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Book Review: Shaper Nations: Strategies for a Changing World by William I. Hitchcock, Melvyn P. Leffler & Jeffrey W. Legro

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Hitchcock, William I., Melvyn P. Leffler, and Jeffrey W. Legro, eds. *Shaper Nations: Strategies for a Changing World*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016. vi + 218 pages. Hardcover, \$35.

The title of the volume is quite self-explanatory; it presents analysis of the national strategies in the countries that shape global politics in today's increasingly multipolar world. *Shaper Nations: Strategies for a Changing World* is the result of a project conducted by a multinational team of scholars who live and work in Brazil, China, Germany, India, Israel, Russia, Turkey, and the United States. Each scholar provides an insider perspective on the national strategies of his or her home country and its capabilities to determine the future of world politics. Much of the credit for the organization of this unique volume goes to its editors from the University of Virginia: William I. Hitchcock, Professor of History, Melvyn P. Leffler, Edward Stettinius Professor of History, and Jeffrey W. Legro, Vice Provost for Global Affairs.

For comparative purposes, the scholars address the same set of questions related to national strategic thinking, ranging across military, political, and economic policies. This approach allows for the identification of similarities in dominant strategies pursued by governments of the shaper nations, despite their differences in political regimes and economic development. As William Hitchcock indicates in his introductory essay, "the common factors that are shaping today's strategic thinking include the non-national nature of most security threats, the importance of domestic politics in shaping national strategy, the powerful and distorting effects of history and national identity..., and the economic capabilities and ambitions" (p.5). These factors represent severe constraints on crafting effective national strategies in the countries under consideration.

Structurally, the volume consists of eight chapters representing each of the shaper nations in alphabetical order. The first chapter explores rapid socioeconomic development that has allowed Brazil to make a decisive impact on regional politics despite its lack of "grand" strategy. The second chapter shows the rising power of China and the evolution of its "vision of realism" in response to its economic ambitions, strategic vulnerabilities, and cultural challenges. The third chapter covers an extensive list of internal and external problems that India has to address in its national strategy, including poverty, social inequality, rivalries with Pakistan and conflicts with China. The fourth chapter presents an analysis of Germany's leading role "by default" in the European Union and its challenges related to regional integration and external threats. The fifth chapter focuses on Israel confronting the issue of national identity and further militarization in response to security threats. The following two chapters analyze risky national strategies pursued by Russia and Turkey, both of which are sliding back toward authoritarianism and are characterized by deteriorating relations with Western countries. Finally, the last chapter is devoted to the search for new national strategies for the United States to keep its leading position in shaping today's world politics.

The volume moves beyond conventional conceptualizations of the nature and sources of national strategic thinking. For example, instead of traditional views on the importance of external forces and security threats in shaping strategic thinking at the national level, the volume provides evidence of the prevalence of domestic political constraints on the related policymaking process. As Jeffrey Legro states in the concluding essay, "leaders are certainly concerned with objective security challenges, but internal economic opportunities and challenges, shaped by the global economy and the role of other states, often take priority" (p.156). From this perspective, the distinctive features of the contemporary international order include ever-increasing

uncertainty, a chronic undersupply of collective goods in international development, further regionalization of world politics, the growing impact of individual leaders' preferences on policymaking in the shaper nations and their mixed strategic outlooks for war and peace. Most importantly, these features are evident both in developing and developed countries.

Shaper Nations: Strategies for a Changing World is a good example of high-quality research into the evolution of the national strategies of the most powerful states in the twenty-first century. The volume will be of great importance to policy makers and academic experts who specialize in international relations and politics. Since the book illustrates the process of policymaking at the national level, it can also be a fruitful object of study for those who are interested in public affairs and administration.

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