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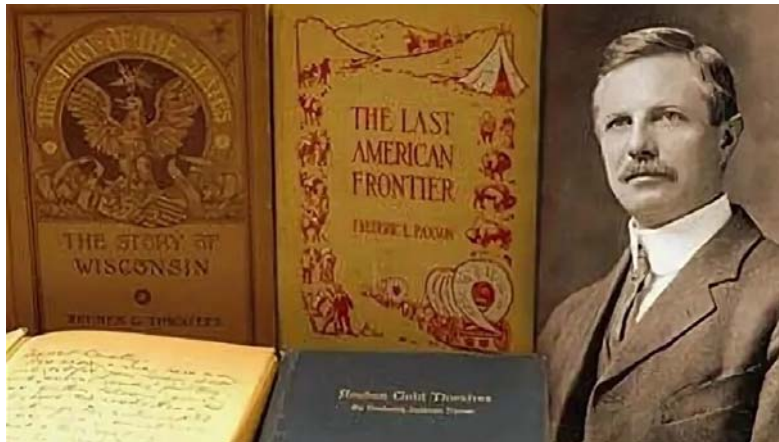
زبانهای اروپایی

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An Unorthodox Look at America's "Manifest Destiny" *Part 2*

The enduring legacy of the American frontier, as analyzed by Frederick Jackson Turner, continues to shape the nation's economic, political, and cultural identity, extending its influence far beyond its historical origins.



The Perennial Rebirth and the Death of Localism (Cont.)

Turner succinctly categorized 3 classes of "Frontiersmen". First, the pioneers, the ones who endeavor into the primitive newfound lands (Free lands). Second, is the emigrant who is willing to purchase land as real estate of value, created by the pioneer. Third, the capitalists and entrepreneurs, represent the final "civilizing" or "Americanising varnish to the created "City life".

When the Frontier turns into an Empire, the expanding quest to the west, mutates and replicates itself in all geographical and geopolitical direction

Shifting to the negative facet of the "Frontier", Turner then highlights some important points. One is that this westward mobility amounted to the "death of localism". Of course, these anti-

aboriginal sentiments might be temporarily subsided by both the “frontiersmen” and the anti-Frontier European English when the aboriginal local comes in handy as an ally in a war against the other side. The War of 1812 constitutes a very stark case in point in this regard.

Back to Turner, as he contends that this negative effect of the frontier in the West, has reached back east, and “affected profoundly the Atlantic coast and even the Old World”.

Might we note here, that the end of Localism may as well exceed the level of “Nationalization”, reaching all the way forward to connote “Globalisation” sentiments?

Turner stressed at this point that “the democracy born of free land, strong in selfishness and individualism, intolerant of administrative experience and education, and pressing individual liberty beyond its proper bounds”. We dare to add here: and pressing the delocalizing effect beyond its national bounds as well, can’t we?

Turner would probably approve of our daunting intellectual trespassing, as he revealed: “the influence of frontier conditions in permitting lax business honour, inflated paper currency and wild-cat banking. The colonial and revolutionary frontier was the region whence emanated many of the worst forms of an evil currency”.

Does this sound like aspects that were kept exclusive to the bounds of the “Brave New World”?

The Rude Strength of the Wild Cat

A wildcat bank is a financial institution that prints more currency than it is capable of redeeming in specie.

Historian Hugh Rockoff defined Wild-cat banking as “applies the term to free banks whose notes were backed by overvalued securities – bonds which were valued at par by the state, but which had a market value below par”. The financial crisis known as the “Panic of 1837” is a case in point.

This fiat currency issuance in the “Frontier”, by under-capitalized, unregulated, dispersed, and remotely located state-charted banks, caused recurring waves of bank closures and financial schemes/scams which left people with money in their hands and accounts that had zero value.

Sounds familiar?

The reader is very much welcomed and invited to expand this last inquiry, over all the highlighted aspects of the American “Frontier” spirit. That’s the whole idea, isn’t it?

As Shahid Bolsen of Middle Nation in an analytical video titled (Trump: Overseeing the Downfall). He stated: “*When I say western predatory capitalism, those adjectives are important because it’s not even really about capitalism in and of itself. It really mostly has to*

do with the culture and the “civilizational peculiarities of the West”. Adding: “They don’t act like that because of capitalism, their capitalism acts like this because of the way they are”.

When Turner names 3 characteristics of the Frontier in “Humor, bravery and rude strength”, one must let the judgment of what results from the mixing and these three components of the frontier concoction to the reader to avoid being too cynical.

Turner further quotes an editor of the Home Missionary: “While we sympathize in whatever tends to increase the physical resources and prosperity of our country, we can not forget that with all these dispersions into remote and still remoter corners of the land the supply of the means of grace is becoming relatively less and less”.

Does this scarcity of materialistic supply stop at the borders of the Atlantic or Pacific frontiers? At the time Turner’s essay was written and orated to the public, a denier might argue with a “Yes”. But if we choose to expand the Frontier approach to the alleged “scarcity” of resources to the contemporary world, the same denier would most certainly change his yes to a strict No.

A Necessary Turnerian Summary

The essay summarizes the Frontier characteristics in a powerful paragraph: “That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy, that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom. These are traits of the frontier”.

Following it with yet another potent clause: “He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise, But never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves”.

So, I guess it is safe for anyone to add, that when the Frontier turns into an Empire, the expanding quest to the west, mutates and replicates itself in all geographical and geopolitical directions.

Cited in Turner’s seminal 1893 essay, is a salient quote by Francis Grund, excerpted from his 1837 book titled “Americans in their Moral, Religious, and Social Relations:

“It appears then that the universal disposition of Americans to emigrate to the western wilderness, in order to enlarge their dominion over inanimate nature, is the actual result of an expansive power which is inherent in them, and which by continually agitating all classes

of society is constantly throwing a large portion of the whole population on the extreme confines of the State, in order to gain space for its development. Hardly is a new State or Territory formed before the same principle manifests itself again and gives rise to a further emigration, and so is it destined to go on until a physical barrier must finally obstruct its progress”

With this final excerpt from Turner’s pioneering speech, we rest our case, but it’s certain that the “Frontier” will not rest.

This article is but a modest effort to understand the country that is claiming the throne of the emperor of the contemporary world. In no way does it claim to represent the final end-all-be-all-encompassing input regarding this vast and crucial topic.

Tamer Mansour, February 16, 2025

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