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The Extraordinary Lives of Uzbeks in Russia: Understanding Migrant Legal Adaptation

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Irregular migration has become a contemporary global phenomenon in both the Global North and South. While it has been widely analyzed and theorized in Western countries, non-Western immigrant-receiving countries such as Russia remain underrepresented in the relevant literature. Rustamjon Urinboyev's new book promises to fill this gap by examining migrants' adaptation and integration in politically hybrid regimes. The author considers his book a critical reflection on the dominant migrant legal adaptation and integration literature, which is still largely based on case studies of immigrant communities in Western-style democracies. He argues that "we know relatively little about how migrants adapt to a new legal environment in the ever-growing hybrid political regimes that are neither clearly democratic nor conventionally authoritarian." (p.??) By calling Russia a hybrid regime, the author refers to a weak rule of law, dysfunctional institutions, widespread corruption, large shadow economies, a poor human rights record, and a weak civil society.

As in other countries, Russia produces insecure and legally ambiguous migration statuses through inconsistent and arbitrary law enforcement, which serves to keep migrant workers submissive. In other words, Russian immigration laws and policies are so restrictive that migrants easily become "illegal" (or undocumented) before Russian immigration officials. But what Rustam argues is that "migrants are not just passive, agencyless subjects constrained by a restrictive legal environment. Instead, they do have agency, and they use

that agency and the opportunities provided by a weak rule of law and a corrupt political system to navigate the legal landscape using informal channels to access employment and other opportunities that are limited in the current legal framework of the host country" (p.26).

The author maintains that in the Russian context, undocumentedness is a conscious adaptation strategy for migrants. They do so because the corrupt legal environment and the weak rule of law enable them to produce various informal strategies and tactics to maneuver around arbitrary law enforcement. In hybrid political regimes, the legal adaptation of migrants depends not only on their legalization efforts and involvement with state institutions, but also on their understanding of and navigation of street laws and informal rules, their connections to street institutions, and their ability to integrate into the corrupt and weak rule-of-law environment.

To understand migrant legal adaptation strategies, Urinboyev proposes to move beyond conventional Western-based legal centralistic perspectives, which emphasize migrants' legal status, their compliance with the host country's immigration laws, and their ability to engage in claim-making. Rather, in hybrid political regimes such as Russia, ethnographically embedded and legally pluralistic perspectives should be employed which incorporate "informality and a weak rule of law" as key analytical factors. "Legal pluralism emphasizes the coexistence and clash of multiple sets of rules that mold people's social behavior: the law of the nation-state, indigenous customs and rules, religious decrees, moral codes, and practical norms for social life" (p.17). Thus, drawing on the legal pluralistic perspective that goes beyond state immigration laws, policies, and institutions, the author points to the existence of informal "legal orders." These informal legal orders include:

(1) migrants' agency and their "legal baggage" (i.e., informal practices, rules, strategies, networks, and structures used by migrants to follow, avoid, or maneuver around the laws);

(2) informal, rent-seeking behaviors and practices among state officials (e.g., immigration officers, policemen, and border guards) in charge of enforcing immigration laws and policies;

(3) street institutions (e.g., racketeers, intermediaries, and former law-enforcement officers) used to enforce contracts and legalization; and

(4) transnational networks, interactions, and pressures that shape migrants' experiences in the host society (p.18).

As the author argues, by using a legally pluralistic framework and accounting for the hybrid characteristics of the regime, "we arrive at a rather different conclusions whereby migrants in Russia are active and resilient actors capable of inventing various informal strategies to adapt to the restrictive legal

environment and organize their working life and tackle uncertainties and risks by producing informal legal orders" (p.139).

Through a "legal baggage" framework, the author also demonstrates how *Mahalla*-level norms, identities, reciprocal relations, and social sanctions continue to shape Uzbek migrants' lives, even when they move to Russia. In this way, "migrants import and adapt their pre-migratory cultural and normative repertoires to Russia, especially when they work and live under the conditions of a shadow economy requiring alternative forms of law and order" (p.56). For migrants, the state remains "absent" not only in Uzbekistan but also in Russia, where they live largely isolated lives with few opportunities to interact with the host society. Rather than integrating into the host society, migrants rely on alternative paths to adaptation, employing networks based on kinship, shared village origins, ethnicity, or religion. "Migration under the conditions of legal uncertainty and precarity requires the reproduction and maintenance of transnational identities and relationships that act as forms of social safety nets when migrants face hardships" (p.58).

One of the advantages of the book is its "thick description" of the lives of Uzbek migrants in Russia. The author's village of origin (where most of his informants also originate from) and language skills (both Uzbek and Russian) allowed him to be perceived as an insider. These migrants let the author "immerse" himself into their lives, hidden from prying eyes. They shared their stories with the author, which they would hardly do with other scholars, let alone law-enforcement institutions. This has resulted in a book full of extraordinary life stories of migrants like Misha, Zaur, Baha, and Nodir and their encounters with employers, state officials, street-level institutions (including racketeers), and other participants within the informal labor market. To this end, the author is able to uncover for us an informal, parallel world of migrants based on its own non-codified but socially reproduced and legitimate forms of governance and legal order.

That's being said, the book may leave a reader with a few issues. The author solely discusses the cases of male migrants, who are street-smart and knowledgeable about informal rules. This can partly be explained by the fact that the majority, around 80 percent according to various sources, of Uzbek migrants in Russia are still men. But as we have seen the growing, albeit slow, feminization of Uzbek migration to Russia in recent years, it is necessary to address how female migrants integrate into politically hybrid regimes such as Russia. The book could benefit from a reflection on positionality. As Urinboyev's background and cultural competence certainly enabled him to collect ethnographically rich material, it would be interesting for him to have reflected on the impact of positionality on data interpretation and limitations.

In sum, *Migration and Hybrid Political Regimes* extends the state-of-the-art by examining labor migrants' relationship with the law and law-like structures in Russia, thereby contributing new theoretical insights regarding migrants' socio-legal integration and ethnographically rich material that lies beyond the Western experience. By gathering unique empirical material on migrants' strategies for seeking justice on the streets, the book offers a new theoretical lens through which to analyze the nuances of migration governance and the socio-legal environment in Russia.

Hybridity or Legal Pluralism?

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Rustamjon Urinboyev's monograph *Migration and Hybrid Political Regimes: Navigating the Legal Landscape in Russia* is empirically rich, innovative, and theoretically provocative. It is a fast-paced read that exposes the underbelly of the migration world in Russia, showing that while lawlessness is not without risk, neither is it entirely the seedy, dark, and dangerous world depicted in crime novels. Rather, for migrants in Russia, it is simply a way of life, colored by multiple "legal orders" that do not fit neatly into a normative rule-of-law framework.

Urinboyev sets out to accomplish the crucial task of demonstrating how migrants exercise agency in a context where they are often painted as victims of unemployment at home and of exploitation abroad. He shows beautifully and compellingly that Uzbek migrants both find and create spaces to reduce risk, find solidarity, and solve problems. By relying on *mahalla* ties forged in Uzbekistan, migrants have ready-made networks while working in Russia that they can use to find jobs and housing, pressure non-paying employers, and call for help when harassed by law enforcement agents.

The field research that underlies Urinboyev's work is multi-sited, moving between Moscow and Uzbekistan to investigate firsthand how problems of migration can be solved through the communities rooted at home. The result is detailed narrative accounts of everyday experiences shared by migrants and their families.

These accounts provide a glimpse into how the migration world operates in Russia. The stories are generally problem-focused, recounting situations

migrants face and the creative solutions they exercise. While the presence of alternative legal orders in Russia that offer documents for sale, informal housing opportunities, and extra-legal protection services suggests the routine nature of migrants' problems with formal law, the book does not give the reader a broad sense of how often an average migrant encounters such problems in their day-to-day life. How often is a migrant extorted by the police or denied wages? The book offers contours of these experiences and encounters, if not the whole scope. Importantly, Rustamjon Urinboyev also adds to our understanding that migrants from different Central Asian countries have unique social structures and coping mechanisms.

While analyses of migration in Russia tend to objectify migrants as victims of circumstance, Urinboyev turns that traditional narrative on its head. There is a cost to this narrative, however, that comes in casting the state and its agents in the role of the "other" that relies on predatory behavior given any chance. Urinboyev does not mince words in his characterization of the Russian political system, calling the laws draconian, institutions dysfunctional, and state actors corrupt. Weak rule of law is taken as a background condition upon which parallel legal orders multiply and state actors exploit the system for personal gain. What the book does not fully address is why this situation has come to be, how and why state actors engage in multiple legal registers, or how this situation demonstrates the hybridity that is part of the underlying conceptual framework. The question of what hybrid *is* in the context of Russia's legal landscape is not fully engaged.

Generally, the concept of hybrid regimes focuses on grey zones between democracy and authoritarianism. Adjectives like hybrid are most often used as a characterization of political systems that do not neatly fall into one type or another. Instead of a democracy that uses political power to empower its citizens through political institutions and other routinized mechanisms, or an authoritarian system that uses its power to disempower through arbitrary or systematic strategies, hybrid regimes are an amalgam. Nevertheless, applied to regime-types, the concept of hybrid is far from perfect, in part because while it identifies combinations of features that are borrowed from various types of political systems, it rarely engages how these combinations amalgamate and catalyze new practices and meanings. Hybridity is likely not just a sum of mismatched parts, as it is so often portrayed in the literature.

What, then, is the relationship between hybridity and legal pluralism? In Urinboyev's account, Russia's hybrid regime, defined by corruption and weak rule of law, produces legal pluralism. But what if it is not the lack of rule of law or the presence of corruption that characterizes a hybrid regime, but rather the very contradictions that arise when formal and informal spaces are intertwined? Hybridity might not simply be a background condition but could

instead be conceived of as a continually negotiated space that is part and parcel of legally pluralistic contexts, regardless of regime type. The fact that *both* formal and informal practices and systems can be used to empower *and* disempower, to increase and decrease the agency of a variety of actors, remains an important aspect of hybridity that can and ought to be developed beyond this monograph.

One example that might be better investigated through a more nuanced conceptualization of hybridity is the idea that Russia's migration laws are draconian, yet the rule of law is weak. There is an inherent contradiction in this pairing that speaks to the hybridity of the Russian system. While it may be true, as Urinboyev argues, that harsh laws provide opportunities for exploitation, it does not necessarily follow that harsh laws were created in order to be exploitative, nor that opportunities for exploitation are uniformly acted upon. Tracing potential causal chains may be one way to try and disentangle contradictions. Another strategy might be to think theoretically about the relationships and roles involved in institutionalization and habituation to parallel legal practices. How do practices become entrenched, beyond simple opportunism on the part of state agents or intermediaries looking to make a quick buck, or desperation on the part of a migrant seeking to solve a discrete problem? What guides the choices available to migrants, beyond their knowledge of the options? In other words, not only how do they exercise agency, but how and why do they choose between multiple options? One way to flesh out these processes might be to look at the role played by emotions such as fear or stress in migrants' choices. Are interactions with state agents laced with emotion, or are they simply seen as transaction costs? This type of inquiry could provide a view into understanding how habituated migrants really are to the various aspects of the legally plural contexts they find themselves in.

Migrant Legal Culture and the Production of Illegality

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The strongest point in Rustam Urinboyev's book is its transnational ethnographic methodology. Urinbyev spent four years between Moscow and a village in Ferghana valley, Uzbekistan scrupulously documenting how migrants

navigate the legal landscape of the post-Soviet space. Rustamjon is a master of "thick description" (Geertz 2008) in telling migrants' everyday life stories. His book, which consists of eight chapters, traces how Uzbek migrants adapt to different elements of the Russian legal system: employers and middlemen (Chapter 4), street-level institutions (Chapter 5), and police and immigration officials (Chapter 6). Chapter 7 is told from the perspective of three men and their different adaptation strategies to a parallel legal order. In the words of Bhavna Davé, Urinboyev narrates how Uzbek migrants become "legal" through "illegal" procedures (Davé 2014). Through retelling these unique yet everyday life stories, with a keen eye for anecdotes and clever detail, the author holds the reader firmly in his grip, making the book impossible to put down. If you ever wondered why the goldfish could not help Putin solve the undocumented immigration conundrum, *Migration and hybrid political regimes* is your go-to book.

I found it particularly fascinating to review this book, as at the analytical level, Urinboyev commits to taking further a theoretical framework originally developed in my study of Polish migrants' socio-legal integration in the United Kingdom (Kubal 2012: 17–44). In that study, which Urinboyev extensively reviews in his introductory Chapter 1 (pp. 7–15), I demonstrated the limitation of the classical approaches to migrants' legal adaptation in the host country traditionally studied through the prism of assimilation, acculturation, and integration. By positioning the study of migrants' responses to the legal environment in the transnational sphere, I introduced migrants' pre-migratory legal-cultural strategies as a factor for understanding their legal adaptations (Kubal 2013: 23–26). Migrants' legal culture was not seen as a static determinant of their behavior but more as a tool kit or repertoire of values, attitudes, and behaviors (Swidler 1986), a compass helping them charter their legal adaptation pathways and navigate the new complex legal immigration rules with a unique degree of agency (see also the social remittances literature, Levit and Lamba-Nieves 2010).

Urinboyev's book promises to develop that framework in the hybrid political regime context of Russia. To that effect, the author also conceptualizes pre-migration legal cultural strategies as "legal baggage"—"migrants' attitudes toward the law, interpretations of legality and illegality, moral codes, religious values, established behavioural patterns and accustomed social practices that they internalized prior to their migratory experiences" (p. 24, see also Kubal 2012: 46 or Kubal 2013: 59–60, 67). In Chapter 3, Urinboyev introduces the *mahalla* system of informal governance in rural Uzbekistan, its rules and resources, community-level and transnational functions, as well as nuanced power structures. His book presents a powerful indication of how the *mahalla*

system, intricately linked with migrants' legal culture, has adapted under the influence of international migration and the establishment of a strong migration system between rural Uzbekistan and urban Russia (Moscow). Upon their arrival in Russia, migrants draw on the cultural practices of the mahalla to create "an informal adaptation infrastructure, based on its own economy, legal order, trust and mutual aid networks (…) informal social safety net to share the livelihood risk and deal with precarious conditions" (p. 63). In Chapter 4, Urinboyev offers a powerful example of mahalla's transnational presence—how the dispute over non-payment of wages between migrant workers and their recruiter (which all hailed from the same village) in Moscow was solved only through mobilizing the resources of the mahalla by exerting local pressure on family and extended kin in Uzbekistan, which then travelled transnationally aided by ICT technologies and smartphones.

We can therefore see the *mahalla* system as an important cultural factor of social reproduction (in Pierre Bourdieu's terms). Yet, from all the theorizations of culture, we also know that one of the things that culture "does" is … change. I would therefore welcome a more nuanced reflection of the changes—observable either in Moscow or in Uzbekistan—that were inspired by migratory, legal adaptation experiences. A more in-depth analytical commentary on nuanced cultural changes at the level of values, attitudes, but also actions either among migrants in Moscow or transnationally, would be particularly fitting for Chapter 7, which, at present, reads overly descriptive as it is centered solely on relaying the adaptation experiences of Urinboyev's "three heroes of the book" (p. 117).

Connected to this is a second central theme that permeates the book: Urinboyev's ambition for "a new analytical lens encompassing not only the legal centralistic approaches but also the legally pluralistic perspective accounting for informal norms and practices" in Uzbek migrants' legal adaptation in Moscow (p. 116), which left me somewhat perplexed. It stems from an unfair, in my opinion, assumption that "Western-centric" perspectives are structuralist and "emphasize the importance of one's legal status and the enduring power of the legal environment" (p. 101). While many scholars would agree that migrant illegality is legally produced (De Genova 2004), I cannot see how this is not the case in Russia, especially given its arbitrary and fast-changing immigration rules (Buckley 2018) together with its precarious enforcement in everyday life (Kubal 2019, Round and Kuznetsova 2016), which also gave rise to this book.

Having said this, "Western" scholarship is much broader than the author gives it credit for and should not be limited only to recognizing the power of the law, but also migrants' agency in challenging, bypassing, or ignoring it altogether. The works of Ellie Vasta on migrants' identity document market in

London (Vasta 2011), or Werner Menski's analysis of South Asian legal adaptation in the UK (Menski 2008), revealed pluralistic responses to the legal environment, either through informal "shadow" means or the deployment of communities' distinctive values, conventions, and expectations to order personal and domestic lives, giving rise to *angrezi shariat* (British Shariat) or *angrezi dharma* (British Dharma). A conversation and dialogue with these works would be a welcome addition to Urinboyev's accounts of Uzbek's legal adaptation in Moscow, making this otherwise wonderful contribution that much stronger and distinct.

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Understanding and Theorizing Migrants' Experiences in Non-Western, Non-Democratic Migration Regimes

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Migration and Hybrid Political Regimes is a critical reflection on contemporary migration regimes scholarship, which is still based on the study of migrants' experiences and immigration policies in the context of Western liberal democracies in North America, Western Europe, and Australia. There is a growing body of literature arguing the necessity of advancing existing theories in migration studies beyond the Western-centric perspective (Mirilovic 2010, Breunig et al. 2012, Boucher and Gest 2015, Natter 2018, Düvell 2020, Gest and Boucher 2021).

Given the dominant research focus on migration processes in Western liberal democracies, major non-Western migration destinations continue to be underrepresented in existing theories within migration studies, including top migrant-receiving countries such as the Gulf countries, Russia, Turkey, China, Brazil, Malaysia, and Indonesia. According to the latest World Migration Report (IOM 2019), 12 out of 20 top destinations for international migrants in 2019 were countries not part of the traditional western nations of North America, Western Europe and Australia. As per the editors of the International Migration Review (a leading journal in migration studies), 80 percent of articles published in the journal since 2016 focus on North America or Western Europe. This uneven geographic coverage is explained by the limited attention given to migration dynamics beyond North America and Western Europe. "It also highlights the challenges that scholars writing about the wider geography of international migration face in attempts to situate their work in relation to hegemonic perspectives about two global regions" (IOM 2019, p. 138).

As Reeves (2013) notes, this lacuna can be explained in part by the ongoing legacies of the "three-worlds division" of social-scientific labour (Pletsch 1981, Chari and Verdery 2009) that tend to focus on Global South–North migrations, whereas migration processes in non-Western contexts remain underrepresented in comparative and theoretical debates about contemporary migration regimes. Consequently, without a comparative and comprehensive analysis of a large diversity of migration countries, we run the risk of using approaches

and theoretical frameworks that have limited applicability in non-Western migration contexts.

Moreover, many new migration hubs are non-democratic, which, in turn, requires us to revise or produce new frameworks of analysis beyond existing [Western-centric] migration regime typologies. In Western-style democracies, as Sassen (1996) and Joppke (1998) maintain, the state's arbitrary power and penchant to curtail migrant rights are significantly constrained by the international human rights regime, independent national courts, and active civil society. Unlike Western-style democracies, non-democratic (and non-Western) immigrant-receiving countries are often characterized by autocratic regimes, poor human rights records, weak rule-of-law and arbitrary law enforcement, systemic corruption, large shadow economies, and poorly organized civil society and labor unions (Mirilovic 2010, Breunig et al. 2012, Natter 2018). This implies that autocracies are less constrained than liberal democracies in terms of respecting the human rights of citizens (including those of migrants) and ignoring the population's anti-migrant sentiments, leverage which enables autocratic regimes to be more liberal in their immigration policies (Breunig et al. 2012). Given these differences, we cannot assume that frameworks constructed in the context of (Western) liberal democracies equally apply to non-democratic migration contexts.

These considerations have informed my position in the book, which is intended to examine migrants' legal adaptation and everyday experiences in a non-Western, non-democratic migration locale. I felt that the study of migrants' experiences in Russia—a non-Western, non-democratic context and one of the five largest recipients of migrants worldwide—could contribute new insights to contemporary migration regimes scholarship, and, more specifically, socio-legal studies of migration. Through a transnational ethnographic study of Uzbek migrant workers in Russia, *Migration and Hybrid Political Regimes* attempts to do just that by developing an argument focused on the interplay between the specifics of a political regime and migrants' agency. I propose a framework for migrants' legal adaptation in hybrid political regimes (broadly conceived, non-democratic regimes) that is intended to provide theoretical and methodological perspectives for studying migrants' experiences in similar non-democratic contexts.

At the same time, the book suggests that in non-democratic migration locales such as Russia, the legal adaptations of migrant workers should be understood not only through migrants' legalization efforts and involvement with state institutions but also in terms of their knowledge of street law and informal rules, connections to street institutions, and their capacity to integrate

into the weak rule-of-law environment. Hence, migrants use the opportunities provided by a weak rule-of-law and a corrupt political system to navigate the repressive legal landscape and to negotiate—using informal channels—access to employment and other opportunities which are hard to obtain through the official legal framework of their host country. In other words, migrant undocumentedness does not automatically deprive migrants of their agency; it may, in fact, actually entice them to invent informal strategies, thereby allowing them to avoid the constraints imposed upon them by draconian immigration laws and policies.

In trying to address these tasks, however, the book was pulled in several directions. First, as Kubal rightly noted in her review, I tried to take Kubal's (2012) framework on migrants' socio-legal integration further by developing it in a hybrid political regime context of Russia. While reckoning with Kubal's suggestion that we need to consider the "legal baggage" migrants carry to their host country (Kubal 2012, p. 46), I argued the necessity of incorporating a "legal informality and a weak rule of law" as key analytical factors to understand migrant agency and legal adaptation in non-democratic regimes. Second, I attempted to contribute to broader migration regimes scholarship by positioning my book as a study of migrant legal adaptation in hybrid political regimes, the ever-growing "in-between" regimes worldwide. Third, I strived to contribute to the study of migration processes in post-Soviet spaces by providing a transnational ethnography of Uzbek migrant workers in Moscow, Russia, and in their home village in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley. Fourth, I also aimed to engage with the literature on Russian legal culture by providing empirical insights on migrants' experiences of state law and street-level legal orders.

As shown above, my book speaks to a variety of scholarly debates, an interdisciplinary ambition that makes it relevant to different disciplines and raises certain empirical and theoretical issues. This classic challenge of equally addressing theoretical and empirical ambitions (including disciplinary differences) largely reflects the criticisms raised by the reviewers above. Kubal, as an interdisciplinary socio-legal and migration scholar, criticizes my work with reference to relevant debates in migration studies and socio-legal studies; Schenk, a political scientist with a specific focus on migration governance in Russia, pays particular emphasis to the interlinkage between hybrid regimes and migration governance, raising such questions as "what hybrid is in the context of Russia's legal landscape" and "what is the relationship between hybridity and legal pluralism"; Eraliev, coming from Russian and Eurasian Studies with ethnographic fieldwork experience in Russia and Central Asia, focuses more on methodological aspects, asking questions about the issues of gender

and researcher positionality. Reflecting on these criticisms and disciplinary differences, I frame my responses around four broad issues that will hopefully be useful to others studying migrants' experiences in non-democratic regimes.

First, agreeing with Genova (2002), I need to emphasize that my book's main focus is not to confirm or refute the argument that "migrant illegality is legally produced," but rather to ethnographically demonstrate how migrants with semi-legal or undocumented status organize their daily lives in Russia. While observing Uzbek migrants' daily lives and experiences in Russia from January of 2014 to August of 2019, I felt that imagination and creative navigation simplified life for Central Asian migrants in Russia. In my observations, there were always ways to navigate through informal channels. Russian police officers, migration bureaucrats, and border guards often looked for favors and bribes, a practice that permeates the Russian migration regime. The legal status of a migrant worker did not come down to having the required paperwork; rather, it was a matter of situation or creative maneuvering. One of my key findings was that migrants in hybrid regimes like Russia's experience the following: with the right skills and networks, the corrupt legal system allows them to move around ambiguous laws and arbitrary state officials. In my view, this differs from Western-style democracies, where undocumented migration status is frequently seen as somewhat of a dead end due to a strong rule of law.

Second, connected to the above point, I argued that migrant integration and adaptation frameworks largely rely on the cases of migrant communities who live and work in the territory of liberal democratic states in North America, Western Europe, and Australia, where the rule of law is presumed to be the standard of governance. The publications mentioned by Kubal, such as Vasta's work on migrants' identity document market in London (2011) and Menski's study of South Asian legal adaptation in the UK (2008), focus on migrants' experiences on UK soil, a Western-style democracy, while my argument is that we need to consider the differences in state-society relations, governance, and legal cultures between Western-style democracies and non-democratic regimes. In a nutshell, it is highly unlikely that a South Asian migrant could bribe the English police, while Uzbek migrants can easily bribe the Russian police in Moscow, a contextual difference which needs to be considered when studying migrant legal adaptation in hybrid regime contexts such as Russia.

Third, it should be noted that I employ the term "hybrid political regimes" to situate my book in the broader literature on migration regime typologies. There are different terms used to refer to political regimes that are neither clearly democratic nor conventionally authoritarian. I agree with Schenk

that there is no consensus within the comparative political-regimes literature on the usage of terms in relation to such "in-between" regimes. By utilizing the term "hybrid regime," my ambition was to highlight the need to include non-Western migration regimes in existing theories within migration studies, thereby paving the way for new avenues of research in this field. Therefore, the connection between hybridity, migration governance, and legal pluralism, as Schenk has rightly noted, should be developed beyond this monograph.

Fourth, several issues raised by reviewers are beyond the scope of my book. Schenk raises two important issues: (a) the book does not discuss why the Russian political system is corrupt, how and why state actors engage in multiple registers, or how this situation demonstrates the hybridity of Russia; and (b) it does not give a broad sense of how often an average migrant is extorted by the police or denied wages. Another critique raised by Eraliev is that the book mainly focuses on the experiences of male migrants, while the experiences of female migrants are not sufficiently covered. Eraliev also highlights the need for more reflection on the researcher's positionality during fieldwork. While agreeing with these critical remarks, I position *Migration and Hybrid Political Regimes* as an ethnography of migrants' experiences (not an ethnography of migration governance), through which I attempted to provide a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of how migrant workers, employers, middlemen, and street-level bureaucrats negotiate the Russian migration regime.

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