

United States must be repaired. The “second oil rush in the Caspian” requires pipelines or other pathways to get the oil to market, and the Western firms with the easiest access to capital are denied some of the most viable routes—through Iran—by U.S.-Iranian enmity.

Iran’s loss has been Turkey’s gain. The Iraq war, instead of opening floodgates of Iraqi oil, initially did the opposite, providing an unforeseen boost to Caspian oil. Pipeline projects that skirt both Russia and Iran attracted more interest with each uptick in oil’s price. Turkish oil and gas transport projects that seemed far-fetched in the 1990s have proven successful, and new ones have gotten increased impetus, write Paul A. Williams and Ali Tekin, professors at Bilkent University in Ankara. As the three recently independent Caspian states stand poised to become major players in the world economy because of their energy reserves, Turkey, the area’s energy have-not nation, has already benefited from increased energy transit fees and better access to oil for its own economy.

Ghafari concludes that the lure of oil wealth can go a long way toward promoting international cooperation in the Caspian. After years of rivalry in the Persian Gulf region, the joint development of offshore oil and natural gas resources is under way. And if the states in the volatile Persian Gulf can swallow their differences in the interest of making money, can the Caspian be far behind?

OTHER NATIONS

Ability Grouping

THE SOURCE: “Why Children Work, Attend School, or Stay Idle: The Roles of Ability and Household Wealth” by Marigee P. Bacolod and Priya Ranjan, in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, July 2008.

THE SPECTER OF A 10-YEAR-OLD hauling bricks or stirring a vat of boiling liquid is far from eradicated in the developing world, where the International Labor Organization estimates that 218 million children are working at least part time instead of concentrating on school. But the reality of child labor is much more nuanced than such images suggest, according to new research by Marigee P. Bacolod and Priya Ranjan, economists at the University of California, Irvine. Poor children are not always consigned to work. New research from Cebu City in the Philippines shows that a significant percentage of children who are not in school are simply idle.

One of the main differences between children who go to school and those who don’t is academic ability. Children with high IQs—but with parents in the bottom third of the income scale—are nearly as likely to attend school (88 percent) as those from the most affluent third (89 percent), according to a study of 3,000 children in randomly selected Cebu City districts. Asked why their offspring were not in class, parents were most likely to respond that their children had “no interest” (36 percent). Even within the same poor family, children with high ability

were more likely to attend school than their less able brothers and sisters. Clearly, Bacolod and Ranjan say, some parents faced with paying the costs of education for children with low ability decide not to send them to work but to allow them to stay home. More than one in every 10 children in the study went to school and worked at the same time.

Richer families were more likely than poor ones to send their children with lower IQs to school. And parents were also more likely to dispatch their young of all ability levels to school if the facilities were better—judged by the presence of electricity, running water, toilets, and a usable blackboard.

An outright ban on child labor, which is often proposed as a solution to the horrors of the brick-yards and tanning factories, may have a perverse effect, according to the researchers. Parents who now send children to school while they are also working may respond to such a ban by pulling them out of school entirely and choosing the option of idleness.

OTHER NATIONS

India’s Sick Democracy

THE SOURCE: “India’s Parliament as a Representative Institution” by Jessica S. Wallack, in *India Review*, April–June 2008.

THE RECENT DEBATE OVER THE Indian-American nuclear cooperation agreement didn’t do a lot for the bottom-feeder image of the Indian parliament. Chanting, raging legislators heckled speakers and stormed