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William Bartlett is a Reader in Social Economics at the School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol. He has published extensively on the topic of the economics and social policies of Western Balkan countries.

In his recent book, *Europe’s Troubled Region: Economic development, institutional reform and social welfare in the Western Balkans*, Bartlett analyzes, from different perspectives, the region of the Western Balkans, defined as Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia. He mostly focuses on them individually but in several places he also analyzes their interrelations, and brings former Yugoslavia into the picture where needed.

The book is divided into 9 chapters. From chapter 2, they are: (2) Initial conditions: Yugoslavia and Albania, (3) The early reformers: Croatia, Macedonia and Albania, (4) The late reformers: BiH, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, (5) Privatization and foreign investment, (6) Entrepreneurship and SME policies, (7) Growth, employment and trade, (8) Social policies and welfare reforms, (9) International aid and regional cooperation, and (10) European integration.

Bartlett’s book is intended for those interested in development economics, transition, European studies and international economics, and for policy makers and other people with an interest in Western Balkans. The book does demand a certain knowledge of economics, but it is quite accessible even to those with just a basic orientation in that field, and thus meets the needs of its wide target audience very well.
Another strong side of the book is its breadth. There are many analyses dealing with specific issues in the Western Balkans, but having many of the different aspects of the economic and institutional changes in the region in one place, together with their short histories, is not so common. In that sense, Bartlett’s book is a very welcome addition to the literature.

Bartlett often bases his analyses on readily available macroeconomic data, but he also draws on various other sources, such as reports, independent research, etc. Even more importantly, he also uses his own research, for example, interviews with company managers. This wide array of sources is good in itself, but Bartlett’s primary research is especially refreshing considering the fact that many modern-day economists are quite content to use readily available data and hope that it approximately reflects whatever is of interest to them. Bartlett delivers what we need: more research sources and original research. Indeed, the best parts of the book are those which are based on a wide array of sources and which fall into Bartlett’s field of expertise.

However, there are three aspects of the book that I find problematic.

The first, and least important, problem is that Bartlett’s analysis, although detailed and broad, on occasion seems a bit patchy and gives an impression that he used what data was available, and did not try to fill in the blanks. For example, on p. 11, he notes the value of the IMF 3-year adjustment loan given to Yugoslavia in 1981, and goes on to say that the World Bank also provided loans. However, in the next sentence, Bartlett notes the value of the WB loans between 1961 and 1982, i.e. before the period that he was just discussing. Similarly, on p. 55, Bartlett talks about how a brewery in Kosovo managed to rebuild after the 1999 bombing of Serbia, by “drawing on the enthusiasm and hard work of the labor force.” He presents a short excerpt from an interview with the company’s manager, but in it there is no mention of the said enthusiasm and hard work (although it is noted that the company is still managed by the workers). On the next page, Bartlett notes the bad export performance of Kosovo, and its dependence on aid and remittances, but then gives the numbers for total agricultural imports and exports, without giving any explanation as to why the rest of the imports and exports were left out.

Such lapses should have been omitted. Of course, it is quite possible that the needed data does not exist, or cannot be collected. In that case, it is, of course, justifiable to use what is available. But, if that is the case, Bartlett should have clearly stated it, and not inserted (or omitted) data which does not quite fit into the argument, without explanation.

The second problem is similar, but has a much greater effect on the quality of his analysis. Namely, in various parts of the book, some key aspects of the