

## The Reflection of Turkey's Failed Coup Attempt upon Bangladesh: An Analysis on Bengal Socio-Political Arena

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*Bangladesh and Turkey are two brother countries, two nations that come to know each-other since 9<sup>th</sup> century. Both countries bear a glorious history until modern time. Now the relations between the two are being developed. Two nations faced military interference upon democracy for several times. On 15 July 2016, Turkey experienced a coup attempt failed by the mass peoples' participation which became a matter of discussion all over the world. With its local influence in the Middle East with its Muslim population, Turkey is a brother country of Bangladesh. Both countries have known each other since 9<sup>th</sup> century. Bengal Muslims approach to the Turks is based on brotherhood as it is the predecessors of the Devlet-i Aliyye (Ottomans). Both nations have a glorious cooperative history, even till today both have a good number of cultural and religious similarities. The two countries faced several military coups after their establishment with some failed coup efforts. Since the establishment of Turkish Republic, military has had a great influence upon its governments and society. This dissertation examines how the failed coup attempt reflects upon Bengal society with a hope of possible expected relations between the two countries.*

*Key Words: Bangladesh, Turkey, Coup Attempt, Politics, Democracy*

*"We are always against unconstitutional regime. The Turks proved that the peoples are the source of power by failing coup effort. No unconstitutional government could bring a better thing".*

**'Sheikh Hasina'**

Prime Minister, Peoples Republic of Bangladesh

'Japan is to be known as the land of earthquake and Turkey of coup'. Turkey, a regional influential Muslim populated republic in the middle-east is a brothercountry of Bangladesh.

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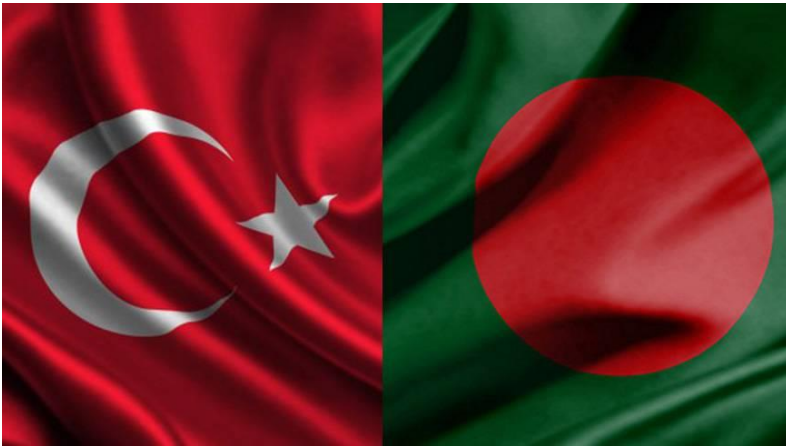
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The two nations come to know each other since 9<sup>th</sup> century. Bengal Muslims approach to the Turks is based on brotherhood as it is the predecessors of the Devlet-i Aliyye<sup>2</sup> (Ottomans). Both nations have a glorious cooperative history, even till today both have a good number of cultural and religious similarities. The two countries faced several military coups after their establishment with some failed coup efforts. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, its military has had a great influence upon its governments and society.

On 15 July of 2016, it faced another coup effort by a small part of military backed by Gülen movement (Fetö)<sup>3</sup> which was failed by the joint effort of mass people and political parties. It was a big blow for the Turkish democracy as well as for the gradual development of the country. After this failed coup effort, it became a burning question in many ways all over the world. It also became a matter of discussion in Bangladeshi society in different perspectives.

### **Turkey-Bangladesh: Historical Background and 15<sup>th</sup> July Coup Attempt**

Bangladesh is a south-Asian and 3<sup>rd</sup> largest Muslim populated country in the world. And Turkey is a Middle Eastern influential Euro-Asian Muslim country. As we noted before both countries maintain a glorious history and relations but today's relations between the two are not in an expected level in socio-economic and political arena.



*Image: Flag of Turkey and Bangladesh*

Even in some cases when we introduce ourselves to Turks, particularly young Turks, they ask “Is Bangladesh in Africa?”<sup>4</sup> Though business relation is being continued and increased slowly, the expected political relation does not meet the demand. Even it faced a blow when several political leaders of Bangladesh Jamaat-e Islami were hanged. Turkey as a country

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<sup>2</sup> Devlet-i Aliyye is the official name of Osmani Sultanat or Khilafat founded by Osman Bey. Ottomans or Ottoman Empire is being used in the place of Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye. It is important to mention that Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye and Ottoman Empire are not same in identification and nature.

<sup>3</sup> As it is cleared by the military staff and published in all media; also recognized by the international community. Fetö means fettullah terör örgütü.

<sup>4</sup> As the writer is in Turkey and stayed for education being with Turks.

against capital punishment opposed each execution. It got worse when the Jamaat Leader Mawlana Motiur Rahman Nizami was hanged<sup>5</sup>. However, when Turkey faced a coup attempt, most of the Bangladeshi people were with the Turkish people and it took a big space in the media especially in social media. Various analyses have been through many viewpoints.

Both countries have experienced many coup attempts, successful and unsuccessful. Bangladesh, from 1975 to 2009, faced six coup attempts with several unsuccessful attempts<sup>6</sup>. And Turkey experienced four big coups<sup>7</sup> in the Republican history with several unsuccessful coup attempts<sup>8</sup> as 15 July was the last failed attempt.

### **Reflections upon Bangladeshi Society**

Reflections of this failed coup attempt on Bangladeshi society could be described in several approaches as follows:

#### **a. Political Ground**

The Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, a country with fundamental principles of democracy got independent and continued its effort to touch the goal but stumbled many times mainly by military interference. Nevertheless, its population took part in the almost every election with a dream of joy<sup>9</sup>.

Turkey-Bangladesh maintains brother country's status in their relations although in present days it got sour as we noted before. But when Turkey, an influential Middle Eastern country, experiences something different in socio-political arena, it becomes a matter of discussion in Bangladesh as a whole. As usual, Turkish Failed Coup Attempt was supposed to be a matter of discussion in political arena at large and regarded only as a matter of condemnation.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina condemned the unsuccessful coup attempts saying they are always against unconstitutional regime. The Turks showed them that sovereignty belongs to

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<sup>5</sup> Turkey called Ambassador of Dhaka to Ankara as condemnation.

<sup>6</sup> Bangladesh faced coups at times like 15 August, 1975, 3 November, 1975, 7 November, 1975, 30 May, 1981, 24 March, 1982 and 11 January, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Four Historical coups in Turkish History like 27 May 1960, 12 March 1971, 12 September 1980, 28 February 1997

<sup>8</sup> We apparently had two coups in 2004!

<http://www.haber7.com/siyaset/haber/230639-2004te-iki-darbe-atlatmisiz>

[http://web.archive.org/web/20160305012811/http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2007/07/21/haber\\_C4842A78487F4CF19D6BB26ACC85A448.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20160305012811/http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2007/07/21/haber_C4842A78487F4CF19D6BB26ACC85A448.html)

Darbe yapmak da teşebbüs de suçtur

<http://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/darbe-yapmak-da-tesebbus-de-suctur-373869>

Eruryur'un üçüncü darbe planı 'Eldiven' deşifre

oldu <http://web.archive.org/web/20090603182205/http://www.zaman.com.tr:80/haber.do?haberno=711530>

<sup>9</sup> Voter turnout data for Bangladesh <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=20>

nation. They also noted that no unconstitutional power could bring a better thing. The Prime Minister also sent a condemnation paper to the Turkish Government.<sup>10</sup>

Besides, opposition parties condemned the attempt. Bangladesh Jamaat-I Islam,<sup>11</sup> the largest Islamic political Party in the country, sent a condemnation letter. Actually, it has not been a burning question in the political arena, which might have been due to poor relations between the two countries in all levels and absence of expected political practice in Bangladesh.

### **b. International Turkish Hope School: A Gülen Affiliated School**

Gülen School in Bangladesh named International Turkish Hope School is run by Turkish staff, situated in Dhaka, Bangladesh. It started in 1996 and formally inaugurated by Suleyman Demirel, the then-President of Turkish Republic in 1997.



*Image: International Turkish Hope School (Run by Gülen Movement) and Logo*

Since its establishment, almost all Turkish High officials visited the school when they came in Bangladesh. Turkish President Abdullah Gul and ex-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also visited this school. It has four branches and became well known as a qualitative school in the country. It is expensive; only elites' son and daughter can afford education at this institution.

Actually, almost all Bangladeshis knew it as the School of Turkish Republic observed by or under the direct influence of Turkish Government<sup>12</sup>. Even its logo also indicates that it is the representative of Turkish people and working for the development of the relations between the two countries. Now it is cleared that Hope School belonged to the Gülen Movement which

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<sup>10</sup> Prothom alo, 16.07.2016

<sup>11</sup> Bangladesh Jamaat-i Islami seems to be a religious-political party sympathetic to AK Party of Turkey.

<sup>12</sup> I have witnessed that a parent of a student brought to Turkey after the completion of graduation at Hope School shared his great sorrow with me that they felt the School was run by the Turkish Government.

was behind the Turkish failed coup but unfortunately there's no discussion regarding the fate of the School. Turkish authority might have a thought regarding the issue.

### c. Influence upon Printed and Electronic Media

Bangladeshi Media played important role in this regard. Though some of Media tried to follow the western policy against President Erdoğan, at the same time it stood up with the Turkish people and showed the heroic efforts made by the Turkish mass people with breaking news simultaneously.

#### a. Media Review



Image: The Daily Star, Jugantar, Daily Inqilab and Kalerkantho

A review upon four popular daily newspaper on 16 July 2016, a day on which the coup attempt was failed by the mass protest or mass people's participation<sup>13</sup> is shown above. Language of three of the four influential newspapers is Bengali and the language of the other newspaper is English; 2<sup>nd</sup> common language of the country. These newspapers are Jugantar<sup>14</sup>, Daily Inqilab<sup>15</sup>, Kalerkantho<sup>16</sup> and the Daily Star<sup>17</sup> respectively. The four newspapers' reports were mostly regarding how it was failed and how Turks acted bravely. Some analyses in this respect are as follows:

Jugantar claimed the picture given below as the 'best picture of the century'<sup>18</sup>. As in Reuters news, it described that the young stood up before the tank to protect the country's democracy. It also said the picture became very popular within very short time in social media.



*Image: A man before a military tank*

<sup>13</sup> Time distance between the two countries is three hours. When coup effort started in Turkey (around 21:00), Bangladesh started a new day. So, almost of the efforts were in 16 July in Bangladesh local time.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.jugantor.com/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.dailyinqilab.com/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.kalerkantho.com/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.thedailystar.net/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.jugantor.com/online/international/2016/07/16/19232/%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%A4%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B8%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%BE-%E0%A6%9B%E0%A6%AC%E0%A6%BF!>

Jugantar also noted that all the oppositions took place beside the government against coup effort. Especial importance was also given to the phone call of Devlet Bahçeli, President of Turkish Nationalist Party (MHP) to Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım. Devlet Bahçeli also assured the nation saying his party was with the nation and warned that if democracy and national unity broke down, civil war could start. Peoples Democratic Party's (HDP) leaders also stated that no one can seize the power ignoring people's consent<sup>19</sup>.

The Daily Star reported as **“Attempted coup in Turkey: What do we know so far since 16<sup>th</sup> July”**. Analyses of the developments are given below:

“A group calling itself the "Council for Peace in the Homeland" declared martial law and a curfew on Friday, saying it had launched the coup "to ensure and restore constitutional order, democracy, human rights and freedoms and let the supremacy of the law in the country prevail..."<sup>20</sup>

It also said referring Erdoğan that Gülen Movement was behind the coup effort, had an influence on Turkish society including the media, police, judiciary and so on. However, it also noted that the claim was denied by Gülen.

This newspaper also stated referring to the Prime Minister regarding the control of the country that the government declared it had a full control upon the state institutions. Meanwhile, PM, ministers of justice and interior as well as Turkey's top general were outside their offices in the capital. The acting army chief, Full General Umit Dundar, said earlier that the coup attempt had been foiled<sup>21</sup>. The coup attempt followed the path below:

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<sup>19</sup><http://www.jugantor.com/online/international/2016/07/16/19250/অভ্যুত্থান-চেস্তার-বিরুদ্ধে-তুর্কি-বিরোধী-দলগুলোও>

<sup>20</sup><http://www.thedailystar.net/world/attempted-coup-turkey-what-we-know-so-far-1254682>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

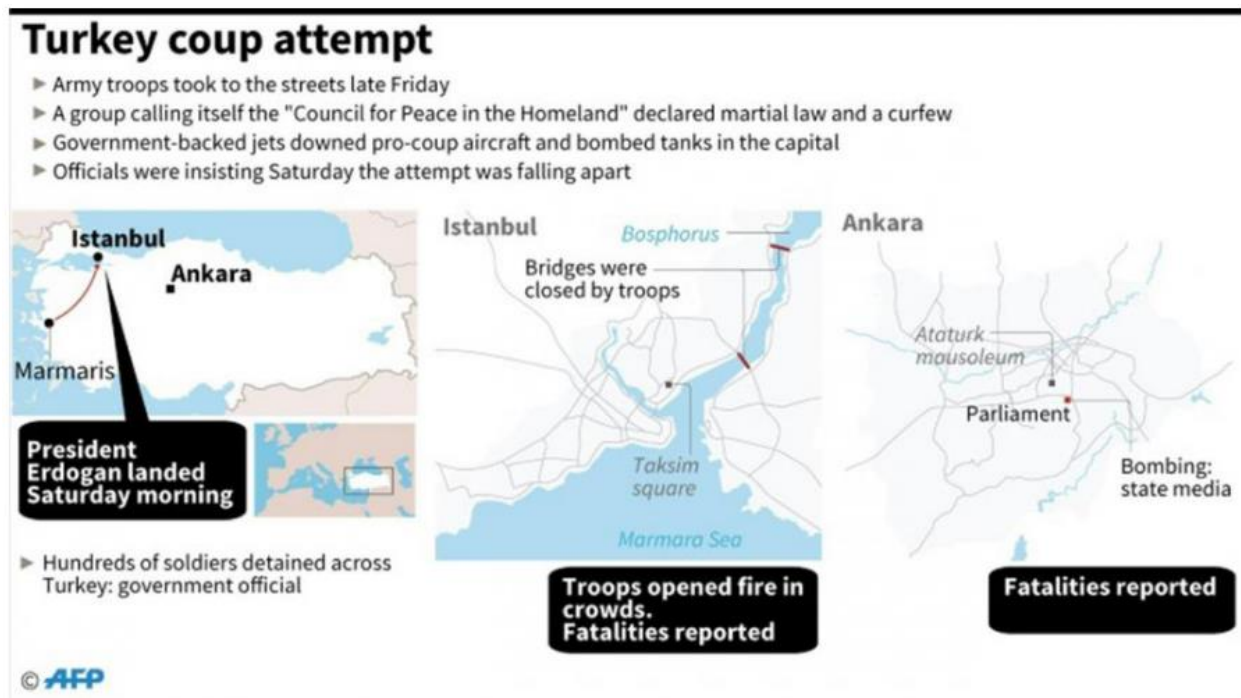


Image: How and in which way the attempt was made.

The Daily Star also reported Erdoğan's position and his speeches taking casualties into account<sup>22</sup>.

Daily Star noted 'Turkey coup broadcast live on social media despite blockages' highlighting Erdoğan's policy of controlling social media and then his call to the people through a video call. Even he tweeted "**I call our nation to the airports and the squares to take ownership of our democracy and our national will**" and it was retweeted by the Prime Minister and the official presidency account condemned the coup<sup>23</sup>. Two sample tweets are shown below.



<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.thedailystar.net/world/turkey-coup-bid-carried-live-social-media-despite-blockages-1254562>





*Image: A tweet describing the nature during coup attempt by a civilian*

### Foreign Responses

Newspapers also took an account of foreign responses. Especially how and what the international community's immediate response was got analyzed as immediate response bears especial importance, even can change the move. Among foreign responses, Barak Obama, the then-president of USA called for National Security Council Meeting. Kalerkantho also noted that President Obama was also going to be informed regarding foreign policy at large.<sup>24</sup>



**German Chancellor Angela Merkel** condemned immediately with firm language calling for judgment of the coup plotters according to rule of law. She also added they (coup plotters) should only be judged by law<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>24</sup><http://www.kalerkantho.com/online/world/2016/07/16/381671>

<sup>25</sup><http://www.kalerkantho.com/home/printnews/381672> Actually, several western countries responded to more or less failed coup effort. Even some of western countries emphasized on judgment according to the Turkish general law. Even when a question of execution was raised by some people, some of politicians from EU and USA expressed their concerns. Actually western world emphasized on rules of law or despotism rather than protection of democracy soon after the coup attempt. Even President Erdoğan directly criticized the western world regarding their unnecessary concerns on the confusion or hesitation in rules of law. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkey-coup-could-threaten-countrys-nato-membership-john-kerry-warns-a7142491.html#gallery><https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/18/european-leaders-urge-turkey-to-respect-rule-of-law-after-failed-coup><http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/germany-urges-turkey-to-respect-rule-of-law-after-failed-coup-attempt.aspx?pageID=517&nID=102615&NewsCatID=351>



*Image: German Chancellor Angela Merkel*

Kalerkantho also included regional responses like that of Sushma Swaraj, Indian Minister of External Affairs, who urged Indian citizens not to go to Turkey and those staying in Turkey not to leave their residence. She also asked her citizens to maintain communications with Indian Embassy to Turkey. A special help line was also introduced<sup>26</sup>.

**The DailyStar** reported that ‘NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg hailed the "strong support shown by the people and all political parties to democracy and to the democratically elected government of Turkey, a key NATO ally"<sup>27</sup>. Russia reacted and condemned seriously as its foreign ministry said the coup attempt, coupled with terrorist threats in Turkey and armed conflict in neighboring countries, "brings a heightened risk to international and regional stability"<sup>28</sup>.

At the same time, French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault also said his country "hopes that Turkish democracy will emerge strengthened from this test and fundamental freedoms will be fully respected."<sup>29</sup>

**Erdoğan asked the people to take control of the streets in the coup night.** Again, his request from his people to stay at nights through twitter was highlighted by Jugantar<sup>30</sup>. Erdoğan also noted that whatever the coup’s condition was, they had to be in the streets in the nights.

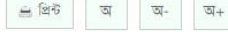
<sup>26</sup><http://www.kalerkantho.com/online/world/2016/07/16/381517>

<sup>27</sup><http://www.thedailystar.net/world/attempted-coup-turkey-what-we-know-so-far-1254682>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup><http://www.jugantor.com/online/international/2016/07/16/19269/সমর্থকদের-রাজপথে-থাকতে-বললেন-এরদোগান>



## সমর্থকদের রাজপথে থাকতে বললেন এরদোগান



ফের সেনা অভ্যুত্থান ঠেকাতে নিজ দলের সমর্থকদের রাজপথে থাকার আহ্বান জানিয়েছেন তুরস্কের প্রেসিডেন্ট রিসেপ তাইয়িপ এরদোগান।

*Image: People were asked to be in the streets at night by the president. Picture shows the People's presence in the streets.*

Any time another coup attempt could take place. It was also mentioned that some of military group were not controlled yet, even in some cases news of clashes with the security forces were heard<sup>31</sup>.

Daily Inqilab, another Bengal daily observed on 16 July that coup plotters surrendered to the decisive steps taken by the people.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid



*Image: After the military's surrender, people took the control of the tank*

Erdoğan's speech pointed the coup plotters' attempt as the treason against the state. It also drew attention to the reasons for the failed coup attempt.

The Daily Star reported that Turkish coup plotters 'requested asylum' in Greece. It also added referring Athens News Agency that the asylum seekers were three majors, three captains and two sergeant majors. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu added "We have requested Greece to turn over the eight traitors as soon as possible". According to an official in the Greek National Defence General Staff, "the helicopter is scheduled to be sent back immediately to Turkey" and "As far as the asylum seekers are concerned, we are going to proceed according to the international law" Olga Gerovassili, the Greek government spokeswoman, said. She added that Athens was "in constant contact with the Turkish authorities", and would take into account the fact that "the asylum seekers took part in a coup against the Turkish constitution". Early Saturday, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras expressed his "support for the democratically elected" Turkish government<sup>32</sup>.

Moreover, these newspapers also updated their news constantly on the 16<sup>th</sup> July such as "the last group of coup plotters surrendered", "about 3000 arrested after the coup attempt", "265 killed in the attempt coup", "2745 judges sacked" etc.

## **b. Electronic Media**

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<sup>32</sup><http://www.thedailystar.net/world/turkish-coup-plotters-request-asylum-greece-1254688>

Turkish failed coup attempt also took important place in the media for several days. Any new developments were broadcast immediately. In the television sector breaking news took place for a couple of days regarding the attempt. It became the burning question of discussion in talk shows, interviews, discussions etc.. Turkish democracy, politics and politicians, development, Erdoğan, Turkey-EU relations, Turkey-US relations, Syrian war, Gülen Movement were among the subjects of discussion.

### **c. Social Media**

Most debate and discussions took place in the social media, mainly through Facebook. Especially the young generation was divided into several groups regarding the issue. Some question became the burning issue like:

- ✓ Why did it happen? Because of Erdoğan's rule as a dictator or as a conspiracy of west since he was a pro-Islamic leader. It was also seen to make debate with the western countries etc.
- ✓ Some saw it historically as influence of Turkish military upon the politicians for ages.
- ✓ Definitely a vast number of users shared the view that Erdoğan is a charismatic leader and he would be regarded as the 2<sup>nd</sup> man just after Atatürk in the modernization and development of modern Turkey.
- ✓ A good number of users shared their posts emotionally that he (Erdoğan) was the savior of hundreds of Muslim refugees from several countries and raised voice of the Muslim community against suppression and oppression in the Muslim world, such as Syria, Palestine etc. Even some tried to regard him as the leader of the Ummah.
- ✓ "Who is Gülen?" and "what are his aims and objectives (?), his schools etc.?" also became a matter of discussions.
- ✓ Such questions as Erdoğan's policy to curb the coup attempt, particularly soon after the fail of coup hundreds of the staff from different institutions were legitimate or not, he was becoming a dictator or not were very important topics of debate.
- ✓ Again who backed Gülen? How could he make a worldwide network being a preacher? How was it possible? It was even thought that CIA and MOSAD were behind the movement.

### **d. Most Discussed Issues**

After being failed, the coup became an issue of discussion for the people of all sections in the country. With the abovementioned, coming to different conclusions is possible. This

incident became a burning issue and was discussed in many angles. Some could be summarized as follows:

- ❖ ‘Erdoğan, from a leader to a Hero’ by failing the coup with the charismatic leadership. (Noted by Daily Sangram)
- ❖ Who was behind the coup was the most important subject of discussion; whether it was the US or Israel was discussed a lot. The suspicion of three ex CIA agents inspiring support to the coup plotters put the people in doubt. Secondly, US Commander Campbell, was he also behind this plot? That he was accused of coming to Turkey secretly and meeting Gülenists and supporting coup plotters created a matter of analysis according to Yeni Şafak<sup>33</sup> newspaper.
- ❖ Another point was that whether it was a theatre as Gülen demanded or not, at the end of the day everything became clear and common sense could not accept such a thing. Another important point was why west became disappointed when the move failed? In the Fox news, Ralph Peters expressed his disappointment saying ‘**Turkey's last hope dies. We would be the winner if it were successful**’<sup>34</sup>. All of these made the people confused regarding who was behind the coup.
- ❖ What would be the next reaction of Erdoğan? A dictatorship? It was expressed that the failed coup would be boon for Erdoğan and for development in the country’s democracy<sup>35</sup>.
- ❖ The effort and activities made by the coup plotters were uncharacteristic for the Turkish military as it did not do before such events as killing its people, bombing its own parliament etc. and should be analyzed in details<sup>36</sup>.

#### e. Sources of Information used in the Media

Bangladeshi media depends mainly on English language for the international news. So, it sought to English newspapers and channels for current developments in Turkey. Even though they knew it would be doubtful, no other way to gather news existed. Turkey is a country that prefers to use their own language only, even in their official activities. At the same time, they don’t think how important English media is for their nation. So, international community can

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<sup>33</sup><http://www.yenisafak.com/en/news/us-commander-campbell-the-man-behind-the-failed-coup-in-turkey-2499245> and <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/533698/turkey-coup-incirlik-ss-air-base-cia-general-John-Campbell-Erdogan-conspiracy-theory>

<sup>34</sup>[www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/07/16/turkeys-last-hope-dies.html](http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2016/07/16/turkeys-last-hope-dies.html)

<sup>35</sup><http://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/turkeys-baffling-coup-1255735>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

only depend on English based sources. The something happened regarding coup attempt. Generally Bangladeshi Media showed source of information are following.

- Guardian
- BBC
- CNN
- Daily Mail
- Reuters
- Washington Post
- The Telegraph
- Aljazeera (English)
- Yeni Şafak (English)
- Project-syndicate

### **Evaluation on Socio-Political Response: Possible Expected Relations between the Two Countries**

Bangladeshi response to Turks is very positive and even Turkish products and other things relating Turkey are taken very positively. As usual, a good number of Bangladeshi passed the coup night with prayers for their Turk Brothers. In general, this nation never wants any sort of deterioration in relations with Turkey in any of socio-economic and political arena. It comes from its legacy as it sent medical team to serve Turks brothers during Balkan War (1911-12), revolted against British troops with the Caliph's order and organized mass movement demanding the continuity of Caliph Institution and protection of two holy places-Mecca and Medina with the ensuring of territorial integrity which is well known as the Khilafat Movement. Furthermore, Turkish heroic role in the Turkish War of Independence under Mustafa Kemal influenced Bengal education and culture. Turkish Republic's policies and socio-political reform attempts were also followed by this nation. So, there is a glorious history shared by the two nations.

**Secondly**, in the political arena, coup attempt wasn't been discussed sufficiently because of poor relations among the politicians of the two countries and due to the fact that Bangladesh was passing critical time as opposition parties were not strong.

**Thirdly**, both countries faced the same problem in terms of military interference. So, they can work together in the future.

**Fourthly**, Bangladeshi people are sympathetic and even emotional in some cases to the Turkish nation and showed sympathy and supported its democratic institutions during crisis time, whereas Turkish nation just know Bangali brothers. Co-operation and socio-economic and cultural activities could be increased.

**Fifthly**, Turkey should give importance on their media in different languages, in particular most used international languages like Arabic, English etc. It will help to maintain good relations by providing accurate information.

**Sixthly**, Bengali young generation made debates and analyses in many angles as they care about Turkish nation. So, two young generations should have some programs like student exchange, youth gathering, etc.

**Seventhly**, Gülen Schools like Hope School in Bangladesh should be closed as they are cheating with the humanity or they could be run by different curriculum and staff. Furthermore, social awareness programs through politics and media should be conducted regarding any movement like Gülen.

Moreover, two big Muslim countries, with around 250 million man power and religious and cultural similarity, can enrich their socio-economic and political condition by cooperation, being together.