



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND SOCIETY  
BERKELEY LAW

## CSLS SPEAKER SERIES

Monday, April 5, 2021

### EGOR LAZAREV

Assistant Professor of Political Science, Yale University

### “State-Building as Lawfare: Custom, Sharia, and State Law in Post-War Chechnya”

How does the state manage to impose the rules that regulate everyday life? This study explores state-building as lawfare – the use of state or non-state legal systems to achieve political, social, or economic goals. In particular, the talk will discuss how politicians and individuals navigate Russian state law, Sharia, and customary law in post-war Chechnya. The presentation will outline state-building both from above and from below by addressing two interrelated puzzles. First, why do local rulers tolerate and even promote non-state legal systems at the expense of state law? Second, why do some members of repressed ethnic minorities choose to resolve their everyday disputes using state legal systems instead of non-state alternatives? The talk will focus on the first puzzle and document how the Chechen regional government headed by Ramzan Kadyrov – the Kremlin-imposed ruler of postwar Chechnya – promotes and reinvents customary law and Sharia. This strategy has allowed the Chechen government to borrow legitimacy from tradition and religion, increase autonomy from the metropole, and incorporate authorities and ideological supporters of non-state legal systems – most notably, the former rebels – into its ruling coalition. At the same time, the study shows that despite the history of state violence, a considerable share of the Chechen population demands state law. Many lessons from the experience of post-war Chechnya extend to peripheral state-building efforts across the globe.

**PLACE** Zoom – [Register here for zoom link.](#)  
**TIME** 12:45 – 2:00pm.  
**INFO** [csls.berkeley.edu](https://csls.berkeley.edu)

**If you require an accommodation for effective communication** (ASL interpreting/CART captioning, alternative media formats, etc.) to fully participate in this event, please contact [csls@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:csls@law.berkeley.edu) with as much advance notice as possible and at least 7-10 days in advance of the event.

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