

1963, the United States still accounted for more than half of all the crude oil that had ever been produced. Today the United States is the world's third largest producer, with the Soviet Union standing first and Saudi Arabia second. The decline of American influence in international petroleum affairs is indicated in Figure 3-22, which outlines world oil output by region since 1930. With U.S. crude output having peaked in 1970, American influence on the world petroleum scene has declined rapidly over the past decade.

While other parts of the world, most notably the North Sea and Mexico, have risen in prominence as oil-producing regions, OPEC will continue to be the dominant influence in the petroleum market for many years to come. Reducing dependence on foreign petroleum should thus be an overriding concern of national policy in the countries of the Western World. This situation also drives home the consequences of allowing one nonrenewable energy commodity to dominate an energy system.