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Book Review: *Forced Federalism: Contemporary Challenges to Indigenous Nationhood* By Jeff Corntassel and Richard C. Witmer II

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Forced Federalism: Contemporary Challenges to Indigenous Nationhood. By Jeff Corntassel and Richard C. Witmer II. Foreword by Lindsay G. Robertson. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008. xxi + 251 pp. Figures, tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. $34.95 cloth.

Rather than having the exclusive U.S.-tribal relationship respected, Indian nations are wrongly forced to deal with state governments that are often hostile to Indian interests. This is the provocative thesis of *Forced Federalism*. For the last 20 years, from 1988 to the present, tribes have been increasingly seen as emerging contenders vying for resources and playing an expanding role in state economies and politics. The gaming success of some tribes has also subjected Indians to what the authors call "rich Indian racism" that relies upon stereotyping and the categorization of tribes as interest groups rather than independent nations. Though acknowledging that tribes have had some success in their engagement with states and the non-Indian political process, the authors make a convincing case that jurisdiction and community-based improvements should not be conceded lightly in the name of short-term economic gain.

Corntassel and Witmer begin by describing the importance of social constructions of Indians historically and in the present day. Earlier images of Indians as warlike or as noble savages have been replaced by conceptions of Indians as rich interest groups. The authors argue that these "invented images of Natives as casino rich or as aspiring casino entrepreneurs limit the ability of indigenous nations to act in the best interests of their communities." The challenge with such an argument of course is that to some extent calling these "invented images" is not accurate, nor can non-Indian resistance be reduced in every case to rich-Indian racism. Rather, in some instances, non-Indians would be more or less correct in seeing their neighboring tribe as rich casino entrepreneurs, and their concerns about the downsides of gaming or other tribal projects might be justified and unfairly pigeonholed as merely racist.

The book's main contribution comes when it grounds its provocative thesis in the actual practices of Native nations and in survey results from 1994-2000 of tribal governments. Tribes in some states have had success—getting approval for gaming, ousting anti-Indian politicians from office, and generating support for tribal activities—in their engagement in federal and state politics through everything from get-out-the-vote efforts to lobbying to public ballot initiatives. Without supporting or denigrating such engagement, the authors' analysis is both nuanced and fair, presenting the perils as well as the upsides of Indian involvement in state and federal politics. The survey results show that tribes often do decide to support political candidates, even though "emulating the lobbying and political behavior of other U.S. citizens" may not be the best way forward for tribes. I find the authors' concern regarding the rise of state-tribal compacting, given the history of state antagonism to Indian interests, to be compelling. But here too the book does a good job walking a fine line: pointing out how tribes have benefited from compacts while also cautioning against conceding regulatory authority on reservations to states in return for short-term economic development.

Corntassel and Witmer, drawing on tribes across the U.S. but with an emphasis on Oklahoma Cherokee leaders, language, and challenges, make a convincing case that tribes are in the midst of an era of forced federalism. Even those less troubled by the shift from exclusively tribal-federal dealings to tribal-state relationships should give *Forced Federalism* careful consideration. **Ezra Rosser**, *Washington College of Law, American University.*

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