

Natural Resources Line of Inquiry

Lesson 2

Geopolitical Challenges of Fossil Fuels - CCRS Level C

Fossil fuels have both positive and negative effects on society. Using fossil fuels has helped many people around the world live better lives. We rely on fossil fuels for things like transportation and making plastic. But, depending too much on fossil fuels can also cause problems. If we run out of fossil fuels or they become really expensive, our economies could be in trouble. Some countries don't even have their own fossil fuel reserves, so they have to rely on other countries for oil. In the United States, we started importing more oil after our own oil production went down in the 1970s. In 2009, more than half of the oil we used came from other countries.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a group of countries that have a lot of oil reserves. They have a lot of influence over how much oil is available in the world. OPEC has 15 member countries, including Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. They give each member a limit on how much oil they can produce, but not all countries follow these limits. The decisions made by OPEC countries can affect the price of oil. For example, in 2011, the price of oil went up because of conflicts in some Arab countries. To reduce our reliance on foreign oil, the United States is trying to find more oil within our own country and from other non-Middle Eastern countries like Canada and Mexico.

Having oil reserves can bring a lot of money and jobs to a country. But, it can also cause problems. Sometimes, the wealth from oil is not shared with the people who live in the country. Instead, it goes to oil companies or dictators. This was the case in Nigeria before the 1990s. So, even though there are challenges with using fossil fuels, there are also challenges with not having them. It's important for countries to find a balance and think about the impact of fossil fuels on society.

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