shows the frailty of democratic institutions, and the power of demagogues seeking, and increasingly backed by, wealth. We would do well to learn its lessons.

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Limits of a Post-Soviet State: How Informality Replaces, Renegotiates, and Reshapes Governance in Contemporary Ukraine. By Abel Polese. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag. 2016. 245 pp. Bibliography. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. $39.00, paper.
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Limits of a Post-Soviet State is a compilation of previously published studies that Abel Polese single- or co-authored between 2006 and 2015. The focus of this book is the manifold ways in which post-Soviet citizens attempt to earn a living and provide welfare for their families through informal ways. The introductory and concluding chapters are new, attempting to offer a conceptual framework and suggest venues for further research. The book provides rich insights, but is conceptually underdeveloped.

The studies are empirically rich and cross traditional disciplinary boundaries. The book is therefore recommended for anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, political scientists, and economists alike. Polese has spent years in Ukraine and other post-Soviet states and his in-depth knowledge of the region is impressive. The prose is accessible and the stories of individual citizens make for an enjoyable read. In particular, his account of Ukrainians living in the vicinity of Chernobyl is fascinating, teaching us why they have decided to stay in this contaminated region of the country; how they survive without the help of the Ukrainian state, which has largely abandoned them; and how they interact with the rest of the country.

Equally interesting are the studies of contraband trade between Poland and Ukraine, as well as between Ukraine and Moldova. Polese shows how traders have found informal (and often illegal) ways to negotiate state borders that are meant to constrain their economic activities. He thereby looks benignly at smuggling and paying bribes to border guards. In general, Polese is quite apologetic of corrupt activities. He considers these activities often necessary in the face of cumbersome state regulations and insufficient welfare systems. In fact, as he further explores in his chapter on "brifts" (bribes and gifts), there is a large grey area between legal and illegal, and between licit and illicit activities. Using the morally-charged concept of corruption is therefore inappropriate. As he says, sometimes the laws are wrong, not the behavior in violation of these laws (21).

Unfortunately, Polese's treatment of his two central concepts, informality and corruption, fails to provide a coherent conceptual framework. It seems that he considers informality as comprising all those activities that take place in areas "that are not regulated by the state but are either socially acceptable or do not harm directly a fellow human being" (27). Yet other statements either contradict this conceptualization or are at best vague. For instance, Polese argues that informal rules might also challenge formal rules (29). Yet if the state does not regulate, where should these formal rules come from? In fact, in almost all cases presented in this book formal rules are present—for instance, when Ukraine's government tries to impose Ukrainian as the official state language—and citizens try to circumvent these rules through various informal means.

Elsewhere, Polese cryptically describes informality as the "cartilage" between two formal rules (29 and 223), without further explaining what the metaphor might imply. I suggest that it would be more helpful to consider informality as those

informal rules and networks that are created in direct response to formal rules, for in the absence of formal rules, it actually makes little sense to speak of informality because then, as Polese rightly points out, "everything is informal" (27).

Polese also struggles with the concept of corruption. On the first page of his Introduction (17), he liberally borrows from moral, economic, and public office (legal) approaches to corruption. His unease with the concept of corruption arguably relates to his allergic reaction to the common use of the term (21). Yet this reaction does not absolve him from defining it. Had he provided a coherent definition, he would have noticed that few scholars would consider the activities discussed in Chapter 2 as instances of corruption (arranged marriage in Uzbekistan and tax dodging in Lithuania and Romania).

In short, *Limits of a Post-Soviet State* offers valuable insights into the various informal ways through which citizens have tried to fill the void that the retreat of the (welfare) state has left and how they negotiate rigid and detrimental state rules. It also provides some ideas about the interplay between formal and informal rules. Yet a coherent conceptual framework of informality and corruption is missing.

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Muslims and Christians in the Bulgarian Rhodopes: Studies on Religious (Anti) syncretism. By Magdalena Lubanska. Trans. Piotr Szymczak. Warsaw: Walter de Gruyter Publishers, 2015. xii, 350 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. $140.00, hard bound.
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Magdalena Lubanska's *Muslims and Christians in the Bulgarian Rhodopes* is a careful, detailed study of mixed communities in southwestern Bulgaria. This is the kind of nuanced scholarship that is of extreme value to researchers in the immediate field of east European studies, and specifically those who are interested in the study of sectarian relations in Bulgaria. The author makes an analytic distinction between "deep" and "shallow" syncretism to elucidate the motivations and worldviews of different religious communities who nevertheless visit the same holy sites and the same healers. Lubanska argues that her observations of lived religious practices among Muslims and Christians in the Western Rhodope communities of Ribnovo, Satovcha, and Garmen provide evidence for a "shallow" syncretism, militating against the creation of a Muslim-Christian hybrid religiosity.

In the specific case of the Western Rhodope Pomaks (Bulgarian-speaking Muslims), Lubanska asserts that shallow syncretism "is a cultural strategy calculated to maintain an anti-syncretic attitude by protecting religious boundaries from infiltration" (301). Muslim religious elites in these communities are loath to be called "crypto-Christians," and actively try to discredit Christian beliefs, even if lay Muslims visit Christian healers. And because of the conflation of Bulgarian ethnic identity with Bulgarian Orthodox Christianity, these Pomaks also reject their Bulgarian ethnicity. The author spends considerable time discussing the tensions between what she calls "Adat Islam" and "Salafi Islam." The former represents the traditional, more syncretic forms of the religion traditionally practiced in the Rhodopes while the latter represents the influx of new, supposedly purer religious practices from the Arabian Gulf following the collapse of communism in Bulgarian in 1989.

The book is organized into eight substantive chapters with an introduction and conclusion. The empirical evidence presented in the chapters often takes the form