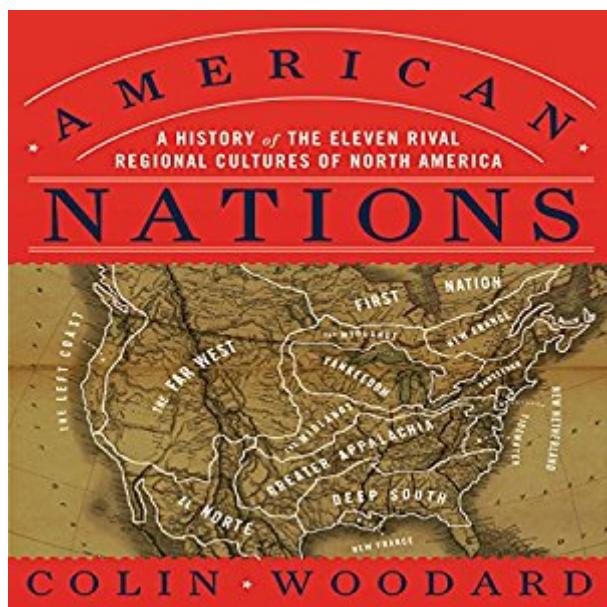


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American Nations: A History Of The Eleven Rival Regional Cultures Of North America



Synopsis

An illuminating history of North America's 11 rival cultural regions that explodes the red state/blue state myth. North America was settled by people with distinct religious, political, and ethnographic characteristics, creating regional cultures that have been at odds with one another ever since. Subsequent immigrants didn't confront or assimilate into an "American" or "Canadian" culture, but rather into one of the 11 distinct regional ones that spread over the continent, each staking out mutually exclusive territory. In *American Nations*, Colin Woodard leads us on a journey through the history of our fractured continent and the rivalries and alliances between its component nations, which conform to neither state nor international boundaries. He illustrates and explains why "American" values vary sharply from one region to another. Woodard reveals how intranational differences have played a pivotal role at every point in the continent's history, from the American Revolution and the Civil War to the tumultuous sixties and the "blue county/red county" maps of recent presidential elections. *American Nations* is a revolutionary and revelatory take on America's myriad identities and how the conflicts between them have shaped our past and are molding our future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I highly recommend this book, but I'm submitting a three-star review based on the book's very weak and undisciplined finish. I thought the first two-thirds of the book provided a well-documented and

well-thought-out presentation of America's regional differences and the history behind those differences. It was truly enlightening, even for an historian like myself. When writing the last third, however, the author clearly lost his objective discipline. Whereas the first two-thirds were well-reasoned and well-supported, the last third devolved into stereotypes and generalities, and contained more than a few downright errors, particularly concerning the modern Deep South and Greater Appalachia. I am an unapologetic Left Coaster with clear leanings toward activist Yankeeism, but even I was able to see Mr. Woodard's clear bias in the last third of the book. I found myself cringing more than a few times at the outright inaccuracies contained in his presentation of the modern South. I could list at least a half-dozen factual errors in his presentation concerning the practice and influence of Evangelical Christianity in the Bible Belt, for instance, but would rather not bog down this review with nit-picking. It would be great if Mr. Woodard could write a revised edition where he would exercise the same historical discipline in the last third of the book that he did for the first two-thirds. Such a presentation would truly be worthy of five stars. I still feel that this book is very much worth reading, but readers should approach the last third with a skeptical eye.

This book offers a breakdown and historical overview of what the author refers to as the 11 distinct ethno-geographical nations that make up the US and Canada. His broad history and analysis is mostly correct. You may be surprised at how well the history of colonial settlement, migrations, and assimilation connects and translates to today in a way that helps explain the socio-political characteristics and traits of the different American regions. The author is writing from a secular perspective, and is left-leaning politically, although it doesn't affect his analysis too much until the last chapters. I would recommend this book first of all for Americans to understand better what national culture they grew up in, based on where they are from, and how and why other American nations differ in their social and political habits. I'd also recommend it for those traveling or moving to a different location in the US or Canada. I've lived in several different parts of the US, and always noticed cultural differences of attitude, behavior, and treatment of outsiders, but I feel like I understand better where the lines are drawn after reading this book. (Hint, it doesn't normally coincide with state borders.) Woodard could have done a better job tracing the changes in religious belief and how the nations were impacted and altered by those changes, especially "Yankeedom." He doesn't seem to have a firm grasp on that aspect, not drawing a line between the public Christianity of the puritan fathers and the social activism of liberal churches and post-Christian New England, to mark when and how the change came about, and what impact it had on the nation. He seems to think that the Puritans deemphasized individual Christian faith, although of course those

who know the Puritans know that if anything they are often perceived as being too introspective about their faith. And New England was also the birthplace of the Baptists in America, an offshoot of the puritans, who later made such inroads in the Deep South. All in all it's a very useful book.

"American Nations" is a well thought out book. The author does an infallible job defining the terms and differences between state and nation while debunking the myth of the "American Nation". On a critical note, Woodward seems to lack critical footnotes on accusations and specific details that he espouses on the topics of the Tidewater and particular the Deep South. Woodard's anti-Southern bias is revealed by the end of the book.

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