

SOME HINTS TO ANSWERING COURSEWORK TWO PART TWO
“Use of Sources about the use of “Terrorism” in the Middle East situation”

Official Question: “How accurate is Source A when applied to the activities of the Palestine Liberation Organisation under Yasser Arafat since the 1960s ?”

Remember: you can use the Sources but must NOT cop out my suggestions. You CAN use this set of notes to form an outline of your answer. Your answer does NOT have to be very long as you are only asked to COMMENT on four small Pieces of Evidence. You must end up with a Conclusion in which YOU say whether what Source A says is “Accurate” or “Inaccurate”, so you need to start of your answer by saying what “Accurate” means to an historian THIS COURSEWORK IS EASIER THAN IT LOOKS AT FIRST!!

Source A: **Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun** [By Mao-Tse-Tung, Communist leader in the Civil War in China in the 1930s. He wrote this line in a book in 1938. In 1948 he took over all of China and became its leader. He was *never* elected]

Source B: **Since the 1980s, Yasser Arafat has tried hard to change his image from that of “freedom fighter” to the idea of a sensible, moderate statesman. In 1988 he agreed that Israel had the right to exist [before he had wanted to wipe the whole country off the map]; in 1993, after secret meetings, he signed a peace deal with Israel. This gained some home rule and freedom for some Palestinians, but then people inside his own party, the PLO, began criticising him for doing a deal with the enemy. One group split away and formed a “terrorist” group named Hamas** [From a school text book published in 1997. Hamas still exists. The suicide “terrorist” bombers killing people in Israel today are from Hamas]

Source C: **When we hijack a plane it is more effective than killing 100 Israelis in war. The whole world now notices us, whereas before the world ignored us. The world is talking about us now** [From interviews with PLO members in the 1970s, written up in a book published in 1997]

Source D: **Democratic governments will never give in to blackmail, violence and terror. Appeasement [being nice to the enemy] will only encourage more terror and bring more death** [From a British newspaper in 2001 after Arab “terrorist” supporters of the Palestinians had tried to blow up the World Trade Centre in New York. This was *before* the September 11th attack on the Two Towers]

Most countries in the world now change governments by having elections and votes. This was not always the case. In the 1930s the Mao-Tse-Tung said that elections were a waste of time and that if you wanted to get into power you had to use violence [See Source A] Once he had seized power in China he banned all elections [in case he lost !} and China is still a Communist country even today. So his Plan worked !!!

You can see why it would seem attractive to small, unhappy groups of people such as the Palestinian Arabs, many of whom had been thrown out of their “own” land after the return of the Jews and after Israel had been set up as an independent country in 1948. Under its leader Yasser Arafat the PLO avoided fighting the Israelis face-to-face [there have been 4 Arab-Israeli wars, and the Israelis won all 4] and began to use what they called “guerrilla” or “freedom” fighting ideas [such as ambushes, bombings, assassinations etc] but which the Israelis and their powerful American allies still call “terrorism” [Remember George Bush calls the fighting in Iraq part of his struggle against “the world of terrorism”.

The PLO claimed it was only using the same methods the Jews had used against the Romans 2000 years ago and also against the British army between 1945-1948, when some Jews killed British soldiers to try to get the British government to give the Jewish people their own homeland. So, said the Palestinians, if it was alright for you to use nasty ways of fighting to gain your freedom, then we can use the same ways ourselves.

The problem is the use of the word “terrorism”, which is a word always used by one side to claim the other side is not fighting “decently” and “fairly”.

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When a historian writes about the past he/she always tries to use evidence and sources to write a book that is “accurate”, by which he/she means does it tell the truth, or as near as we can get to the truth. The trouble is that there are always at least two sides to any argument [often many more] and even people on the same side will disagree with their own side, and sometimes start little civil wars. Also, people’s ideas change: if their original plans do not work, sensible political leaders change their plans. This is what seems to have happened in the middle east situation, where both Palestinians Arabs and Israeli Jews claim the same piece of Land is “theirs”.

By the 1960s the Palestinian Arabs were desperate. They claimed they had been thrown out of “their” homeland, where they had lived for 2000 years, by the Israeli Jews who had themselves been thrown out by the Romans 2000 years ago. These Jews had been moving back since the beginning of the 20th century, but huge numbers moved in after WW2 saying they wanted a land of their own where such horrors as the Nazi gas-chambers could never happen again. The Palestinian Arabs were sorry about what the Germans had done to the Jews, but said it had nothing to do with them. Even so, in 1948 a brand new country called Israel came into existence, and many thousands of Palestinian Arabs lost their land. The problem is still going on right now.

Between 1948 and 1973 there were four Wars between the Israelis and the Arabs, trying to get the Palestinian Arabs back “home”, but the Arabs lost all four. So young Palestinian Arab men, lead by Yasser Arafat, set up the Palestine Liberation Organisation to win “freedom” [that’s what Liberation means] for their people, this time using different ways of fighting: ambushes, bombings, sabotage, assassination, which they claimed they had copied from the Jews themselves. They based these plans on the words of the successful Chinese leader Mao-Tse-Tung [See Source A] but, basically, they didn’t work. The world took no notice. So the PLO switched to blowing up targets outside Israel, in countries friendly to Israel: this was to get the world to at least notice there was a problem [see Source C]. Then, having got the rest of the world [especially the USA] to take some interest, Arafat switched his plans and starting talking to the Israelis, just as if he had always been a normal leader. The Israelis wanted peace [they said] so a peace deal was signed [see Source B]. But some PLO members said that Arafat had sold them out by talking to the enemy Israel, and they continued with their ideas of “terrorism”, even attacking their old friends in the PLO and, as we know now, committing acts of “terrorism” in other countries [see Source D]. Remember the connection between the Palestinian people’s problems and the attacks in New York and Washington DC on 11/9/2001 by Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.

So Source A was accurate once: “terrorism” used to work. But eventually both sides agree that it is better to sit down and talk, with both sides making a deal. [This is what is happening in Northern Ireland, where the IRA and the British are working with each other, while 20 years ago they were killing each other]. The problem in the Middle east is to convince people who have hated each other on-and-off for thousands of years that they can sit down, talk, and possibly even live side-by-side.