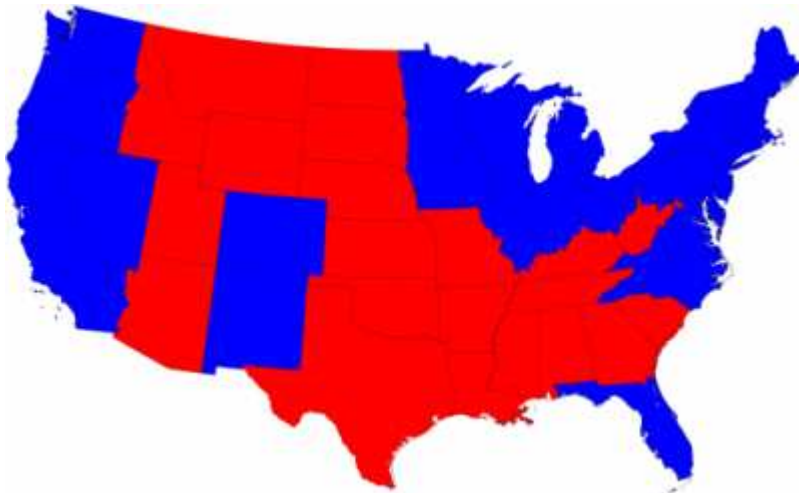


Transforming the Electoral Map: Beyond Red and Blue

Emily Ekins - Oct. 30, 2012

By October of a presidential election year, partisan tribal mentality has set in, and the news cycle is dominated by the horse race between the red and blue teams. America is divided up according to whether a simple majority in each state says they plan to vote for the Republican or Democratic presidential candidate.

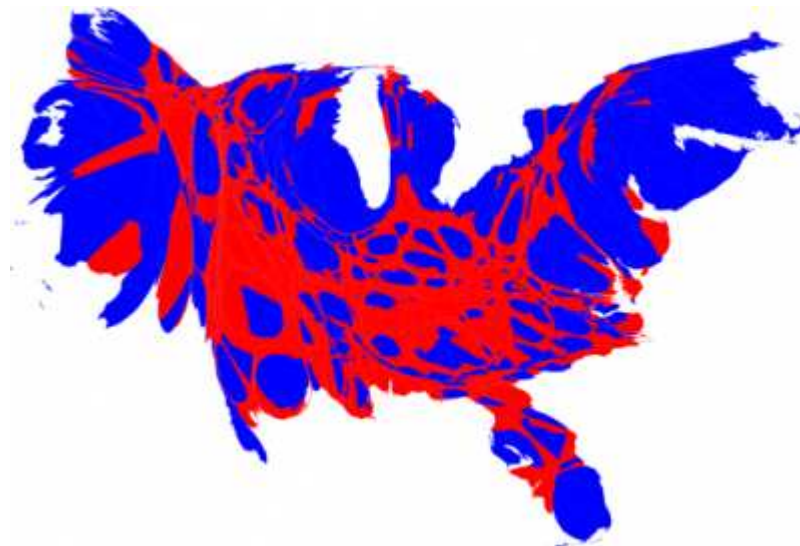
Here is the conventional electoral map from the 2008 presidential election. (For an up-to-date 2012 electoral map, visit [Real Clear Politics](#)). The [following maps](#) were created by Professor Mark Newman at the University of Michigan.



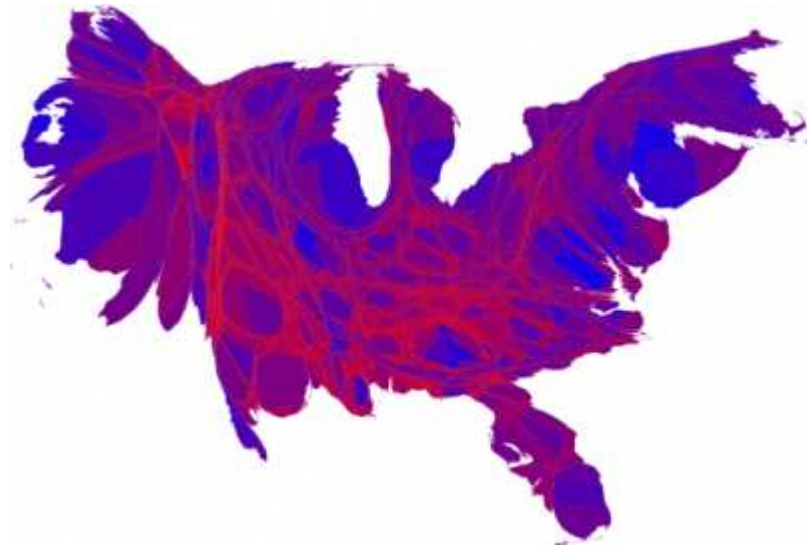
The first problem with the above map is that it overemphasizes acreage over population size. Dr. Newman makes use of a cartogram which rescales each state's size according to its population.



However, coloring each resized state based on simple majorities overlooks the many Americans who reside in counties with different political views, like Austin, TX, or Orange County, CA.



Moreover, coloring each county based on simple majorities still overlooks the ideological composition within each county. The following cartogram uses shades of purple to indicate each counties' vote intensity for the Democratic or Republican presidential candidate.



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Adding just several nuances to the electoral map demonstrates the United States is far from polarized. Nevertheless, these improvements of the electoral map still leave out the fact that individual Americans' beliefs are not necessarily reflected by the counties in which they reside, and also that a Democratic county in New Jersey is surely different than a Democratic county in Minnesota. But most importantly, Americans' political views are not adequately characterized by only red, blue, or purple. The [Reason-Rupe](#) poll asks a series of questions about the role of government in social and economic affairs, which reveals [nearly half](#) of Americans don't fit neatly into either conservative or liberal buckets. Instead about a quarter of Americans are fiscally conservative and socially moderate and about a fifth of Americans are socially conservative and fiscally liberal. This is also consistent with [Gallup findings](#) on political groups in America.