

Natural Resources Line of Inquiry

Lesson 2

Geopolitical Challenges of Fossil Fuels - CCRS Level D

Fossil fuels have played a very important role in improving the lives of many people worldwide. They have made it possible for us to have modern technologies and services like transportation and plastics. These advancements have made our lives more convenient and efficient in many ways. Depending on fossil fuels has allowed many people around the world to have a better quality of life.

However, relying on fossil fuels also has some negative effects on society. One big concern is that when the supply of fossil fuels becomes limited or very expensive, it can cause problems for economies. Without access to affordable fossil fuels, economies may struggle to keep growing. This is especially true for countries that don't have their own fossil fuel reserves, as they have to depend on imports and can be influenced by the countries that produce oil.

The United States is a good example of a country that relies more and more on oil from other countries. Since 1970, when the U.S. stopped producing as much oil, we have had to import a lot of it. In 2009, more than half of the oil we used was imported, with most of it coming from countries in the Western Hemisphere. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) controls a lot of the world's oil reserves and their decisions can affect how much oil is available worldwide.

OPEC countries have a lot of control over how much oil is produced and can limit production by international oil companies. For example, in 2011, when there were protests in Arab countries like Libya, the price of oil went up because OPEC decided to produce less. To reduce how much we depend on oil from other countries, the United States has been trying to find more sources of energy within our own borders and diversifying where we import from, but it's not easy because there are economic and political challenges involved, like who gets the money from oil and how it's distributed. Nigeria before the 1990s is an example of a country where the people didn't benefit much from the oil wealth because it was controlled by companies and dictators.

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