Why It Matters

North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia contain a large share of the world’s oil and natural gas reserves. A study of the region today will explain how its natural resources influence the global economy and what challenges the region faces, including water scarcity, political instability, and destructive wars.

Section 1: The Economy
Changes occur in the use, distribution, and importance of natural resources. Large oil and natural gas reserves have brought tremendous economic growth to some of the region’s countries and have affected its relations with other world regions.

Section 2: People and Their Environment
Human actions modify the physical environment. Throughout the region, new technologies and destructive wars have created many environmental problems.

Dubai, the largest city in the United Arab Emirates, is the main center of trade for the entire Persian Gulf region.
Identifying Information  Create a Shutter Fold to identify the causes and effects of environmental problems in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia today.

Reading and Writing  As you read the chapter, identify and describe in the appropriate place in your Foldable the causes and effects of the region’s environmental problems, such as the scarcity of freshwater in many parts of the region.
The Economy

The oil-producing countries in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia have experienced greater economic growth than other countries in the region. Tremendous wealth from oil and natural gas has brought many positive changes. For some countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, vast oil reserves have defined their economic history.

I. Economic Activities

A. 

B. 

II. Transportation and Communications

A. 

B. 

Voices Around the World

“The fulcrum of Saudi history can be pinpointed exactly: the Persian Gulf city of Dammam on March 3, 1938, when American engineers unleashed the kingdom’s first commercially viable oil gusher after 15 months of drilling. The joint venture between U.S. petroleum companies and Saudi Arabia’s ruler, King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, put the fledgling nation on the global economic map.”


A Saudi man at an oil refinery
Economic Activities

**MAIN Idea** Economic activities in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia are influenced by oil, natural gas, and water.

**GEOGRAPHY AND YOU** What natural resources are important to the U.S. economy? Read to learn how the vast oil and natural gas reserves in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia affect global affairs and economic activities.

Oil and water are two key natural resources for economic activities in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia. Those countries rich in oil generally have scarce water supplies; those countries with abundant water supplies generally lack oil resources.

### Agriculture and Fishing

As the chart at the right shows, only a small part of the region’s land is **arable**, or suitable for farming, yet a large percentage of the population works in agriculture. In Afghanistan, for example, where only 12 percent of the land is arable, 67 percent of the people farm for a living. Agriculture plays a smaller role in countries that have economies based on oil, such as Kuwait.

Areas of North Africa and Southwest Asia that have a Mediterranean climate are best suited for growing cereal crops, citrus fruits, grapes, olives, and dates. When rainfall is below normal, however, harvests of major crops such as wheat, barley, and corn seldom meet people’s needs. Countries that grow these crops must often import additional grains to feed their people. Other crops like citrus fruits are important exports. For example, Georgia’s humid subtropical climate is good for growing citrus fruits, grapes, and cotton.

The steppes of Central Asia provide fertile soil for growing crops and grasslands for grazing livestock. Uzbekistan is one of the world’s largest cotton producers. Both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are important centers for raising silkworms. Wheat, cotton, potatoes, and tea earn Azerbaijan substantial export income, even though only 21 percent of the country’s land is arable. Kazakhstan is a major grain producer.

Fish are an important food source in the region. Moroccan vessels bring in sardines and mackerel from the Atlantic Ocean. The majority of Israel’s annual fish catch consists of freshwater fish raised in artificial ponds. Fishers from other countries harvest fish from the Persian Gulf, which is home to about 150 species. The size of fish catches has declined in the Caspian Sea because of overfishing and pollution. Still, Iran and several other countries bordering this sea have flourishing fishing industries.

### Industry

Petroleum and oil products are the main export commodities, or economic goods, of the region. It holds over 60 percent of the world’s oil and is likely to continue to supply much of the world’s oil. In addition to significant oil reserves, the region also holds about 50 percent of the world’s natural gas reserves.

Oil has brought unimaginable riches to the Persian Gulf countries. Trapped in pockets beneath the region’s sandy soils are two-thirds of the world’s known petroleum reserves. This “black gold” provides the raw material for everyday products, such as compact discs, crayons, and house paint. In addition, oil supplies more than half of the energy used worldwide. Almost overnight, oil profits transformed villages in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and other Persian Gulf countries into gleaming, modern cities.
Oil, Natural Gas, and Mining

Wealth from oil has helped build industry in the region. Iran and Saudi Arabia operate oil-refining and oil-shipping facilities. Most other oil-producing countries export crude oil—petroleum that has not yet been refined—to industrialized countries. Natural gas has also advanced the region, powering steel, textile, and electricity production.

Industries using petrochemicals—products derived from petroleum or natural gas—make fertilizers, medicines, plastics, and paints. The economic growth brought by such industries provides jobs and improves the standard of living.

Coal and copper mining and cement production are important in both Southwest Asia and Central Asia. In North Africa, Morocco is the largest exporter of phosphate, an essential ingredient in agricultural fertilizers.

Service Industries

Service industries play significant roles in the region’s economies. For example, the banking, real estate, and insurance industries amount to more than 60 percent of Bahrain’s gross domestic product (GDP).

1. Location

What is common about the location of most of the region’s manufacturing and trading centers?

2. Regions

What type of land use is most common in the region of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia?

North Africa and Southwest Asia are popular travel destinations because of their historical importance. Ancient monuments and religious sites attract followers of the three major religions that originated in the region. Christians and Jews visit Israel, Jordan, and other countries whose past is linked to the Bible. Muslims make a hajj to Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Other visitors come to enjoy sunny Mediterranean beaches.

Some countries, however, discourage visitors to limit foreign influences. After the Islamic revolution in 1979, the Iranian government placed restrictions on tourists from non-Muslim countries. Conflicts and instability in Algeria, Syria, Iraq, Israel, and Lebanon have also affected tourism.

READING Check

Regions What economic activity has brought the greatest development to the region?
Transportation and Communications

**MAIN Idea** Advancements in transportation and communications are improving throughout the region, but the physical environment and government control have limited some development.

**GEOGRAPHY AND YOU** What physical features must be crossed to link major cities, oil fields, and ports in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia? Read to learn how the physical environment has slowed the development of transportation and communications in the region.

Advances in transportation and communications systems in the region are bringing people closer together. Countries in the eastern Mediterranean have experienced the greatest expansion in transportation and communications.

**Roads, Railroads, and Airlines**

Road systems are unevenly distributed across the region. Extensive systems cross Iran, Turkey, and Egypt, connecting major cities with oil fields and seaports. In some countries, though, mountains and deserts make road building difficult and costly. In recent years, however, economic development and the growing number of vehicles demand the construction of more road systems.

In parts of the Caucasus area, roads provide the only access to the outside world. In Central Asia, the countries of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are surrounded by formidable mountain ranges such as the Hindu Kush, Tian Shan, and Pamirs. **Landlocked** countries—those almost or entirely surrounded by land—such as these do not have access to the sea for transportation and trade.

To ease traffic congestion in crowded urban areas and to improve urban-rural connections, some governments have built rapid-transit systems and railroads. A new subway in **Istanbul**, Turkey, a city of nearly 9 million people, carries commuters to and from the city’s center. National rail lines also connect urban areas and seaports. In 1998 Tajikistan unveiled part of a major railway system, which is designed to make trade and travel easier throughout the countries of Central Asia.

Since World War II, the growth of the air travel industry has benefited North Africa and Southwest Asia. In recent years, Central Asia has also benefited from increased air traffic. Before the breakup of the Soviet Union, Central Asian countries relied on the Soviet airline Aeroflot, but now some Central Asian countries have their own airlines.

**Waterways and Pipelines**

Water transportation is vital to the region. Ships load and unload cargo at ports on the Mediterranean and Black Seas. The Strait of Tiran—between the **Gulf of Aqaba** and the Red Sea—and the **Strait of Hormuz**—linking the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea—are of strategic and economic importance. Oil tankers entering and leaving the Persian Gulf must pass through the Strait of Hormuz. The Suez Canal, a major human-made waterway located between the Sinai Peninsula and the rest of Egypt, enables ships to pass from the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea.

1. **Location** In which countries is the greatest concentration of oil pipelines located?

2. **Regions** Why are waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal of economic importance?
An elaborate system of pipelines transports oil overland to ports on the Mediterranean and Red Seas and the Persian Gulf. In Central Asia, pipelines carry oil from Baku, Azerbaijan, to Batumi, Georgia, on the Black Sea coast. Discovery of large oil and natural gas reserves in the Caspian Sea in the 1990s prompted governments to build underwater pipelines.

**Communications**

Throughout the region, television and radio broadcasting is expanding, although government control of the media in many places limits programming. Communication is difficult in some areas because of vast stretches of desert. Satellite technology, however, is helping countries improve communications services. Technologies such as wireless service and solar-powered radiophones are bringing telephone service to more people. Cellular phones are a common sight on the streets of the region’s major cities. Although service is limited, more and more people in the region have computer and Internet access. In Dubai, a territory of the United Arab Emirates, plans are in place to build a computer-based “cybercity” that will include a free trade zone, a research center, a science and technology park, and a university.

**Two New Silk Roads**

The year 1998 marked the opening of the world’s longest telecommunications highway. The “highway” is actually a 16,767-mile (26,984-km) cable that follows the route of the Silk Road, the ancient trade route that linked Europe, Central Asia, and China. The cable provides the 20 countries along its path with digital circuits for voice, data, fax, and video transmissions.

Plans are also under way to build a vast network of road, rail, and air transportation systems tracing the Silk Road’s path. The Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) will extend from Moldova eastward to Mongolia. The more than 30 countries involved hope the project will promote peace and regional cooperation, enhance access to world markets, develop corridors for landlocked countries, and open access to newly discovered oil and gas deposits in the Caspian region.

**Reading Check** Regions Why has it been difficult to develop transportation and communications networks in the region?

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**Trade and Interdependence**

**Main Idea** Interdependence among the countries of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia is growing, as is the region’s interdependence with the rest of the world.

**Geography and You** On what natural resources from the region does the United States depend? Read to learn how resources have increased interaction within the region and with the world.

Interdependence is growing within the region, as more developed countries provide aid, trade deals, and development loans to less developed countries. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, for example, Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia helped the new Central Asian republics make a smooth transition to independence.

Good transportation and communications networks are also increasing the interaction between North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia and the rest of the world. In 2004 the United States signed an agreement with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to establish a U.S.-Central Asia trade council and to strengthen relations between the United States and Central Asia.

Eight of the region’s oil-producing countries—Algeria, Libya, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates—have become a majority in the 11-member Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Founded in 1960, OPEC has given member countries more control over oil production and prices.
Because other countries depend heavily on the region’s oil, OPEC has considerable influence in global affairs. During the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, OPEC exercised political muscle by restricting oil shipments to the United States because of its aid to Israel. OPEC also raised oil prices during the 1970s. It placed an embargo, or restriction, on oil shipments to the United States and other industrialized countries. In 1999 and 2000, OPEC cut back oil production, forcing a rise in oil prices around the world. In 2006, oil prices rose sharply due to the ongoing conflict in Iraq and tensions over Iran’s nuclear power ambitions.

The countries of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia and the rest of the world depend on one another. Industrialized countries need oil from the region, and the region needs industrial products for its markets. However, the region’s heavy dependence on oil income has led to wide disparities between the oil-rich and the oil-poor countries. In addition, industrialized countries such as the United States and Japan that depend on the region for oil are exploring alternative sources less sensitive to price increases.

**Critical Thinking**

5. **Think Critically** How has the discovery of oil and natural gas reserves affected economic growth in the region and the region’s relations with other countries in the world?

6. **Identifying Cause and Effect** Why do oil prices rise and fall? How do these changes affect global consumers?

7. **Analyzing Visuals** Study the economic activity map on page 476. Which countries use oil and natural gas resources for economic activities? Which countries most likely depend on water as a resource for economic activities?

**Writing About Geography**

8. **Expository Writing** List recent changes in global communications in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia. Then write a paragraph explaining how these changes have affected and will continue to affect everyday life in the region.
People and Their Environment

Like human actions in many places, those in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia often threaten the environment. These actions take many forms—oil spills, urban sprawl, overuse of water supplies, and destructive wars. The dilemma people face is how to meet human needs while trying to restore the already damaged environment and protect it from further devastation.

Voices Around the World

“After 23 years of conflict Afghanistan is the neediest of all, a gutted shell of a state with millions of land mines embedded in its earth. . . .

Consider the arithmetic of Afghanistan: A million and a half people killed. Nearly four million living as refugees, including most of the veneer of educated men and women. Land mines preventing the use of thousands of acres of precious farmland. Kabul all but destroyed, the university in rubble. Highways, bridges—gone. Experts say it will take at least a decade to rebuild Afghanistan merely to its spare 1960s development level. And many more years to bring it into the 21st century.”

—Mike Edwards, “Central Asia Unveiled,”
National Geographic, February 2002
Managing Resources

MAIN Idea Growing populations in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia severely strain the already scarce water resources.

GEOGRAPHY AND YOU What human actions impact water resources in the United States? Read to learn about solutions to the lack of freshwater in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia.

According to UNICEF and the World Health Organization, more than 1 billion of the world’s people cannot obtain clean drinking water. About two-thirds of the world’s households do not have a nearby source of freshwater.

Water Resources

Much freshwater in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia comes from rivers, oases, and aquifers—underground layers of porous rock, gravel, or sand that contain water. As populations grow, demand for water taxes water resources.

The Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, Jordan, Amu Dar’ya, and Syr Dar’ya are the region’s only major rivers, so only a few of the region’s countries have enough freshwater for irrigation. Israel, for example, uses an elaborate system of human-made canals to funnel the freshwater of the Jordan River from north to south. In the rest of the region, people turn to smaller rivers and other sources for water.

Desalination

Limited water resources have prompted scientists to develop ways to remove salt from seawater, a process called desalination. As the world’s population increases and becomes more concentrated in urban areas, desalination helps meet the need for more freshwater. The region now has about 60 percent of the world’s freshwater-production capacity, producing more than 2.4 billion gallons (9.1 billion l) a day. Many countries, particularly those near the Persian Gulf, depend on desalination plants. The costs to build and maintain such plants, however, are too much for some countries. These countries still face the challenge of acquiring enough freshwater for their needs.
The Great Man-Made River

Libya’s Great Man-Made River is an ambitious effort to supply freshwater. This multibillion-dollar project uses two pipelines to carry water from large aquifers beneath the Sahara to farms near the Mediterranean. The first two phases of the project, completed in 1993 and 1996, bring freshwater across eastern and western Libya. The second pipeline carries water to areas near Tripoli (TRIH•puh•lee), the country’s capital. The third phase of the project, which is still under construction, will link the pipelines of the first two phases. Already, the project has had a positive effect on daily life in Libya.

The Great Man-Made River may, however, create environmental challenges. Scientists fear that the pipelines could drain aquifers in Libya and neighboring countries. They also fear that pumping aquifers near the Mediterranean could draw in salt water from the sea, contaminating the freshwater.

Human Impact

New technologies and destructive wars have increased environmental problems in North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia.

GEOGRAPHY AND YOU In what other regions of the world have the effects of past and present conflicts created environmental challenges? Read to find out how wars in the region have resulted in environmental problems.

In recent decades, both new technologies and destructive wars have heightened environmental concerns in the region. Today, countries must balance accessing their natural resources with preserving the environment.

The Aswān High Dam

In 1970 Egypt completed the Aswān High Dam, located about 600 miles (966 km) south of Cairo. Started in the 1950s, the 364-foot (111-m) dam controls the Nile’s floods, irrigates around 3 million acres (1.2 million ha) of land, and supplies some of Egypt’s electricity. To boost the fishing industry, the dam also created the world’s largest human-made lake, Lake Nasser.

In spite of these successes, the project also had a negative impact on the environment. Before the dam’s construction, the annual Nile floods deposited fertile alluvial soil along the floodplain and washed away salt from the soil. Now the dam traps the soil, and Egyptian farmers must use expensive fertilizers. The land also retains salt because floodwaters no longer cleanse the soil.

The health of people and their livestock also suffers. After the dam was completed, parasite-related diseases and deaths around the dam and downriver increased. With aid from other countries and international organizations, however, Egypt is overcoming many of these difficulties.

Impact of War

War in the region has also had a negative effect on the environment. During the Persian Gulf War (1990–1991), Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait set fire to more than 700 oil wells. Huge black clouds of smoke polluted the area. Iraqi troops also dumped about 250 million gallons (946 million l) of oil into the Persian Gulf.
Thousands of fish and other marine life died when the oil spill spread 350 miles (563 km) along the Persian Gulf coastline. Smoke from oil well fires threatened millions of birds. Oil pollution from routine shipping also adversely affects the Persian Gulf environment.

Meanwhile, more conflicts continue to erupt throughout the region. In March 2003, the United States led an invasion into Iraq to end the regime of Saddam Hussein. Coalition forces remain in Iraq amidst violent attacks from insurgents, and many fear the violence will evolve into civil war.

In 2006, after a Hezbollah raid from Lebanon into Israel, tensions between the two countries again escalated. Hezbollah is an Islamic movement that wants to drive Israeli troops from Lebanon. Israel launched air strikes at Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon and pushed its offensive further into the country, causing massive destruction. In one Israeli air strike, bombs hit a power station and caused an oil slick that damaged the Lebanese coast and spread into the Mediterranean Sea.

### Three Troubled Seas

The Caspian Sea, the Aral Sea, and the Dead Sea face severe environmental challenges. Pollution at the Caspian Sea’s southern end, near the Elburz Mountains of Iran, is especially severe. Pollution and overfishing threaten fish, like sturgeon, whose products are important exports.

The Aral Sea has had water diverted from feeder rivers to irrigate croplands. These changes destroyed the sea’s fishing industries, and dust storms have spread polluted soil. People living by the Aral Sea are now working to revive their sea as a chain of lakes that can support fish.

The water level of the Dead Sea has dropped more than 262 feet (80 m) over the past 40 years. Ninety percent of the water from the sea’s feeder rivers is diverted for irrigation and to hydroelectric plants. Scientists have suggested pumping water into the Dead Sea from the Gulf of Aqaba, but the cost is too high. To reduce the amount of water diverted from the Dead Sea, some recommend building a desalination plant on Israel’s Mediterranean coast. In the countries surrounding the Dead Sea, some believe the best hope for its survival is to build a canal connecting the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, but the mix of salt water and seawater could cause other environmental problems.

**Human-Environment Interaction** How has agriculture affected the size of the Aral Sea?
Nuclear and Chemical Dangers

Central Asia inherited the Soviet era’s environmental problems. Kazakhstan was once home to Soviet nuclear bases. During the Cold War, the Soviets tested nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons there. Northeastern Kazakhstan remains severely affected by radiation after the Soviets tested nearly 500 nuclear weapons in the area. In many instances, local populations were not warned nor evacuated before the testing took place. In 1989 it was found that this weapons testing had caused radiation leaks. Scientists think many years will pass before all the resulting contamination disappears.

Soviet planners also chose Kazakhstan as a site for heavy industry, which polluted the air with toxic chemicals. Scientists have linked increased infant mortality, or death before a child’s first birthday, in Kazakhstan directly to industrial pollution. The people of Kyrgyzstan, another site of Soviet heavy industry, have suffered similar effects.

Human-Environment Interaction

What are two of the major causes of environmental problems in the region?

Meeting Freshwater Needs

1. Location  In which country are most radioactive waste storage sites located?
2. Place  Where does most uranium mining take place?

Critical Thinking

5.  What impact has the Aswān High Dam had on Egypt’s environment?
6. Predicting Consequences  What problems might occur if better use and conservation practices for freshwater sources are not found for the region?
7. Analyzing Visuals  Study the map of the importance of freshwater on page 481. What generalization can you make about the relationship between the location of desalination plants and the level of economic development in the region?

Writing About Geography

8. Expository Writing  Think about the challenges the region faces in managing its freshwater resources. Write a plan to address the future water needs of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia.

Geography ONLINE

Study Central™  To review this section, go to glencoe.com and click on Study Central.
**Black Gold!**

- The region of North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia contains more oil than all other world regions combined.
- As more and more countries become industrialized, the demand for oil has increased, making countries with large oil reserves very wealthy.
- Most of the oil-producing countries in the region have joined OPEC and help set the supply and price of oil around the world.

**Water in the Desert?**

**Challenges**
- The region is mostly composed of desert areas.
- The population centers of the region are located along rivers and coasts.
- There are few major rivers to provide water to the region and coastal water is salty.
- Aquifers supply some water, but the growing population in the region means a growing demand for water.

**Solutions**
- Desalination plants have been built to remove salt from coastal waters.
- Human-made canals divert the flow of major rivers to drier areas.
- Dams along rivers create reservoirs of water used for irrigation.
- Water pipelines draw water from distant aquifers into populated areas.
Reviewing Vocabulary

Directions: Choose the word or words that best complete the sentence.

1. _______ land is land that is good for farming.
   A Commodity
   B Arable
   C Reg
   D Wadi

2. Products that are derived from petroleum or natural gas are _______.
   A crude oil
   B commodities
   C petrochemicals
   D arable

3. A(n) _______ is an underground layer of porous rock, gravel, or sand that contains water.
   A wadi
   B oasis
   C Kum
   D aquifer

4. Removing salt from seawater so that it can be used for drinking and other purposes is _______.
   A commodity
   B arable
   C pastoralism
   D desalinization

Reviewing Main Ideas

Directions: Choose the best answers to the following questions.

Section 1 (pp. 474–479)

5. What kind of climate is best for producing cereal crops, citrus fruits, grapes, olives, and dates?
   A desert
   B steppe
   C Mediterranean
   D humid subtropical

6. The “new Silk Road” that opened in 1998 is a _______.
   A superhighway
   B railroad
   C cable
   D hiking trail

Section 2 (pp. 480–484)

7. What is Libya’s Great Man-Made River?
   A a canal
   B diversion of the Nile
   C a pipeline
   D a desalinization plant

8. Why has the Aral Sea shrunk in the last 40 years?
   A The climate has become warmer, evaporating more water.
   B More sand and silt have washed into the sea, filling it up.
   C Water has been pumped out of the sea in order to reclaim the land under it.
   D Water from the rivers that feed the sea has been diverted for irrigation.
Critical Thinking

Directions: Choose the best answers to the following questions.

9. In what ways has the use of technology addressed the environmental problems facing North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Central Asia?

A There has been no effect on the environment.
B The projects have had a good effect on the environment but often cause additional problems.
C The projects have had negative environmental impacts.
D The projects have had only good effects on the environment.

Base your answer to question 10 on the map and on your knowledge of Chapter 19.

10. Which region has the greatest oil resources?

A Central Asia
B Arabian Peninsula
C North Africa
D the Northeast

Document-Based Questions

Directions: Analyze the document and answer the short-answer questions that follow the document.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was organized in Baghdad in 1961 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. The OPEC Statute, last revised in 2006, explains its purpose.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), hereinafter referred to as “the Organization”, created as a permanent intergovernmental organization . . . shall carry out its functions in accordance with the provisions set forth hereunder.

A. The principal aim of the Organization shall be the coordination and unification of the petroleum policies of Member Countries and the determination of the best means for safeguarding their interests, individually and collectively.
B. The Organization shall devise ways and means of ensuring the stabilization of prices in international oil markets with a view to eliminating harmful and unnecessary fluctuations.
C. Due regard shall be given at all times to the interests of the producing nations and to the necessity of securing a steady income to the producing countries; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on their capital to those investing in the petroleum industry.

11. What is the principal aim of OPEC?

12. Why would OPEC be concerned about an efficient, economic, and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations?

Extended Response

13. Describe how the physical environment of the region has hampered transportation and communications. What advances have been made in these areas?
SUNNI AND SHIA MUSLIMS: Why are there two branches of Islam, and how do they relate to each other?

There are two main branches of Islam—Sunni and Shia. The main difference between the two is their belief about how the leader, or caliph, should be chosen. Sunni Muslims believe that the caliph should be chosen by the Islamic community. Shia Muslims believe that the caliph should be a descendant of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam.

The split dates from about a.d. 680. Both groups accept the first four caliphs who followed Muhammad. Sunnis believe that heirs of all four are legitimate leaders. Shias, however, believe that only heirs of the fourth caliph are legitimate. In a.d. 931 the twelfth caliph disappeared. This was an important event in Shia history, because the Shias believed they lost their divinely guided political leader.

Most Muslims in the world are Sunni. Only in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain, and Azerbaijan are the majority of the people Shia.

Understanding the Issue

The relations between Sunni and Shia Muslims can be understood from a variety of perspectives.

A Moral Issue Religions teach rules of conduct that one must follow in order to be in harmony with the world and to live a good life. Followers of many religions believe that they should work for the organization of their entire society according to these rules. When the rules of different groups are not the same, conflicts between the groups can become very pronounced, even violent.

A Cultural Issue Because religious belief deals with some of the deepest questions of human experience, it becomes a part of culture that people use to define their identity. Followers of one religion or religious branch may distrust people from other groups, based on their membership and identity.

A Political Problem Groups of people who identify with particular religious groups may form political factions. They want to see their particular group in power, or at least in an equal position with their rivals. In areas where one religious group has been favored and others disadvantaged, the disadvantaged group may become demanding of greater power if given the chance. For example, after Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein (a Sunni) was driven from power, the Shia saw an opportunity to assume power. The Sunnis, fearing they would be disadvantaged, fought back in a violent insurgency.
Possible Solutions

The division of Muslims between Sunni and Shia has become an important issue as political and religious factions emerge.

Democratic Government In countries where there are many religious and ethnic groups, democratic political institutions help insure that all groups have a say in the government. Groups may form political parties, which work to win votes at the ballot box instead of through violence.

Human Rights Laws Along with democratic government, where the will of the majority prevails, laws protect the interests of the minority. If members of the minority feel they have been wrongly treated, they can take their problems to an impartial court, where the issue is decided on the basis of laws.

Economic Development People whose lives are improving economically are less likely to become frustrated and violent. They see that their lives are getting better and that fighting will simply destroy everything they have worked for. They are less likely to follow extremist leaders, especially when they see that they can retain the most important parts of their religious beliefs along with economic development.

Muslim women in France march during a demonstration in support of wearing head coverings.
Understanding the Case

The primary resources listed below provide information about Sunni and Shia Muslims. Use these resources, along with what you have learned in Unit 6, to complete the activities listed on the next page.

**Conflict Between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq**

**Primary Source**


People in Iraq identify strongly with the branch of Islam to which they belong. These groups are forming the basis for conflicting groups struggling for power.

Instead of becoming a Middle Eastern model of pro-Western democracy, as the Bush administration had hoped, Iraq is being swept by Sunni and Shi'ite [Shia] Muslim extremism.

High unemployment, little visible progress toward rebuilding the country and dissatisfaction with leaders appointed by foreigners are herding thousands of disenchanted Iraqis into the hands of hard-liners, according to political parties, Islamic scholars and social scientists.

Sunni militants such as those in Fallujah, who seek to impose Saudi or Taliban-style Islamic puritanism, pose one threat to the new, secular interim Iraqi government that takes charge July 1.

Radical cleric Muqtada al Sadr and other Shiite extremists, with fertile recruiting ground in Iraq's volatile Shiite majority, pose another, calling for an armed struggle to create an Iranian-style theocracy.

The conflict between the two, now 1,324 years old and going strong, could plunge the country into civil war and anarchy.

"Iraq is now the crossroads for the two most rigid extremist groups in the Islamic world," said Sadoun al Dulami, the head of the Iraqi Center for Research and Strategic Studies. "They think they hold all the truth. We left one brutal regime and now we are preparing ourselves for an even bloodier one."

Bearded men armed with long sticks sometimes stand outside the [Baghdad University] campus and strike college women who don't cover their hair or don't wear loose-fitting clothes, students said. Newly minted radicals have stopped saying hello to moderate classmates, and militant young women sometimes smear the lipstick off the faces of their former friends.

"Their minds are owned by the extremists now," said Safa Hussein, 21, a senior at the university. "In Baghdad, we used to have a special kind of open environment, but the Islamic waves are rolling in and the clerics are coming out of the woodwork. If they have their way, we'll be living in Iran or Saudi soon."
Attempts to Control Violence

Primary Source 2

U.S. military forces, sent to Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein’s government and set the country on a path to democracy, find themselves caught between the fighting Sunni and Shia factions. U.S. forces try to keep the violence contained and the factions separate from each other.

Terrorist Attacks Increase Hatred and Violence

Primary Source 3


The conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Iraq continues.

Bombers blasted the gilded dome of one of Shiite Islam’s holiest shrines into naked steel and gaping blue sky Wednesday in a provocative assault that roused tens of thousands of Iraqi Shiites into angry protests and deadly clashes.

The highest spiritual leaders of Iraq’s Shiite majority simultaneously rallied and restrained the outrage of their followers after the attack on the Askariya shrine in Samarra, about 65 miles north of Baghdad . . . 

In Baghdad, Shiite boys and men abruptly abandoned classrooms, homes and jobs to muster outside the headquarters of the influential Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in the heart of Sadr City, the slum named for the cleric’s father.

“This is a day we will never forget,” said Naseer Sabah, 24, who had left his job at a pastry factory without changing clothes to join the black-clad Shiite militia fighters clutching pistols, Kalashnikov assault rifles and grenade launchers outside Sadr’s headquarters. Thousands converged on the Sadr offices, on foot or in buses and pickup trucks packed with armed men hanging out the windows.

“We await the orders of our preachers,” teenagers around Sabah cried . . . 

Sunni political leaders said retaliatory attacks hit more than 20 Sunni mosques across Iraq with bombs, gunfire or arson.

Analyzing the Case

1. Drawing Conclusions  Review the information in the primary sources above. How do religious traditions and beliefs combine with economic problems and political upheaval to increase the conflict between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq?

2. Making Predictions  How might the conflict between Sunnis and Shias in Iraq eventually be resolved?

3. Forming a Peace Team.  Divide the class into two teams, one representing Sunnis and one representing Shias. Teams should research the following questions:

   • What is the origin of the split between Sunni and Shia Muslims?
   • Where in the world is each group dominant?
   • Do the groups have different degrees of political power? Why?

   Teams should then conduct a negotiation session to come to an understanding of how to begin to resolve their differences.

4. Writing About the Case  Write a one-page essay in which you discuss one of the issues addressed in #3 above.