

Historical Understandings

CHAPTER 21

SS7H2 The student will analyze continuity and change in Southwest Asia (Middle East) leading to the 21st century.

- a. Explain how European partitioning in the Middle East after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire led to regional conflict.*
- c. Describe how land and religion are reasons for continuing conflicts in the Middle East.*

What Were They Thinking?

At one time in history, the Muslim **Ottoman Empire** was six times the size of Texas! It stretched across what is now Turkey and parts of southeastern Europe, northern Africa, and southwestern Asia. Before World War I, it had already lost big chunks of its empire. After the Ottoman Empire ended up on the losing side of World War I, Britain and France divided up the land that remained.

Lines in the Sand

After WWI, France took control of Lebanon and Syria, while the British took control of Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and what is now Jordan. The

problems created by this land division have persisted into the Middle East today.

Desiring immediate control of the area and looking to future oil profits, Britain and France drew borders that paid no attention to local cultures and tribes. Shia and Sunni Muslim territories were merged into the new country of Iraq, where they still vie for power. The Kurds, a vibrant ethnic group found themselves divided among Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. These countries are uneasy with the Kurds and try to rule them with an iron fist.

