

## ★ HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY ACTIVITY 18

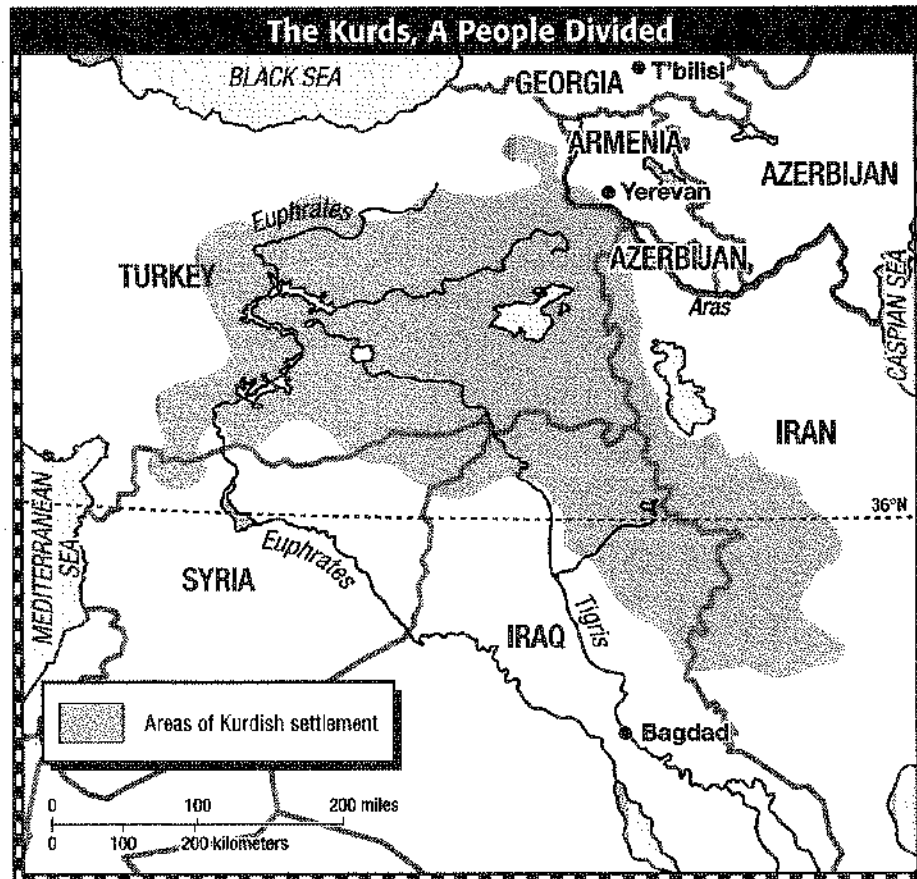


### Peoples of Iraq

In 1920, the League of Nations mandated the creation of the country of Iraq under British administration. The borders for this new nation were drafted by British civil servants, with no representation by the peoples then inhabiting the region. But did this new nation really represent one people?

When the British established Iraq, they incorporated the people then living in the area into four main geographic regions. To

the west of the Euphrates River, Bedouin nomads inhabited the stony plain that edges the Syrian Desert. Bedouin clans and the Madan (Marsh Arabs) lived east of the river in the Alluvial Plains below Baghdad. Tribal Arab plainsmen of the Shammar confederacy inhabited the northern uplands. The Kurds made their home in the steppes and mountains of the northern highlands north of Mosul and Kirkuk.



*The political boundaries of Iraq bear little relationship to ethnic boundaries. Note that the mountainous region where the Kurdish people live is split between five countries. The Kurds, who used to herd livestock freely across these lands, are now restricted in their movements. These restrictions have isolated Kurds across the border from one another and forced the Kurds to alter their traditional semi-nomadic ways.*

**HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY ACTIVITY 18** (continued)

The Kurdish people have a distinct identity. They are neither Arabic nor Semitic, they have their own Aryan language with many Persian words, and, while the majority of Iraqis are Shiite Muslims, the majority of Kurds belong to the Sunni Muslim sect.

For centuries, the Kurds have struggled for independence, seeking to establish a nation in the mountainous region that lies between Iraq, Iran, Syria, Armenia, and Turkey. A 1920 treaty with the Ottoman sultanate would have established a separate Kurdistan, but the Ottoman Empire collapsed, leaving the treaty that would have granted the Kurds independence among the rubble.

Geographic areas may belong to more than one region. The Kurds of Iraq, for example, belongs to both the Kurdish ethnic group and to the political region called Iraq. The map on the previous page shows how the regions overlap.

Your community may also belong to overlapping regions. Your climatic region, for example, probably overlaps your political, economic, and vegetation regions. Other overlapping regions may include those based on population or physical features. The particular combination of regions of which your community is a part helps make it unique.

**APPLYING GEOGRAPHY TO HISTORY**

**DIRECTIONS:** Answer the questions in the space provided or on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Explain why political and tribal regions overlap in Iraq.  
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2. Based on Iraq's overlapping regions, what kinds of conflicts do you think might exist there?  
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**Critical Thinking**

3. **Predicting Consequences** What do you think would happen if the map of the Middle East were redrawn to reflect ethnic boundaries? What problems would be solved? What problems might arise? Why?  
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**Activity**

4. Identify a local, national, or international problem that can be traced to overlapping regions. Draw a map that shows the existing regions; then draw a revised map that shows how the problem could be solved. Write a few sentences to explain your revisions.