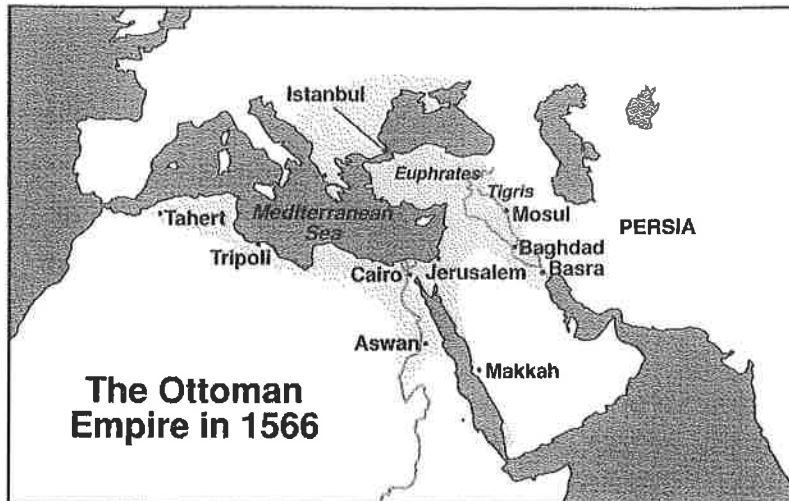


## The Ottoman Empire and Its Fall



From the fourteenth century until the end of World War I in 1918, the Ottoman Empire ruled a vast and diverse state that encompassed much of the Middle East. The Ottomans, ancestors of modern-day Turks, descended from Sunni Muslims from central Asia. The Ottoman leader, called the *sultan*, was considered the leader of all Muslims in the empire. At the peak of the empire, the area under the

sultan's rule stretched from Tahert in the west to Persia in the east, and from southeastern Europe in the north to the southern Arabian peninsula in the south. This enormous empire contained hundreds of different ethnic groups. In fact, Turks were a minority in their own state. However, despite this ethnic diversity, the belief in Islam served to unify many of the empire's subjects. While the majority of people living in the Ottoman Empire were Muslims, millions of Christians and Jews lived under the rule of the sultan as well.

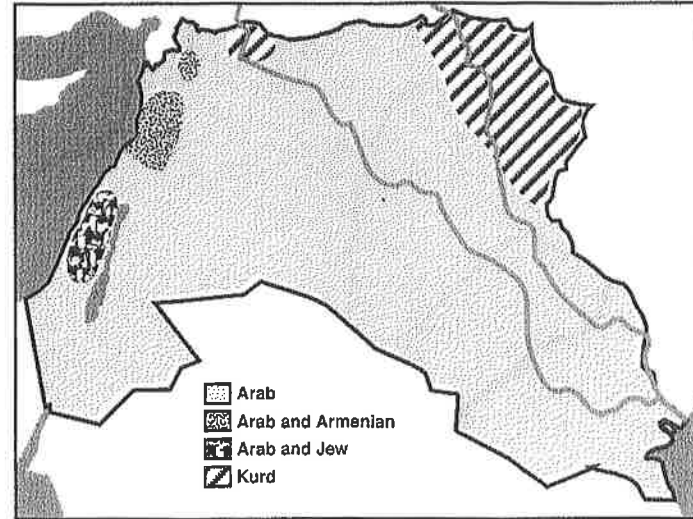
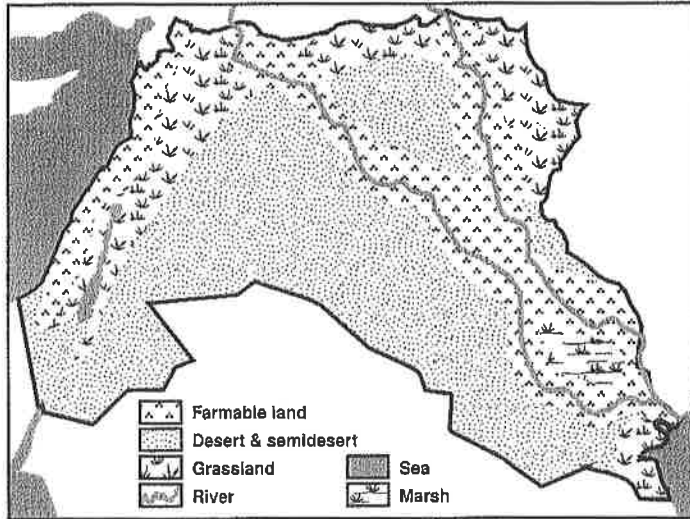
The Ottoman Empire thrived despite ethnic and religious diversity because of its political flexibility. Ottoman leaders were more interested in efficiency and loyalty from their subjects than in conformity to a single Ottoman lifestyle. For example, Ottoman leaders did not force non-Muslims to convert to Islam. Instead, non-Muslims were organized into religious communities called *millets*. Each millet—governed by a religious leader appointed by the sultan—controlled tax collection, education, justice, and religious affairs within its community. In addition to the millet system, Ottoman officials allowed traditional regional leaders, such as Arab village chiefs, to keep their positions as long as they paid taxes and maintained order in their provinces.

Starting in the 1600s, the power and size of the Ottoman Empire began to decrease as western European countries seeking power in the region won wars and took over economic control. In the nineteenth century, sultans began adopting western European political and social ideas in an attempt to counteract the Ottoman loss of dominance over the empire. However, conflict between European-influenced reforms and strong Ottoman traditions caused growing tension within the empire. As British, Russian, and French colonial strength increased in the region, Ottoman leaders allied themselves with Germany in hopes of regaining power. But when Germany declared war on Russia in 1914, the Ottoman Empire was dragged into World War I on the side of the Central Powers. The defeat of the Central Powers in 1918 led directly to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

# Maps of the Middle East Circa World War I

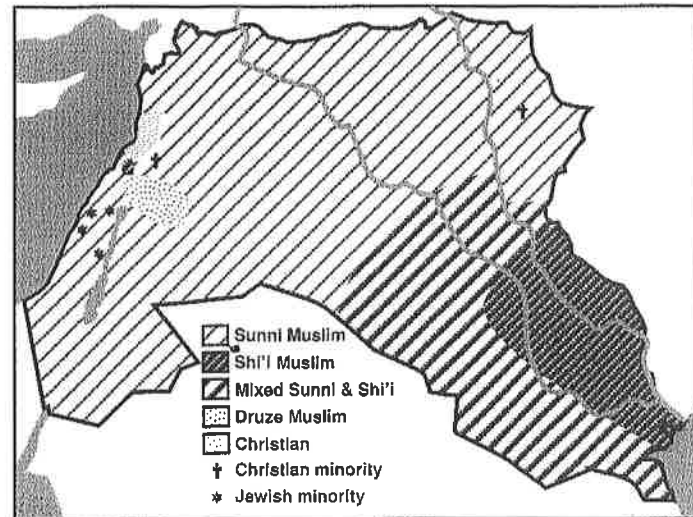
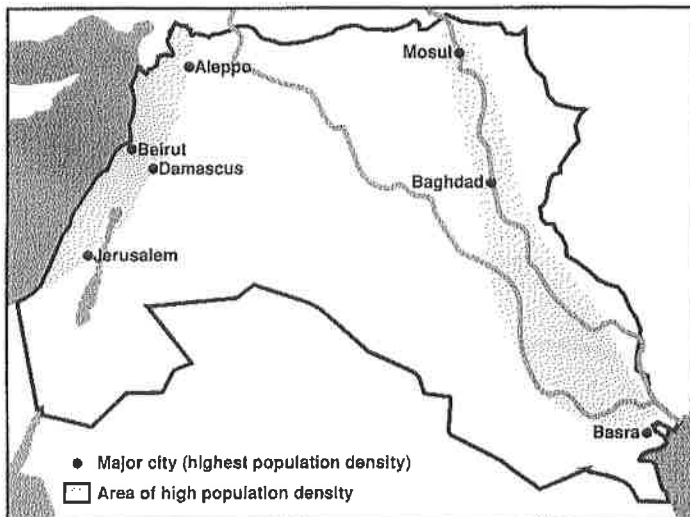
**Directions:** Carefully examine each map below. Then, use the information from the maps to design borders for six new nations on **Student Handout 2.1C**.

**Physiography**



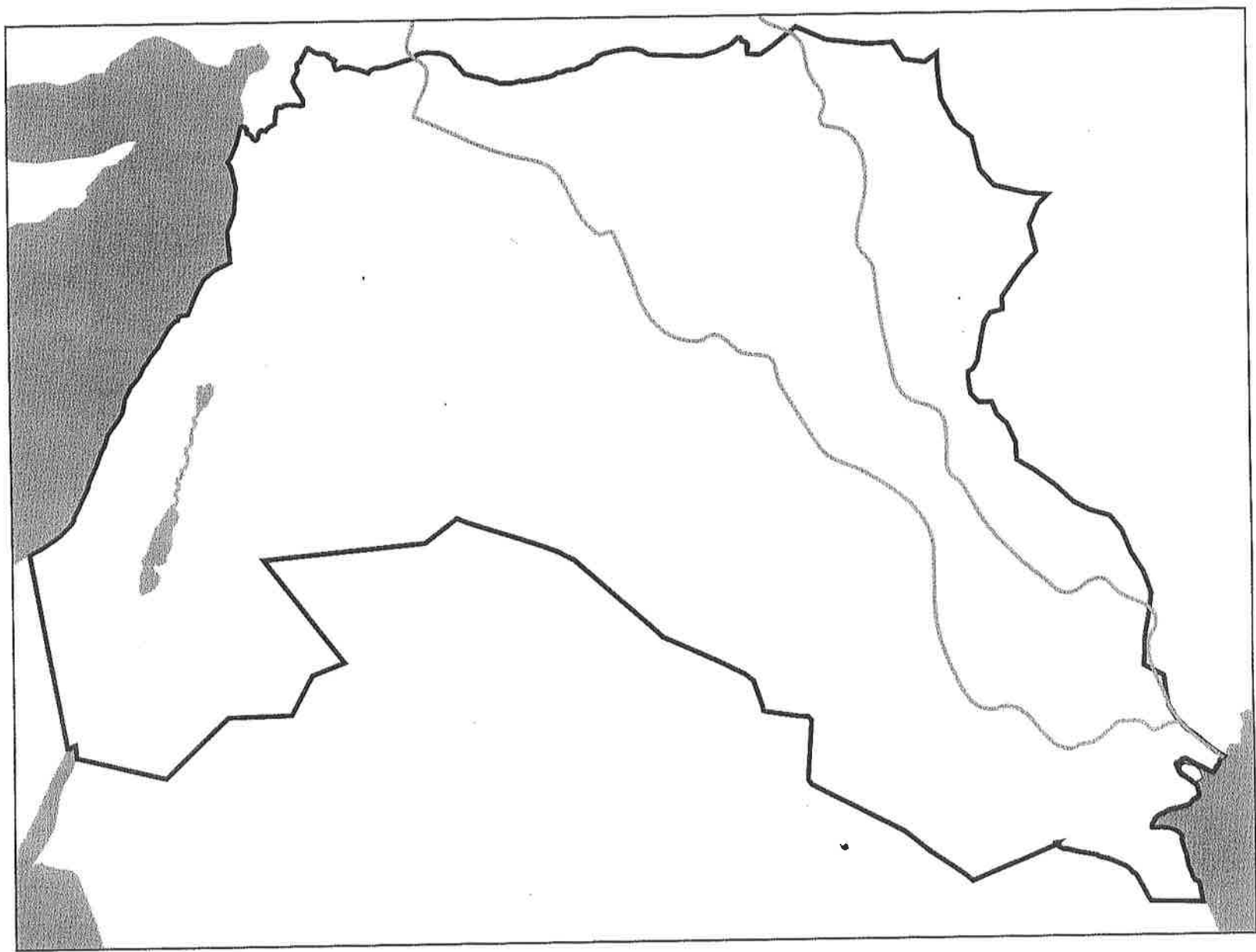
**Distribution by Ethnic Group, 1918**

**Population Distribution, 1918**



**Distribution by Religion, 1918**

# Sketching a New Map of the Middle East



## Directions for Creating a Map of the Middle East

1. Make sure your group members have copies of **Student Handouts 2.1A, 2.1B, and 2.1C.**
2. Use **Student Handout 2.1C** to create a rough draft of your group's map of the Middle East. Your map must include the following:
  - a. The borders of six new nations in the Middle East.
  - b. Names for each of the six nations.
  - c. On the front, an explanation of why you placed the borders where you did.
  - d. On the back, a list of two strengths and two weaknesses of your map based on the extent to which your map will reduce or increase conflict.
3. Create your final map on a large sheet of paper.

A completed map might look like this:

