

different concept—that of “value rationality”—to advance an almost identical explanation. “Georgia’s pro-Western orientation stems largely from ideas and identity rather than from pragmatic or systemic factors,” she writes (147). If Georgia “accepts democratic decision making, good governance and rule of law as fundamental to its national and human security, then there are not options other than pursuing the European model of social, political and economic development” (148).

In contrast with these constructivist explanations, Cecire rejects the very premise that Georgian foreign policy represents structure-deviant behavior and instead advances a “straightforward” realist account: “Georgia’s prioritization of NATO and the Euro-Atlantic West is an effort to attenuate its own weakness relative to Russia,” which constitutes “its chief rival and regional hegemon” (182). However, Cecire is the outlier in this volume; identity-based explanations of the sort advanced by German, Kakachia, and Sabanadze are dominant in most of its remaining chapters.

Acquiring an adequate understanding of Georgia’s myriad relations with the outside world represents a challenging undertaking for non-Georgians (and probably even for most Georgians). Undoubtedly with that realization in mind, German, Jones, and Kakachia have put together a book that will be of great assistance to anyone who seeks to acquire that understanding. None of its chapters would be useful in a course on IR theory or security studies, but both post-Soviet specialists and practitioners dealing with the region would be well-advised to make themselves familiar with this book’s contents.

Ed. Maria Taroutina and Allison Leigh. *Orientalism in a Global Context: Hybridity, Encounter, and Representation 1740–1940.*

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023. v, 277 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Plates. Photographs. Maps. £90.00, hard bound.

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This volume is a welcome exploration of Russian Orientalism in visual arts and material culture in all its complexities, contradictions, and ambiguities. While the last three decades produced extensive studies on Russian literary Orientalism, *Orientalism in a Global Context* is the first to examine similar trends in visual culture in equal depth and diversity. Each chapter of the book introduces a different facet of the phenomenon of visual Orientalism in Russia, some of them focusing on particular artists, genres and movements. Yet there are overarching themes and questions that the contributors of this volume ponder together.

One of the most important questions the book explores is how unique Russian visual Orientalism is compared to its European counterparts. The comparative approach is an essential aspect of this volume. It encompasses not only comparing Orientalist trends in Russia and Europe, but also analyzing their interactions in the context of the political and ideological tensions of global imperialism.

For example, Ch. 5 by John Webley studies the late nineteenth-century paintings of Vasily Vereshchagin, comparing them to the works of French and British Orientalist artists. In the

1860s, Vereshchagin studied in Paris under Jean-Léon Gérôme. Compared to his teacher's work, Vereshchagin's paintings deliberately avoided aestheticization of their Orientalist subject matter, making it less exotic and seemingly reducing its othering of the East. At the same time, just as French and British Orientalist artists, Vereshchagin justified his own country's imperialism by its civilizing mission, portraying the "Orientals" as brutal and in need of moral guidance. In the historical context of the Russian-British rivalry in their attempt to subjugate Central Asia and Afghanistan, Vereshchagin's painting of the execution of Indian rebels by the British portrays the rival empire as an oppressor, suggesting the need of milder imperial control by the artist's own empire.

Another overarching theme is the multidirectional way that visual Orientalism was used to shape perception of self and other in Russian society, and at the same time introduce changes in cultural norms. Thus, Ch. 2 by Ekaterina Heath and Jennifer Milam discusses the usage of Russian chinoiserie to Orientalize China and also to support gender ambiguity in Russian court culture.

Soviet modernizing projects in Central Asia and the accompanying policy of *korenizatsiia* (nativization), analyzed in Ch. 10 by Mollie Arbuthnot, further complicate the applicability of the Saidian notion of Orientalism. The imitation of the aesthetic elements of Islamic art (by itself a controversial term as the author points out) in order to promote social change through propaganda posters in 1920s Uzbekistan definitely demonstrates elements of Eurocentric condescension. However, the purpose of using Oriental aesthetics is not to gratify a westerner with exotic images, but to explain the advantages of socialist modernity to viewers in Uzbekistan by mobilizing their own heritage. In the process, it becomes dissociated from its religious content and is perceived as Uzbek national heritage.

The diverse content of this volume includes studies of professional as well as popular art. Ch. 7 by Hanna Chuchvaha explores the fascinating journey of the Russian folktale of Eruslan Lazarevich, which originated from Firdousi's eleventh-century Persian epic *Shahnameh* before becoming the subject of Aleksandr Pushkin's fairy tale *Ruslan and Ludmila* (1820), on which Mikhail Glinka based his 1842 opera. The visual representations of the tale, starting from the Russian popular prints called *lubki* to illustrations of Pushkin's fairy tale to theater design of the opera reveal a chain of transformations in which the Persian tale was Russianized and the Russian self-image Orientalized to represent the imagined folkloric past.

The complex idea of Russianness makes it difficult to categorize Russian art. Ch. 1 by Allison Leigh discusses the question of whether Russian art is western or non-western, suggesting that the binary system of dividing art into two separate worlds is not productive. Other chapters of the book are just as insightful, exploring the representations of the Caucasus and its inhabitants during the Caucasian wars in the mid-nineteenth century (Ch. 3, by Andrew M. Nedd); Orientalization of building interiors in nineteenth-century St. Petersburg (Ch. 4, by Katrin Kaufmann); Ilia Repin's depiction of a Tatar man in his 1886 painting *Reception of Volost Elders by Alexander III* (Ch. 6, by Nikita Balagurov); Zen Buddhist concepts in Kazimir Malevich's works (Ch. 8, by Maria Taroutina); and Pavel Kuznetsov's depictions of agricultural laborers in the Caucasus and Crimea during 1920s collectivization (Ch. 9, by Marie Gasper-Hulvat).

The book is framed by an excellent foreword, introduction and afterword. Maria Taroutina's introduction addresses the complex relationship between Russian art and the "Orient," the nature of which changed with time, and which included both the justification for imperial domination and calls for cultural decolonization. Vera Tolz grounds the trajectory of this changing relationship in the broader history of Russian culture and scholarship in her foreword, and Mary Roberts inscribes them into a global context in the afterword. The book provides new insights and a wealth of information for scholars and students in the fields of Russian, Eurasian, and east European studies, as well as art historians. It can be used in its entirety in graduate and undergraduate courses on the Russian empire or Russian Orientalism or be subdivided into chapters for courses on particular time periods in the history of Russia or the Soviet Union.