

and stressing surrogate altruism and empowerment, thereby humanizing the commercial relationship. These framings exist in other surrogacy markets, for example altruism is more emphasized in the US and empowerment in low-income countries, but both circulate in Russia and Ukraine as the moral middle ground. A gay man in Austria engages in ethical labor when he describes the surrogate as a middle-class woman “who obviously has some kind of calling” (176). Happiness—of both surrogates and intended parents—becomes an individual right and the surrogacy market a means to achieve happiness and freedom.

In the final chapter, Siegl turns to understandings of surrogacy as empowerment where surrogates are autonomous women and intended parents lack choice and freedom. Intended parents and agencies promote surrogacy as a win-win situation but ignore the material inequalities on which surrogacy rests. This chapter is the most ethnographically rich, with Siegl accompanying intended parents who pick up their newborn twins in Ukraine. Although the contract stipulates that the surrogate will not see the babies in the event of a Caesarean section, the twins are born early and Alyona takes care of them for five days before Stefan and Teresa arrive. The circumstances illustrate the risk surrogates assume. While Stefan and Teresa recognize structural inequalities, they see them as inevitable and feel vulnerable themselves. The surrogate “does have a choice” (214) Stefan tells Siegl. Market exchanges reduce ethical considerations to choice, consent, and payment. Like happiness, free choice becomes an ultimate argument.

This book is an important contribution to critical understandings of surrogacy arrangements as shaped by social context. Siegl compellingly shows how the economic is made moral through ethical labor, even as the truths actors espouse remain fragile. Actors labor to keep intimacy and economy separate. Yet surrogacy as an intimate endeavor leaves both surrogates and intended parents vulnerable; surrogacy as an economic relation is also troubling. Thus, actors vacillate between understandings of surrogacy as business and as altruism, flexibly using these truths as needed. Instead of considering possibilities for more trust and care in these relationships, tropes such as consent, happiness, choice, and freedom serve as truths that foreclose more sustained deliberation and relations, ensuring the expansion of the market and the structural power of agencies and intended parents.

Siegl's book makes contributions to scholarship on assisted reproduction, transnational surrogacy, reproductive governance, intimate economies, and ethics. This book will be of interest to scholars across social science disciplines and is appropriate for advanced undergraduate and graduate students.

Egor Lazarev. *State-Building as Lawfare: Custom, Sharia, and State Law in Postwar Chechnya.*

Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2023. xvi, 321 pp. Notes. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$99.99, hard bound.

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Chechnya was frequently depicted as a romantically idealized realm of heroic warriors, or more recently as a chiefdom under the rule of Ramzan Kadyrov. While the latter portrayal

is not far from the truth, it is important to recognize that this realm is not as lawless as it may initially appear. Political scientist Egor Lazarev's meticulously researched study offers a comprehensive perspective on this Russian region, portraying it as a complex landscape of legal pluralism. In this intricate milieu, Russian state law coexists with the traditional *adat*, or customary law, and Sharia, Islamic law.

Both foreign and Russian researchers have seldom ventured into this republic due to security concerns and persistent harassment by state authorities. Lazarev conducted fieldwork in Chechnya between 2014 and 2016, spending a total of seven months in the republic. His book may well be the last fieldwork-based work for the time being, as the authoritarian regime's increasing restrictions effectively deter researchers from conducting on-site studies.

Lazarev examines the landscape of legal pluralism from both historical and contemporary perspectives. During the First Chechen War (1994–96), communities predominantly rejected Russian state law as the law of the oppressor, relying on Sharia and customary law instead, while the penetration of state law was primarily driven by the Second Chechen War (1999–2009)—far more violent, humiliating and devastating. Toward its end, people were left in a strong need for just “any law.” Lazarev skillfully elucidates how armed conflict perturbed the established social hierarchies in Chechnya, ultimately clearing the path for the infiltration of state authority into Chechen society. This disruption was especially pronounced in gender hierarchies. The highly gendered nature of the war compelled women in Chechnya to take on the role of breadwinners and assume crucial social responsibilities, such as mediating between various communities and armed groups.

The war-induced empowerment of women has been challenging the patriarchal social order in post-war Chechnya. It has, however, suffered a significant backlash from the Chechen government: Kadyrov's government implemented neotraditionalist policies, including the semi-formal introduction of polygamy, support for honor killings, and a restrictive dress code for women. State officials responsible for handling gender-related cases actively disrupted the functioning of state law. Chechen women realized the shortcomings of both Sharia and *adat*, and recognized benefits that came from the state legal system that at least nominally acknowledges gender equality, despite being plagued by corruption and nepotism.

Sharia, adat, and blat

“In Chechnya, we have sharia(t), *adat* and *blat* (getting things done informally)” joked Said, my befriended attorney in Grozny in 2015, listing cases where it was money that was the most convincing “law” in the Chechen courts, while sharia and *adat* were often referred to in order to cover informal transactions. It is precisely this shadow side of (il)legal pluralism that is missing in this otherwise well organized and intricate book. The work would undoubtedly benefit from more in-depth conversations with trusted lawyers (especially those who would likely be willing to divulge the intimate details of their work). Additionally, engaging with Chechens who have sought justice after suffering abuse by Kadyrov's squads would provide valuable insights. State officials or individuals supporting the regime, like Sultan-haji Mirzaev, Chechnya's former mufti, whom Lazarev interviews, do not seem to shed light on the darker aspects of contemporary state dealings, despite their prevalence in Chechnya and the broader North Caucasus region.

Let me provide an example from a court hearing in the neighboring republic of Dagestan. In 2015, I sat quietly in the courtroom, pretending to be a local friend of a Dagestani journalist. The murderer was sitting in a floor-to-ceiling iron cage as is customary in Russian courts. When the court officials entered, he stood up and with a self-assured grin amiably shook hands with almost all of them through the bars. He did not deny the murder of his niece, claiming it was in response to her alleged improper behavior. For his defense, he referred to family honor. The victim's mother told us that she had refused to

accept money from the murderer's family and, similar to what Lazarev highlights in the case of Chechnya, she was determined to rely on state law, hoping to find justice there. However, unlike the victim's family, the murderer's family was affluent and successfully "persuaded" the court to consider additional factors such as "family honor." This hearing did not result in a verdict. Three months later, though, the murderer was released on the basis of "not enough evidence."

Lazarev demonstrates that state officials responsible for handling gender-related cases actively disrupted the functioning of state law. This was also evident in the example mentioned above. I would refrain from overly romanticizing the actual use of *adat* or sharia, however, or linking them solely to patriarchal inclinations. It is important to remember that court verdicts are often influenced by monetary incentives in both Dagestan and Chechnya, while reference to *adat* or sharia serves as a cover. While there are evidently distinctions between the two republics, in both cases, corruption within the courts is not an isolated anomaly but an intrinsic aspect of state dealings. Therefore, the overall cohesive and somewhat positive picture presented by Lazarev should, I believe, be disrupted by questioning how the legal realm is actually permeated by the illegal and how violence is integrated into legal practice, such as the extraction of confessions through torture. Regrettably, ever since the introduction of the "foreign agent" law in 2012, local NGOs have been compelled to shift their focus away from these sensitive issues, so I assume that the author's informants might have been too cautious to share with him their own or their family members' experiences of state violence, or struggles in the courts. Overall, the book could benefit from the works of Ieva Raubiško² and Mantas Kvedaravicius,³ who conducted fieldwork in Chechnya during the Second Chechen War and closely explored the limits of law and intimate, bodily state dealings.

Government Usage of Legal Pluralism

In my view, the most intriguing part of the book pertains to the Chechen government's usage of legal pluralism. Lazarev challenges the established perspective that links legal pluralism to weak states, or more specifically, to limited state capacity. The author convincingly argues that the Chechen regional government strategically promotes legal pluralism to strengthen its coalition-building efforts. In doing so, it allows men to maintain control over their families through customs and religion, in exchange for unwavering political loyalty.

The government's promotion of legal pluralism fulfills various political aims. It allows it to derive legitimacy from tradition and religion, both of which hold substantial appeal among the Chechen population. It amplifies the government's discretion, enabling it to selectively adopt norms from various alternative systems while bypassing the regulations entrenched within them. Finally, it bolsters the regional government's influence over the federal center by emphasizing the indispensability of local intermediaries in governing Chechnya.

Challenging assumptions taken for granted, Lazarev convincingly argues that legal pluralism is not merely a reflection of "political culture" or "weak state capacity," but is fundamentally a political phenomenon, serving as an arena for the pursuit of interests by both the government and individuals.

¹ Ieva Raubiško, "'A Lot of Blood Is Unrevenged Here': Moral Disintegration in Post-War Chechnya," in Jarrett Zigon, ed., *Multiple Moralities and Religions in Post-Soviet Russia* (New York, 2011), 92–118; Raubiško, "Life in a Negative-Positive Space: Moral Transformations in Post-war Chechnya" (PhD diss, University of Oxford, 2012).

² Mantas Kvedaravicius, *Knots of Absence: Death, Dreams, and Disappearances at the Limits of Law in the Counter-terrorism Zone of Chechnya* (PhD diss, University of Cambridge, 2013); Kvedaravicius, "Carnal Legalties: Affective Lives within Zones of Counter-terrorism Operation," *Subjectivity* 11, no. 4 (December 2018): 339–56.

In conclusion, I would assert that the book significantly advances our comprehension of Kadyrov's regime and the intricacies of state operations within the domain of legal pluralism. It is an essential read for analysts and students intrigued by the North Caucasus. As every book, it has to be read critically, however, so that one is not left with a slightly too positive picture of the republic and its legal realm, where corruption and torture are not just aberrations but part and parcel of the broader system of the authoritarian regime.