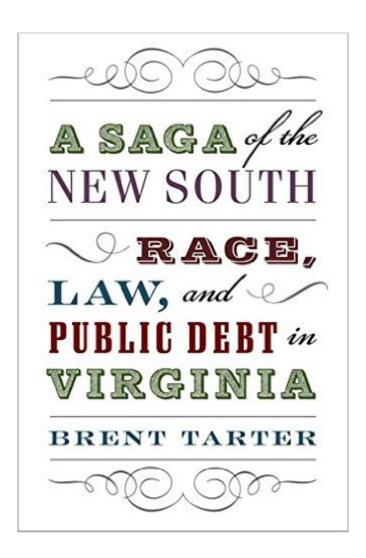
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A Saga Of The New South: Race, Law, And Public Debt In Virginia





Synopsis

In the lead-up to the Civil War, Virginia, like other southern states, amassed a large public debt while striving to improve transportation infrastructure and stimulate economic development. A Saga of the New South delves into the largely untold story of the decades-long postwar controversies over the repayment of that debt. The result is a major reinterpretation of late-nineteenth-century Virginia political history. The postâ "Civil War public debt controversy in Virginia reshaped the stateâ ™s political landscape twice. First it created the conditions under which the Readjuster Party, a biracial coalition of radical reformers, seized control of the state government in 1879 and successfully refinanced the debt; then it gave rise to a counterrevolution that led the elitist Democratic Party to eighty years of dominance in the state's politics. Despite the Readjustersâ ™ victory in refinancing the debt and their increased spending for the popular new system of free public schools, the debt controversy generated a long train of legal disputesâ ∗at least eighty-five cases reached the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, and twenty-nine reached the Supreme Court of the United States. Through an in-depth look at these political and legal contests, A Saga of the New South sheds new light on the many obstacles that reformers faced in Virginia and the South after the Civil War.

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