Imagine this scenario: You’re an aide to a member of Congress. Your boss has been hearing a lot lately from a group of voters in the college town in his district. They want to see a change in US policy toward Saudi Arabia. Before he responds to them, he asks you to research the issue and write him a memo with some advice.

Here’s what you find out:

Saudi Arabia is a human rights disaster. Whatever individual liberties there are apply only to Sunni Muslim males. The country has never signed onto the United Nations’ basic document on human rights. The Saudis have something known as the Commission to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice. It runs the religious police, or *mutawaa*. They exercise largely unchecked power to curtail rights. The Saudi courts do not offer due process protecting the individual. Nor do they offer effective remedies for violations of those rights. Saudi Arabia doesn’t even allow women to drive cars. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom has recommended that the State Department label Saudi Arabia a “country of particular concern.”

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia is the United States’ second leading oil supplier, behind Canada. Within the oil exporters’ group, the Saudis are a moderating influence. They often get lower oil prices for the United States. Saudi Arabia, at times, supports US foreign policy goals. During the Persian Gulf War of 1991, Saudi Arabia was a big help. It allowed the United States and its allies to use bases on Saudi soil as a staging ground. It did this despite criticism from other Muslim countries. Use of Saudi bases made it much easier to free Kuwait from the Iraqi invaders.

What do you recommend?
The Importance of the Production and Distribution of Oil and Energy

At the beginning of the twentieth century, geologists made a discovery that would change the Middle East forever: oil. It happened first in Iran. By 1911 the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, a British firm, was producing oil in Iran. British geologists found oil in Iraq in 1927. Standard Oil Company of California started exploring the region in the 1930s. In 1938 the company found crude—another name for oil, especially in its raw or unprocessed state—in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran are among the world’s leaders in known oil reserves, the supply of crude oil that a country can retrieve. Saudi Arabia is the world’s leading oil exporter.

A tanker unloads oil at the Port of Los Angeles, the busiest port in the United States. Photo by Robert Harbison / © 1999 The Christian Science Monitor

The United States imports well more than half the oil it uses.
The oil fields took time to develop. But as the West rebounded after World War II, it thirsted for oil. Billions of dollars flowed into the Middle East and funded waves of economic development.

Political development, however, was another thing. The Middle Eastern states that emerged in the early twentieth century struggled with concepts of legitimacy and democracy. More often than not, oppressive rulers governed them.

Despite the Middle East’s general lack of freedom, the United States’ need for oil then and now colors its relations in this part of the world. In 1945, for example, President Franklin Roosevelt agreed to protect the Saudi royal family in return for access to their oil. This policy continues today.

Later presidents followed similar policies—even Jimmy Carter, known for his idealism and focus on human rights. In 1980 he called Persian Gulf oil a vital US interest to be defended “by any means necessary.” This policy is known as the Carter Doctrine.

**US Dependence on Foreign Oil Supplies**

The United States imports well more than half of the oil it uses. This dependence on imports will only grow as domestic oil reserves run out. Most of the world’s oil reserves are in the Middle East. OPEC—the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which you will read about later in this section—controls about two-thirds of the world’s reserves.

This group has pricing power in world energy markets. That is, it is able to manipulate prices by setting production levels. When OPEC produces more oil, the price falls. When OPEC tightens the spigot, less oil is available and the price goes up. These changes sometimes lead to “oil shocks.” Such shocks in turn can trigger significant recessions.

The United States also gets its oil from sources closer to home. Canada is a reliable trade partner. Mexico also regularly ships supplies to the United States. The US relationship with Venezuela (an OPEC member) is troubled as of this writing, but nonetheless, the United States receives a steady flow of oil from that Latin American nation as well.

**CHAPTER 1 The Middle East**
The Production and Shipping of Oil

Many of the places where oil is found are hot and dry. But oil deposits begin in watery places that scientists call marine environments. When plants and animals died millions of years ago, water and layers of mud oozed over their remains. Heat and pressure, acting over a very long time, melted all these ingredients together to make crude oil. Petroleum is yet another name for oil. It means “rock oil,” or “oil from the earth.”

Crude oil is a smelly liquid. Its color can range from yellow to black, and it’s usually found in underground pools known as reservoirs. Sometimes people come across oil just bubbling out of the ground. But with so much oil already pumped out of the ground, the easy reserves have already been found. Today, scientists and engineers study rock samples and conduct tests before they start drilling. Once they hit “black gold,” as it’s often called, the drilled well will bring the oil to the surface in a steady flow.

The amount of oil produced in the United States gets smaller each year. US domestic reserves are running out, yet the population and the economy continue to grow and more oil is needed. More people are driving cars and making more petroleum-based goods to sell.

The United States uses about 21 million barrels of petroleum products a day. Almost half of that is in the form of gasoline. More than 210 million motor vehicles in the country drive 7 billion miles a day. The rest of those 21 million barrels go to other kinds of fuels—jet fuel, diesel, heating oil—and to the manufacture of plastics.

Refining is the process that turns crude oil into a fuel that powers your car. While the United States imports a majority of its oil, it refines most of its fuel here at home. The gasoline travels from the refinery by pipeline to a storage depot near its final destination—Los Angeles, for instance. The gasoline is then loaded into trucks for delivery to individual stations.

OPEC and the Politics of Oil

In 1960 five countries with vast amounts of oil—Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela—banded together to form OPEC. Their goal was to stand up to the Western firms that, at that point, controlled the world oil industry. Until then, production, distribution, and pricing were in the hands of a group of Western oil companies known as “the Seven Sisters.” These were the companies that first explored the Middle Eastern oil fields.
In its first years, OPEC members moved to nationalize some of the Western oil companies operating on their territory. They struck deals that gave host countries more control over oil prices. OPEC functions as a cartel—a group of independent entities that band together to control the price of a commodity.

The original OPEC five expanded over time. (They also moved their headquarters from Geneva, Switzerland, to Vienna, Austria.) The organization now includes Qatar, Libya, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Nigeria, Ecuador, and Angola. Some countries have joined and then withdrawn. Indonesia, which signed up in 1962, suspended its membership in early 2009.

OPEC’s big year was 1973. That was when its members finally wrested control of oil prices from the multinational companies. And as you read in Lesson 2, during the Yom Kippur War of October 1973, Arab oil producers within OPEC began an embargo against the United States to protest its support of Israel during the war. The Arabs extended the embargo to other supporters of Israel as well. At the same time, OPEC engineered an oil price hike that led to a quadrupling of oil prices.

Prices eventually eased somewhat. But then again in 1979, oil markets faced another major disruption. The Islamic Revolution in Iran interrupted oil production. With less oil coming onto the market, prices spiked.

When people speak of “the oil shocks” they generally are referring to the price hikes of 1973 and 1979. But from OPEC’s perspective, the 1980s brought oil shocks of another kind—a collapse in prices.

What happened then was a classic example of a basic economic principle. If the price of something goes up, two things will happen: Some customers will leave the market, and more suppliers will enter it. Both will work to pull prices back down. The oil-price shocks of the 1970s led more people to buy smaller cars, to drive less, and to conserve energy generally. Ultimately, they bought less oil. And new suppliers entered the market. Britain and Norway worked to develop their offshore oil reserves in the North Sea, for example. That oil was more expensive to produce. But at the new higher prices, it was worth it. The result of all this: In 1986 oil plummeted from $27 to $9 a barrel.

Oil prices have risen and fallen in the years since. The classic law of supply and demand continues to work to keep the market more or less in balance. As a cartel, OPEC controls prices by assigning strict production quotas—limits—to its members. But it’s not always easy for OPEC to enforce its policies and quotas. Its members are sovereign states, with different political concerns and different amounts of oil. Sometimes they cheat on their quotas. Saudi Arabia, generally a friend of the United States, has enough reserves to exercise a leadership role within OPEC.

Many Americans are uneasy about the nation’s reliance on oil imported largely from such a troubled part of the world. They realize that a good part of the US defense budget goes to protect oil supplies. Especially during times of recession or conflict, many Americans call for energy independence. But for the foreseeable future, imported oil seems destined to play a major role in the US and global economy.
The Clash Between Middle Eastern and Western Cultures

In the Introduction, you read about culture as including language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies, among other elements. In this section you will read about ideas and behavior that seem very different from what is familiar to you as an American. It's important to understand these differences, since they affect relationships between peoples and nations.

Some differences are rooted in religion; others in a country's customs and traditions. All shape a person's beliefs and attitudes and, consequently, the way that person behaves or acts. Just as people interpret Christianity in numerous ways—think of the range of Protestant churches in America—people interpret and practice Islam in a wide variety of ways—think of the Sunnis and Shias. These different beliefs also affect the way a government behaves.

Western and Middle Eastern Views of Government

The United States firmly believes in the separation of church and state. In fact, this is law as spelled out in the First Amendment to the US Constitution. Government and religion don't mix. Government doesn't interfere in religious matters, and religious institutions don't run the government.

Many people in the Middle East hold different views on the relationship between religion and government. Muslims remember that Muhammad was both a spiritual and a political leader. He founded a religion. But he led armies, too. And his successor, the caliph, was also to be both a civil (political) and religious leader.
However, Muslims around the world live in countries with many different constitutional systems. Some are Islamic republics, where Islam is the official state religion. Some, such as Turkey, are secular states with strict separation of religion and state. Even some countries with Islam as the state religion, such as Algeria and Bangladesh, provide guarantees of freedom of religion and expression. Some of these guarantees “compare favorably” with international standards, says a study by a US government advisory commission.

Moreover, recent research shows many Muslims support separation of religion and state. In 2002 the Pew Research Center surveyed public opinion in 44 different countries. It found that in all the countries with large Muslim populations, majorities of Muslims agree with this statement: “Religion is a matter of personal faith and should be kept separate from government policy.” This feeling was especially strong in Turkey and in several African countries. But many Muslims also back the idea of religious leaders playing a bigger role in politics.

Mohammed Khordadian’s story shows the control the religious police exercise in Iran. In the early 1980s he left his native Iran for Los Angeles to teach and perform traditional Iranian dance. California has a large Iranian community familiar with this dance form. Khordadian had a lot of fans. Television stations run by Iranian exiles beamed some of his performances into Iran. And some of his videos made their way to Iran, too. He became well-known, and was quite popular with young people, especially young girls.

After many years, he heard that his mother had died, and he went back to Iran to visit his family for a few months. But when he was ready to return to California, he was arrested at the airport. The charge: enticing and inciting the nation’s youth to corruption. After several months in jail in 2002, officials finally released him, but not before a Tehran court found him guilty as charged and told him he would not be allowed to leave the country for another 10 years.

Many Iranians enjoy dancing at private parties. But Iran’s religious rulers frown on dancing, especially when men and woman dance together. In Iran it is against the law for an unwed couple to go out in public. The law is not always enforced, though. At the time of Khordadian’s sentence, young Iranians noticed stepped-up street patrols by the religious police.
Freedom to practice their religion is also important to Muslims. Pew found large majorities calling it “very important” to them to live where they can practice their religion freely.

Human Rights in the West and Middle East

The Middle Eastern tendency to see the spiritual and political realms as one affects views of human rights, too. “When we want to find out what is right and what is wrong,” one Iranian leader said, “we do not go to the United Nations; we go to the Holy Koran.”

Meanwhile, the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a basic statement of international law. It doesn’t mention religion, or describe human rights as “God-given.” But its authors meant it to reflect the world’s spiritual and religious traditions.

Most Middle Eastern nations have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But some of them have since changed their stance. The Pakistani Islamic scholar Abul Ala Mawdudi, for instance, saw a conflict between women’s rights, as enshrined in the UDHR, and what he saw as the need to protect and preserve the chastity of women.

Concerns about such conflict have led some scholars to come up with Islamic statements of human rights. Others have tried to show that Islamic law is not at odds with international norms. In 1981 a group of eminent scholars produced the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights. They based it on the Koran and the Sunna. Critics, however, say it falls short in many ways. For instance, it doesn’t ban discrimination against women, religious minorities, and nonbelievers in God.

The Pew research, however, suggests that average Muslims are at least somewhat attuned to global norms: “Majorities of Muslims in every country surveyed also say it is at least somewhat important to them to live in a country that has freedom of speech, freedom of the press, an impartial judiciary and honest elections where voters have the choice of at least two political parties.” Freedom to practice their religion does seem, though, to be the most important civil liberty for those Pew talked with.
The Role of Women in the West and Middle East

Moroccan scholar Muhammed Naceri said, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was for complete equality for man and women. For us, women are equal to men in law; but they are not the same as men, and they can’t be allowed to wander around freely in the streets like some kind of animal.”

Equality of the sexes in the West is certainly not an absolute. Nor has it been fully achieved. Many people feel traditional roles have changed too much, too fast. But equality of the sexes is one of the principles on which Western society is built. In the West, women are present in the workplace and elsewhere in public life. They are present in the news media, in political and religious life, in law enforcement, and in the military.

Women in the Middle East tend to have far fewer opportunities, although this is changing. Many countries require them to wear head scarves, veils, or even the burqa—a full-body covering for women that is hard to see out of or walk in comfortably.

But again, the Middle East is not all the same. Pew research suggests relatively high levels of support for providing freedom and opportunity for women. Asked whether women should have the right to decide whether to wear a veil, majorities of Muslims in every country surveyed said yes, except for Nigeria and Uganda. In Lebanon and Turkey, 3 Muslims out of 4 endorsed this view.
Majorities of Muslims in every country surveyed favored letting women work outside the home. This view was especially strong in Lebanon and Turkey. However, some Muslims in countries such as Jordan supported restrictions on men and women being together in the workplace.

Pew asked Muslims in all 44 countries it surveyed whether they preferred (a) a marriage where the husband provides for the family and the wife stays home, or (b) one where both partners have jobs and care for the home and family. In four countries, including Egypt and Jordan, at least half the Muslims surveyed preferred option (a). By contrast, the majority preference in Europe, Africa, and the Americas was option (b).

According to one survey, Muslims in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries prefer that husbands provide for the family and the wife stay at home rather than both partners work and care for the home and family together.

A study released in February 2009 by Freedom House, a human rights group in Washington, found women’s rights on the upswing in the Gulf states. The project director went so far as to call it a “seismic shift” over the previous five years. The study confirmed that women with paid jobs can make some positive changes in their lives. Even so, without certain civil liberties, including freedom of speech and assembly, women can progress only so far.

Beyond paid jobs, another key development for women in the Middle East took place in the courts in Oman, a small Arab country. In many Arab countries, a woman’s testimony in court gets only half the weight of a man’s. The new law in Oman makes a woman’s testimony equal to a man’s in most cases.

Even in a strict Islamic country like Saudi Arabia, women’s rights are on the rise, Freedom House reported. Saudi women can now study law, obtain their own identity cards, and check into hotels alone. And they can register a business without having to hire a male manager first. “Their overall degree of freedom, however, remains among the most restricted in the world,” the study says.
The Importance of Nuclear Nonproliferation and the Iranian Issue for the United States

In August 1945 the United States dropped two nuclear bombs on Japan, killing about 200,000 people. They were the first, and so far, only nuclear attacks in the history of warfare. Within days, Japan surrendered unconditionally to the United States. World War II, the deadliest conflict in human history, was over.

The nuclear age had just begun, however. These new weapons were like nothing anyone had ever seen before. Efforts to control their spread began within months. On 15 November 1945 the United States, Britain, and Canada proposed a UN Atomic Energy Commission for the purpose of “entirely eliminating the use of atomic energy for destructive purposes.”

The following year the United States offered a plan to put all nuclear resources under international control. It didn’t work, however. Within 20 years, the “club” of nations with nuclear weapons grew from one member (the United States) to five.

This spread of nuclear arms is known as proliferation. It has been an important US foreign policy concern since that first proposal in November 1945. It took many years, though, to find the right instrument to deal with this matter.

Nuclear Nonproliferation

Nuclear nonproliferation is preventing the spread and increase of nuclear weapons. As the nuclear “club” expanded, it became clear that materials for a nuclear bomb weren’t all that scarce. And such bombs turned out to be relatively easy to make.

Besides, by the early 1960s, several countries were turning to nuclear energy to make electricity. By 1985, experts predicted, there would be more than 300 nuclear reactors in operation, under construction, or on order. These reactors would produce not only power, but plutonium as well, as a byproduct. Plutonium is a fissionable material—its atoms can be split. And it can be used to make nuclear weapons. There would be enough of it by 1985, experts said, to make 15 to 20 bombs a day.

It all added up to a grave new threat. Policymakers didn’t have to worry just about enemy states (such as the Soviet Union) having bombs. They had to think about nuclear materials possibly being diverted (stolen) from power plants and made into bombs. And they had to worry about bombs falling into the hands of unstable countries that might be tempted to use them, rather than keep them as a deterrent—a way of discouraging an enemy attack by threatening to retaliate. Today, this danger is even greater as non-state actors such as terrorists try to lay their hands on nuclear weapons as well.
The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), created in the United Nations and signed on 1 July 1968, entered into force on 5 March 1970. This occurred during the period of history known as the Cold War (1948–89) when the United States and the Soviet Union faced off against one another. The United States and the Soviet Union were the world’s two superpowers, militarily superior countries. Each superpower had a vast nuclear arsenal with missiles aimed at the other’s cities. Each knew that a nuclear attack on the other would mean instant retaliation. The system was called mutual assured destruction, or “MAD.” And in a crazy way, it worked. It was stable.

But from the beginning of the nuclear age, people felt that these new weapons needed to be controlled. It wasn’t easy to develop a treaty that would do the job, but the superpowers both wanted one. So did non-nuclear powers, such as Africa’s developing countries. They wanted access to this promising new technology for their energy needs.

The gist of the NPT is that it seeks to confine nuclear weapons to the countries that already had them when the treaty was negotiated. And it sought to reward countries that renounce nuclear arms by supporting their peaceful nuclear activities, such as producing electricity.
Chapter 1  The Middle East

The NPT in a Nutshell

Here are the main aims of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT):

• To prevent the spread of nuclear weapons
• To keep states without nuclear weapons from making them with materials diverted from their nuclear power plants
• To promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy (to make electricity) as much as possible
• To support arms control and nuclear disarmament.

How the UN Enforces the Treaty

The NPT tasked the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with enforcing the treaty. The agency, part of the United Nations, does this by inspecting nuclear facilities. IAEA inspectors make sure that countries are using their reactors for peaceful purposes, such as generating electricity or conducting research in nuclear medicine.

A review conference held every five years also enforces the treaty. It ensures that the treaty is fulfilling its purposes. On 11 May 1995 representatives of more than 170 countries at the NPT Review Conference in New York decided to extend the treaty indefinitely and without conditions.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the global effort to halt the spread of nuclear weapons. More than 180 countries have signed on. No other arms control agreement in history has been so widely adhered to. And its list of signers continues to grow. This shows wide support around the world for nonproliferation.

Despite the NPT’s popularity, however, the situation grows more complex with each passing year. Back in 1974 India carried out its first nuclear test. In 1998 India’s regional rival Pakistan conducted its first nuclear test. More recently, in 2006, North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. All three of these are declared nuclear powers that operate outside the NPT. Israel is also widely understood to have a small nuclear arsenal.

On the other hand, since 1995 a number of states have given up nuclear weapons to sign the NPT. South Africa is one. It had a small nuclear weapons program but dismantled it before signing the NPT in 1991. Also, three of the countries that became independent at the Soviet Union’s breakup gave up their nuclear weapons. Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine all “inherited” nuclear arms that Moscow had put on their soil when they were Soviet republics. But when each decided to sign the NPT, they returned the nuclear weapons to Russia, the successor state to the old Soviet Union.
Why Iran’s Nuclear Program Concerns the United States

In November 2003 the IAEA issued a troubling report. It said that Iran had been carrying on secret nuclear activities for 18 years. This violated Iran's international agreements. After all, it had signed the NPT, which forbids such activities.

The report got the international community's attention. A few weeks later, on 18 December 2003, Iran signed another agreement, the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement. In this document, Iran agreed to suspend all uranium enrichment and reprocessing. Iran also swore to cooperate fully with the IAEA to answer questions.

Six months later, though, Iran still hadn't opened up. It got another rebuke from the IAEA. Then in November 2004 Iran made a deal with the European Union. Iran promised to suspend most of its uranium enrichment. But the government in Tehran didn't keep its word then, either. Concerns about Iran's nuclear activities have grown ever since.

On 6 June 2006 China, France, Germany, Russia, the United States, and Britain offered Iran a big aid package. This depended, however, on Tehran's falling into line with IAEA guidelines. It needed to stop enriching uranium. Iran was also to stop other nuclear activities, including research and development.

But the regime in Tehran defied a string of deadlines. This led in turn to a series of UN Security Council resolutions. The Iranians insist that their nuclear efforts are for peaceful purposes. But outside observers express skepticism that a country with so much oil needs electricity from nuclear sources. They also note that Iran has been trying to rebuild its military forces since its disastrous war with Iraq during the 1980s. Iran is also trying to build ballistic (long-range) missiles. In fact, in early 2009 Iran sent a satellite into space with an Iranian-made rocket. This puts the country that much closer to assembling a successful long-range missile that could target Israel with nuclear weapons.

All of this would be a concern in and of itself. But there are other reasons to worry. The United States considers Iran a state sponsor of terrorism. That is, it aids groups that use terrorism against other countries. Iran aids Hizballah, which makes trouble for Lebanon and Israel. Furthermore, Iran opposes efforts to make peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And Iranian leaders continually call for Israel's destruction.

Iran doesn't get on well with its Arab neighbors, either. One reason is that Iranians and Arabs belong to very different ethnic groups. Another is that, as you read in Lesson 1, Iran follows Shiite Islam while most of its Arab neighbors are Sunni Muslims. This makes for religious tensions. One irony about Iran's war with Iraq in the 1980s was that Iraq is really a Shia majority country. In theory, Iran and Iraq should have been great allies. However, the Sunni Muslims under Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq. Now that Hussein is dead, however, Iran continues meddling in Iraq's politics in hopes of making use of potential Shia allies.
Iran’s human rights record is dismal as well. It punishes criminals by cutting off their hands or stoning them. Its judges are not independent. The Tehran government severely limits freedom of speech, of the press, and of assembly. Women and minority groups suffer discrimination and often actual violence.

The UN General Assembly has passed several resolutions expressing “deep concern at ongoing systematic violations of human rights” in Iran. But the Iranians have shown little regard for the UN’s views on nonproliferation or human rights. Iran remains one of the US government’s most serious foreign policy challenges.

The Importance of the Water Problem in the Middle East

Water may cover the world, but most of it is salty. Only 2.5 percent of it is fresh water. Two-thirds of that is frozen, locked up in polar ice caps and glaciers. Of the remaining third, much is in remote areas where people can’t use it. Or it arrives in floods and monsoons, which amounts to the same thing. The bottom line: Only 0.08 percent of Earth’s water is available to drink.

Is it any wonder that in 1999, United Nations Environment Program scientists named water shortage, along with global warming, as one of the new century’s two most worrying problems?

The situation starts to sound even more serious when you focus on the Middle East. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the region it calls the Near East (running from northern Africa to Central Asia) has only 2 percent of the world’s total renewable water resources. It has, however, 14 percent of the world’s total land area and 10 percent of its population.

Water supplies vary widely within the region, however. The Arabian Peninsula and the Maghreb (northern Africa) have very little water. On the other hand, places such as Turkey and parts of Central Asia have more reliable water supplies.

Water and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

One way to understand the deep impact water supply can have on relations between nations is to look at the Arabs’ and Israelis’ contentious history. Competition for water from the Jordan River helped cause their 1967 Six-Day War, though it was not the war’s only cause.

The Litani River is another source of concern in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It’s a Lebanese river. It originates in Lebanon and flows into the Mediterranean. It provides water for much of southern Lebanon. But it was under Israeli control from 1982 to 2000. The Lebanese accuse the Israelis of wanting to take it back.
Water also plays a role in Israel’s occupation of the Golan Heights. The heights provide about one-third of Israel’s water. If Israel withdrew to pre-1967 borders, it would have to contend with a significant loss of water. But it would also face the prospect of up to half a million Syrians moving into the region, with environmental strain on the Sea of Galilee as a result.

Water is also a direct source of tension between Israelis and Palestinians. Israelis use four times as much water per capita as their Palestinian neighbors. Some of this may be for cultural reasons. Many Jewish immigrants move from Britain and the United States to new settlements in the West Bank. They often want the green lawns and swimming pools they grew up with. Palestinians, meanwhile, have access to only about 2 percent as much water per capita as most Americans take for granted.

Around the world, 70 percent of water use goes to farming. In Israel, farming drinks up a lot of water, too. Food self-sufficiency is important to many Israelis—important enough to justify their farmers’ growing such water-intensive crops as rice and citrus. Palestinians have called on Israel to change these practices.

**What the Future May Hold**

Many observers and political leaders predict that tension over water resources could lead to war between Israel and its neighbors. The Nile, in Egypt, at one point seemed as if it might figure into a peace deal with Israel. During the 1970s Israeli water planners were scouting water resources outside their borders. And during the late 1970s Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was willing to share some of his country’s water in exchange for concessions from the Israelis on Jerusalem.
Tension among Turkey, Syria, and Iraq over the allocation of waters from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers goes back to the 1960s. At issue were two dams, one built by Turkey and one by Syria in the early 1970s. These cut the flow of water into Iraq significantly. In 1975 Syria and Iraq nearly went to war over this. Saudi Arabian mediation averted war and restored much of Iraq's water. But the sides never came to a final agreement. International talks among the three states continued inconclusively for years. After coalition forces overthrew Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the country's new leadership stated its intention to renew negotiations.

In 2008 Turkey, Syria, and Iraq announced their intent to form a joint institute to study and map water resources. The institute will also try to resolve water allocation issues.

There can be no doubt that water is a serious issue in the Middle East. But some observers like to say that, even so, no one has gone to war there simply over water. “Miraculously, and above all silently, Middle East governments have been able to avoid the apparently inevitable consequences of their inherited water deficits,” Tony Allan of the University of London wrote in 1998. He further emphasized, “This is a life-and-death economic issue for them and their peoples.”

And how have they managed? By making use of an important resource: “virtual water.” By this Allan meant the water in imported food. It takes 1,000 cubic meters of water to grow the food a person eats in a year. (By contrast, a person needs only about one cubic meter of drinking water in a year.) If that person can afford to buy food on the open market, the food can be produced where the water is more readily available. Middle Eastern governments have avoided wrangling over local water by importing food in large amounts.
Lesson 5 Review

Using complete sentences, answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

1. How much of its oil does the United States import?
2. What is the Carter Doctrine?
3. What is OPEC?
4. In Islam, what is the caliph’s dual role?
5. What does Oman’s new law on courtroom testimony say?
6. What is nuclear nonproliferation?
7. What does the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty promise countries that choose not to pursue nuclear weapons?
8. What is the importance of the Golan Heights to the water problem in the Middle East?
9. What is virtual water?

Applying Your Learning

10. Which individual liberty—for example, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, more rights for women, freedom of assembly—would do the most to change the Middle East, and why?