syria)**. This created the central, enduring problems: Palestinians under occupation, and Jewish **settlements** in the territories.
- **UNSCR 242:** called for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories and recognition of every state's right to exist — the "**land for peace**" formula that remains the main framework for peace.
- **Other consequences:** a surge of **Palestinian nationalism** and the rise of the PLO under **Arafat** (see the Palestinian Nationalism guide).

3. The Yom Kippur War (1973)

- **Causes:** Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack to recover the territory lost in 1967.
- **Outcome:** early Arab gains were reversed by Israel; the war triggered an **Arab oil embargo** with global economic impact and brought superpower brinkmanship.
- **Significance:** though militarily inconclusive, it restored Arab (especially Egyptian) pride and made negotiation possible — paving the way for the **Camp David Accords (1978)** and the Egypt–Israel peace treaty (see the Peace Attempts guide).

4. Historical perspectives

- **1967 as the hinge:** most historians treat the Six-Day War as the event that locked in the modern conflict (occupation, settlements, Palestinian statelessness) while simultaneously creating its potential solution (242).
- **Aggression vs pre-emption:** was Israel's 1967 strike defensive necessity or expansionist opportunity? The exam rewards weighing both readings.

5. Recurring exam question patterns & what high answers do

- **"Evaluate the significance of the Six-Day War."** High answers: organise by short-term (territory, 242), medium-term (1973, Camp David) and long-term (settlements, Oslo, ongoing refugee/occupation issues).
- **"Outline the reasons for Suez and assess its significance."** High answers: give the causes, then judge the shift to superpower dominance and Arab nationalism.

Recall self-test. Can you:

- Explain the causes, outcome and significance of the Suez Crisis (Nasser, Sèvres, the Anglo-French withdrawal, the superpower shift)?
- Explain the causes and course of the Six-Day War (brinkmanship, the pre-emptive strike)?
- Name the four Occupied Territories and which state each came from?
- State what UNSCR 242 and "land for peace" mean?
- Explain the causes, outcome and significance of the Yom Kippur War (including the oil embargo and the road to Camp David)?
- Argue 1967 as both defensive pre-emption and expansion, and as the hinge of the conflict?