

1 **What impact did control of valuable resources have on politics in the Middle East?**

2 *Simpson, Larry. "Natural Resources and Middle East Politics: The Arab Oil Embargo and Price Hikes." World*  
3 *Geography: Understanding a Changing World. ABC-CLIO, 2015.*

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5 The Middle East, with its largely desert climate, presents an interesting economic dichotomy. The  
6 scarcity of water has led several nations in the region to attempt diversion and damming projects. Such  
7 efforts are almost always politically controversial, however, because they negatively impact the  
8 economies of neighboring nations. Several countries in the Middle East do, however, have large deposits  
9 of oil, a fact that has brought them immense political and economic power on the international stage.

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11 Some say that oil and water do not mix, but the two have certainly combined to influence the course of  
12 the Arab-Israeli dispute. The former is a fast-diminishing resource for most of the world, yet it can be  
13 found in abundance in many parts of the Middle East. Although there is no problem obtaining the latter  
14 in many parts of the globe, there is a dearth of water in much of the region and conflicts over water  
15 rights there have contributed to war. To understand the Arab-Israeli conflict, one must consider both of  
16 these economic resources at further length.

17 **The Waters of the Jordan River Basin**

18 An often neglected aspect of the Arab-Israeli conflict concerns the dispute over the control of water  
19 resources. In 1953, the Israelis began the construction of a National Water Carrier to transport water  
20 from the Jordan River to the Negev and "make the desert bloom." As the Arabs vehemently objected to  
21 this diversion of the scarce resource, the United States tried to find a compromise on the issue. Between  
22 1953 and 1955, American officials came up with the Johnson Plan for an equitable division of water.  
23 Neither side, however, would agree to the proposal and tensions continued over the issue. When the  
24 Israelis unilaterally began in 1964 to pump water from Lake Tiberias and dam its southern outlet, this act  
25 added to the growing strains that ultimately culminated in the Six-Day War of June 1967. The Arabs  
26 objected not only on account of the fact that Israel's offtake of water would deny the same to thousands  
27 of Jordanian farmers farther south in the Jordan River Valley, but also because they claimed Israel's  
28 access to more resources would allow greater immigration and thus tighten its hold on Palestine and  
29 increase the threat of Zionist<sup>1</sup> expansionism.

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31 In response, an Arab Summit approved \$17.5 million in funds for diverting the headwaters of the Jordan  
32 River farther north in Lebanon and Syria. It was the Syrians who actually began a project to divert water  
33 in November 1964 and began building the Mukeiba Dam. As this threatened to deprive Israel of 35% of  
34 the water resources from the upper Jordan, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol considered the Syrian action  
35 a *casus belli* and began to take preemptive military actions to ensure the continued flow of what he  
36 called "Israel's life-blood." Following this logic, Israeli tanks destroyed Syrian bulldozers that were within  
37 range on the other side of the border. When the Syrians persisted with the project beyond where Israeli  
38 shells could reach and when border incidents were followed by Syrian artillery bombardments of Israeli

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<sup>1</sup> Zionist: Refers to a person identifying with Zionism. Zionism is a nationalist and political movement of Jews and Jewish culture that supports the reestablishment of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel (also referred to as Palestine, Canaan or the Holy Land).

39 settlements, Tel Aviv did Damascus one better and escalated the conflict. The Israelis employed the  
40 Israeli Air Force (IAF) to silence the Syrian guns and halt the construction of the diversionary project.

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42 Thus, the issue of water was one of the central points of contention between the Arabs, particularly the  
43 Syrians, and the Israelis. Unable to defeat the Israelis by conventional methods, Syrian leaders  
44 increasingly turned to support of fedayeen, or guerrilla, raids into Israel. The number of such attacks  
45 continued to rise—especially after a February 1966 coup brought General Salal al-Jadid into power in  
46 Syria—and there were some 93 border incidents that year. Realizing that they needed a counter to the  
47 IAF, Syrian leaders purchased MiG-21s from the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Syrian Air Force proved  
48 no match for the IAF. In two aerial encounters in July and August 1966, for instance, the IAF shot down a  
49 total of three MiGs. All of this was part of the escalation that culminated in the Six-Day War in 1967. The  
50 Israeli capture of the Golan Heights eliminated the threat posed by the Syrian water diversion program,  
51 but it in no way ended the bitter dispute between the Arabs and Jews over water rights regarding the  
52 Jordan River.

### 53 **The Arab Oil Embargo & Price Hikes**

54 During the second week of the 1973 Yom Kippur War<sup>2</sup>, Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum  
55 Exporting Countries (OPEC), led by Saudi Arabia, announced a 5% cut in production until Israel withdrew  
56 from territory it occupied in 1967 and the world recognized the rights of the Palestinian people<sup>3</sup>. The  
57 stunning event followed a prior agreement between Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and the Saudis and  
58 was Riyadh's way of expressing solidarity with the Arab cause. When U.S. president Richard Nixon  
59 turned to the U.S. Congress to send emergency aid to Israel, the Arab OPEC members imposed a  
60 complete embargo on the United States and any other country they deemed guilty of supporting the  
61 Jewish state.

62  
63 The idea of using oil as a weapon in the dispute over Palestine was not new, as the Arab League had  
64 considered doing so as early as 1946. At that time, however, there was an oil glut, and this continued  
65 throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. Likewise, the petroleum-producing countries were not united  
66 and it was not until 1960 that several of them formed OPEC. In the meantime, demand for oil continued  
67 to grow in the United States as well as in Europe and Japan. By 1970, the oil industry was running at full  
68 capacity so that suppliers were in a unique position. Beginning that year, the radical Libyan leader  
69 Muammar Qaddafi would initiate a cycle of price hikes by coercing Occidental Petroleum into accepting  
70 a number of concessions, including a 30-cent price hike on a barrel of oil and a 5% increase of Libya's  
71 share of profits. The shah of Iran soon followed suit, as did Venezuela. A game of leapfrog ensued with  
72 OPEC countries joining together to demand better terms from the oil companies and with the latter  
73 unable to unite in the face of the pressure. The cost of a barrel of oil would soar from \$1.80 in 1970 to  
74 reach \$11.65 in late 1974.

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<sup>2</sup> A subsequent conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors over land.

<sup>3</sup> An ethnic group displaced by the creation of Israel in 1948 and subsequent conflicts. Today the majority of Palestinians live in restricted areas within Israeli borders (The West Bank and the Gaza Strip) and in refugee camps in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Other Palestinians have migrated to nations outside the Middle East.

76 The Arab boycott was just one element that contributed to spiraling petroleum prices. Iraq's  
77 nationalization of oil in 1973 also was a major factor in spreading fear on world markets. Indeed, prices  
78 continued to rise even after the Arab OPEC members lifted the embargo after March 1974 at the urging  
79 of Sadat. Moreover, it was not only Arab countries that jacked up prices. Other major petroleum  
80 producers such as Iran and Venezuela saw a golden opportunity for an economic windfall with the price  
81 raises.

82

83 The response to this revolution in world economics was near panic. Long gas lines suddenly sprang up  
84 and there were fuel shortages and rationing. As petroleum has a wide variety of uses in modern  
85 industrial economies beyond transportation, such as in the production of plastics and fertilizers, the  
86 effects rippled through Western economies and had a kind of negative multiplier effect. While oil-  
87 producing countries reaped windfall profits, the global economy suffered from high inflation and  
88 unemployment, and developing countries were hit particularly hard. The 1970s was a decade of  
89 economic challenges, and a subsequent wave of petroleum price increases would leave the price of oil  
90 at \$40 per barrel. There were also political consequences. Although the United States continued to  
91 support Israel, the European countries began to take a more pro-Arab view of the Arab-Israeli dispute.  
92 Developing nations, particularly those in Africa, went even further and broke relations with Tel Aviv.  
93 Likewise, there were unintended consequences for the "winners" as well. The socioeconomic changes  
94 helped to destabilize traditional political systems, as the revolution in Iran well illustrates.

## Core-Aligned Reading Materials Creation

Question Composers: Mario Fitzpatrick and Katie Anderson

Name of the Text: What impact did control of valuable resources have on politics in the Middle East?  
CLIO

Author: Larry Simpson for ABC-

Grade Level: 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

Subject: World Geography

Flesch-Kincaid: 13.9

### Essential Understanding/Purpose (Remember to choose text worth reading!)

This article describes the significance of water and oil as political tools used in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is a text worth reading because it takes a difficult, but often oversimplified, issue and illuminates its political complexity. In highlighting nuances and the depth of the conflict, the author shows that the conflict is about more than land and religious differences.

### Qualitative Text Complexity

Each paragraph is dense with historical information and interactions between players (Israelis, Arabs, Palestinians, Syrians, and Americans) that make following the argument difficult. Chronology isn't always ordered and the reader has to move around in the reading to understand the significance of key events.

### Vocabulary

1. Which words have the meaning provided for the students within the text? Unilaterally, boycott
2. Which words will I provide a definition for my students? Embargo, Zionism, Palestinian People, commodity
3. Which words will I craft questions about to support my student's understanding of the word and the text? Dearth, contention, dichotomy

4.

## Questions to Guide Reading

Text Dependent/Specific Questions	Possible Answers- Including Line Numbers & Teacher Notes
<p>The title of this article considers the control of valuable resources on politics in the Middle East. What do you learn about the significance (importance) and qualities (qualities) of the key resources in lines 1-9?</p>	<p>Line 1: Resources impact politics in the Middle East.            Line 5: resources present an economic dichotomy            Line 6: there is a scarcity of water/ nations attempted diversion and damming projects/ everybody and everything need water to live            Line 7-8: such efforts are politically controversial and negatively impact the economies of neighboring nations.            Line 8: there is an abundance of oil/ large deposits of oil has brought these nations immense political and economic power internationally.</p>
<p>In line 1, the author states that the availability of resources in the Middle East “presents an interesting economic dichotomy.” Read the following sentences using dichotomy and come up with at least two synonyms for dichotomy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The conference focused on the dichotomy of public and private education.</li> <li>2. The dichotomy of nature versus nurture is an ongoing debate.</li> <li>3. They reject the dichotomy of left versus right politics.</li> </ol> <p>What then is the dichotomy the author is presenting about the Middle East in the article?</p>	<p>Words might include: conflict, clash, difference, contradiction, opposition, split, disagreement, separation</p> <p>Students should be able to conclude that the dichotomy is between the scarcity of water and the abundance of oil and that the access to both of these have tremendous effects on Middle Eastern politics and economies.</p>
<p>Former and latter is a structure that can sometimes be confusing. Line 13 says, “Although there is no problem obtaining the latter...” What clue in this sentence informs you as to which resource is the latter? What, then, is the former resource and how is it described in this paragraph? How does this help you understand the meaning of the word “dearth” on line 14?</p>	<p>The sentence goes on to establish that “although there is no problem obtaining the latter in many parts of the globe, there is a dearth of water in much of the region and conflicts over water have contributed to war”</p> <p>Latter= water    Former= oil</p> <p>Line 12: oil is described as fast diminishing resource for most of the world.</p> <p>Dearth= scarcity, lack of, deficiency</p>

The scarcity of water is a key factor in the Arab-Israeli conflict and is illuminated in lines 17-40. Use two highlighters to dissect the problem. Use one color to show Israeli efforts to secure water for their national interests and a second color to show Arab efforts to secure water.

Teacher Notes: Please consider taking time to familiarize your students to a map of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and surrounding nations. In this way, they will be able to understand the geographic setting for the problems being described. This is a good time for students to take time to tackle this question and the practice of simple annotation on their own. Then, they can share their information with partner before working together as a class to gain deeper understanding of the content.

Israeli	Arab
<p>Line 19: 1953: Israelis began the construction of a National Water Carrier to transport water from the Jordan River to the Negev to “make the desert bloom.”</p> <p>Line 24: 1964: Israelis unilaterally began to pump water from Lake Tiberius and damn its southern outlet.</p> <p>Line 36: Israeli tanks destroyed Syrian bulldozers that were within range on the other side of the border.</p> <p>Line 39: Israel employed the Israeli Air Force to silence the Syrian guns and halt the construction of the diversionary project.</p>	<p>Line 26: Objected for two reasons.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Israeli’s offtake of water would deny the same to thousands of Jordanian farmers farther south in the Jordan River Valley.</li> <li>2. They claimed that Israel’s access to more resources would allow greater immigration and thus tighten its hold on Palestine and increase the threat of Zionist expansion.</li> </ol> <p>Line 31: Arab summit approved \$17.5 million in funds for diverting the headwaters of the Jordan River farther north in Lebanon and Syria.</p> <p>Line 33: Syrians begin building the Mukeiba Dam.</p> <p>Line 37: Syrians persist with the construction of Mukeiba Dam beyond where Israeli shells could reach, and bombed Israeli settlements.</p>
<p>Line 42 introduces “points of contention” between Syrians and Israelis. What actions in that paragraph help define what contention means? Create a definition of “contention.”</p>	<p>Unable to defeat, guerilla raids into Israel, border incidents, escalation of weapons, aerial encounters, IAF shot down a total of three MiGs, Six Day War, Israeli Capture of the Golan Heights, bitter dispute over water rights</p> <p><b>Contention:</b> a heated disagreement, an argument, dispute, conflict</p>

<p>Embargo refers to a restriction placed on a commodity by the supplier. A commodity is a raw material or primary agricultural product that can be bought and sold.</p> <p>What do you learn about OPEC in lines 54-55?</p> <p>How and why, in lines 54-61, does OPEC use embargos as a way to achieve its political goals?</p>	<p>Line 54: OPEC= Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries that is led by Saudi Arabia</p> <p>Line 55: OPEC announced a 5% cut in oil production until Israel withdrew from the territory it occupied in 1967 and demanded recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people.</p> <p>Line 58: It was the Saudi's way of expressing solidarity with the Arab cause. (Riyadh's the capital of Saudi Arabia).</p> <p>Line 59-61: In response to US aid to Israel, OPEC imposed a complete embargo on the United States and any other country they deemed guilty of supporting the Jewish State.</p>	
<p>On line 63, the author introduces the idea of "using oil as a weapon." What evidence does the author use to show how oil producing nations employed oil as a weapon in lines 63-74? What was the impact of these price hikes over time?</p>	<p>Line 63: to settle the dispute over Palestine.</p> <p>Line 66: Oil producing nations united under OPEC to strengthen their political power.</p> <p>Line 69 Qaddafi of Libya increased prices and increased Libya's share of market profit.</p> <p>Line 71: Iran, Venezuela follow suit</p> <p>Line 73-73: The cost of a barrel of oil increases from \$1.80 in 1870 to \$11.65 in late 1974.</p>	
<p>In what ways did the Arab Boycott reach beyond its intended impact?</p>	<p>Line 76: Spiraling oil prices.</p> <p>Line 77: Iraq nationalized oil in 1973</p> <p>Line 77-78: prices continued to rise even after OPEC lifted the embargo in 1974.</p> <p>Line 79-81: Countries outside of the Arab league such as Iran and Venezuela join OPEC as that strengthens oil producing nation's interests.</p>	
<p>Make a T-Chart labeled "Political" and "Economic." Under each category, list worldwide events following the oil boycott that resulted from the actions in the Middle East.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Political</b></p> <p>Line 90: US support of Israel continues. (pro-Israel)</p> <p>Line 91: European countries begin to take a more pro-Arab view of the Arab-Israeli dispute.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Economic</b></p> <p>Line 83-84: long gas lines, fuel shortages, rationing of fuel.</p> <p>Line 85-88: Beyond transportation, the production of other oil dependent products like plastics and fertilizers decreased, negatively impacting the global economy with high inflation and</p>

	<p>Line 92: Developing nations break relations with Tel-Aviv.</p> <p>Line 93-84: Traditional political systems are destabilized.</p>	<p>unemployment. Developing countries were hit hardest.</p> <p>Line 89-90: Price of oil increases to over \$40 barrel.</p>
<p>In Line 11, the author notes that “oil and water do not mix.” While this might be true scientifically, in this case what evidence supports how oil and water blend in the Middle East?</p>	<p>Answers might include: Line 11-12: Some say that oil and water do not mix, but the two have certainly combined to influence the course of the Arab-Israeli dispute.</p>	
<p>Rename the article. Consider what the original title fails to communicate and create a new title that includes information or ideas from the text that you believe are most important.</p>		

### **Culminating Writing Task:**

- From your close reading of the article, write a one page informational essay that answers the following question:
  - How have water and oil influenced international relations among nations in the Middle East?
  - Paragraph 1: Water:
  - Paragraph 2: Oil:
  - Paragraph 3: Conclude by deciding which resource has had more impact on international relations and why.
- The first two paragraphs must include a clear topic sentence, at least three pieces of evidence used to explain the influence of the resource/
- In the third paragraph you will make a claim that emphasizes the importance of one resource over the other. You must use evidence and reasoning to explain why. This paragraph must include at least three pieces of DIFFERENT evidence to support your answer.
- Every time you use evidence from the text, cite the line number/s in parenthesis at the end of the sentence: (Line 46) or (Line 33-35).