

C. Timeline Template for the History of South Asia

1. With the two extremities of the history of South Asia—modernity: 1947, and antiquity: ??? BC—established, what can we anticipate the story to look like?
2. To prepare you for the details of the story, I will now introduce a template for the story, which closely resembles prior histories, but which has a twist. The basic representation of this story, broken into three periods, is:



3. As hinted at by this visual outline, there is a very straightforward progression. The period of Hindu Culture extends all the way into modern times, at which point, like the rest of the world, it is severely disrupted by the period of the *World Wars*. The crisis of the world wars is what leads to its independence from the British Empire, and thus to the challenge of defining a new non-British, or “post-colonial,” identity.

D. A Tale of Ancient Empires

1. A peculiar fact about ancient South Asia is that there *is* a clear “first recorded event” in its history. It is the invasion of India by the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great c.327 BC.
2. Understandably, given the desire to define a “post-colonial” identity (an identity that does *not* revolve around being ruled by others), Indian culture does not embrace the brief entry into India by Alexander as a valuable truth.
3. One thing the arrival of the Greeks makes possible, because they *did* keep their history, is the illumination of the historical make-up of ancient India during and after that time. What is revealed *does* appeal to modern post-colonial Indians, because an empire was formed, called the Mauryan Empire (c.323-185 BC).
4. The Mauryan Empire was a native Indian dynasty, which leads it to be valued by promoters of Indian culture as a precursor to modern India. It did not last, however, and India remained as politically *un-integrated* as it had been before the Mauryans when their empire fell.

E. Muslim Invasions (c.711 AD -)

1. An undeniably important transformation took place in South Asia upon the arrival of the first conquering wave out of Arabia carrying the banner of *Triumphal Islam*.
2. Like Iberia in Europe, India was invaded by a great army engaged in “jihad” **c.711 AD**.
3. The outcome of this and subsequent invasions by Muslim conquerors was the conversion of a huge segment of the population of South Asia to Islam. This the main reason why in

1947, South Asia was “partitioned” at the same time as it became independent. The country of Pakistan was formed at the same time as India in the Indus River Valley precisely because of the permanent takeover of that region by Islamic conquerors.

4. The inclusion of this anchor fact in the story of South Asia leads to an important modification to the timeline.
5. South Asia is a post-colonial cultural block today, but it is also a two-part cultural block, divided by religion. (Brown is used here to denote *Islamic culture*.)



6. Following the initial invasion of South Asia by Arab invaders c.711 AD, there were three more major waves. The only obvious significance of these additional waves is that the far eastern portion of South Asia became Muslim as well. It is now a separate country as well: Bangladesh.
7. The ability of Muslim empires to rule India permanently was severely affected by the arrival of Europeans in India, starting with the Portuguese navigator Vasco Da Gama in 1498.
8. The Portuguese established dominance over the Indian ocean with superior vessels and weapons, and proceeded to chip away at the control of the coastal regions of India, only to be replaced themselves by the French and the British, who were also seeking trade, and at first did not challenge the domination of India by its last Muslim empire, the Mughal Empire (1526-1857).