

Nov 04, 2016 by **Behar Xharra**

Why Bangladesh Should Recognize Kosovo? ^[1]

From Pristina to Dhaka: My hope for two countries to join hands

The one month I have been in this country, I was invited almost each night to a home for dinner, a family gathering, or even weddings. The hospitality and generosity reminds me of my grandparents, uncles and aunts. I have met young conscientious people showing great enthusiasm to learn about the life and fate of Kosovars, though my country is thousands of kilometers away. I even met a Bengali soldier who served in Kosovo as a peacekeeper. He has fond memories and heartfelt sympathy for the struggles of Kosovars. Now, as we have embarked on the month of Ramadan, I receive good wishes from friends from both sides across the continents. Each part of my visit in Dhaka has proved a sense of natural bonding and commonalities between the people of Bangladesh and Kosovo.

Despite the brotherly connections, official relationships between the two countries unfortunately do not exist. This is primarily because Bangladesh has not, yet, recognized Kosovo as an independent country. Kosovo declared its independence in February 2008. Since then, 77 countries around the world have acknowledged the small Balkan state, including most European countries and neighbors, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia and Malaysia. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled last year that Kosovo's declaration of independence was in accordance with international law. Most recently, on July 5, 2011, the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) adopted a resolution calling on its members to recognize Kosovo as an independent state.

Bangladesh does not have a firm stance on the issue of Kosovo. It has previously sent supportive signals for the recognition of the new Republic. In May 2010, the country's Foreign Minister, Dr. Dipu Moni, said that Bangladesh will come to a decision after the ICJ ruling. Later, the Foreign Secretary, Mohamed Mijarul Quayes, had stated that the country does not feel the necessity to recognize Kosovo. This was interpreted as a way for Bangladesh to maintain its ties with other countries that oppose Kosovo's independence such as Russia.

Bangladesh's connection to Kosovo dates back to 1999, when it joined the row of democratic countries to support the people of Kosovo in the aftermath of the war waged by the then-Yugoslav dictator, Slobodan Milosevic in 1990s. Bangladesh sent hundreds of soldiers and policemen as part of the United Nations Peacekeeping mission in order to preserve peace and security in the region and develop capable self-governing institutions of Kosovo.

Thanks to the support of the international community, Kosovo's statehood is on its way to be fully established. The independence of Kosovo is irreversible. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has significantly downsized since its declaration of independence in 2008. Since 2009, the EU has deployed a mission to strengthen justice and the rule of law. The

future of both, Serbia and Kosovo lies in the European Union, whereby the latter has been mediating the dialogue on technical issues between Belgrade and Pristina.

Bangladesh shares a great degree of commonalities with Kosovo. Besides similarities in culture and religion, the two countries share a history of struggles for self-determination. Bangladesh has gone through the same process of statehood building forty years ago, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the independence of Bangladesh on 26 March, 1971. The citizens of Bangladesh know what it means to experience the birth of a nation and celebrate the right to self-determination. Such experience has helped shape an open and welcoming foreign policy towards emerging states, which was recently expressed through Bangladesh's recognition of the world's newest country, the Republic of South Sudan.

Moreover, Bangladesh's economy has become more viable in the recent years. Its industry together with leather products, pharmaceuticals and human resources are constantly growing. Bangladesh has been seeking to increase its exports and initiate economic exchange with all countries throughout the world. Country-to-country relationships with Kosovo could further facilitate its goal of expanding to new markets and building economic links across continents, reaching Europe.

The EU is the largest exports partner of Bangladesh. It is also one of the main development donors of the country. As a geo-strategically important ally, the EU will continue to be of significance to Bangladesh. Good relationships with its members will be key. Kosovo has a European future; recognizing it today, would mean growing together as strong partners.

Passive stances of some of the Asian countries in recognizing Kosovo have cut out the young Republic from this part of the world. Kosovo's development is immensely hampered by non-recognitions: business people cannot access two thirds of the world and explore new markets; local products cannot be exported with official stamps; sportsman cannot participate in international sports competitions. The people of Kosovo need the recognition by Bangladesh to contribute the solidarity among states for peace, security and economic wealth.

The recognition of Kosovo by the People's Republic of Bangladesh would be an honorable gesture in expanding Bangladesh's friendship with the people of Kosovo, creating bridges for cooperation and programs of mutual interest. I believe that our shared bonds deserve stronger ties and closer friendship. I had the pleasure to have been one month in your beautiful and kind country, and I am hoping for a future where both our states and people can grow with each other. I am thankful for the help Bangladesh gave to us Kosovars during the times of war. Facing peace in my country, it would be wonderful to extend this close relation between us. Together, Bangladesh and Kosovo can join hands across borders. Let's start today.

This article was sent to us by Behar Xharra. It was originally printed and circulated in local newspapers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It is an example of the type of public diplomacy Kosovo is conducting toward foreign publics.
