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Custom, Sharia, and State Law in Postwar Chechnya
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State-Building as Lawfare

State-Building as Lawfare explores the use of state and non-state legal systems by both politicians and ordinary people in postwar Chechnya. The book addresses two interrelated puzzles: why do local rulers tolerate and even promote non-state legal systems at the expense of state law, and why do some members of repressed ethnic minorities choose to resolve their everyday disputes using state legal systems instead of non-state alternatives? The book documents how the rulers of Chechnya promote and reinvent customary law and Sharia in order to borrow legitimacy from tradition and religion, increase autonomy from the metropole, and accommodate communal authorities and former rebels. At the same time, the book shows how prolonged armed conflict disrupted the traditional social hierarchies and pushed some Chechen women to use state law, spurring state formation from below.

EGOR LAZAREV is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yale University and a Scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies.

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EGOR LAZAREV

Yale University



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To Satsita Israilova

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FIGURE 0.1 Map of the region