



NEA SCA Onboarding Tool

Design Writeup



Challenge: Find a way for new joins to the NEA/SCA division of the U.S. State Department to gain an understanding of the region. Find a way to use this as a policymaking tool.

Stipulations: This onboarding method should be both interactive and data-driven; it should embody the State Department as being a data-driven environment. It should work on desktop or mobile, on any size or OS.

Role: Coder, UX/UI Designer, Persona-Builder

Skills: Git, JavaScript, CSS/HTML, Photoshop



Features:

This process/tool could contain:

Comparison metrics (requested)

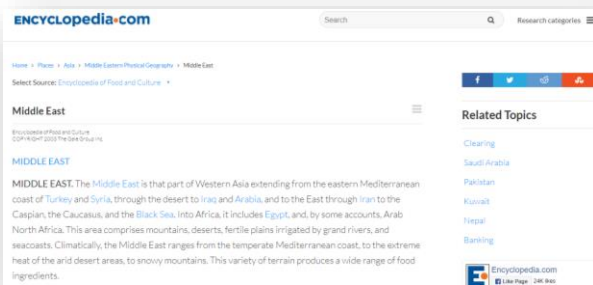
Timeline

Current news

Interactive maps

Field Research: What already exists if you look up these regions and try to find a brief on them?

Search terms: 'Near East Asia brief'; 'South Central Asia brief'



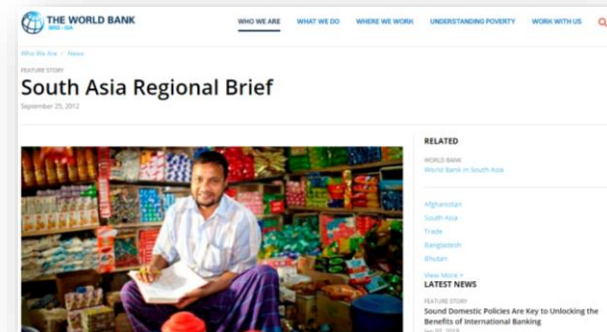
Encyclopedia.com



TheDiplomat.com



Asia Society



World Bank

Critiques:

No interactivity

Difficult to see diplomatic relevance of most information

Cannot compare/contrast

Information is *too* historical

Sources assume significant prior knowledge

Note: Google exists. Realistically, most of the users of this project are going to be utilizing it as a first resource.

So this onboarding tool, if it's going to be genuinely useful, must offer something that a quick Google search won't.

Google kazakhstan

All News Maps Images Videos More Settings Tools

About 88,600,000 results (0.66 seconds)

Kazakhstan - Wikipedia
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstan>
 Kazakhstan (US: /kəˈzæks stæn/, kəˈzɒk stæn/ (About this sound listen), UK: /ˈkæzɪk stɑːn, -stæn/; Kazakh: Қазақстан, tr. Qazaqstan, IPA: [qɑzɑqˈstɑn] (About this sound listen); Russian: Казахстан, tr. Kazakhstan, IPA: [kazɐˈxstɑn]), officially the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kazakh: Қазақстан Республикасы, ...
 Portal/Kazakhstan · Russians in Kazakhstan · History of Kazakhstan · Astana

Things to do in Kazakhstan

 Almaty Zenkov Cathedral & Panfilov Park ✈ 5660 📏 545	 Astana Bayterek tower views & Ak Orda Palace ✈ 5679 📏 543	 Shymkent Water park, zoo, monument, theatre, and ...	 Aktau Beach, mountain, monument, and desert
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Kazakhstan travel guide

Top stories

 China's ambitious new 'port': landlocked Kazakhstan TODAYonline 2 days ago	 China's ambitious new 'port': Landlocked Kazakhstan, East Asia News & Top Stories The Straits Times 2 days ago	 Bishops in Kazakhstan say no Communion for divorced, remarried Catholics National Catholic Reporter 6 hours ago
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[More for kazakhstan](#)

Kazakhstan - Wikitravel
<https://wikitravel.org/en/Kazakhstan>
 Kazakhstan is the world's ninth biggest country by size, and it is more than twice the size of the other Central Asian states combined. Its lack of significant historical sites and endless featureless steppe have put many off Kazakhstan, while many still are captivated by the emptiness and mystery of this Goliath state. It will be ...
 Country code: +7 Language: Kazakh (official, state language) 64...
 Currency: tenge (KZT) Area: 2,724,902km²; water: 47,500km²; land: 2,...

Kazakhstan
 Country in Central Asia

Kazakhstan, a Central Asian country and former Soviet republic, extends from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Altai Mountains at its eastern border with China and Russia. Its largest metropolis, Almaty, is a long-standing trading hub whose landmarks include Ascension Cathedral, a tsarist-era Russian Orthodox church, and the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan, displaying thousands of Kazakh artifacts.

Capital: *Astana*
Population: 17.8 million (2016) World Bank
Currency: Kazakhstani tenge

Plan a trip

Kazakhstan travel guide

✈ 14 h 55 min flight
Official languages: Kazakh, Russian

Points of interest [View 15+ more](#)

Medeu	Bayterek Tower	Lake Kaindy	Khan Shatyr Entertainment...	Belukha Mountain
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People also search for [View 15+ more](#)

Astana	Russia	Kyrgyzstan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan...
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[Feedback](#)

See results about
 Kazakh language (Spoken language)
 Language family: Kipchak languages, Altaic languages
 Regions: Turkistan, Dzungaria, Anatolia, Greater Khorestan

Stage 1: User Visualizations

Usually we'd do actual user interviews, but in this case, that was logistically complex enough that we used personas to design for instead. We'll return to this once we have our first prototype.

David Andrews NEA Division New Hire



PERSONALITY

Extrovert ☐ Introvert ☐

Thinking ☐ Feeling ☐

Judging ☐ Perceiving ☐

TECHNOLOGY USE

Software ☐

Mobile Apps ☐

Social Networking ☐

MOTIVATIONS

- Convenience of usage;
- Modern visual style;
- Workflow integration;
- Professional growth.

GOALS

- To be better organised;
- Spend more time with friends;
- More automated process;
- To keep track of everything.

FRUSTRATIONS

- Inconsistency;
- Deadlines;
- Expectations are not clear;
- Too many processual steps.

LIFESTYLE COLLAGE

GAME OF THRONES

PARIS

The Economist

AGE 31

OCCUPATION Foreign Service Officer

STATUS Married

LOCATION Washington, DC

TIER New Hire

ARCHETYPE Activist

Alex Guerrero SCA Division New Hire



PERSONALITY

Extrovert ☐ Introvert ☐

Thinking ☐ Feeling ☐

Judging ☐ Perceiving ☐

TECHNOLOGY USE

Software ☐

Mobile Apps ☐

Social Networking ☐

MOTIVATIONS

- Geography brush-up
- Learn more before next asst.
- Compare his experience to numbers
- Policy knowledge

GOALS

- To draw regional comparisons
- Update his blog
- Find a steady partner
- Stay healthy

FRUSTRATIONS

- Resource-heavy apps while on the go
- Needing statistics for reports
- No single reference for the region
- Unsure how to ask senior FSOs for their observations

BRANDS

PORTLANDIA

THE MACHINISTS

AGE 27

OCCUPATION Foreign Service Officer


STATUS Single

LOCATION Washington, DC

TIER 1-Year Experience

ARCHETYPE Policy Wonk

Tamara Mathews Content Manager



PERSONALITY

Extrovert ☐ Introvert ☐

Thinking ☐ Feeling ☐

Judging ☐ Perceiving ☐

TECHNOLOGY USE

Software ☐

Mobile Apps ☐

Social Networking ☐

MOTIVATIONS

- Aggregator of facts
- No learning curve
- Clear sources
- Tablet-friendly

GOALS

- Quickly compare and contrast
- Report-ready insights
- Predictive power
- Stand alone reference

POTENTIAL FRUSTRATIONS

- Small delicate buttons
- Presumed foreknowledge
- Too many features
- No linear flow of actions

LIFESTYLE COLLAGE

MICHAEL KORS

Br

Ba

AGE 52

OCCUPATION Policy Advisor

STATUS Married

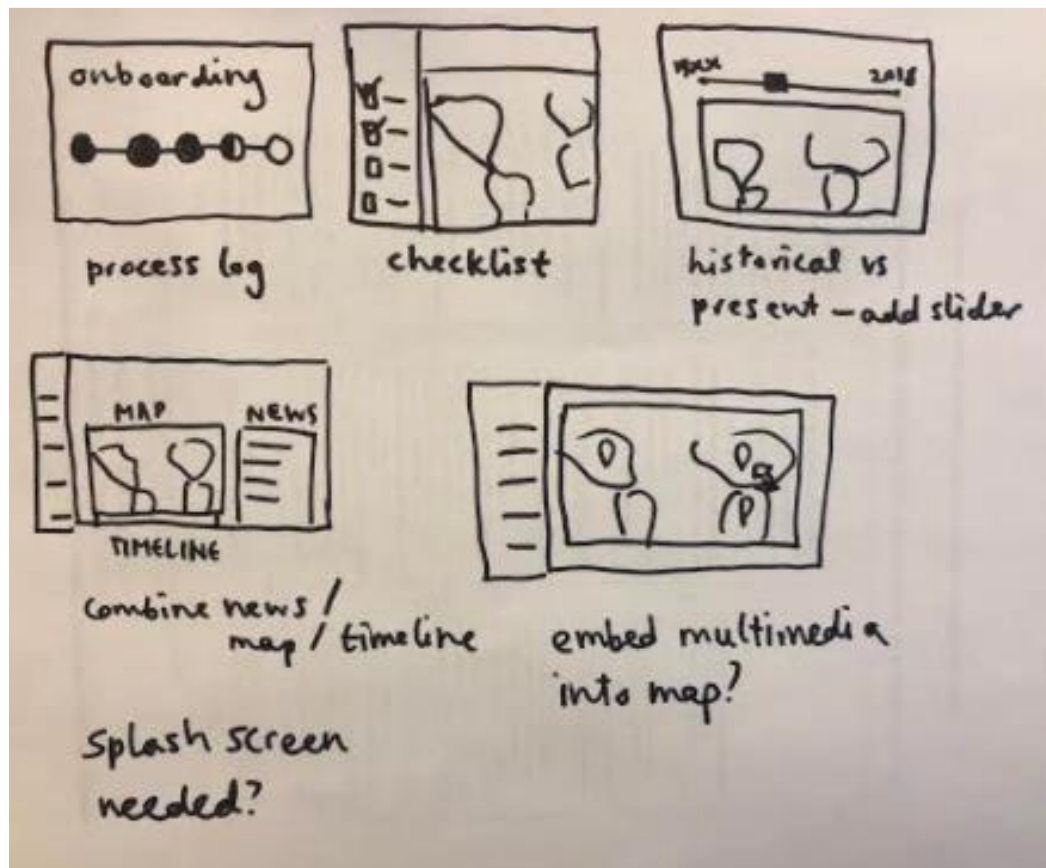
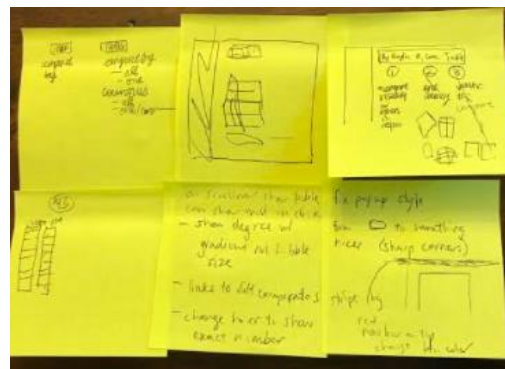
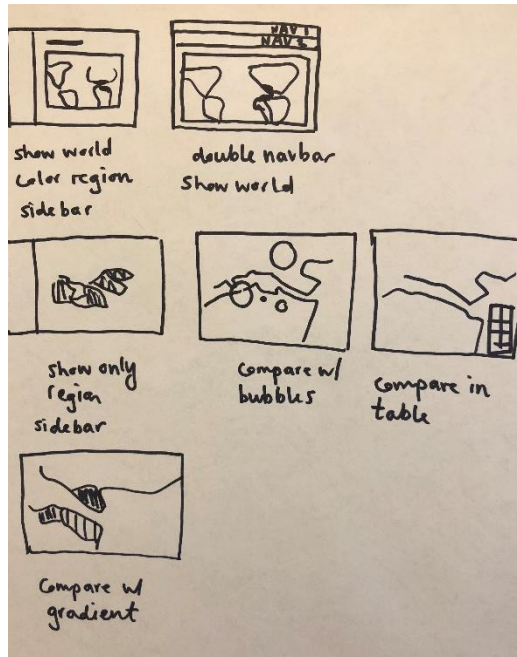
LOCATION Washington, DC

TIER Collaborator

ARCHETYPE Business Woman

Stage 2: Hand-drawn Sketches

We begin with some rough sketches to figure out what elements might go where.



Here, I considered:

- Sidebar vs top navbar(s)
- Y/N splash screen
- Whether there should also be a timeline or news options
- whether the maps should have multimedia embedded in them
- whether the site should be explicitly about onboarding and feature steps to do

Now that we know what we're keeping in mind, we'll reason through these questions in the next section.

Stage 3: UX/UI Considerations

More deliberate than the hand-drawn sketches, this stage focuses on specific user interface questions. What's the best possible approach?

- 1) Should we frame this to the user as a 'process' with definite, discrete steps, or should it be make-your-own-way?

I decided that the tool should be make-your-own-way to avoid becoming onerous and to make it a handy reference.

- 2) Should features be in separate tabs or together?

Modular parts show the user what types of information he or she could look for. Separating them prevents overwhelming the user and taking too long to load the page

- 3) Should it be personalized, save-your-progress or a generalized reference tool?

Having it be make-your-way and as-you-need makes it more useful overall. There's not really a need for a login.

- 4) Should there be multimedia?

While multimedia (pictures etc.) might be useful, too much media will detract from the comparisons we are trying to draw.

- 5) Should there be present news or historical feed?

Realistically, this isn't going to be a go-to site for news, so that seems like it's not really adding much. Historical data would be nice, but the CIA World Factbook doesn't have that, and nowhere else really does either.

- 6) Should there be a splash screen?

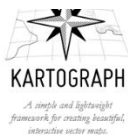
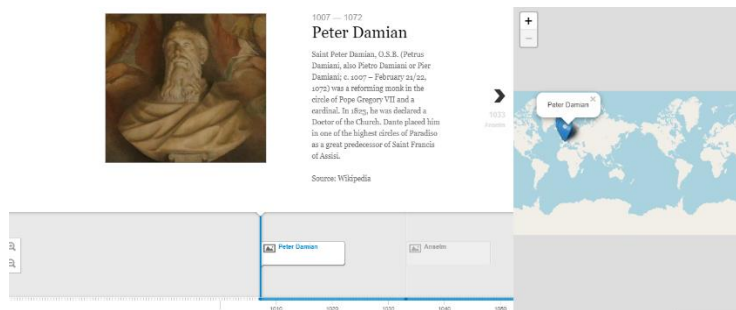
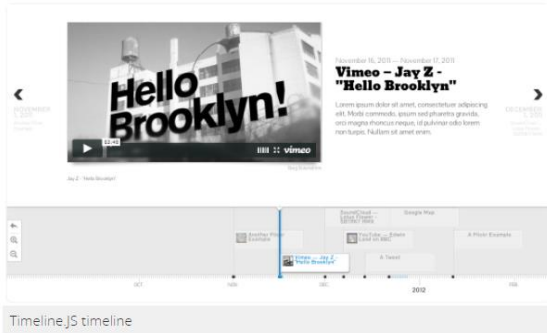
There should be a page explaining how to use the site, but not a full splash screen, to reduce loading time—the maps are already going to make it slower than most sites.

Stage 4: Technical Considerations

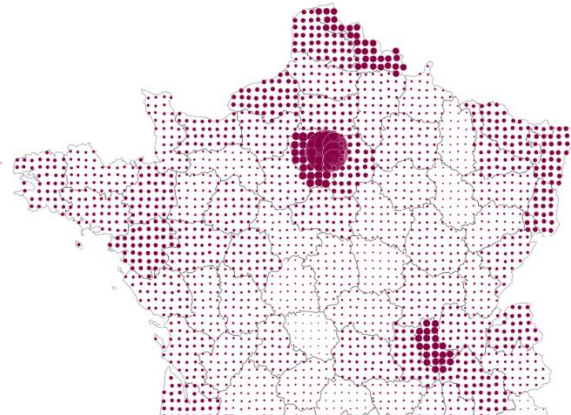
The two aspects of the project needing the most attention are the data (source, frequency of updates, etc) and the maps.

Map:

Possible Map Libraries



Showcases
[Animated Symbols](#)
[La Bella Italia](#)
[Choropleth Maps](#)
[Symbol Maps](#)
[Clustering Map Symbols](#)
[Chart Maps](#)
[Dot-grid Maps](#)
[3D-Projections](#)
[Map Projections](#)
[High-res vector mapping](#)



- **faster**, with a new rendering module
- **stronger**, to handle even **more** datapoints (40k+)
- **easier to use** so you can get up to speed quickly
- **easier to extend** for custom functionality

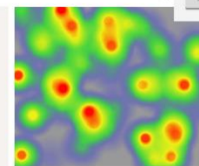
than ever before.

A Quick Example

With only a few lines of code you can create your own interactive web heatmap:

```
var heatmap = h337.create({
  container: domElement
});

heatmap.setData({
  max: 5,
  data: [{ x: 10, y: 15, value: 5}, ...]
});
```



Skip the coding!

Get the visitor data you need without messing w source code & JavaScri

Start FREE today and finally see your visitors are doing on your site with one of our partners.

GET EASY HEAT MAPS NOW

NO thanks! My conversion rates are already gr

I found so many options here: TimeLine and TimeMapper are fit best to embed interactivity, which I decided earlier wasn't necessary. Kartograph is for more density of data than I have, and so is HeatMaps. That leaves DataMaps as the best candidate.

Data: I found four candidate sites for drawing data from:

NationMaster

ChathamHouse

World Bank

CIA

While all of them have high-quality data, Chatham House doesn't have an API, nor does Nation Master, so those are out. World Bank does, but it's only about economic data, and we want to have some social issues too.

That leaves the CIA World Factbook as my choice.

So DataMaps and the World FactBook are the underlying framework of our site.

I considered also whether the service should be an app, a web app, or a web site.

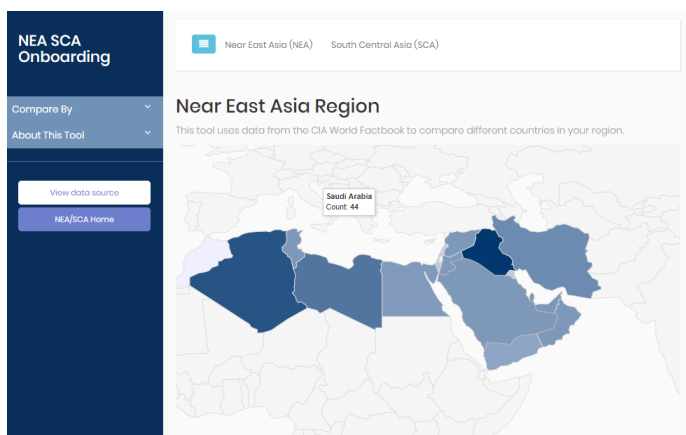
I thought it would be limiting to make it just an app, as well as add development costs. Between web app and web site, I chose something of a hybrid—while it is interactive, the site doesn't really need a formal backend because we don't have logins and all the data is pulled from the CIA. So it's a web site with some web-app-like components.

Stage 5: First Build

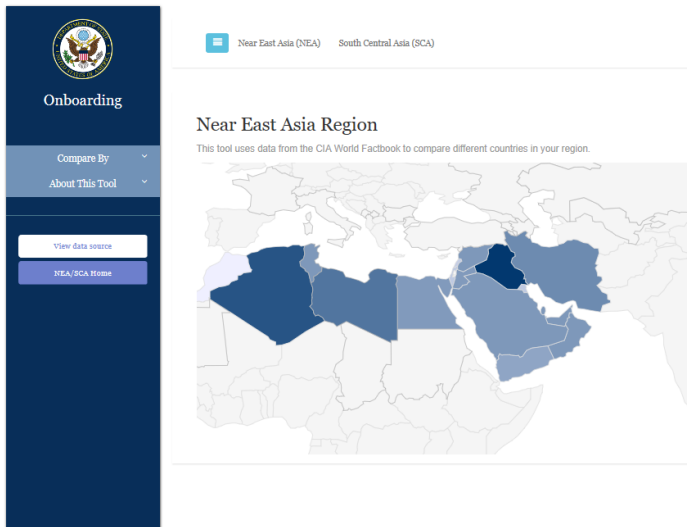
Process:



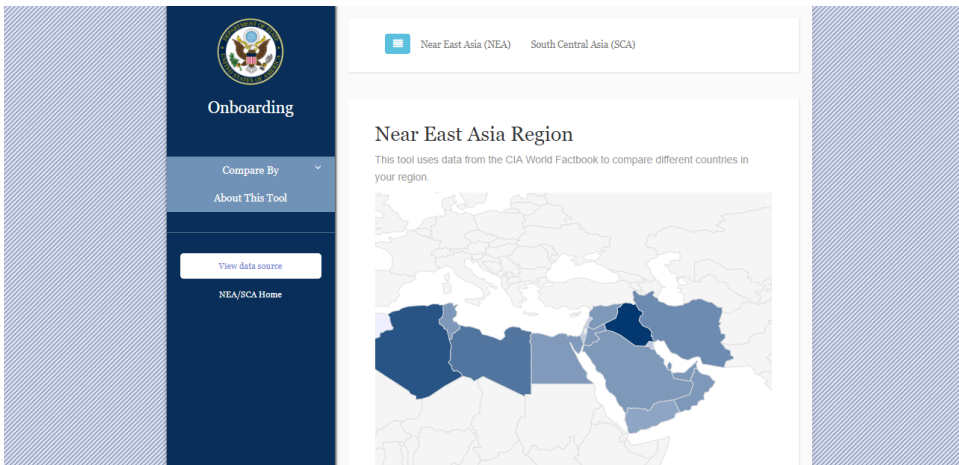
Step 1: Getting the map working



Step 2: Color picking; basic web framework; interactivity



Step 3: Responsiveness, better loading, browser compatibility



Step 4: Cleaner design

Step 6: Evaluation

Works well

Needs fixing

- Gradient in combination with numbers: both visual and numerical
- Clean color scheme
- Cross-browser compatible

- Should maps be sorted by region?
- We probably want a table view—what should that look like?
- Should we be able to see each country individually?
- Should you be able to compare two specific countries on every datatype?

Future additions:

This project could also:

Introduce insights from senior FSOs in the region.

Show comparisons between NEA/SCA regions with world at large

Include also UN and/or US aid to the region (<https://www.foreignassistance.gov/developers>)

Step 7: Interview some real users

Throughout this process, I got feedback from many stand-in users who commented on the usability and design of the site.

To maximize the utility of this tool, it should be tested with its intended users!

To be continued...