

(Episode 1)

CHAPTER ONE

The Imperial Quadrant

Our study of world history and our search for the forces of destiny that shape its progress begin with two questions, or rather, a question and a riddle. The question is quite simple. Which period of history could be considered the best time ever in human experience? The second question is actually a riddle whose solution seems deceptively complicated but is really quite simple as well.

The length of the Equator is 24,901 miles, so let us round it off and say that the Equator is 25,000 miles long. Measured in feet, considering that a mile is equivalent to 5,280 feet, the Equator is about 132,000,000 feet long. Let's also assume for the purpose of this riddle that the surface of the earth all along the Equator is smooth and uniform with no mountains or valleys. We take a rope that is also 25,000 miles long and draw it around the Equator so that its ends touch. It fits snugly and lies flat on the surface all the way around.

Now, we add to one end of the rope an additional piece of rope that is 60 feet long, and we bring the new ends together. The length of the rope is now 132,000,060 feet. Assuming there is no gravity, the rope will float freely and uniformly off the surface all the way around the Equator.

How far off the ground will the rope be at every point along the Equator as a result of the addition of 60 feet to its length? Take a few moments to consider this riddle, and if you cannot come up with a precise solution, take an intuitive guess.

The answer to the question and the solution to the riddle provide valuable insight into the study of world history, but before we can discuss them, we have to define the term world history.

What is the study of world history? It is certainly not the study of the local histories of every corner of the world. Rather, it is the study of the history of the world as a whole. It assumes that the world as a whole has a common origin and a common destiny, and it seeks to identify and trace the forces that drive it toward that destiny.

As we look at global history, we are immediately struck by spectacles of chaos and confusion. The global landscape changes constantly over the short span of a few millennia. Civilizations rise and fall. Empires appear, spread out and fade away. Ideologies and systems are born, tested and discarded. Cities are built and destroyed by endless wars. Technology and communications forge ahead, continuously accelerating the pace of change, compressing centuries into decades, years or even days. Generation after generation battles for a hold on the present and yearns for a future that never seems to arrive. People spend their fleeting moments on this earth in violent struggles and mad pursuits. Is there a purpose to all this chaos? Is there a method to the madness?

If we look amidst the clutter and rubble of history, we can indeed discern the forces of destiny and faint outlines of a road to the future. The forces of destiny inhabit the world of ideas, of striving, of beliefs. Like people, they have long genealogies, changing with the progress of generations and epochs but forever rooted in the past; the forces of destiny of today are different from their predecessors, but also very much the same.

The interplay of the forces of destiny that drive world history clearly does not take place at the periphery of the world but at its epicenter. In fact, the region where they arise, regardless of its geographical location, is the epicenter of the world by virtue of the forces generated there.

So, where is the epicenter of the world? Where are the forces of our common destiny manifested? The world is full of societies, each with its

own history, philosophies, religious beliefs and cultural imperatives, its own particular forces of destiny, but they cannot all be central to our common destiny. It would seem that the determinant zone of world history is an area which can arguably be called the Imperial Quadrant.

Today, the Imperial Quadrant is a large geographic rectangle bounded on the east by the Ural Mountains, on the south by the Tropic of Cancer, on the west by the Pacific Ocean and on the north by the Arctic Circle. The imperial military and economic power of the Quadrant controls the security and prosperity of humankind. The ideas and culture of the Quadrant permeate into the farthest corners of the earth.

This is where the forces of world destiny are to be found. The Cold War in the middle of the twentieth century between the United States and the Soviet Union, the two dominant powers of the Quadrant at that time, had a profound effect on the entire globe. The reverberations of the earlier wars between Germany and Britain, Britain and France, France and Spain were felt to the very ends of the earth. But wars outside the Quadrant, such as the fierce war between India and Pakistan in 1962, do not directly threaten the security and stability of our homes.

The Imperial Quadrant projects hard power, in the form of military, industrial, scientific and economic prowess, to the entire world. It also projects soft power, in the form of ideological and cultural influence, over the rest of the world. Social movements, philosophies, religions, progressive ideas, literature, music, cinema, television, journalism, social media and all other cultural expressions that originate in the Quadrant have a far greater influence on world culture than do cultural expressions that originate outside the Quadrant.

It could be argued that the domination of the Imperial Quadrant is essentially the domination of the white races over people of color, and most likely, it started that way. Today, however, the racial component is less significant. The United States, the most dominant power in the Quadrant, is on the verge of being minority white.

Also, just to take music as an example of cultural influence, American hip hop, a completely black musical form, has had an incredibly profound influence on international music, as have jazz and blues but to a lesser extent. Had they originated in Uganda or Bangladesh, it is highly unlikely that they would have had the same effect.

The lands outside the Quadrant do not project worldwide imperial power. Japan, China and India, the three giants of Asia, stand alone. There has never been unity among them, nor is there ever likely to be, and individually, they are not a threat to the world at large. Even Japan, which has shown regional military power and global economic power, is not a significant geopolitical factor on its own. China, with its billion plus population, does project economic power far beyond its borders, but its purpose is generating profit rather than projecting imperial power globally. There is not much danger of a Japanese, Chinese or Indian military presence in Europe or North America, but all these countries have been occupied at one time or another by a power from the Quadrant.

There can be no denying, of course, that the Asian powers are of critical importance to the world, but they are nonetheless not at the epicenter of world affairs. Their armies and fleets do not patrol the far corners of the globe. Their stock markets are not the economic trendsetters. Their major sports events and athletes do not make the headlines on all the continents, but Muhammad Ali, an American boxer, was once the most recognized name in the world. Their books, music and films do not receive the international distribution and canonization enjoyed by the artifacts of Western culture.

Further afield, the southern Pacific basin, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have never been extraterritorial powers. Nations such as Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, Nigeria and Brazil are important members of the international community, but they are not potential shakers of the world.

The internal histories of all these nations are therefore not central to overall world destiny, because whatever social and political form they take

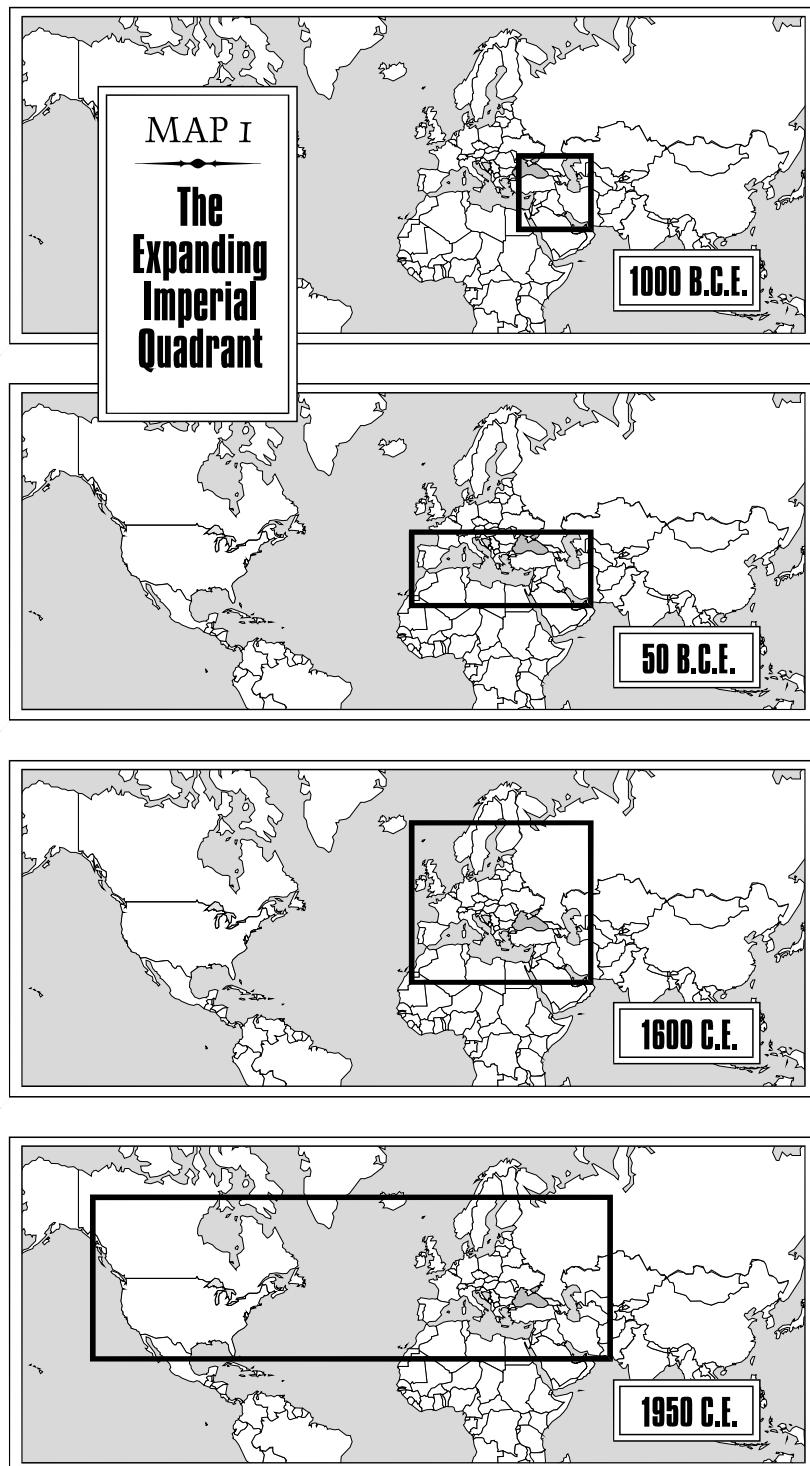
is not likely to upset the equilibrium of the rest of the world. Only in alliance with a power from the Quadrant do they take on global significance. Their experiences affect world destiny only if they influence the Quadrant. Otherwise, they are of practical interest primarily to their regional neighbors.

An understanding of the last thousand years of Indian history may be politically important for Bangladesh and Pakistan but not for the rest of the world. An understanding of the last thousand years of Germanic or Slavic history, however, will give us a glimpse into the future of world history. Therefore, we must seek the keys to the destiny of mankind in the Imperial Quadrant. The history of the West is the history of the world.

As we go back into history, the Imperial Quadrant shrinks. One hundred and fifty years ago, its western boundary was the Atlantic rather than the Pacific. Two thousand years ago, its northern boundary was the Alps. Three thousand years ago, its western boundary was the Nile River, and its northern boundary was Asia Minor. At this point, before the shift of power to Europe, the Quadrant included only Western Asia and the northeastern tip of Africa, but the civilization, ideas and religions of Europe all originated in the ancient Quadrant. The thoughts and feelings of the ancient Quadrant through every stage of its expansion live on today in one form or another. Therefore, we must look at the last three millennia of history in the Quadrant if we are to gain insight into our common destiny.

It is the thesis of this book that the underlying thread of Western history is the ideological conflict that arose in the Quadrant between the Jewish world view and the Greek world view. Human society always identifies an object of communal idolization, a deity, which serves as the fountainhead of aspirations and ideals. In the Jewish view, that deity is God. In the Greek view, that deity is Man. The unresolved struggle for dominion of the world, whether it will become a Kingdom of God or a Kingdom of Man, is the engine that drives world history. The Jewish and Greek positions are the polar opposites of Western civilization, and all major ideologies and

movements in the Western world fall somewhere into the magnetic field between them.



As we follow the progress of history, we see the spread of the Judeo-Greek ideological conflict across the centuries and millennia of Western history. We see it adapt repeatedly to changing social, political, technological and geographical conditions. We see it play a crucial role in the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the emergence of Christianity and Islam, the feudal Germanic kingdoms, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution and the birth of secular humanism, fascism and socialism in the modern era.

We cannot fully understand the Judeo-Greek conflict, however, unless we go back to their formative periods in ancient times. In the centuries of their youth, both the Jewish and Greek civilizations strove to create higher cultures that would elevate mankind. Both sought a state of expanded spirit and mind that totally transcended the purely physical condition. But these two cultures were so different from each other that when they met it immediately became clear that one would ultimately have to destroy the other. The ensuing life-and-death struggle is the history of the world.

Having defined the objectives of the study of global history, we can now return to the two questions with which this chapter began.