### Three Ethnic Groups of Southwest Asia

#### Arabs
- Arabs are the largest ethnic group in the Middle East, living throughout North Africa and Southwest Asia.
- They speak Arabic, a language which originated in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula.
- Today 17 countries in the Middle East are occupied with over 160 million Arabs.
- Most Arabs (95%) are Muslim, but there are also Christian and Jewish Arabs.

#### Persians
- Persians have an ancient culture and once controlled the world’s most powerful empire.
- Persian contributions to world culture include elaborate rugs and the invention of algebra, wine, polo, and the domesticated chicken.
- Persians are NOT Arab and do not speak Arabic. They speak Farsi, a dialect of the language Persian.
- Persians come from Iran, which is the largest Shia Muslim country. In fact, 90% Persians are Shia while only 8% are Sunni Muslim.

#### Kurds
- Kurds come from a mountainous region called Kurdistan (land of the Kurds), which includes parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.
- The Kurds do not have a country of their own and have fought numerous wars against the Turks and the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein.
- Kurds have many of their own customs and are mostly Sunni Muslim. They speak Kurdish, a language related to Persian.
- Since 1990, the Kurds of northern Iraq have maintained a successful independent government, under the protection of the United States. Kurdish troops supported the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and today Iraqi Kurdistan is a peaceful and prosperous region of modern Iraq.
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Complete this table and then answer the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Where do they live?</th>
<th>What religion(s) do they practice?</th>
<th>What language do they speak?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arabs</td>
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<td>Persians</td>
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<td>Kurds</td>
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</table>

1. What is the largest ethnic group in the Middle East? How many countries does this group occupy?

2. Which ethnic group does not have its own country?

3. Which group helped with the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003?

4. What country do Persians come from?