

SHARED TRAITS OF REALM

The countries of the realm share three key dominant traits that influence all other human activities. The first key common trait relates to the climate of the region. Though various climate types can be found in this realm, it is the dry or arid type B climate that dominates and covers most of the physical area. Other climate types include the type H highland climate (cold temperatures at the high elevations with moderate temperatures at the bases) of the mountains of the Maghreb, Iran, or Central Asia and the more moderate type C climate in the coastal regions bordering the sea. The type C climate along the coastal Mediterranean area attracts human development and is home to many large port cities. The overall fact is that vast areas of each region are uninhabited desert. North Africa has the largest desert in the world—the Sahara—which borders the **Libyan Desert** and the **Nubian Desert**. About one third of the Arabian Peninsula is part of the **Empty Quarter** of the Rub' al Khali (Arabian Desert). Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have vast regions of desert with few if any inhabitants. This aspect of the realm reveals the importance of water as a valuable natural resource. Most people in the realm are more dependent on the availability of water than on the availability of oil.

The second trait is Islam: most of the people in the realm are Muslims. The practice of Islam in day-to-day life takes different forms in the various divisions of the religion. The differences between the divisions have contributed to conflict or open warfare. Islam acts as more than just a religion. It also serves as a strong cultural force that has historically unified or divided people. The divisive nature of the religion has often resulted in serious political confrontations within the realm between groups of different Islamic ideologies. Concurrently, the religion of Islam is also a unifying force that brings Muslims with similar beliefs together with common bonds. Islam provides structure and consistency in daily life. The faith can provide comfort and a way of living. The holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located in Saudi Arabia. Other holy cities for other divisions of Islam include Jerusalem and the two cities holy to Shia Muslims: Karbala and Najaf in Iraq. Islam dominates the realm, but other religions are significant in various regions. Israel is a Jewish state, and Christianity is common in places from Lebanon to Egypt. There are also followers of the Baha'i faith, Zoroastrianism, and groups such as the Druze, just to name a few.

The third factor that all three regions of the realm share is the availability of significant natural resources. North Africa, Southwest Asia, and Turkestan all have significant reserves of oil, natural gas, and important minerals. It stands to reason that not every country has the same reserves and that some of the countries have very few or none. However, in terms of how the countries gain national wealth, it is the export of oil that has dominated the economic activity as it relates to the global community. This realm is a peripheral realm. The resource that the realm can offer to the core economic regions of the world is the energy to fuel their economies and maintain their high standard of living. Enormous economic profits from the sale of these resources have traditionally been held in the hands of the elite ruling leader or his clan and do not always filter down to most of the population. The control of and profits from natural resources have become the primary objectives of the countries; this fuels conflicts and armed military interventions in areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan