

How different are terrorist groups in their membership, aims, motives and methods?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- In this lesson you will:
- examine the membership, aims, motives and methods of three terrorist organisations
 - learn to make effective comparisons.

The Provisional IRA

On 6 December 1921, most of the island of Ireland was granted independence from the UK, leading to the creation of the Republic of Ireland (an independent state) and Northern Ireland (part of the United Kingdom).

The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was a paramilitary organisation who wanted to put pressure on the British government to unite Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland. They were composed of **radical**, mostly **left-wing**, Catholics. They were all Irish **nationalists**. In 1968, the situation in Ireland became more tense and some within the IRA felt that the organisation's tactics were not strong enough to put pressure on the British government and so they broke away to form the PIRA.

HISTORY DETECTIVE
What effect do you think the events of Bloody Sunday had on the membership levels of the PIRA?



The division of Northern Ireland from the Republic of Ireland.

Aims and motives of the PIRA

Since its emergence in 1969, the PIRA has sought an end to British influence in Northern Ireland and the creation of an all-island Irish state. They have also aimed to defend the Catholic community from attack and support it in its desire for further civil rights.

Methods of the PIRA

There have been five main stages in the methods used by the PIRA.

1 Use of as much force as possible (1969–75)

Throughout this period, the PIRA aimed to inflict a level of casualties on the British forces to such an extent that the British government would be forced by public opinion to withdraw from Ireland. They used methods such as landmines, bombs and numerous shooting incidents to apply this pressure. They took their terrorist activities to mainland

Britain, where they were responsible for numerous attacks including the M62 coach bombing (February 1974) and the Guildford pub bombing (October 1974). By the mid-1970s, it became clear, however, that any hopes held by the PIRA leadership of a quick military victory were evaporating.

2 Ceasefire (1975–76)

In 1975, following secret meetings between PIRA leaders and Merlyn Rees, the PIRA began a ceasefire in February 1975. The PIRA initially believed that this was the start of a long-term process of British withdrawal, but later came to the conclusion that Rees was trying to bring them into peaceful politics without offering them any of the guarantees they wanted. Consequently, the ceasefire broke down in January 1976.

3 The 'Long War' (late 1970s–late 1990s)

Under new leadership, allegedly including Gerry Adams (future president of Sinn Féin), the PIRA evolved a new strategy termed the 'Long War', which involved a reorganisation of the PIRA into small cells with a focus on more selective operations against specified targets. As part of this strategy, they attempted to assassinate high-profile figures such as Margaret Thatcher in 1984. Alongside this approach, they increasingly recognised the propaganda value of some of their actions and began to pursue a dual political strategy.

4 Political strategy (1980s–)

Sinn Féin was the political party most closely associated with the PIRA. The political appeal of Sinn Féin was immensely helped when seven members of the IRA and three other Irish nationalists starved themselves to death in prison in protest against the British government's refusal to grant them **special prisoner status**, as they argued that they were political prisoners. Sinn Féin had some success with the passing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985, which aimed to bring an end to the Troubles. This started to convince the PIRA that it was possible to make gains without violence.

5 Peace strategy (1998)

After numerous false starts, the IRA eventually called a ceasefire which brought Sinn Féin into the peace process, leading to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. This came about as a result of a great deal of goodwill on both sides of the conflict and intervention on the part of the British, Irish and American governments.



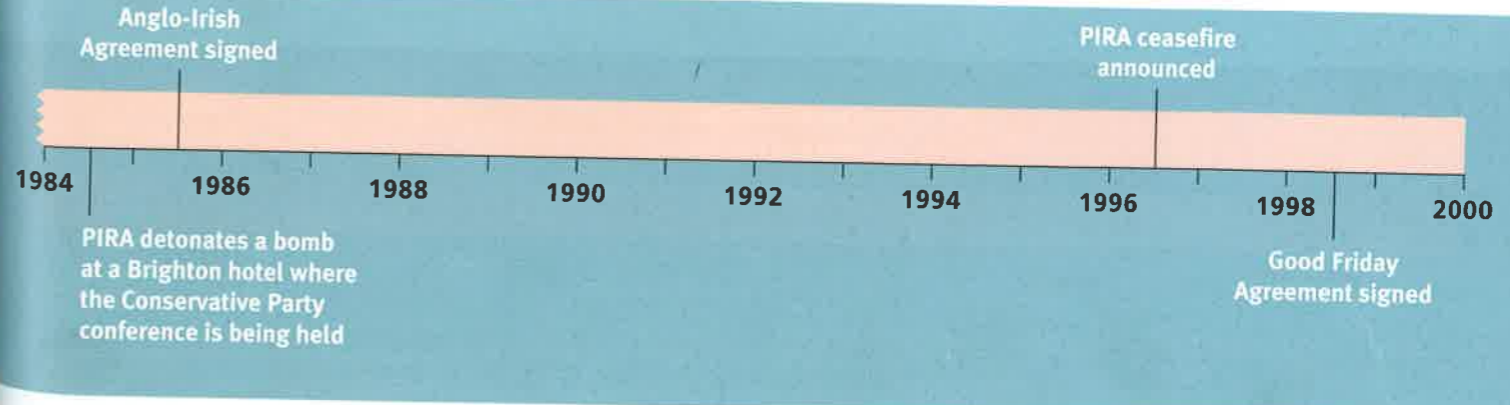
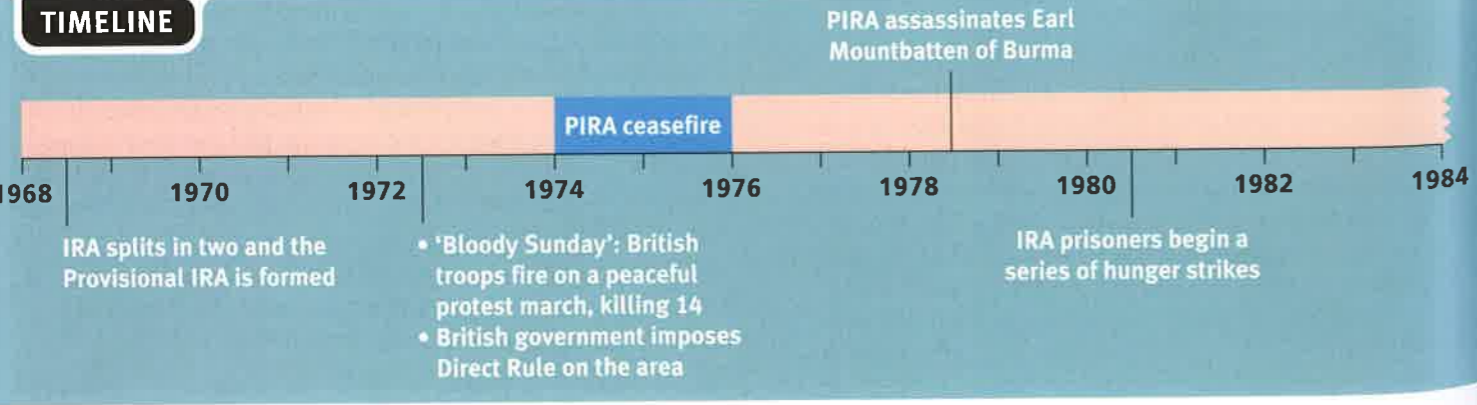
A casualty of the Troubles is carried through the streets of Northern Ireland.

ACTIVITIES

Was Gerry Adams really a member of the PIRA? Why might there be more than one interpretation about this?

KEY WORDS

- Left wing** – a body of political thought which generally criticises the existing social order and argues in favour of a society where all people have equal opportunities.
- Nationalists** – people who hold views focusing on the importance of the nation.
- Radical** – someone who holds an extreme viewpoint.



The Palestine Liberation Organisation

On 14 May 1948, the state of Israel was created by dividing the existing area of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was a paramilitary organisation composed of radical Arabs and Palestinian nationalists, whose original aim was the destruction of the state of Israel and self-determination for the Palestinian Arabs. The PLO was founded by the Arab League in 1964, but it did not become an independent organisation until February 1969. Yasser Arafat was Chairman of the PLO from 1969 to 2004, followed by Mahmoud Abbas (since October 2004).

Aims of the PLO

The basic aim of the PLO was to provide Palestinian Arabs with a country of their own in Palestine. In the early part of its history, it pledged to destroy the state of Israel as part of this aim, though it later recognised Israel's right to exist. In addition, the PLO also aimed for closer Arab unity.

Methods of the PLO

The PLO's strategy changed considerably from the time when it first started until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993.

1 War of Attrition (1969–70)

This was a military tactic in which the PLO attempted to win a war by wearing down Israel to the point of collapse through repeated attacks on its people. During this period, the PLO launched artillery attacks on Israeli settlements and **kibbutzim**, while **fedayeen** launched attacks on Israeli civilians. Although the PLO launched many attacks of this sort, they saw that, given the power of the Israeli military, there was a need for a new strategy

2 Targeted terrorism (1972)

In 1972, Black September, a group with ties to **Yasser Arafat's** Fatah organisation, took members of the Israeli Olympic team hostage. They killed 11 Israeli athletes and coaches and one German police officer. The fact that this took place during the Olympic Games raised international awareness of their cause.



The division of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

HISTORY DETECTIVE
Find out why the PLO left the Arab League in 1969 and became an independent organisation.

TIMELINE

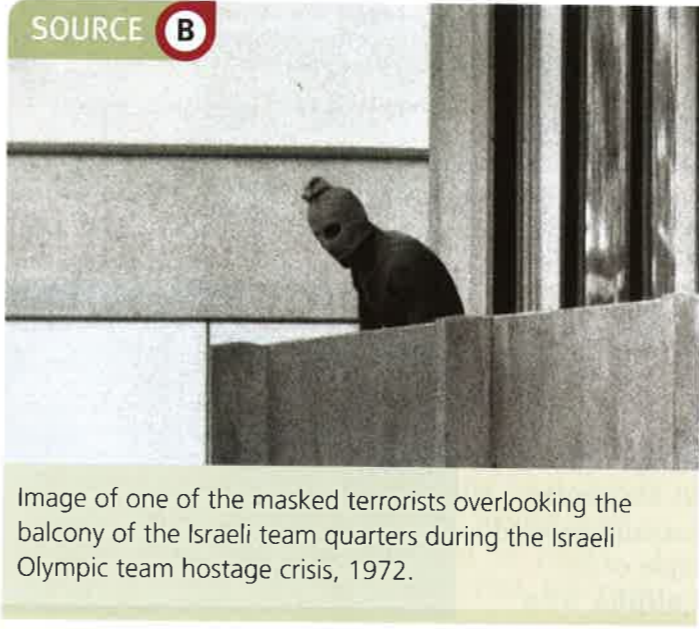
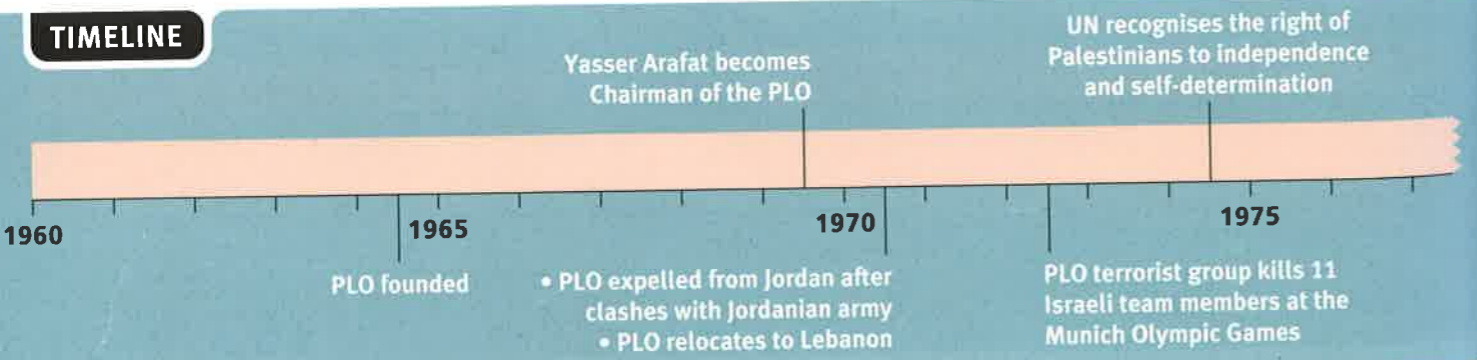


Image of one of the masked terrorists overlooking the balcony of the Israeli team quarters during the Israeli Olympic team hostage crisis, 1972.

3 First Intifada (1987–93)

In the aftermath of the PLO's involvement in the Lebanese Civil War, which seriously destabilised the organisation, there were some murmurings of a peaceful approach, but these came to nothing. In 1987, tension escalated with a mass Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule which spread throughout **Gaza**, the **West Bank** and East Jerusalem. The actions of the protestors ranged from civil disobedience to violence, along with general strikes and boycotts of Israeli products. They were keen to raise international attention, and several Palestinian demonstrations included stone-throwing by Palestinian youths against the heavily-armed Israeli Defence Forces. Following the **Intifada**, Arafat effectively recognised Israel's right to exist in return for an understanding that the Palestinians would be allowed to set up their own

VOICE YOUR OPINION!
Why would the PLO want the world to see pictures of young Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli tanks?

state in the West Bank and Gaza. This paved the way for the USA to enter into diplomatic negotiations with the Palestinians.

4 Negotiating a settlement (1993)

The Oslo Accords of 1993, agreed by Israeli Prime Minister **Yitzhak Rabin** and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, granted the Palestinians the right to self-government in the Gaza Strip and the city of Jericho in the West Bank, through the creation of the **Palestinian Authority**. The PLO had used negotiating tools to get as close to their stated aims as was realistically possible, but this by no means marked the end of the conflict, as a Second Intifada, with repeated suicide bombings, took place in 2000–04.

KEY CONCEPTS

Fedayeen – a term used to describe militant groups formed from within the Palestinian refugee population.
Intifada – a Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule.

KEY PEOPLE

Yasser Arafat – Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, 1969–2004.
Yitzhak Rabin – Prime Minister of Israel, 1992–95.

KEY WORDS

Gaza – the largest city in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian territories.
Kibbutzim – collective communities in Israel that were traditionally based on agriculture.
Palestinian Authority – an organisation created in 1994 and linked to the PLO, formed to provide a limited form of self-governance for the Palestinian people.
West Bank – a landlocked territory on the west bank of the River Jordan.



Al-Qaeda

In December 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to support the communist government in its fight against the Mujahideen resistance. Thousands of Muslim volunteers from around the Middle East came to Afghanistan to defend the Mujahideen.

Al-Qaeda was officially founded in August 1988, as an international organisation whose aim was to build on the operation in Afghanistan to assist Islamist struggles in other parts of the world. Al-Qaeda is composed of Islamic fundamentalists, and it is currently led by Osama bin Laden and **Ayman al-Zawahiri**.

Aims of Al-Qaeda

The primary aim of Al-Qaeda has always been to end foreign influence in Muslim countries such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It has also stated its intention to destroy Israel, topple pro-Western dictatorships around the Middle East, and unite all Muslims behind the principle of an Islamic nation which would follow the rule of the first **Caliphs**, who succeeded the Prophet **Muhammad** in the 7th century.

Methods of Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is an example of an organisation which, unlike the other two organisations, has considerably expanded its operations over time.

1 Fighting the Soviet Union (1988–89)

The conflict in Afghanistan had almost ended by the time Al-Qaeda was formed. Their involvement consisted of recruiting thousands of foreign Mujahideen to help in the fight against the Soviet Union.

2 International terrorism (1992–)

Bin Laden wished to establish operations in other parts of the world, and over the course of the last 15 years Al-Qaeda has done this. Their attacks have included the detonating of two bombs in Yemen aimed at American soldiers on their way to Somalia (1992), the bombing of the US naval vessel, USS *Cole* (2000) and the transport bombings in Madrid (2004) and London (2005). Many of these attacks involved the use of bombs, and some were suicide attacks.

Grade Studio
Describe the origins of Al-Qaeda. [4 marks]

KEY WORDS

Taliban – the organisation which ruled most of Afghanistan during 1996–2001.

Caliphs – the previous name for heads of state of Islamic communities which were ruled by Islamic religious law.

KEY PEOPLE

Muhammad – a man revered by Muslims as the messenger and prophet of God.

Ayman al-Zawahiri – a prominent leader of Al-Qaeda.

VOICE YOUR OPINION!

In groups, consider what rights the terrorists are taking away from citizens by pursuing these aims.

3 Terrorism in Iraq (2003–)

Although they have clearly not ceased their international terrorist activities, the Iraq War and the ensuing instability and chaos has provided Al-Qaeda with an opportunity to use terrorism against Western forces. Suspected Al-Qaeda terrorists are likely to have been responsible for kidnappings and a string of suicide-bomb attacks in the region.

Comparing the different aims

A closer look at the aims of these three terrorist organisations can reveal several important differences.

- The PLO and the PIRA are aiming for a change in geographical borders so that the people they represent (Palestinian Arabs and the Irish respectively) can govern themselves, whereas Al-Qaeda does not have such a specific territorial issue. Instead, it has far more global aims than either the PIRA or the PLO.
- Whereas the PLO and Al-Qaeda have aimed at destroying a particular state (Israel), the PIRA have called for the removal of British influence from one particular territory rather than its destruction.

GradeStudio
'Different terrorist groups have similar aims.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [10 marks]

There are also some key similarities between the aims of these three organisations.

- They have all aimed at removing the influence of a particular government from a particular territory.
- The PIRA, PLO and Al-Qaeda all aim for some type of unity. The PIRA want to unite the two different Irish states, the PLO want Arab unity in the Middle East, and Al-Qaeda want Islamic unity.

Comparing the different methods

The interesting thing to note is how the methods of terrorist groups have changed according to their effectiveness. All three terrorist organisations have expanded and modified their operations to varying degrees. In addition, they have sought not only to cause loss of life but also to raise awareness of their stated aims.

GradeStudio
'Different terrorist groups use similar methods.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. [10 marks]

Examiner's tip
In order to get full marks, it is important to demonstrate three things: knowledge of all three terrorist organisations; evidence of both similarities and differences in the methods of terrorist groups; and an overall judgement.

TIMELINE

