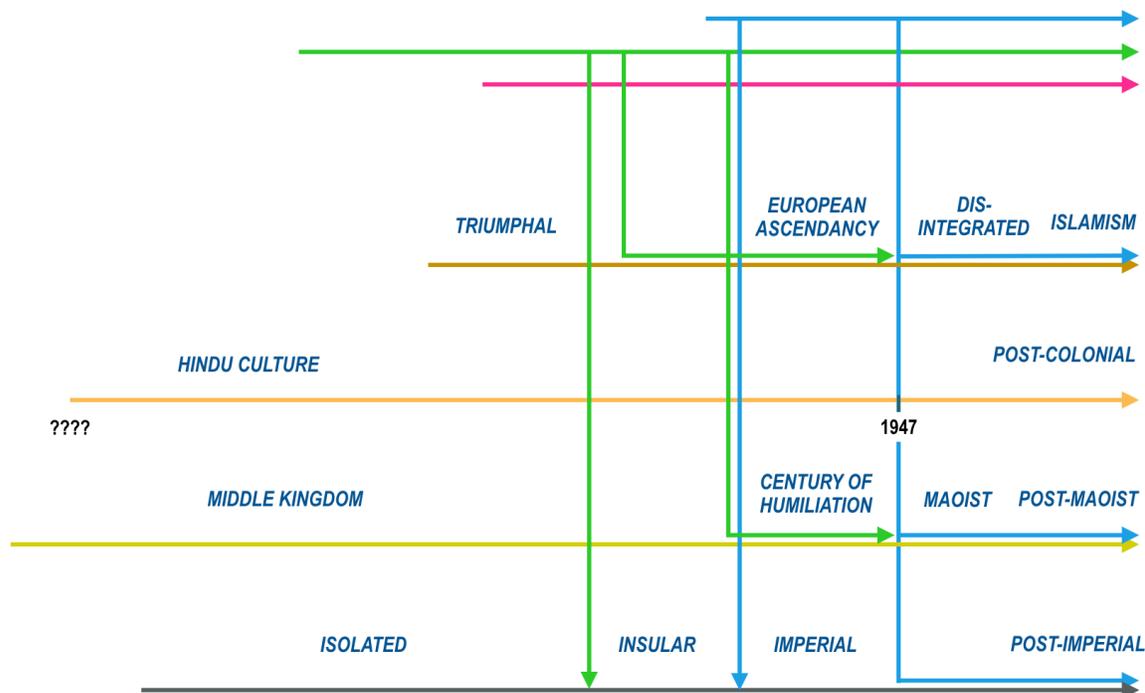


C. Timeline Template for the History of South Asia

1. Post-colonial India emerges in **1947** when the British empire abandoned control of South Asia.
2. The history of Hindu Culture stretches back to some unknowably distant past, which we have to acknowledge by indicating a date that is unusually indefinite “????”
3. These extremities of Indian culture can be indicated on a timeline that fits in our growing model as follows:



3. In order to complete this model, we need to understand the “colonial” history of South Asia: who colonized it and in what ways? As it turns out the invasions of India from the outside world are the pivotal events of its culture.

D. Ancient Empires

1. A peculiar fact about ancient South Asia is that the first recorded event in its history is the invasion of India by the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great c.327 BC.
2. We know about this occurrence because the Greeks had embraced the study of history in their culture and Alexander’s great conquests in Asia were a major chapter in the history of their culture.

3. 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.
4. Although it is tempting to fixate on this moment simply because it’s there, and we don’t have anything like it beforehand, since Alexander’s actions had no lasting impact on South Asian culture his moment in the spotlight does not help us to organize Indian history or understand how India became what it is, so c.327 BC comes and goes and cannot qualify as an anchor fact of history.
5. One thing contact with the Greeks makes possible is a brief illumination of the historical configuration of ancient India during and after that time. What is revealed is an *un-integrated* civilization.
6. Following Alexander’s appearance, records support the fact that a native Indian empire was formed, called the Mauryan Empire (c.323-185 BC).
7. 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, and when it collapsed, India returned to being what it was before the Mauryan, and in the absence of history, the memory of the brief integration of India faded.
8. Because India continued to be a-historical as a culture, any empire that came and went left no permanent mark. A few generations after it had passed, it was as if it had never been at all.

E. Muslim Invasions (c.711 AD -)

1. Since Indian culture is post-colonial today, we need to seek out the events in its past by which India was colonized by aggressive external cultures. We know as a simple fact for the time being that India became independent from the British Empire in **1947**, so we are anticipating the arrival of the British as colonizers, but they were not the first. India’s colonial history is much longer.
2. The first conquering wave in the history of South Asia came from Arabia carrying the banner of *Triumphal Islam*. 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. That is the reason for the existence of Pakistan along side India even though during the long history of Hindu Culture they were parts of the same cultural block. The first conqueror wave of *Triumphal Islam* took over Afghanistan, and then crossed the Khyber pass into the Indus River Valley starting **c.711 AD**, and the entire region was permanently islamized.
6. Following the initial invasion of South Asia by Arab invaders there were three more major waves over nearly a thousand years. The only obvious significance of these additional waves is that one group of invaders penetrated the length of the Ganges river valley to the far eastern reaches of its river basin and that region became Muslim as well. It is now the separate country of Bangladesh.

7. One temporary outcome of the Muslim invasions of South Asia was that an empire was built that encompasses almost all of South Asia by central Asian rulers. It is called the Mughal Empire, and it was begun by its founder Babur in 1526.
8. This is right around the time of the European arrival. Portuguese navigator Vasco Da Gama circumnavigated Africa in 1498 and arrived on the coast of India to establish direct trade with India and cut out the Muslim “middle men.”
9. 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.
10. Portugal is small country, however, and it never colonized India. It only controlled the seas and encouraged the independence of coastal princes from their Muslim overlords.
11. Meanwhile, by land, the Mughals created an empire that covered almost the entirety of South Asia. Their empire was the peak of *Triumphal Islam* in India, and if more European traders and colonizers had not come to India, it is entirely likely that India would have been completely assimilated into Islamic culture, and there would be no Hinduism today at all.
12. One powerful symbol of the Mughal Empire’s ascendancy over India is the Qutb minaret near the capital of India, which is New Delhi today. A “minaret” is a tower that is usually part of a mosque, which is climbed by a religious person known as a “muezzin” to announce the Muslim call to prayer five times a day. The Qutb minaret is a huge tower that was constructed by first destroying 27 Hindu temples, and then using the bricks to build the tower.
13. Another symbol of the Islamic ascendancy over India is the famous Taj Mahal, a tomb built by a Mughal Empire for his favorite wife. It is the most visited tourist site in India and by far the most widely recognized, which is an uncomfortable fact for many post-colonial thinkers in India, since it does not represent Hindu culture, but rather Triumphal Islam, and the phase of Indian history when Hindu culture was almost swept away by Islam.
14. Just as the Mughal Empire was peaking (in the late 1600s) Portugal’s hold on the India trade was broken by the French and the British, who were also seeking trade with Asia. It would not be long before these much more populous and ambitious empires would dominate the story of India and displace Muslim rulers.



The Qutb mosque complex (left) includes the Qutb minaret, built using the bricks of destroyed Hindu temples. The Taj Mahal (right) is India’s most famous building. It is a tomb constructed for a Mughal emperor, thus a strangely uncomfortable monument for post-colonial Indians. Both are symbols of the major role played by *Triumphal Islam* in India’s history.