Andrea Lorenzo Capussela: comments on Gezim Krasniqi’s review of my book in JISB
28 May 2016
dear JISB,
these are my comments on the part of Krasniqi’s essay that reviews my book
I limit myself to the passages that I find demonstrably inaccurate or misleading (at the end I add a few more subjective remarks). I found 17 of them, evenly distributed across the four main charges addressed at my book: as they are so many, and the cut and paste that follows is both pedantic and messy, I’ll make one more general remark first:
the reviewer criticizes also my use of (or my arguments using) expressions such as ‘failed state’, ‘pan-Albanian strategy’, ‘Albanian politico-criminal elite’, and a few similar ones.
A PDF search shows that I never use those expressions (nor do I use the more anodyne ‘Albanian nationalist’, or even ‘Albanian elite’: because the language or ethnicity of the elite are largely irrelevant from my perspective: what matters is their interests and their power).
Many people use them: often to say, or suggest, that there is something wrong with Albanians or their culture. So, maybe the reviewer associates me with this school of thought (for reasons that the review leaves unsaid). But whatever the reviewer may think, the reader of the review will certainly associate me with that school.
Now, precisely because that school has many adherents (less in academic circles than among practitioners, journalists, or Milanese cocktail party conversations), I spend quite a few pages in the book, and one good third of the conclusions, to say that: 1) culture is not K’s problem at all (K’s problem is the allocation of power, the social order it reflects, the institutions underpinned by that social order, and the interests of the elite that benefits from it); 2) the cultural-historical interpretation is often just ‘epistemic nonsense’ (Sen, 2004); 3) those international-historical officials who use it are making a self-serving argument (how could they change K’s culture, or that of ‘the Albanians’, if that is the problem?) and not just a morally repugnant one.
Of all inaccurate or misleading passages in the review, therefore, those associating my book with that school are the most puzzling ones.
Or maybe the most revealing: as the reviewer cannot possibly have overlooked my critique of the cultural-historical interpretation, maybe the purpose of the review was not to review my book but to make some points that it was urgent to make. Indeed, my overall impression is that the reviewer has taken my book, grafted upon it the targets of his criticism, and then proceeded to criticize them. Which is why the book he reviews does not sound very familiar.

* 
these are the 17 problems:

1 by a predatory political elite with strong ties to organized crime. Therefore, the argument goes, Kosovo is not only a local problem but also a wider one that threatens regional security and that of the EU (p. xiv). In short, the book portrays a rather grim picture of Kosovo.
Not really: I just say (often quoting EC and ECA 2012) that K’s problems threaten the ‘internal security of the EU’ (a PDF search found this expression a dozen times): e.g., p. xiv:

largely unaccountable elite. This social order, which took shape during the UN protectorate and has cemented itself after independence, is the origin of the threat that Kosovo still poses to the stability of the Balkans and the internal security of the EU.

2

Overall, both arguments are well documented. In particular, Capussela’s analysis of the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) is very insightful (partially stemming from his experience as a EULEX employee) and lays bare its structural defects, political vulnerability and failures.

Not so: I never worked for Eulex: (and, having seen it alive, I would never have worked there). I worked for the ICO, as I say half a dozen times in the book, and I was an interlocutor of Eulex:

p. xiv:

there in 2006–7, between two jobs in the private sector. I returned to Kosovo in February 2008, one week before it declared independence, to join the economics unit of the mission that was to supervise the new state, the International Civilian Office (ICO). During my first year I was the deputy head of the unit, and I then led it until it was closed, in the spring of 2011. From that position I could observe the choices of the international community rather closely, and as I dealt with matters that concerned money I could also see the ‘true face’ of Kosovo’s

p. 135:

Successive opportunities to remedy these mistakes were lost because Eulex’s management failed to acknowledge them. As part of my institutional dialogue with the mission, for instance, I twice advised its deputy head and the director of the justice sector to devote more resources to the commercial courts. On both occasions I was told that changing the operational plan was too complex, but I have reason to believe that my proposal did not go much beyond the people with whom I discussed it. Had the management raised the problem in its real proportions before its superiors in Brussels, the misallocation of resources might have been remedied. But doing so would have exposed errors that part of the same management had committed during the planning phase, which brings us to the question of accountability.
in the economy, and divergences within the international presence in Kosovo. As a result, in six years, EULEX has gone from being a European Union flagship mission, to a total failure.

I never use this expression, which is grossly excessive, and say some goods things too about Eulex: e.g., p. 147:

It must be added, however, that Eulex’s judicial staff includes the prosecutors who vigorously pursued some very unpopular war crimes cases, and the judges who took decisions that were equally inconvenient for the management, such as the acquittal of innocents whom the mission had previously arrested. It is also in this sense that the question posed must be given a limited answer.

4

Merits aside, the book’s strength is undermined by a number of factors. First and foremost, the book takes a rather simplistic approach to the process of statebuilding, seeing it as a simple process of transition from post-conflict society to a stable state and open social system under
The second consequence is that efforts to improve the institutions of limited access societies tend to contradict the logic upon which their social order is based. Their elites will resist reforms that promote economic competition or strengthen the independence of the judiciary, for instance, because they threaten their privileges and rents. But if such reforms succeed, the incentives that had originally allowed society to contain violence would dissolve together with those rents. Rents, as already noted, are the primary condition of stability in the natural state, for they make the pact among elites self-enforcing and stable: consequently, non-elite members of such societies might themselves fear and oppose reform – an observation that can be traced back to Machiavelli – because it would threaten the peace and their own security. For the same reasons, in the natural state clientelism and corruption are rational strategies for the ordinary citizens, which need not be explained by – often sweeping, as we shall see – claims about culture or tradition. But if this is the case, how can a natural state evolve into an open access society? How can transition occur?

Both theories we have summarized argue that transition is an endogenous, slow and non-linear process: progress is not necessary or inevitable, and any advances can be reversed. They differ slightly on how transition can happen. Acemoglu, Robinson and their co-authors observe that transitions have occurred when pluralistic coalitions of non-elites were able to exploit ‘critical junctures’, or historical accidents: they could thus constrain the power of the existing elite, or overturn it, and establish more inclusive political institutions, under whose aegis more inclusive economic institutions also emerged, which in turn strengthened political pluralism in a self-reinforcing virtuous circle; to set off this process, according to this reading, the ‘empowerment’ of a sufficiently broad segment of non-elite social forces is crucial.
Ahead of Kosovo’s independence it was clear that the vacuum that the departure of UNMIK would leave in the independent political and economic authorities risked being filled by the dominant coalition. Despite UNMIK’s permissive stance, in fact, such independent agencies did pose a constraint on the predatory interests of the elite because they forced it to negotiate compromises with the international community: the risk was that such constraint, however tenuous, would dissolve and that those authorities would be turned into instruments for implementing the strategies of the elite. Behind their formal independence, the elite would have been able to unaccountably use the powers of such agencies – over the largest markets, public finance, crime repression, the media – so as to achieve its immediate aims, as well as to weaken, deter or attack any emerging social, economic or political force that could challenge its power and rents. Moreover, direct

the guidance of international actors. According to this model, the outcome depends on the ability/inability of the international actors to prevent local politicians and other interest groups from subverting the process and consequently capturing the state. Such an approach

Not so: I do say that ‘preventing’ is important, but (in both the theoretical part (see. e.g., the passage quoted just above) and in the rest) I say that the main thing, in short, is to build internal countervailing powers (for without them, policies to prevent state capture will cease to be effective once the intervention goes away: sustainability requires to build those internal things (institutions, other powers, etc.) that can themselves prevent, or undo, state capture):

p. 29–31:

In sum, from the perspective of this theory state-building is an attempt to stimulate the transition of post-conflict or developing countries from fragile to more mature natural states, and on to open access societies: leading them through such a process is the very purpose of state-building, by reason of the correlations that link together democracy, prosperity and stability.57 This conclusion can be exemplified by looking

If left to their endogenous forces, however, in natural states transition begins and is sustained only if it conforms to the (enlightened or
short-sighted) self-interest of the elite. Consequently, the primary obstacle to state-building is the power of the dominant coalition, even if its position rests on an electoral mandate, for its interests will *ex hypothesi* lead it to oppose transition. Mirror-like, the primary supports of a state-building intervention are the ordinary citizens and any organized non-elite social force, to whom transition would open access to impartially-enforced rights and political and economic competition. A state-building intervention is an attempt to help such interests to prevail over those of the elite, and cannot be neutral between them: rather, it ought to aim at stimulating the political agency of citizens and favouring the coordination of their political action.⁵⁹

p. 59:

This country risked what is generally known as 'state capture'.⁸⁸ Capture of an idiosyncratic kind, however, for there would have been no clear separation between the 'captors' — typically, the economic elite — and the 'captured' politicians and public officials: both the economy and the political system risked falling under the tight control of a homogenous elite, made up of groups comprising politicians, military and criminal leaders and businessmen. Such a phenomenon would have been the natural evolution of Kosovo's emerging social order.⁹⁹ And as governance is a system composed of mutually influencing parts, as already noted, the effects of state capture would have reverberated across Kosovo's institutions, affecting also those in which UNMIK had achieved its better results, such as the central bank, the ombudsperson or the electoral system: all institutions that had previously acted under the aegis of the mission would have been distorted so as to conform to the logic of that social order, which independence was set to cement.
their society’s aspirations and policy preferences. Not only democracy and individual freedoms ought to be the primary end and the primary means of state-building, therefore, but the ‘government by discussion’ precept must be observed by the state builder too, for different possible adaptations of such general principles should be evaluated and compared before one set of institutions is chosen.⁶³

The elite, once more, stands out as an obstacle to the design of appropriate institutions, for it has no interest in such discussions being fruitful or even possible. The political pre-eminence of the elite might prevent competing views on the shape of institutions from emerging into public debate, and if the views of those who have an interest in the success of the state-building exercise are suppressed, the ‘local ownership’ principle itself risks being subverted. The multiple constraints that the domestic elite can pose to a state-building intervention are thus to be seen as a physiological element of such enterprises: they are one manifestation of the problem that is to be addressed.

p. 60:

But if this explains the mission’s reluctance to confront the elite in the name of governance reform, it does not explain its failure to stimulate the agency of Kosovo’s inhabitants, in whose interests those reforms were: aside from its intrinsic desirability, an active approach to citizenship by the population would have helped UNMIK achieve its stated objectives. But the mission lost their trust: not only because

⁶ political structures and logics (Boege, Brown, and Clements 2009). Seen in this light, more than a failed state (at least by regional standards), Kosovo represents a rather peculiar

⁷ than a failed state (at least by regional standards), Kosovo represents a rather peculiar hybrid regime with different overlapping systems and power structures that stem from its recent history, state contestation, international presence and local interests.

ture, I don’t say ‘hybridity’ and neither use nor comment (or have read much, honestly) on that literature. But the yellow part is exactly what I say in both the theoretical part and the rest, e.g.:
CHAPTER 2

KOSOVO ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE

Introduction: the UN protectorate and its approach to state-building

In developing countries, the actors that shape the social order generally are the dominant coalition of elites, other social forces seeking to join or replace them and the ordinary citizens. In 1999 at the centre of the stage in Kosovo stood a fourth protagonist, the international community, which held a monopoly on both political power and the legitimate use of force, in the service of a state-building mandate.¹

The international community was a polymorphous character, however. It consisted of a civilian mission, UNMIK, of numerous specialized institutions (the European Commission, the OSCE, the IMF, the World Bank, several UN agencies) that operated under its guidance or in cooperation with it, and a military mission, KFOR. Although both UNMIK and KFOR acted under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), the NATO mission did not take its orders from the UN one. The coherence between the exercise of political and military power was nonetheless ensured by the fact that both missions were subject to the guidance of the main Western powers.²

The interaction between the international community and the domestic actors was equally complex. As required by resolution 1244, UNMIK progressively devolved part of its legislative and executive powers to representative institutions — named the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) — that it shaped like those of

p. 54:
The two forces that shaped Kosovo’s political and economic institutions were UNMIK and the international community, on one hand, and the elite described above, on the other hand: civil society and the media were

lithic. Although in the case of international actors the author clearly distinguishes between the often diverging US and EU interests in Kosovo, he does not pay sufficient attention to varied interests within the EU member states (not least those between states recognizing Kosovo’s independence and those that do not). The often irreconcilable interests of various EU states have in many ways and instances hindered EULEX’s mission and continue to pose serious challenges to Kosovo’s statebuilding and EU integration efforts. More problematic, in my view, is Capussela’s tendency to this is Eulex’s most frequent argument (or excuse), which I comment and largely confute (so, as the review praises my part on eulex, I also see a contradiction here), e.g., p. 113:
statebuilding and EU integration efforts. More problematic, in my view, is Capussela’s tendency to treat Kosovo’s economic and political elite as homogenous. Kosovo’s recent history has been marked by intense intra-Albanian power struggles and political cleavages that continue even now. Thus, by omitting important intra-Albanian power struggles and cleavages in both Kosovo

Not so: I do explain (in the theoretical part too) that the elite is composed of several factions, which differ among themselves (urban/rural, military/not. Etc.) and compete with each other on the distribution of rents; and I explain in what sense I see it as homogenous, despite all that:

pp. 49–50

The nexus between politics, crime and business can be pictured as a system of partly overlapping ellipses joined at the centre, like the petals
of an open flower. Each system generally had four or five components: the political structure (the party or the faction, and in some cases a loyal newspaper); the criminal operations (smuggling, extortion, trafficking and money laundering); the legitimate businesses, formal or informal; the military force, formerly part of either the KLA or of LDK’s own smaller armed formations; and the social group, based on bonds such as family or clan affiliation, which tied the other components together and linked it to a territory. At their juncture stood persons who pursued political, economic and criminal interests simultaneously, and coordinated the activities of the organization in each sector. They held that central position by virtue of skill, merit or social standing, and did not necessarily include the ostensible leaders of the political structure or its highest representatives in the PISG: the allocation of power within the system was as opaque as the system itself. Below each organization, finally, were extensive patronage networks.\textsuperscript{59}

Several such power structures existed, organized around some of Kosovo’s dozen clans.\textsuperscript{60} The three main ones presumably were the ‘Drenica group’, which led PDK; a second group of former guerrilla commanders (the ‘Llapi group’), who formed a separate faction within that same party; and the structure assembled around the leader of AAK.\textsuperscript{61} LDK was not believed to have equally organic links to crime, even though it did have its own informal secret service.\textsuperscript{62} According to a leaked KFOR report, the main strengths of such politico-criminal groups were their ‘strong connections’ with politicians, senior civil servants, policemen, justice officials; the ‘large availability of any kind of weapon’; ‘strict discipline’, enforced upon ancestral norms of conduct; the link to their territory; and the ‘silence conspiracy of the local population’.\textsuperscript{63}

Such organizations closely correspond to the logic of the natural state, whereby violence is contained through rents and society is organized through vertical relationships. They also display the double balance that is characteristic of that social order and ensures its stability — a balance of privileges and rents among the military, political and economic components of such power structures, and a mirroring one among the different power structures that composed Kosovo’s dominant coalition. Within this coalition, the groups holding superior military power prevailed: in particular, even though between 1999 and 2007 LDK was always the largest party, of the four prime ministers of that period two
The political elite was composed of two main groups: the urban intelligentsia, organized around LDK; and the former guerrilla leaders, mostly of rural origin, who led PDK and AAK. Although divided by upbringing and social background — which are important cleavages in Kosovo — and by the degree of violence they could exercise, those two groups had common traits. Both were supported by powerful businessmen, members of both had expanded their power into the economy, and both — with the differences already underlined — were involved in corrupt practices and organized crime. Equally importantly, both had an interest in acquiring electoral support through patronage rather than by delivering public goods to the population, for in Kosovo’s conditions clientelism and the cultivation of each party’s well-defined regional constituencies was a more effective political strategy.

The homogeneity of this elite explains why the programmes and outlook of the main political parties displayed remarkably small differences, and why they shared the same approach to the exercise of political power: they competed to control the political system and the rents it could guarantee, not to change it. Between 2001 and 2007 LDK governed Kosovo, either alone or with AAK: PDK won the 2007 elections, becoming Kosovo’s largest party, and formed a coalition with LDK; but the character and the general direction of the policies of the government hardly changed. Aside from their shifting political alliances, therefore, Kosovo’s dominant coalition included these three parties and the several political, economic, criminal and military forces that each represented, themselves organized in the power structures described above. And the pact that held such factions together was relatively stable: after 1999–2000 conflicts within the elite were rare, and generally limited or indirect.

Facing this coalition were UNMIK and the Western powers that directed its policies. The UN report which, after the riots of March 2004, set the status process in motion advised UNMIK also to devolve greater powers to the PISG, so as to assuage Kosovo’s frustration, but admonished that:

pp. 180–81:
Nonetheless discontinuities have also emerged. A deep rift has seemingly opened in the elite, separating PDK from LDK, AAK and Limaj’s party. And, by consequence, in each remaining scenario – options 2, 3 and 4 – the next government would depend on the decisive support of the new ‘Serb’ party. But while its predecessor, SLS, was a loyal associate of the elite, this party appears to be tightly controlled by the Serbian government: thus Pristina would de facto become politically dependent on Belgrade.

This paradoxical outcome would be the result of several factors, contingent and structural: the decline in election fraud, on one hand, which reduced the elite’s control over the balance of power (PDK’s crucial ally AKR missed the 5 per cent threshold by only 2,533 votes, or 0.3 per cent of the valid ballots, and Limaj’s party surpassed it by 978: with inverted results no crisis would have emerged); and, on the other, Vetëvendosje’s stable strength, firm international opposition to it, and the changed political orientation of the Serb minority, following the agreement on north Kosovo. The rift splitting the elite might be of a structural nature too, because a grand coalition would seem a preferable outcome for most of its factions: should they persist in eschewing it, this would probably be due – assuming rationality – to irreconcilable differences on the sharing of rents. This, in turn, would signal that Kosovo’s social order is more fragile – has less ‘dynamic stability’ and ‘adaptive efficiency’, in the language of the literature discussed in Chapter 1— than it previously appeared. Thus a period of heightened competition might follow, between the old leading faction and its challengers, which could lead to a similar wave of political violence as that observed in 1999–2000: a PDK candidate was assassinated soon after the elections, ominously, and more recently a former opposition parliamentarian shot a KLA veteran, killing him. Undesirable though such a conflict may be, however, if the two groups will fail to find a more stable equilibrium the political system could begin to open up, because the elite as a whole is likely to become more exposed to the pressure and demands of the citizens.

now. Thus, by omitting important intra-Albanian power struggles and cleavages in both Kosovo and the wider region, Capussela takes a rather simplistic and even essentialist perspective. A case in point is the frequent use of the term ‘Kosovo’s elite’ and the implicit reference to the existence of a pan-Albanian politico-criminal elite that uses threats of destabilizing Macedonia in order to get concessions in Kosovo. For instance, the author attributes various incidents that occurred in
I never use such expressions (‘pan-Albanian’, ‘Albanian politico-criminal’, etc.). I only say ‘Albanian elite’, but only twice (in p. 88): when I talk of the Serb adjunct of the elite, to distinguish them:

p. 88:

parliament in exchange for rents. For instance, I sat for three years next to the main Serb political leader, on the board of directors of Kosovo’s privatization agency: although his role was to safeguard the interests of his community, this person visibly voted and often spoke according to the instructions of the chairman of the board, who represented the interests of the PDK party and the Albanian elite. And a Serb minister defended, against my objections, a (fiscally irresponsible) draft law awarding generous pensions to KLA veterans: its preamble qualified them as ‘liberators’ and defined Serbia’s sovereignty over Kosovo since 1912 as ‘colonial occupation’. These figures are the product of the overrepresentation of the Serb minority, which increases the incentive to seek political office for private gain and thereby leads to a form of adverse selection that favours such entrepreneurs over bona fide politicians.

An indirect confirmation emerged during the 2010 general elections, when anecdotal evidence suggested that in Serb enclaves votes were purchased at a price (€50) that was twice as high as in Albanian-majority polling stations, which is precisely the ratio by which Serbs are overrepresented in parliament. 71 The party that obtained the largest share of the Serb vote – the Samostalna Liberalna Stranka (SLS, Independent Liberal Party), to which the two politicians mentioned above then belonged – is widely believed to have engaged in vote buying with PDK’s financial support. 72 SLS was closely linked to the leading faction of that party, in fact, and was a crucial component of the 2007–14 governing coalitions, thanks to the disproportionate number of parliamentary seats it controlled.

A communion of interests ties these Serb political leaders and the Albanian elite, therefore, which has perversely reinforced the deeper causes of the marginalization of the Serb community. Yet such leaders on the ‘essentialist’ charge, by the way, I say also this on the cultural interpretation:

p. 221:
Interpretations that rely primarily on history, culture or traditions obscure the role of the far more recognizable forces — the power and the interests of the elite — which we have observed while, over the course of the past 15 years, they gradually gave shape to the social order and institutions of this country: these are the origin of its current malaise. Thus it is only an apparent paradox — and hardly a sign of honest introspection — that their own ancestral customs are frequently blamed also by Kosovo’s elite and public officials.\textsuperscript{12}

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to get concessions in Kosovo. For instance, the author attributes various incidents that occurred in Macedonia at the time of negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia to ‘the close ties between Kosovo’s elite and its principal criminal organization (SHIK [Kosovo Information Service]), on the one hand, and the criminal and armed groups of the Macedonian Albanians, on the other’ (p. 80). Although such incidents occurred and there have been small armed groups operating in not so: I don’t ‘attribute incidents’, but explain a policy of the int. comm. (motivated, in part, by fear of such incidents), as the preceding passage shows (pp. 79–80):

Although these comments concern the question of the independence of Kosovo, they are enlightening also for the question of the north, because it too had become a cause célèbre for the Albanian nation and was perceived as the counterpart for the West’s imposition of the resented ban on union with Albania, itself motivated precisely by concerns for the stability of Macedonia. Had the West withdrawn its support for Kosovo’s claim to the north, therefore, tension was likely to rise in
Macedonia, and the aftermath of the aborted police raid offered empirical evidence of this danger.

Against such a background, the close ties between Kosovo’s elite and its principal criminal organization (SHIK), on one hand, and the criminal and armed groups of the Macedonian Albanians, on the other, represented a latent threat in themselves, which could be effective even if it remained unspoken.47 It presumably is on its strength that Kosovo’s former minister of finance and economy (my main interlocutor in 2008–10) could address to the EU these unsubtle words: should Serbia’s presence in the North not be ‘immediately’ removed – he wrote in 2012 – ‘I am deeply concerned that Kosovo and the region could rapidly slip into an uncontrollable and unpredictable situation’.48 Conceivably, therefore, Kosovo’s elite relied on this latent threat also to condition Eulex’s encroachment on its own material interests, or to resist incisive governance reform. We shall return to these questions in the next chapter.

(p. 80). Although such incidents occurred and there have been small armed groups operating in the region, according to local commentators, their actions have for the most part been motivated by (intra-Albanian) criminal and power interests and competition rather than being part of a well-

not so: the ‘incidents’ I refer to at p. 80 are those I described thus, at p. 76:

On the night of 25 July Pristina sent two special police units to take control of such customs gates. Never before had Kosovo’s police ventured in the north. Both units met armed resistance, which killed one policeman. They had to retreat and were eventually escorted out of the north under KFOR’s protection. The move failed, predictably, but it inflamed the north: barricades were immediately set up on all its main roads, and tension spread across the region.37 International mediation averted an escalation, but in the following weeks a resurgence of sporadic attacks against the Serb minority was observed in south Kosovo, and Macedonia witnessed a wave of ethnically motivated crimes and clashes between the police and ethnic Albanians, which produced about ten deaths in the space of 12 months. Similar incidents had preceded the outbreak of the 2001 insurgency, and are likely to have been read as a sign that serious unrest could have followed: in one particularly ominous instance three ethnic Albanians were killed by the Macedonian police while allegedly smuggling weapons from Kosovo.

by (intra-Albanian) criminal and power interests and competition rather than being part of a well-planned pan-Albanian national(ist) strategy in the region, as the book implies.
I never mention to such a strategy, of which I have no knowledge; and PDF search shows that not even the (rather common) expression ‘Albanian nationalist’, or variants of it, ever appear in the book. I only talk about the greater Albania idea (4 times, plus 1 citation), to say what it is:

p. 7:
land bordering Kosovo and Albania: this region is the third main component of the map of Greater Albania, a political project which was initially the long-term aim of the KLA, still surfaces in public discourse in Kosovo and Albania, and is a latent threat to the survival of Macedonia.

p. 78:
Albanian neighbours. And since 2008 the territory on which they are concentrated borders two Albanian nations: Kosovo and Albania; the project of joining them and their own land into a Greater Albania is not their, Kosovo’s or Albania’s official policy, but it is ‘gaining ground’. The potential benefits of an insurgency were greater in 2011 than they had been in 2001, therefore: even though a union with Kosovo or the creation of Greater Albania presumably remained unrealistic objectives, the Macedonian Albanians could plausibly have aimed for a high degree of regional autonomy, which could also serve as a stepping stone for subsequently achieving one of those objectives. And the possibility of

p. 94:
Kosovo is a central and symbolically important territory in the Balkans, and popular unrest there can have repercussions across the region. Indeed, this is the principal reason it was allowed to become independent: but the risk was not removed, because Kosovo’s secession was fiercely contested and inevitably opened the question of the north, behind which the Greater Albania project also resurfaced, threatening Macedonia. Such complications gave rise to demands and resentments

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Last but not least, the book advances certain unsubstantiated claims recurrently, such as the one about the international community’s failure to disarm the KLA. Like any post-conflict society, Kosovo has a rather substantial number of arms in private or semi-private hands. Yet this is the first time that I read, or hear, that the international community did not fail to disarm the KLA (whereas it’s true, as I say, that weapons are everywhere in the region and it would not have been possible to take all illegal weapons in K); I quote evidence that they did fail to disarm them: I have two full sections (pp. 35–38, 151–5) on this:
Stability and the question of violence

The tension between short- and long-term stability, and between apparent and real progress, is an important cause of the unsatisfactory results of the UN protectorate. The problem is best illustrated by the international community’s failure to disarm the KLA fighters, which influenced many of UNMIK’s subsequent choices. Centralizing military power under the political institutions is an essential priority of peace-

The means and the organization of violence

An important condition for sustainably improving governance in Kosovo within the necessarily limited timeframe of its international supervision was a significant reduction of the military power of the elite, which lay also in the ‘large availability of any kind of weapon’. This consideration does not emerge from either the official documents or the

claiming that the KLA structure remained intact after the war and has ever since been used by its leaders-turned-politicians to blackmail international missions (pp. 48–41, 152–155) is a far-fetched claim. Similarly, the book contains unnecessary anecdotal evidence. For instance, not so: I say (p. 6), and later prove (in my view), that:

fighters. The KLA was formally dissolved and most of its members were absorbed by an ad hoc civil protection corps and by the new police force, but the organization of the largely autonomous regional or personal groups that had composed that irregular army remained essentially intact, under the command of leaders who entered politics, business or organized crime (the KLA had also financed itself through drug trafficking and other forms of crime). Their fighters remained well armed: only a fraction of their arsenal was handed over under a disarmament pledge made immediately after the conflict; only a few antiquated guns were subsequently delivered, in response to amnesties decreed by UNMIK to collect illegally possessed arms (estimated to have been between 300,000 and 460,000 in 1999, nearly one for every adult male); and KFOR’s weapons search policy was notable less for its successes than for its prudence. 16

for the following week’ (p. 154). This and other similar examples risk diminishing the quality of the work as well as blurring the line between evidence-based argument and speculation.
no comment on the ‘diminishing’ bit (except to say that one rarely has hard evidence on an unofficial secret service: should one limit oneself to hard evidence, what on earth can one say about such organizations, or organized crime more generally? at any rate, I do quote quite a bit of evidence on this organization): but, at a micro level at least, I see no ‘blurring’, because I clarify that nothing of my argument hinges on the Friday meetings: these are the two passages in which I refer to them:

p. 154:

The attempt to dismantle the informal intelligence services failed entirely: the European Commission recently noted that ‘the main political parties continue to rely on their own informal security arrangements, which is an issue of serious concern’. In 2003 KFOR knew the names of 160 salaried members of the agency linked to the leading faction of the elite, SHIK: yet this organization continued its operations undisturbed, and I am told that its leaders — who allegedly include the current prime minister and the deputy leader of his PDK party — still meet on Fridays in the village of Malishevë, in the Drenica hills, to plan SHIK’s activities for the following week. Their nature is such that no direct evidence of them exists, of course, but the press frequently reports on SHIK’s actions, both within and beyond the classic sphere of organized crime: these actions include the infiltration of public institutions, the interference in the exercise of their powers, the extortion of businesses, election fraud, and the intimidation of witnesses, political opponents and journalists.

p. 201:

In 2009 Norway donated two schools and their equipment, conforming to Norwegian quality standards, for an overall investment of €13.5 million. Controlled by PDK, the education ministry allocated them to two strongholds of the party: Malishevë, where SHIK’s leaders meet on Fridays, and Skënderaj, which coined the ‘one man, 1.49 votes’ rule. Construction was managed by Norway: the municipalities only had

* some looser comments (but consider that I haven’t read the ther book):

A

Skendaj’s Creating Kosovo has a two-pronged focus on statebuilding and democratization, with a stronger emphasis on the former. In addition to decoupling statebuilding and democratization, the author also unpacks the state into its core bureaucracies—police, custom, central

This would have made a comparison with my own approach (democracy is key, also for economic growth), which the review effectively ignores instead
and ineffectual, international insulation contributed to the development of a professional police force and customs service. The book argues that high levels of politicization in the again, had one wanted to compare the two books: I argue that ‘insulation’ is unsustainable instead, and should be neither the aim, nor even the (main) instrument of state-building

C

venting them from penalizing corruption. On the contrary, the comparative effectiveness of the police force and customs service stems from their insulation from political interference and promotion of a public service ethos. Both claims are well supported by evidence collected by the the other book says that the state-building intervention (and Eulex, I guess) have a mixed record. But if the good part of this mixed record is customs and police I disagree entirely, and my book explains why (odd, therefore, that the reviewer appears to accept those claim uncritically, and yet doesn’t criticize my criticism). Anyway: the police is only good (relative to other Kosovo agencies) on ordinary crime: not on corruption and organized crime (on which EC says police is hopeless); on customs, see the arguments (it HAD to be relatively efficient) I make in the book:

pp. 108–9:

The only aspect of the Joint Action that does not conform to our analysis is the attribution to Eulex of a specific task in the customs sector,
albeit a purely advisory one. This choice is not convincing. As an improvement of the judiciary would have reverberated positively on the efficiency of all other governmental agencies, by increasing their incentive to comply with the law, it is unclear why the EU chose to allocate part of Eulex’s resources to one of them, and why the customs service was chosen.

The few commentators who offer an explanation answer only the second question, noting that more than two thirds of Kosovo’s recurrent budget revenue was collected at the border.\textsuperscript{57} This is true, but the argument remains unpersuasive. First, in 2006–7 the customs service was already a relatively efficient agency compared to most others: the tax administration in particular, which collects the other third of public revenue, was in markedly worse condition.\textsuperscript{58} Second, Kosovo’s elite itself had an interest in maintaining the general efficiency of the customs service, to avoid a fiscal crisis, and it would at most have attempted to increase corruption at the margins. Finally, and most importantly, public money is in danger not only when it flows into the treasury but also when it flows out: in particular, the vast majority of public money is spent through the public procurement system (86 per cent in 2008), where corruption was both more widespread and more damaging than in customs, and was likely to rise after independence.\textsuperscript{59}

p. 132:

In the customs sector, finally, the mission’s advisory work is found to have been ‘largely successful’, on the argument that customs revenue rose significantly between 2007 and 2010 (without change in the trade regime).\textsuperscript{59} In fact, the growth in revenue barely tracked the growth of imports (33 and 35 per cent, respectively).\textsuperscript{60} This only proves that under Eulex’s watch the efficiency of the customs service did not suffer. Establishing causation, moreover, would require further evidence: in the light of its performance in the police and justice sectors, it would be imprudent to conclude that the customs service has maintained its efficiency because of Eulex’s assistance.

p. 194:
The IMF programme was soon declared ‘irrecoverably off-track’ and
donors withheld their grants. But this sanction was a fleeting one:
before the Fund made that announcement it agreed a ‘staff-monitored
programme’ with Kosovo, which did not include loans but effectively
replicated the previous one, and which was followed by a fully-fledged
programme in early 2012. Under the guidance of the IMF the fiscal
crisis was averted, by virtue of significant cuts in capital expenditure,
subsidies for electricity imports and other transfers, and of a sizeable rise
in tax and customs revenue, due to greater rigour on delinquencies –
which had hitherto benefited from tolerance, evidently – as well as to
possibly excessive pressure on firms.

Through its veto powers on senior appointments, the mission
protected some institutions – the central bank, the economic regulators,
the customs service – from being directly captured by the elite. But it
failed to stem a wave of political appointees from taking over other
institutions, including the tax administration and all but one public
utility. The pressure of the elite was considerable on this front, because
such appointments were necessary for it to have unmediated access to
valuable assets, vast reservoirs of patronage and decisive instruments
of influence over the economy. The ICO initially resisted such pressure but
eventually capitulated. And although the mission could avert the worst
appointments, it could never promote good ones; the governance system
naturally generated – and the elite actively favoured – yet another form
of adverse selection, whereby the better segment of Kosovo’s society
either remained outside of the public sector or left it. None of the
competent and committed professionals I encouraged to seek public
office has been offered or has accepted it.

\textit{international statebuilding in general.} The key message that they convey is that international statebuilding is a painstakingly complex and unpredicted process involving many actors with various and often contradicting aims. At the same time, they are a testimony to Kosovo’s, as well as the

if this is the key message of my book, I wrote a different book from that I had in mind

\textit{iliation. As such, they present a valuable reference for scholars, students and practitioners working or interested in the region, and international statebuilding in general.}

this is a subtly interesting remark, which saves my book too: that ‘or’ implies that there
may be people working ‘in’ the region but not interested in it: I think they are many, and
I think that their number and lack of interest is one cause (hardly quantifiable, or even articulable, but not negligible at all) of the failure of the intervention, and I allude to it in the book. The review supports this argument, which is rarely discussed but important and worth researching, in my view: how can missions avoid recruiting such people? How to attract genuinely interested ones? Had these questions been addressed and solved before the Kosovo intervention was launched, I think the results would have been markedly better.