

## Introduction

On a hot late-August day in 2010, television personality Glenn Beck held a rally on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on the forty-seventh anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Mr. Beck stood where Rev. King had stood and addressed the white, mostly middle-aged crowd encircling the National Mall's Reflecting Pool. "We are a nation, quite honestly, that is in about as good a shape as I am, and this is not very good," he joked. "We are dividing ourselves," he said, "but our values and our principles can unite us. We must discover them again."

It's a theme heard again and again in times of crisis: Americans have become divided on account of having strayed from the core principles on which their country was founded—a "firm reliance on divine providence" and "the idea that man can rule himself," in Mr. Beck's analysis—and must return to those shared values if unity is to be restored. When society was turned upside down by mass immigration at the turn of both the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, intellectuals counseled that America was in danger of losing the "Anglo-Protestant" culture and associated "American creed" that had supposedly kept the nation unified. In the aftermath of the tumultuous 1960s, conservatives like Irving Kristol denounced liberal intellectuals, philanthropists, and social workers for abandoning America's traditional capitalist values in favor of utopian social engineering: the liberals fervently defended these projects as promoting shared national principles of equality, justice, and freedom from oppression. With the United States allegedly divided between red states and blue ones in 2008, presidential candidate Barack Obama promised to "beat back the politics of fear, doubt, and cynicism" in favor of hope, a sentiment that had allegedly rallied Americans to rebel against Britain, fight and defeat Nazism, and face down segregation in the South. "We are choosing hope over fear," he said before the Iowa caucus. "We're choosing unity over division."<sup>1</sup>

Such calls for unity overlook a glaring historical fact: Americans have been deeply divided since the days of Jamestown and Plymouth. The original North American colonies were settled by people from distinct regions of the British Islands, and from France, the Netherlands, and Spain, each with their own religious, political, and ethnographic characteristics. Throughout the colonial period, they regarded one another as competitors—for land, settlers, and capital—and occasionally as enemies, as was the case during the English Civil War, when Royalist Virginia stood against Puritan Massachusetts, or when New Netherland and New France were invaded and occupied by English-speaking soldiers, statesmen, and merchants. Only when London began treating its colonies as a single unit—and enacted policies threatening to nearly all—did some of these distinct societies briefly come together to win a revolution and create a joint government. Nearly all of them would seriously consider leaving the Union in the eighty-year period after Yorktown; several went to war to do so in the 1860s. All of these centuries-old cultures are still with us today, and have spread their people, ideas, and influence across mutually exclusive bands of the continent. There isn't and never has been one America, but rather several Americas.

Any effort to “restore” fundamental American values runs into an even greater obstacle: Each of our founding cultures had its own set of cherished principles, and they often contradicted one another. By the middle of the eighteenth century, eight discrete Euro-American cultures had been established on the southern and eastern rims of North America. For generations these distinct cultural hearths developed in remarkable isolation from one another, consolidating characteristic values, practices, dialects, and ideals. Some championed individualism, others utopian social reform. Some believed themselves guided by divine purpose, others championed freedom of conscience and inquiry. Some embraced an Anglo-Saxon Protestant identity, others ethnic and religious pluralism. Some valued equality and democratic participation, others deference to a traditional aristocratic order. All of them continue to champion some version of their founding ideals in the present day. The United States had Founding Fathers, to be sure, but they were the grandfathers, great-grandfathers, or great-great-grandfathers of the men who met to sign the Declaration of Independence and to draft our first two constitutions. Our

true Founders didn't have an “original intent” we can refer back to in challenging times; they had original *intents*.

America's most essential and abiding divisions are not between red states and blue states, conservatives and liberals, capital and labor, blacks and whites, the faithful and the secular. Rather, our divisions stem from this fact: the United States is a federation comprised of the whole or part of eleven regional nations, some of which truly do not see eye to eye with one another. These nations respect neither state nor international boundaries, bleeding over the U.S. frontiers with Canada and Mexico as readily as they divide California, Texas, Illinois, or Pennsylvania. Six joined together to liberate themselves from British rule. Four were conquered but not vanquished by English-speaking rivals. Two more were founded in the West by a mix of American frontiersmen in the second half of the nineteenth century. Some are defined by cultural pluralism, others by their French, Spanish, or “Anglo-Saxon” heritage. Few have shown any indication that they are melting into some sort of unified American culture. On the contrary, since 1960 the fault lines between these nations have been growing wider, fueling culture wars, constitutional struggles, and ever more frequent pleas for unity.

I have very consciously used the term *nations* to describe these regional cultures, for by the time they agreed to share a federated state, each had long exhibited the characteristics of nationhood. Americans—because of this particular historical circumstance—often confuse the terms *state* and *nation*, and are among the only people in the world who use *statehood* and *nationhood* interchangeably. A *state* is a sovereign political entity like the United Kingdom, Kenya, Panama, or New Zealand, eligible for membership in the United Nations and inclusion on the maps produced by Rand McNally or the National Geographic Society. A *nation* is a group of people who share—or believe they share—a common culture, ethnic origin, language, historical experience, artifacts, and symbols. Some nations are presently stateless—the Kurdish, Palestinian, or Québécois nations, for instance. Some control and dominate their own *nation-state*, which they typically name for themselves, as in France, Germany, Japan, or Turkey. Conversely, there are plenty of states—some of them federated—that aren't dominated by a single nation, like Belgium, Switzerland, Malaysia, Canada and, indeed, the United States. North America's eleven nations are all stateless, though

at least two currently aspire to change that, and most of the others have tried to at one time or another.

This is the story of the eleven nations, and it explains much about who we North Americans are, where we've come from, and where we might be going.

*American Nations* reveals the history of North America's nations from the moment of their respective foundations to their present positions within the continent's three federations: Canada, Mexico, and the United States. It shows how their conflicting agendas shaped the scope and nature of the American Revolution, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and a chain of violent citizen uprisings against the early American Republic. While every American knows about the great intraregional conflict that was the Civil War, it was in fact neither unprecedented (both Appalachia and New England entertained secession in the decades after the revolution) nor strictly two-sided. (The war actually involved a complicated six-nation diplomatic minuet over the future of the West.) Northern Mexicans—including those who built the culture of what is now the extreme southwest of the United States—have for centuries seen themselves as separate from their purported countrymen in central and southern Mexico; they rallied behind numerous secession schemes, including the Texas Revolution of 1836. English-speaking Canadians endlessly ponder the weakness of their identity, and it's no wonder: their federation is comprised of very strong Québecois and far northern aboriginal entities and the northward extensions of four English-speaking regional nations whose cultural cores now lie in the United States.

Disregard the conventional map of North America, with its depiction of a continent neatly divided into three federations, thirteen Canadian provinces and territories, thirty-one Mexican states, and fifty American ones. For the most part, those boundaries are as arbitrary as those chosen by European colonial powers to divide up the African continent. The lines on the map slash through cohesive cultures, creating massive cultural fissures in states like Maryland, Oregon, or New York, whose residents have often found they have more in common with their neighbors in other states than they do with one another. Banish the meaningless "regions" with which we try to analyze national politics—"the Northeast," "the

West," "the Midwest," or "the South"—whose boundaries are marked by those of their constituent states in complete disregard for the continent's actual settlement history and sectional rivalries. The continent's states, provinces, and federations do matter, of course, as they are the official forums through which political power is exercised and expressed. But on carefully examining events of the past four centuries, one realizes these jurisdictions are illusions that mask the real forces that have always driven the affairs of our sprawling continent: the eleven stateless nations of North America.

So what are these nations? What are their defining characteristics? What parts of the continent does each control? Where did they come from? Let me briefly introduce each of them, their spheres of dominance, and the names I have chosen for each.

**Yankeeedom** was founded on the shores of Massachusetts Bay by radical Calvinists as a new Zion, a religious utopia in the New England wilderness. From the outset it was a culture that put great emphasis on education, local political control, and the pursuit of the "greater good" of the community, even if it required individual self-denial. Yankees have the greatest faith in the potential of government to improve people's lives, tending to see it as an extension of the citizenry, and a vital bulwark against the schemes of grasping aristocrats, corporations, or outside powers. For more than four centuries, Yankees have sought to build a more perfect society here on Earth through social engineering, relatively extensive citizen involvement in the political process, and the aggressive assimilation of foreigners. Settled by stable, educated families, Yankeeedom has always had a middle-class ethos and considerable respect for intellectual achievement. Its religious zeal has waned over time, but not its underlying drive to improve the world and the set of moral and social values that scholars have sometimes described as "secular Puritanism."

From its New England core, Yankee culture spread with its settlers across upper New York State; the northern strips of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa; parts of the eastern Dakotas; and on up into Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Canadian Maritimes. It has been locked in nearly perpetual combat with the Deep South for control of the federal government since the moment such a thing existed.

While short-lived, the seventeenth-century Dutch colony of **New Netherland** had a lasting impact on the continent's development by laying down the cultural DNA for what is now Greater New York City. Modeled on its Dutch namesake, New Amsterdam was from the start a global commercial trading society: multi-ethnic, multi-religious, speculative, materialistic, mercantile, and free trading, a raucous, not entirely democratic city-state where no one ethnic or religious group has ever truly been in charge. New Netherland also nurtured two Dutch innovations considered subversive by most other European states at the time: a profound tolerance of diversity and an unflinching commitment to the freedom of inquiry. Forced on the other nations at the Constitutional Convention, these ideals have been passed down to us as the Bill of Rights.

Despite the defeat of the Dutch by the English in 1664, New Netherland has retained its fundamental values and societal model, having long ago replaced Amsterdam as the leading world center of Western commerce, finance, and publishing. Its territory has shrunk over the centuries, its southern reaches (Delaware and southern New Jersey) absorbed by the Midlands, its northern ones (Albany and the upper Hudson Valley) by Yankeeedom. Today it comprises the five boroughs of New York City, the lower Hudson Valley, northern New Jersey, western Long Island, and southwestern Connecticut (where Red Sox fans are outnumbered by Yankee fans). As a center of global commerce, New Netherland has long been the front door for immigrants, who've made it the most densely populated part of North America. Its population—19 million at this writing—is greater than that of many European nations, and its influence over this continent's media, publishing, fashion and intellectual and economic life is hard to overstate.)

Arguably the most "American" of the nations, **the Midlands** was founded by English Quakers, who welcomed people of many nations and creeds to their utopian colonies on the shores of Delaware Bay. Pluralistic and organized around the middle class, the Midlands spawned the culture of Middle America and the Heartland, where ethnic and ideological purity have never been a priority, government has been seen as an unwelcome intrusion, and political opinion has been moderate, even apathetic. The only part of British North America to have a non-British majority in 1775, the Midlands has long been an ethnic mosaic, with people of

German descent—not "Anglo-Saxons"—comprising the largest group since the late 1600s. Like Yankees, the Midlanders believe society should be organized to benefit ordinary people, but they are extremely skeptical of top-down governmental intervention, as many of their ancestors fled from European tyrannies. The Midlands is home to a dialect long considered "standard American," a bellwether for national political attitudes, and the key "swing vote" in every national debate from the abolition of slavery to the 2008 presidential contest.

From its cultural hearth in southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and northern Delaware and Maryland, Midland culture spread through much of the Heartland: central Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; northern Missouri; most of Iowa; and the less-arid eastern halves of South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. It shares the key "border cities" of Chicago (with the Yankees) and St. Louis (with Greater Appalachia). It also has an important extension in southern Ontario, where many Midlanders emigrated after the American Revolution, forming the central core of English-speaking Canada. While less cognizant of its national identity, the Midlands is nonetheless an enormously influential moderating force in continental politics, as it agrees with only part of each of its neighbors' strident agendas.

**Tidewater**, the most powerful nation during the colonial period and the Early Republic, has always been a fundamentally conservative region, with a high value placed on respect for authority and tradition and very little on equality or public participation in politics. Such attitudes are not surprising, given that it was founded by the younger sons of southern English gentry, who aimed to reproduce the semifeudal manorial society of the English countryside, where economic, political, and social affairs were run by and for landed aristocrats. These self-identified "Cavaliers" largely succeeded in their aims, turning the lowlands of Virginia, Maryland, southern Delaware, and northeastern North Carolina into a country gentleman's paradise, with indentured servants and, later, slaves taking the part of the peasants.

Tidewater elites played a central role in the foundation of the United States and were responsible for many of the aristocratic inflections in the Constitution, including the Electoral College and Senate, whose members were to be appointed by legislators, not chosen by the electorate. But the

region's power waned in the 1830s and 1840s, its elite generally following the lead of the planters of the ascendant Deep South in matters of national political importance. Today it is a nation in decline, rapidly losing its influence, cultural cohesion, and territory to its Midland neighbors. Its undoing was a matter of geography: it was blocked by rivals from expanding over the Appalachian Mountains.

**Greater Appalachia** was founded in the early eighteenth century by wave upon wave of rough, bellicose settlers from the war-ravaged borderlands of Northern Ireland, northern England, and the Scottish lowlands. Lampooned by writers, journalists, filmmakers, and television producers as "rednecks," "hillbillies," "crackers," and "white trash," these clannish Scots-Irish, Scots, and north English frontiersmen spread across the highland South and on into the southern tiers of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; the Arkansas and Missouri Ozarks; the eastern two-thirds of Oklahoma; and the Hill Country of Texas, clashing with Indians, Mexicans, and Yankees as they migrated.

In the British Isles, this culture had formed in a state of near-constant war and upheaval, fostering a warrior ethic and a deep commitment to individual liberty and personal sovereignty. Intensely suspicious of aristocrats and social reformers alike, these American Borderlanders despised Yankee teachers, Tidewater lords, and Deep Southern aristocrats. In the Civil War much of the region fought for the Union, with secession movements in western Virginia (creating West Virginia), eastern Tennessee, and northern Alabama. During Reconstruction the region resisted the Yankee effort to liberate African slaves, driving it into a lasting alliance with its former enemies: the overlords of the Tidewater and Deep Southern lowlands of Dixie. The Borderlander's combative culture has provided a large proportion of the nation's military, from officers like Andrew Jackson, Davy Crockett, and Douglas MacArthur to the enlisted men fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. They also gave the continent bluegrass and country music, stock car racing, and Evangelical fundamentalism. Greater Appalachia's people have long had a poor awareness of their cultural origins. One scholar of the Scots-Irish has called them "the people with no name." When U.S. census takers ask Appalachian people what their nationality or ethnicity is, they almost always answer "American" or even "Native American."<sup>2</sup>

**The Deep South** was founded by Barbados slave lords as a West Indies-style slave society, a system so cruel and despotic that it shocked even its seventeenth-century English contemporaries. For most of American history, the region has been the bastion of white supremacy, aristocratic privilege, and a version of classical Republicanism modeled on the slave states of the ancient world, where democracy was a privilege of the few and enslavement the natural lot of the many. It remains the least democratic of the nations, a one-party entity where race remains the primary determinant of one's political affiliations.

Beginning from its Charleston beachhead, the Deep South spread apartheid and authoritarianism across the Southern lowlands, eventually encompassing most of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana; western Tennessee; and the southeastern parts of North Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas. Its territorial ambitions in Latin America frustrated, in the 1860s it dragged the federation into a horrific war in an attempt to form its own nation-state, backed by reluctant allies in Tidewater and some corners of Appalachia! After successfully resisting a Yankee-led occupation, it became the center of the states' rights movement, racial segregation, and labor and environmental deregulation. It's also the wellspring of African American culture, and four decades after it was forced to allow blacks to vote, it remains politically polarized on racial grounds! Having forged an uneasy "Dixie" coalition with Appalachia and Tidewater in the 1870s, the Deep South is locked in an epic battle with Yankeeedom and its Left Coast and New Netherland allies for the future of the federation.

**New France** is the most overtly nationalistic of the nations, possessing a nation-state-in-waiting in the form of the Province of Québec. Founded in the early 1600s, New French culture blends the folkways of ancient régime northern French peasantry with the traditions and values of the aboriginal people they encountered in northeastern North America. Down-to-earth, egalitarian, and consensus-driven, the New French have recently been demonstrated by pollsters to be far and away the most liberal people on the continent. Long oppressed by their British overlords, the New French have, since the mid-twentieth century, imparted many of their attitudes to the Canadian federation, where multiculturalism and negotiated consensus are treasured. They are indirectly responsible for the

reemergence of First Nation, which is either the oldest or newest of the nations, depending on how you look at it.<sup>3</sup>

Today New France includes the lower third of Québec, northern and northeastern New Brunswick, and the Acadian (or "Cajun") enclaves of southern Louisiana. (New Orleans is a border city, mixing New French and Deep Southern elements.) It is the nation most likely to secure an independent state, although it would first have to negotiate a partition of Québec with the inhabitants of First Nation.

El Norte is the oldest of the Euro-American nations, dating back to the late sixteenth century, when the Spanish empire founded Monterrey, Saltillo, and other northern outposts. Today, this resurgent nation spreads from the United States–Mexico border for a hundred miles or more in either direction. It encompasses south and west Texas, southern California and the Imperial Valley, southern Arizona, most of New Mexico, and parts of Colorado, as well as the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja California. Overwhelmingly Hispanic, it has long been a hybrid between Anglo- and Spanish America, with an economy oriented toward the United States rather than Mexico City.

Most Americans are well aware that the United States' southern borderlands are a place apart, where Hispanic language, culture, and societal norms dominate. Fewer realize that among Mexicans, the people of Mexico's northern border states are seen as overtly Americanized. Nortños ("northerners") have a well-earned reputation for being more independent, self-sufficient, adaptable, and work-centered than Mexicans from the more densely populated hierarchical society of the Mexican core. Long a hotbed of democratic reform and revolutionary sentiment, the northern Mexican states have more in common with the Hispanic borderlands of the southwestern United States—historically, culturally, economically, and gastronomically—than they do with the rest of Mexico. The borderlands on both sides of the United States–Mexico boundary are really part of a single *nortño* culture.<sup>4</sup>

Split by an increasingly militarized border, El Norte in some ways resembles Germany during the Cold War: two peoples with a common culture separated from one another by a large wall. Despite the wishes of their political masters in Washington, D.C., and Mexico City, many

*nortños* would prefer to federate to form a third national state of their own. Charles Truxillo, a professor of Chicano studies at the University of New Mexico, has predicted this sovereign state will be a reality by the end of the twenty-first century. He's even given it a name: *La República del Norte*. But regardless of any future nation-state aspirations, El Norte is going to be an increasingly influential force within the United States. The Pew Research Center predicts that by 2050 the proportion of the U.S. population that self-identifies as Hispanic will reach 29 percent, more than double the figure in 2005. Much of that growth will take place in El Norte, where Hispanics already constitute a majority, increasing the region's relative influence in state and national politics. Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes has predicted the borderlands will become an amalgamated, interdependent culture in the twenty-first century, so long as tolerance prevails. "I have always said it is a scar, not a border," he remarked. "But we don't want the scar to bleed again. We want the scar to heal."<sup>5</sup>

A Chile-shaped nation pinned between the Pacific and the Cascade and Coast mountain ranges, the Left Coast extends in a strip from Monterey, California, to Juneau, Alaska, including four decidedly progressive metropolises: San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver. A wet region of staggering natural beauty, it was originally colonized by two groups: merchants, missionaries, and woodsmen from New England (who arrived by sea and controlled the towns) and farmers, prospectors, and fur traders from Greater Appalachia (who arrived by wagon and dominated the countryside). Originally slated by Yankees to become a "New England on the Pacific"—and the target of a dedicated Yankee missionary effort—the Left Coast retained a strong strain of New England intellectualism and idealism even as it embraced a culture of individual fulfillment.

Today it combines the Yankee faith in good government and social reform with a commitment to individual self-exploration and discovery, a combination that has proven to be fecund. The Left Coast has been the birthplace of the modern environmental movement and the global information revolution (it is home to Microsoft, Google, Amazon, Apple, Twitter, and Silicon Valley), and the cofounder (along with New Netherland) of the gay rights movement, the peace movement, and the cultural revolution of the 1960s. Ernest Callenbach's 1975 sci-fi novel *Ecotopia* imagined the U.S. portion of the region as having broken off into a separate,

environmentally stable nation at odds with the rest of the continent. The modern secessionist movement seeks to create the sovereign state of Cascadia by adding in British Columbia and southern Alaska as well, creating a "bioregional cooperative commonwealth." The closest ally of Yankeeedom, it battles constantly against the libertarian-corporate agenda of its neighbor, the Far West.

Climate and geography have shaped all of the nations to some extent, but the Far West is the only one where environmental factors truly trumped ethnic ones. High, dry, and remote, the interior west presented conditions so severe that they effectively destroyed those who tried to apply the farming and lifestyle techniques used in Greater Appalachia, the Midlands, or other nations. With minor exceptions this vast region couldn't be effectively colonized without the deployment of vast industrial resources: railroads, heavy mining equipment, ore smelters, dams, and irrigation systems. As a result, the colonization of much of the region was facilitated and directed by large corporations headquartered in distant New York, Boston, Chicago, or San Francisco, (OH) by the federal government itself, which controlled much of the land. Even if they didn't work for one of the companies, settlers were dependent on the railroads for transportation of goods, people, and products to and from far-off markets and manufacturing centers. Unfortunately for the settlers, their region was treated as an internal colony, exploited and despoiled for the benefit of the seaboard nations. Despite significant industrialization during World War II and the Cold War, the region remains in a state of semi-dependency. Its political class tends to revile the federal government for interfering in its affairs—a stance that often aligns it with the Deep South—while demanding it continue to receive federal largesse. It rarely challenges its corporate masters, however, who retain near-Gilded Age levels of influence over Far Western affairs. Today, the nation encompasses all of the interior west of the 100th meridian from the northern boundary of El Norte through to the southern frontier of First Nation, including northern Arizona; the interiors of California, Washington, and Oregon; much of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alaska; portions of Yukon and the Northwest Territories; the arid western halves of the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas; and all or nearly all of Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada.

Like the Far West, **First Nation** encompasses a vast region with a hostile climate: the boreal forests, tundra, and glaciers of the far north. The difference, however, is that its indigenous inhabitants still occupy the area in force—most of them having never given up their land by treaty—and still retain cultural practices and knowledge that allow them to survive in the region on its own terms. Native Americans have recently begun reclaiming their sovereignty and have won both considerable autonomy in Alaska and Nunavut and a self-governing nation-state in Greenland, which stands on the threshold of full independence from Denmark. As inhabitants of a new—and very old—nation, First Nation's people have a chance to put native North America back on the map culturally, politically, and environmentally.

First Nation is rapidly taking control of vast portions of what were previously the northern fringes of the Far West, including much of Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Labrador; the entirety of Nunavut and Greenland; the northern tier of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta; much of northwestern British Columbia; and the northern two-thirds of Québec.

These eleven nations have been hiding in plain sight throughout our history. You see them outlined on linguists' dialect maps, cultural anthropologists' maps of material culture regions, cultural geographers' maps of religious regions, campaign strategists' maps of political geography, and historians' maps of the pattern of settlement across the continent. California is split into three nations, and the divide is visible, plain as day, on a map of which counties voted for or against same-sex marriage in 2008. The Yankee-settled portion of Ohio is evident on the county maps of the 2000 and 2004 elections: a strip of blue across the top of a largely red state. Greater Appalachia is rendered almost perfectly in the Census Bureau's map of the largest reported ancestry group by county: its citizens inhabit virtually the only counties in the country where a majority answered "American." In 2008 Gallup asked more than 350,000 Americans if religion was an important part of their daily lives. The top ten states to answer affirmatively were all controlled by Borderlanders and/or Deep Southerners, while eight of the bottom ten were all states dominated by Yankees, with Massachusetts and the three northern New England states ranking

the least religious of all. Mississippians were more than twice as likely to answer yes to Gallup's question as Vermonters. In 2007 the most highly educated state (in terms of the percentage of people with advanced degrees) was Yankee Massachusetts (16.0), the least, Deep Southern Mississippi (6.4). The top of the list included Yankee-controlled Connecticut (no. 3), Vermont (no. 6), and Rhode Island (no. 9), as well as New York (no. 5); the bottom included Appalachian-controlled Arkansas (no. 48) and West Virginia (no. 46). Which states first joined together in a carbon-trading compact to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? The ones controlled by Yankees and Left Coasters. Which ones have laws banning labor-union shop contracts? All the ones controlled by Deep Southerners, and most of those in Appalachia. Which counties vote Republican in the Pacific northwest and northern California? Those in the Far West. Which vote Democratic? Those in the Left Coast. Which parts of Texas and New Mexico vote overwhelmingly for Democrats? Those belonging to El Norte. National affinities consistently trump state ones, and they've done so for centuries.<sup>6</sup>

I'm not the first person to have recognized the importance of these regional cultures to North American history, politics, and governance. Kevin Phillips, a Republican Party campaign strategist, identified the distinct boundaries and values of several of these nations in 1969, and used them to accurately prophesy the Reagan Revolution in his *Emerging Republican Majority*, a politico cult classic. In 1981 *Washington Post* editor Joel Garreau wrote *The Nine Nations of North America*, a best seller that observed that the continent was divided into rival power blocs that corresponded to few national, state, or provincial boundaries. His regional paradigm argued the future would be shaped by the competing, conflicting aspirations of these North American nations. But because his book was ahistorical—a snapshot in time, not an exploration of the past—Garreau couldn't accurately identify the nations, how they formed, or what their respective aspirations were.

Brandeis University historian David Hackett Fischer detailed the origins and early evolution of four of these nations—the ones I call Yankee-dom, the Midlands, Tidewater, and Greater Appalachia—in his 1989 classic *Albion's Seed*, and added New France in *Champlain's Dream*, published twenty years later. Russell Shorto described the salient characteristics of

New Netherland in *The Island at the Center of the World* in 2004. Virginia senator Jim Webb's *Born Fighting* (2005) is, in effect, a plea to his fellow Borderlanders for a national self-awakening, while Michael Lind of the New America Foundation has called on his fellow Texans to unseat autocratic Deep Southern rule in favor of the progressive Appalachian strain of the Hill Country. Awareness of these American nations has been slowly gestating for the past several decades. This book aims to see them finally delivered into the popular consciousness.

Any argument that claims to identify a series of discrete nations on the North American continent must address the obvious objection: can nations founded centuries ago really have maintained their distinct identities to the present day? We're a continent of immigrants and internal migrants, after all, and those tens of millions of newcomers representing every possible culture, race, and creed surely must have diluted and dispersed those old cultures. Is it not the height of fancy to suggest New York City's distinctive culture is a heritage of having been founded by the Dutch, given that people of Dutch ancestry now account for just 0.2 percent of its population? In Massachusetts and Connecticut—those most Yankee of states—the largest ethnic groups are the Irish and Italians respectively. One might naturally assume that the continent's nations must have long since melted into one another, creating a rich, pluralistic stew. But, as we will see, the expected course of events isn't what actually happened. North American life has been immeasurably enriched by the myriad cultures and peoples who settled there. I personally celebrate our continent's diversity, but I also know that my great-grandfather's people in western Iowa—Lutheran farmers from the island of Funen in Denmark—assimilated into the dominant culture of the Midland Midwest, even as they contributed to its evolution. My Irish Catholic great-grandparents worked the iron and copper mines of the interior West, but their children grew up to be Far Westerners. My great-great-grandmother's family fled from the same part of Ireland as their future cousins-in-law, but the mines they found work in happened to be in Québec, so their descendants grew up speaking French and traveling on aboriginal snowshoes. All of them undoubtedly altered the places to which they emigrated—for the better, I hope—but over the generations



they assimilated into the culture around them, not the other way around. They may have embraced or rejected the dominant culture, but they didn't replace it. And it wasn't an "American" or "Canadian" culture they confronted and negotiated with or against; it was one of the respective "national" cultures identified earlier.<sup>7</sup>

Cultural geographers came to similar conclusions decades ago. Wilbur Zelinsky of Pennsylvania State University formulated the key theory in 1973, which he called the Doctrine of First Effective Settlement. "Whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been," Zelinsky wrote. "Thus, in terms of lasting impact, the activities of a few hundred, or even a few score, initial colonizers can mean much more for the cultural geography of a place than the contributions of tens of thousands of new immigrants a few generations later." The colonial Atlantic seaboard, he noted, was a prime example. The Dutch may be all but extinct in the lower Hudson Valley—and landed aristocracy may have lost control of the Chesapeake country—but their influence carries on all the same.<sup>8</sup>

Our continent's famed mobility—and the transportation and communications technology that foster it—has been reinforcing, not dissolving, the differences between the nations. As journalist Bill Bishop and sociologist Robert Cushing demonstrated in *The Big Sort* (2008), since 1976 Americans have been relocating to communities where people share their values and worldview. As a result, the proportion of voters living in counties that give landslide support to one party or another (defined as more than a 20 percent margin of victory) increased from 26.8 percent in 1976 to 48.3 percent in 2004. The flows of people are significant, with a net 13 million people moving from Democratic to Republican landslide counties between 1990 and 2006 alone. Immigrants, by contrast, avoided the deep red counties, with only 5 percent living in them in 2004, compared with 21 percent in deep blue counties. What Bishop and Cushing didn't realize is that virtually every one of their Democratic landslide counties is located in either Yankeeedom, the Left Coast, or El Norte, while the Republican ones dominate Greater Appalachia and Tidewater and

virtually monopolize the Far West and Deep South. (The only exceptions to this pattern are the African American majority counties of the Deep South and Tidewater, which are overwhelmingly Democratic.) As Americans sort themselves into like-minded communities, they're also sorting themselves into like-minded nations.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, examining this book's national maps, readers might take issue with a particular county or city belonging to one nation or another. Cultural boundaries aren't usually as clear-cut as political ones, after all, and a particular region can be under the influence of two or more cultures simultaneously. Examples abound: Alsace-Lorraine on the Franco-German border; Istanbul, straddling the borders of Orthodox Byzantium and Turkic Islam; Fairfield County, Connecticut, torn between the discordant gravitational fields of New England and the Big Apple. Cultural geographers recognize this factor as well and map cultural influences by zones: a *core* or nucleus from which its power springs, a *domain* of lesser intensity, and a wider *sphere* of mild but noticeable influence. All of these zones can shift over time and, indeed, there are plenty of examples of cultures losing dominance over even their core and effectively ceasing to exist as a nation, like the Byzantines or the Cherokee. The map immediately preceding this Introduction has boundaries based on the core and domain of each nation circa 2010. If we added each nation's sphere, there would be a great deal of overlap, with multiple nations projecting influence over southern Louisiana, central Texas, western Québec, or greater Baltimore. These boundaries are not set in stone: they've shifted before and they'll undoubtedly shift again as each nation's influence waxes and wanes. Culture is always on the move.<sup>10</sup>

Delve deeply into almost any particular locality and you'll likely find plenty of minority enclaves or even micronations embedded within the major ones I've outlined here. One could argue that the Mormons have created a separate nation in the heart of the Far West, or that Milwaukee is a Midlander city stranded in the midst of the Yankee Midwest. You might argue for the Kentucky Bluegrass Country being a Tidewater enclave embedded in Greater Appalachia, or that the Navajo have developed a nation-state in the Far West. There's a distinct Highland Scots culture on Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island and on North Carolina's Cape Fear peninsula. One could write an entire book about the acute

cultural and historical differences between “Yankee core” Maine and Massachusetts—indeed, this is a subject I treated in *The Lobster Coast* (2004). Digging into regional cultures can be like peeling an onion. I’ve stopped where I have because I believe the values, attitudes, and political preferences of my eleven nations truly dominate the territories they’ve been assigned, trumping the implications of finer-grain analysis.

I’ve also intentionally chosen not to discuss several other nations that influence the continent but whose core territories lie outside what is now the United States and Canada. Cuban-dominated South Florida is the financial and transportation hub of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Hawaii is part of the greater Polynesian cultural nation and was once a nation-state of its own. Central Mexico and Central America are, of course, part of the North American continent and include perhaps a half-dozen distinct nations—Hispano-Aztec, Greater Mayan, Anglo-Creole, and so on. There are even scholars who make persuasive arguments that African American culture constitutes the periphery of a larger Creole nation with its core in Haiti and a domain extending over much of the Caribbean basin and on to Brazil. These regional cultures are certainly worthy of exploration, but as a practical matter, a line needed to be drawn somewhere. Washington, D.C., is also an anomaly: a gigantic political arena for the staging of intranational blood-sport competitions, where one team prefers to park their cars in the Tidewater suburbs, the other in the Midland ones.

Finally, I’d like to underscore the fact that becoming a member of a nation usually has nothing to do with genetics and everything to do with culture.\* One doesn’t *inherit* a national identity the way one gets hair, skin, or eye color; one *acquires* it in childhood or, with great effort, through voluntary assimilation later in life. Even the “blood” nations of Europe support this assertion. A member of the (very nationalistic) Hungarian nation might be descended from Austrian Germans, Russian Jews, Serbs, Croats, Slovaks, or any combination thereof, but if he speaks

\*Some national groups would deny membership to racial or religious minorities. At this writing, Germans are still coming to grips with whether a German-speaking Muslim Turk born in Germany can really be a “German,” whereas a French-born person of West African heritage can claim French identity with relative ease.

Hungarian and embraces Hungarian-ness, he’s regarded as being just as Hungarian as any “pure-blooded” Magyar descendant of King Árpád. In a similar vein, nobody would deny French president Nicolas Sarkozy’s Frenchness, even though his father was a Hungarian noble and his maternal grandfather a Greek-born Sephardic Jew.\* The same is true of the North American nations: if you talk like a Midlander, act like a Midlander, and think like a Midlander, you’re probably a Midlander, regardless of whether your parents or grandparents came from the Deep South, Italy, or Eritrea.<sup>11</sup>

The remainder of the book is divided into four parts organized more or less chronologically. The first covers the critical colonial period, with chapters on the creation and founding characteristics of the first eight Euro-American nations. The second exposes how intranational struggles shaped the American Revolution, the federal Constitution, and critical events in the Early Republic. The third shows how the nations expanded their influence across mutually exclusive sections of the continent, and how the related intranational struggle to control and define the federal government triggered the Civil War. The final part covers events of the late nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first centuries, including the formation of the “new” nations and the intensification of intranational differences over immigration and the “American” identity, religion and social reform, foreign policy and war, and, of course, continental politics. The epilogue offers some thoughts on the road ahead.

Let the journey begin.

\*When a woman of North African descent questioned him on his roots on the campaign trail, Sarkozy’s response made his attitude toward national identity clear: “You are not Algerian, but French. And I am not Hungarian.”