

The Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Iran

Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. Islamic culture and an economy greatly based on oil influence life in Saudi Arabia.
2. Most other Arabian Peninsula countries are monarchies influenced by Islamic culture and oil resources.

Key Terms

Shia branch of Islam in which Muslims believe that true interpretations of Islamic teachings can only come from certain religious and political leaders

Sunni branch of Islam in which Muslims believe in the ability of the majority of the community to interpret Islamic teachings

OPEC Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, an international organization whose members work to influence the price of oil on world markets by controlling the supply

Section Summary

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia is the largest country on the Arabian Peninsula. It is a major center of religion and culture. Its economy is one of the strongest in this region.

Most Saudis speak Arabic. Islam is a strong influence on their culture and customs. This religion was started in Saudi Arabia by Muhammad. Most Saudis follow one of two branches of Islam—**Shia** or **Sunni**. About 85 percent of Saudi Muslims are Sunni.

Islam influences Saudi culture in many ways. It teaches modesty, so traditional clothing is long and loose, covering the arms and legs. Women rarely go out in public without a husband or male relative. But women can own and run businesses.

The country's government is a monarchy. There are also local officials. Only men can vote.

Who started Islam and where?

Section 2, continued

Saudi Arabia is an important member of **OPEC**, an organization with members from different countries. OPEC works to control oil supplies to influence world oil prices.

Saudi Arabia also has challenges. It has very little freshwater to grow crops, so it has to import most of its food. There is high unemployment. This is partly because young people choose to study religion instead of other subjects the economy needs.

Underline two challenges Saudi Arabia faces.

OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

There are six smaller countries of this region: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, and Yemen. Like Saudi Arabia, they are all influenced by Islam and most have monarchies and depend on oil.

Most of these countries are rich. Yemen is the poorest. Oil was only discovered there in the 1980s.

Most of these countries have a monarchy. Some also have elected officials. Yemen's government is elected, but political corruption has been a problem.

Some of these countries support their economy in other ways besides oil. Bahrain's oil began to run out in the 1990s. Banking and tourism are now important. Qatar and the UAE also have natural gas. Oman does not have as much oil as other countries, so it is trying to create new industries.

The Persian Gulf War started in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. The United States and other countries helped Kuwait defeat Iraq. Many of Kuwait's oilfields were destroyed during the war.

List the six smaller countries on the Arabian Peninsula.

Circle three ways besides oil that countries in this region are supporting their economies.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Developing Imagine you are an official in one of the countries of the Arabian Peninsula and oil is running low. You need to develop a plan for new ways to support the economy. Based on what you know about the region's physical and human geography, list several strategies and state your reasons for why they might work.