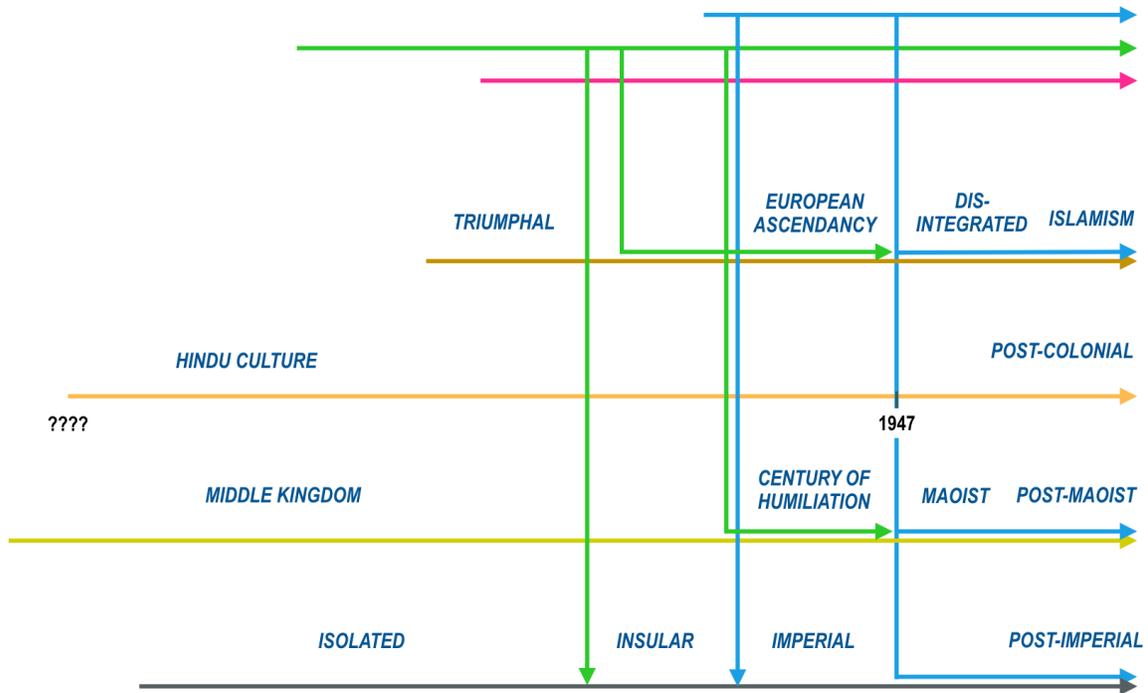


C. Timeline for South Asia

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 unknowable past, which we will mark as “????”.
3. Here’s how these pieces fit into our puzzle of Asia and the wider world:



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

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 as part of their culture.

3. What is strange about this event, however, is it did not change Indian culture at all. So it happened, and we know when it happened—which is kind of exciting, because it’s the first thing we know!—but it doesn’t actually matter to the culture of India or its history.
4. For what it’s worth, Alexander came and went c.327 BC, and then everyone forgot.
5. One thing contact with the Greeks makes possible is that it helps us to know that there was an empire in India right after his brief invasion. It’s called the Mauryan Empire (c.323-185 BC).
6. The Mauryan Empire was a native Indian dynasty, so some people in modern India feel like it’s important to talk about it. It did not last, however, and India, and because India was a-historical the memory of the brief integration of India faded, and life continued as if it had never happened.

#### E. Muslim Invasions (c.711 AD - )

1. Although it was the British who controlled India before it became independent, the first conquering wave in the history of South Asia was a jihad from Arabia **c.711 AD**.
2. The outcome of this and later Muslim invasions was the conversion of a huge part of the population of South Asia to Islam. That is the reason why Pakistan exists as an Islamic country today. Later invaders also took over the eastern part of India, which is now the separate Muslim country of Bangladesh.
3. The greatest invasion of India by Muslim conquerors is called the Mughal Empire, and it was begun by its founder Babur in 1526.
4. If European colonizers had not come to India, it is entirely likely that India would have been swallowed up by Islamic culture, and there would be no Hinduism today at all.
5. An example of Mughal

power 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.



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.

6. Another symbol of the Islamic ascendancy over India is the famous Taj Mahal, a tomb built by a Mughal Emperor 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 Triumphant Islam, and the phase of Indian history when Hindu culture was almost swept away by Islam.
7. Just as the Mughal Empire was peaking (in the late 1600s) the French and the British were beginning to create colonial empires in Asia. It would not be long before these much more populous and ambitious empires would dominate the story of India and displace its Muslim rulers.