



Syllabus

The Indian Ocean – The Ocean of the 21st Century: A Study of the Countries on the Ocean Rim

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Course Description: The Indian Ocean is a mystery to many Americans, who think in terms of the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. (Are there really three other oceans?) The purpose of this course is to study the Indian Ocean and its surrounding countries, most certainly an important geopolitical focus of the 21st century for China, India and the United States. We will visit Oman and Yemen (one a success and the other a mess), Pakistan (yes, there is oceanfront property there), the Gujarat province of India (a mecca for development), Bangladesh (suffering from extreme poverty and threatened by rising sea levels), Kolkata (what a history!) and other stops.

At each stop we will consider the history, current political and economic situation, and the outlook. We will look at the impact of the countries on the Indian Ocean, on the foreign policies of China and India, and see how all we have studied might affect the United States.

Course Goals: What's our goal?: To study the history, current politics and economics and the outlook for the Indian Ocean and countries on the littoral. Just as importantly, to study and understand the bigger picture, the geo-political aspects. India with a billion plus people juts into the center of the Indian Ocean, but China, also in the billionaire club, is close by and has many strategic goals in the area, and the USA plays a role. How will all this play out in the 21st Century?

Text: *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* by Robert D. Kaplan is a guide, to give everyone a grounding. Each week, the class leaders should go beyond the book, find the issue or issues that interests you and that will generate great discussion and debate. Please don't just make a book report.

Course Calendar

Week 1

- Introductions, course goals, what do you want from the course.
- History of the IO in spreading commerce, religion and power. Chapter 4
- India/China – overview of their strategy. Chapter 1

Weeks 2 and 3 – India

- As the biggest player in the IO; with frontage on the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal; with the 3rd largest Muslim population in the world; with a history of conflict with China and with both high tech centers and extreme poverty we're devoting two weeks to India. We're suggesting a balance of India's history, current conditions, strategy for the IO and likely future role.
- Gujarat, Chapter 6
- Kolkata, Chapter 9
- View from Delhi, Chapter 7
- Policies, Chapter 10

Weeks 4 through 7 – Order can be changed to fit members' schedules

Week 4 – Oman and Yemen.

- Chapters 2 and 3
- Kaplan devotes 2 chapters to Oman covering both its ancient history and recent times. Its history since the 1970 coup by Qabus (also spelled Qaboos) set the country on the path of stability and prosperity under one-man rule. Qabus is no doubt the ruler, but seems to have a gentle hand. In March 2013 he pardoned a bunch of dissidents found guilty of the high-tech crime of defaming the Sultan on Facebook and blogs.
- Yemen is a different story. It also has a long and storied history. It doesn't get much play in *Monsoon*. Yemen is a democracy but not nearly as successful as autocratic Oman. We see headlines that Yemen is a home for al Qaeda, a target for drone strikes, the scene of terrorist activity, riots, and with an ousted president.
- Why is the one-man rule state quite successful and the democracy in constant turmoil? What do you see down the road? What will happen when Qabus dies? Will Yemen turn around?

Week 5 – Pakistan, Baluchistan and Sindh.

- Chapter 5
- In June 2013 China formally took control of the Port of Gwadar from the Port of Singapore Authority. There is talk of a \$10B investment in the port and billion dollar improvements to the Karakorum Highway linking Pakistan and China. But as Kaplan points out the natives are restless and there is active rebellion in the area. What does or could this development mean? How will it affect India?

Week 6 – Bangladesh and Burma.

- Chapters 8 and 12

- Bangladesh. On April 24th 2013 an eight-story garment manufacturing building collapsed in Dhaka, killing 1,129 and injuring 2,500. How important is the garment industry to Bangladesh? Why is production moving from China? How does this industry help Bangladesh? Why an eight-story building in a third-world country? Who's responsible for safety?
- Burma. Kaplan describes Burma as strategic, romantic and a moral catastrophe. Once relatively rich, Burma is now the poorest country in Southeast Asia. A kingdom, then ruled by the British, then a democracy. After a 1962 coup, Burma has been under strong-man military rule since. But, suddenly, the Burmese "spring". Why this change of mind by the government? What's the future of Burma with India looking east and China looking south? Does the US have a role?

Week 7 – Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

- Chapters 11, 12 and 13 and 14,
- Sri Lanka. A country right in the middle of the sea lanes; with robust trade with India; relying on China for significant economic aid; with a serious religious/ethnic split, coming off a deadly civil war, and struggling with governance issues. Is the civil war behind Sri Lanka? How will Sri Lanka affect India/Chinese relations? Can and should the US play a role?
- Indonesia. Kaplan devotes a long chapter to Indonesia and Islam. In it he says "The future of Islam will be strongly determined by what happens in Indonesia." Home to more Muslims than any other country Indonesia has its own form of Islam, different from the Arab states, a form which includes elements of Hinduism and Buddhism. Will this balance continue?
- Indonesia holds a strategic position bordering on the Straits of Malacca at one end and thousands of miles away has a foot in the Pacific. How will Indonesia's relationship with China play out? What about with India and the US?

Week 8 – The African coast from Somalia to Zanzibar.

- Chapters 16 and 17
- The east coast of Africa is full of potential topics. Take your pick. Zanzibar has a wild and interesting history. Piracy is a major source of income for many in the Northern IO. What's the future for the pirates? Asian powers are investing in Africa. As Kaplan asks: is this productive investment or exploitation? What's the role of the major players in the west IO?

Week 9 – China.

- Chapter 15
- China, of course, doesn't touch the IO but it is becoming a major player in the area. Many of our discussions so far touch on China's reliance on the IO for oil, its strategic investments in the area, its rivalry with India and its relations with the US. This week let's pull all this together.

Week 10 – Summary – future of the IO. Role of India, China and the USA

- This is the week to bring all we've covered together. Should Obama's swing to the far-east include a strong presence in the IO? What's the future for India and China in the area? We'd like your input on what to cover and how to organize the day. We could consider a panel dealing with class submitted questions. Give us your thoughts.