

## Muslims in the Post-Soviet Era

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### Resources for Teaching from the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies

#### Where is the Middle East?

Explore the boundaries and bordering regions of the Middle East with your students. Descriptions and maps are here: <http://mideast.unc.edu/where.shtml>

#### Maps showing the spread of Islam

These maps make clear the great expansion of Islam in the thirty years after the death of Muhammad, and in the following century, under Umayyad rule.

Map of Muslim Expansion until 660 C.E. <http://home.ct.metrocast.net/~bvon/images/bmap1.jpeg>

Map of the Umayyad Empire, ca. 750 <http://home.ct.metrocast.net/~bvon/images/bmap2.jpeg>

Have your students identify the borders of the expansion of Islam by 660 and 750. How far had Islam spread by 660, about thirty years after the death of Muhammad? Which regions did the Umayyad Empire control by 750? What was its farthest border to the north? The east? The south? The west? What continuing evidence is there in each region of Islamic culture?

Compare the maps of the early expansion of Islam with the Pew Forum's recent "Mapping the Global Muslim Population" (2009).

[http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population\(2\).aspx](http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population(2).aspx)

What regions are still predominantly Muslim? Where has Islam spread since 750?

#### Silk Road Maps

<http://www.silkroadproject.org/Education/TheSilkRoad/HistoricSilkRoadInfoandExternalLinks/SilkRoadMaps/tabid/177/Default.aspx>

The Silk Road Project site offers maps displaying routes, languages, climates, and religions of Central Asia, Transcaucasia, and the Middle East during the Silk Road era. Have your students trace the paths Middle Eastern cultures, languages, and religions traveled as they expanded along trade routes.

#### Ethnicity and Nation in Central Asia

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/casia\\_ethnic\\_93.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/casia_ethnic_93.jpg)

Use this map with your students to explore the location of ethnic populations in Central Asia. Click for a closer look. Uzbek populations are designated in yellow. How would you describe the location of Uzbek populations? National boundaries were drawn by the Soviets in the 1920s. What effect do you think these boundaries had on different ethnic populations?

## UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Central Asia

Locations are chosen as World Heritage Sites for their historical and cultural importance. Of the World Heritage Sites in Central Asia, four are in Uzbekistan. Your students can research the reasons for each citing, read about present problems with conservation, and explore UNESCO recommendations for action by going to the links below.

Itchan Kala

Historic Center of Shakhrisayabz

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/543>

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/885>

Historic Center of Bukhara

Samarkand—Crossroads of Cultures

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/602>

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/603>

## Nationalism in Central Asia

Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asian countries have been working to develop distinct national identities. In Uzbekistan today, in place of Marx and Lenin, two of the most celebrated national heroes are the fourteenth-century conquerer Amir Timur (also called “Tamerlane”), and his grandson, Ulugh Bek, an astronomer and mathematician. Have your students research Timur and Ulugh Bek. (What are their accomplishments? What is the ethnic connection of each to the Uzbeks? What is their connection to the city of Samarkand (see link above)? )

## Human Rights in Central Asia

Freedom House offers a “Map of Freedom in the World,” an interactive map displaying ratings of “Free,” “Partly Free,” or “Not Free” by nation. Criteria for ratings (from 1=Free to 7=Not Free) are on the website. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010>

Have your students find Uzbekistan on the map, note its rating, and read the country report here:

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=7946&year=2010>

Lead a discussion based on students’ research. What is Uzbekistan’s Freedom House rating? What is the basis for the rating? How do conditions in Uzbekistan compare to conditions in those Middle Eastern nations whose people are now protesting? Do your students predict similar developments in Uzbekistan? Why or why not?

To further explore the issue of human rights and Islam, read Richard Rose’s article, “How Muslims View Democracy: Evidence From Central Asia.”

[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal\\_of\\_democracy/v013/13.4rose.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_democracy/v013/13.4rose.pdf)