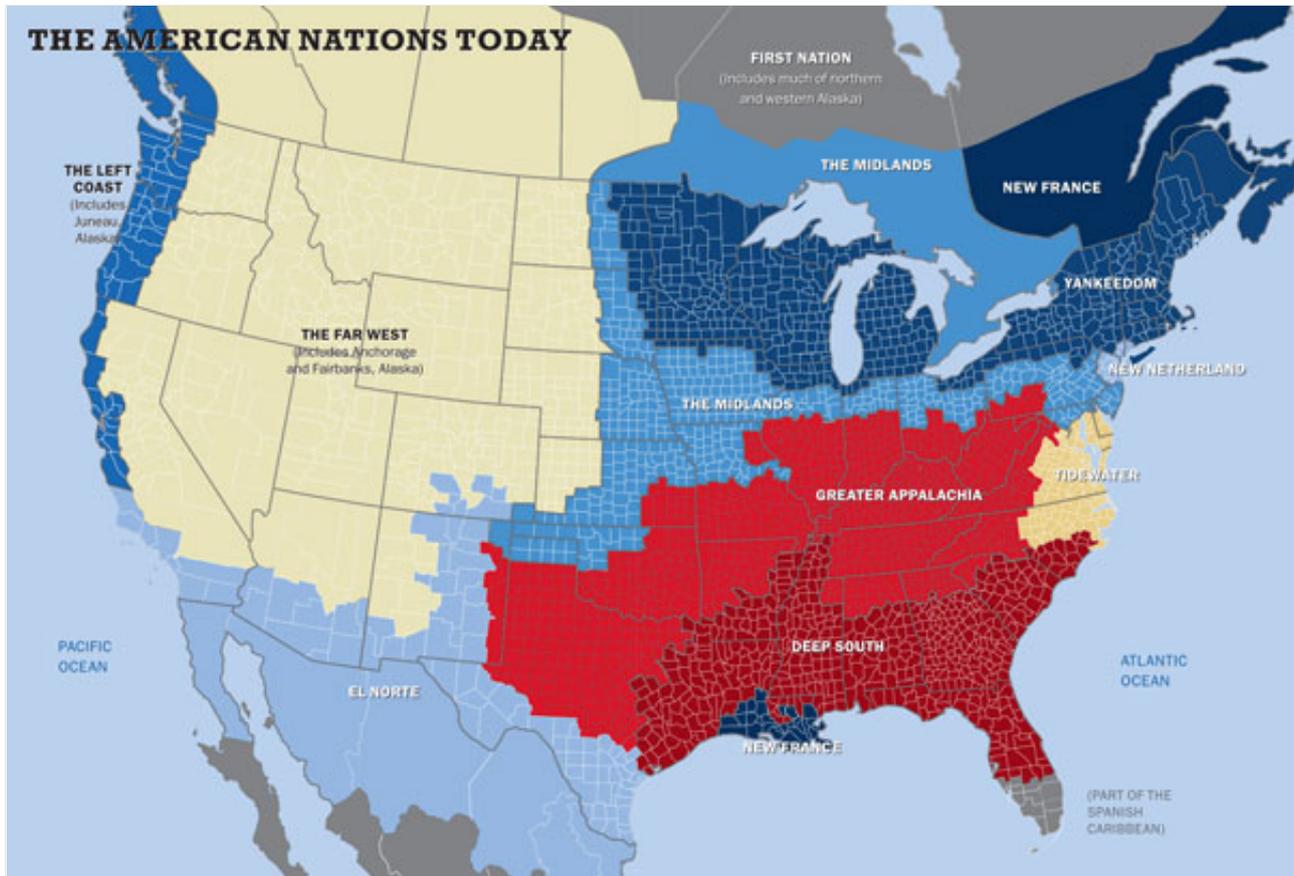


Which of the 11 American nations do you live in?

Red states and blue states? Flyover country and the coasts? How simplistic. Colin Woodard, a reporter at the Portland Press Herald and author of several books, says North America can be broken neatly into 11 separate nation-states, where dominant cultures explain our voting behaviors and attitudes toward everything from social issues to the role of government.

“The borders of my eleven American nations are reflected in many different types of maps — including maps showing the distribution of linguistic dialects, the spread of cultural artifacts, the prevalence of different religious denominations, and the county-by-county breakdown of voting in virtually every hotly contested presidential race in our history,” Woodard writes in the [Fall 2013 issue](#) of Tufts University’s alumni magazine. “Our continent’s famed mobility has been reinforcing, not dissolving, regional differences, as people increasingly sort themselves into like-minded communities.”

Take a look at [his map](#):



Courtesy Tufts Magazine

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Woodard lays out his map in the new book “American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America.” Here’s how he breaks down the continent:

Yankeedom: Founded by Puritans, residents in Northeastern states and the industrial Midwest tend to be more comfortable with government regulation. They value education and the common good more than other regions.

New Netherland: The Netherlands was the most sophisticated society in the Western world when New York was founded, Woodard writes, so it’s no wonder that the region has been a hub of global commerce. It’s also the region most accepting of historically persecuted populations.

The Midlands: Stretching from Quaker territory west through Iowa and into more populated areas of the Midwest, the Midlands are “pluralistic and organized around the middle class.” Government intrusion is unwelcome, and ethnic and ideological purity isn’t a priority.

Tidewater: The coastal regions in the English colonies of Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland and Delaware tend to respect authority and value tradition. Once the most powerful American nation, it began to decline during Westward expansion.

Greater Appalachia: Extending from West Virginia through the Great Smoky Mountains and into Northwest Texas, the descendants of Irish, English and Scottish settlers value individual liberty. Residents are “intensely suspicious of lowland aristocrats and Yankee social engineers.”

Deep South: Dixie still traces its roots to the caste system established by masters who tried to duplicate West Indies-style slave society, Woodard writes. The Old South values states’ rights and local control and fights the expansion of federal powers.

El Norte: Southwest Texas and the border region is the oldest, and most linguistically different, nation in the Americas. Hard work and self-sufficiency are prized values.

The Left Coast: A hybrid, Woodard says, of Appalachian independence and Yankee utopianism loosely defined by the Pacific Ocean on one side and coastal mountain ranges like the Cascades and the Sierra Nevadas on the other. The independence and innovation required of early explorers continues to manifest in places like Silicon Valley and the tech companies around Seattle.

The Far West: The Great Plains and the Mountain West were built by industry, made necessary by harsh, sometimes inhospitable climates. Far Westerners are intensely libertarian and deeply distrustful of big institutions, whether they are

railroads and monopolies or the federal government.

New France: Former French colonies in and around New Orleans and Quebec tend toward consensus and egalitarian, “among the most liberal on the continent, with unusually tolerant attitudes toward gays and people of all races and a ready acceptance of government involvement in the economy,” Woodard writes.

First Nation: The few First Nation peoples left — Native Americans who never gave up their land to white settlers — are mainly in the harshly Arctic north of Canada and Alaska. They have sovereignty over their lands, but their population is only around 300,000.

The clashes between the 11 nations play out in every way, from politics to social values. Woodard notes that states with the highest rates of violent deaths are in the Deep South, Tidewater and Greater Appalachia, regions that value independence and self-sufficiency. States with lower rates of violent deaths are in Yankeedom, New Netherland and the Midlands, where government intervention is viewed with less skepticism.

States in the Deep South are much more likely to have stand-your-ground laws than states in the northern “nations.” And more than 95 percent of executions in the United States since 1976 happened in the Deep South, Greater Appalachia, Tidewater and the Far West. States in Yankeedom and New Netherland have executed a collective total of just one person.

That doesn’t bode well for gun control advocates, Woodard concludes: “With such sharp regional differences, the idea that the United States would ever reach consensus on any issue having to do with violence seems far-fetched. The cultural gulf between Appalachia and Yankeedom, Deep South and New Netherland is simply too large. But it’s conceivable that some new alliance could form to tip the balance.”

Take a look at his [fascinating write-up here](#).

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