The book *Forging Kosovo: Between Dependence, Independence, and Interdependence* is aptly named because the very title succeeds in encapsulating the process, dilemmas, successes and potential pitfalls of this young state’s journey following independence. As the editors Arben Hajrullahu and Anton Vukpalaj explain, the unique selling point of the book relates to the local perspectives it presents. While the last two decades or so have seen a plethora of publications on Kosovo, many, as rightly noted by the editors, “tend to neglect the perspectives and views of local scholars” (9). This is a vacuum that this book fills.

As the prelude states, the book examines “political, legal, economic, and sociological developments since the 1999 international intervention in Kosovo, and assesses the achievements, failures and the lessons (not) to be learned from the unique vantage point of scholars with Kosovar origin”. This is a refreshing perspective; accordingly, in my review, I offer an internationally-versed local perspective on Kosovo.

There are a great many valuable books, journal articles and papers on Kosovo. However, some scholars who look at the region from the outside lack depth or historical perspective, or fall prey to bias. At times, one can discern a certain exoticization: for instance when authors refer to interethnic “ancient” hatred, to local customs and habits, to what they perceive as ever-so-strange rituals and practices. There is however, nothing strange about Kosovo’s customs and practices; they are no stranger than those encountered anywhere else. This book takes a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together local, yet often internationally-versed scholars from political science to sociology, law, anthropology and psychology.

In his introductory chapter, Arben Hajrullahu provides an overview of Kosovo’s current challenges, highlighting the fact that the country is in the middle of a “multi-faced transition and a state- and society-building transition process at the same time” (19). With the backdrop of the ongoing negotiations between Prishtina and Belgrade, he writes that “the Serbia-Kosovo dispute is the litmus test of a European future in the Western Balkans” (15). In its journey to consolidated
statehood, Kosovo faces several challenges, such as grappling with “demos versus ethnos or living in the past versus EU integration” (13), as well as tackling the questions remaining in the talks with Serbia. The success or failure of the new country will just as much be the success or failure of the European Union—as the facilitator of dialogue—among others.

Hajrullahu’s colleague at the University of Prishtina, Bekim Baliqi, looks at the question of the impact of collective memory in shaping the identity of the future. In Kosovo, ethnocentric memorialization of the recent past seems to be incompatible with attempts to forge a civic and multi-ethnic future. These are undercurrents that continue to be played out, often provoking misunderstandings related to national and state identity, collective memory, and citizenship. Identity formation “is influenced not only by past events and historical circumstances, but determined also by present political constellations and relations between ethnic groups inside Kosovo” (36). Anton Vukpalaj’s chapter deals with a gruesome aspect of the past, which very much influences the present and collective memory. He examines Serbia’s exhumation and reburial of the bodies of at least 944 ethnic Albanians who were massacred by the Serbian regime during the 1999 war. The question of missing persons continues to be a pressingly contentious issue in the discussions between Prishtina and Belgrade.

Artan Mustafa provides a very interesting sociological study on the social, political, and economic cleavages in Kosovo’s society. Having an insight into these cleavages, particularly those of “urban vs rural and centre vs periphery” (80), and “ethnic cleavages” (76) helps readers to better understand the fabric of Kosovo’s society. When it comes to religion, the author claims that it remains “generally separated nowadays from the state and politics” (80). However, one could argue that the topic of religion has the potential to increasingly interfere in public life, which may contribute to yet another societal cleavage. I say this having two factors in mind. The first is the possible rise of political Islam in the country, including the tendency of its proponents to seek to impose their views on the state. The second is the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Kosovo as an institution that, like Serbia, does not recognize Kosovo. The potential for cleavage along such religious lines is a theme that would merit more scholarly scrutiny.

Pëllumb Kelmendi, in his chapter, delves into the subjective determinants of civic and political participation. Methodologically, he builds his analysis by borrowing data from the European Social Survey (ESS) of 2012. He points to an interesting set of disaggregated data on civic and political, institutionalized and non-institutionalized participation, which provides a solid basis for future “longitudinal data to study changes over time” (124). Indeed, it would have been interesting had he also used more recent ESS data on Kosovo for comparison. Kelmendi explains that the party Self-Determination Movement (Lëvizja Vetëvendosje, LVV), now in power, has used
protests and street activism much more than other parties in Kosovo, pointing to a discrepancy between the general lack of activism and a single party's use of protests and demonstrations. This too warrants further research: which factors have contributed to the monopolisation of street activism by the LVV? Why does popular discontent seem to have been channeled mainly through this party?

Getoar Mjeku provides an intriguing legal account of Kosovo's constitutional identity and practice. He is sharp in discerning some of the paradoxes in Kosovo's constitutional build-up: on the one hand, its constitution is a “progressive yet military document firmly imposing notions of multi-ethnicity against the overwhelming Albanian majority” (181), but on the other hand, the country's constitutional identity builds upon its recent past. This has been a peculiar situation. As the constitution is the product of international legal experts—a sort of benign imposition—local experts at the time had little input. In showing this tension, Mjeku's chapter complements Baliqi's and Hajrullahu's chapters quite well.

The next two chapters—one authored by Bekim Sejdiu and the other by Liridon Lika and Blerim Reka—examine Kosovo's intricate relations with the United Nations (UN) and the EU respectively. The term *sui generis* has often been used in international relations and international law to describe Kosovo's unique journey to statehood. These two chapters explain very clearly the pitfalls, challenges and opportunities in Kosovo's relationship with the above organisations, and the further complications that come from a number of member states not recognizing its statehood.

Kaltrina Kelmendi zooms in on intimate partner violence (IPV) against women from her perspective as a psychologist. She presents very worrying figures, underlining the many traps of such structural violence against the backdrop of a traditional, patriarchal society where women are often silent victims. As she stresses, further research is needed in order to understand this complex phenomenon, and “longitudinal design studies that follow women and men through their development would improve our understanding of IPV and its factors” (312).

The state of Kosovo is now 15 years old. The authors of this book, of whom I have highlighted only a selection, take stock of the situation and provide their readers with diverse methodological and disciplinary perspectives on a wide and pertinent range of issues, to the point that the book could be said to lack focus and consistency. However, it offers rich analyses not only for students and scholars of social science and international law, but for policymakers and practitioners as well.