

Political Patronage and Illegal Drug Business in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to map out political patronization as instigation behind framing the epidemic form of illegal drug business throughout the country and to find out major potential factors for political leaders to patronize illegal drug business in Bangladesh. Illegal drug business has emerged as a deep concern for Bangladesh in the last one and half decade because of its devastated characteristics. Bangladesh cannot not produce chemical required for manufacturing of drugs but it is turned into a wide drugs market because of its geographical location. Four thousand kilometers land border of India by three sides and two hundred fifty kilometers land border of Myanmar at the South Eastern corner encompasses the country. Heroine, phensedyl, injecting drug, cannabis are trafficked into the country from India through Western and Eastern border (Satkhira, Rajshahi, Jessor, Jaypurhat, Dinajpur, Comilla, Bramhonbaria) and yaba from Myanmar through the South Eastern border (Cox's Bazar district). Department of Narcotic Control report 2016 indicates that drugs business is flooded over the country which handicapped the total development process of the country. Policy makers respond to illegal drug business. Different strategies and tactics have been taken to protect the country. ("Where does Bangladesh's War on Drug Go from Here, 2018) Narcotics Act 1990 of Bangladesh empowered Bangladesh police, Bangladesh Ansar, Bangladesh Coast guard, Border Guard of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Customs to take the necessary steps against illegal drug business. Govt. has taken some initiatives to control drug business and it has declared zero tolerance policy to drug business. But all of these initiatives have been failed due to various contentions. Political patronage is one of them which worked behind framing drug business epidemic in the country. The paper has followed a qualitative approach by applying content analysis method.

Keywords: Drugs, Illegal business, Political Patronage, Bangladesh.

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Introduction

Illegal drug business is a dreadful curse for any society. Bangladesh is not free from this curse but in the last one and half decade, it has come in touch with vulnerable drug business. It has experienced a dreadful condition of drug addicted due to available drugs. The number of seized drugs in different borders, airports and seaports mainly indicate the horrific shape of drug has taken in the country.

Table 1: Statistics on the seizure of drugs by all Agencies in Bangladesh

Name of Drugs	Name of the Years					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Heroin (in kg)	107.499	126.92	123.73	78.3	109.798	266.785
Codeine preparation (Bottle)	932874	1291078	987661	741137	880042	566525
Codeine (loose) (in litter)	3228	2613	857.55	438.22	5104.74	275.68
Cannabis (in kg)	54244.16	38702	35012.54	35988.56	41720.16	47104.655
Cannabis plant	742	485	666	727	761	894
Buprenorphin (Ampoule)	118890	157995	99509	6512869	86172	152740
ATS (Yaba) (Tablet)	1360186	1951392	2821528 & Amphetamine Powder 5 kg	6512869	20269045	29450178
Total No. of Cases	37245	43717	40250	51801	57420	69739
Total Number of Accused	47309	54100	47531	62080	70581	87014

Source: Annual Drug Report Bangladesh, 2016

In Bangladesh 32 border districts are vulnerable for drugs trafficking. Among them Cox's Bazaar and Chittagong Metropolitan area are the highest prevalence of Yaba because 73 percent of total smuggled Yaba

seized here. Rajshahi is the highest prevalence of heroine and phensedyl. Phensedyl also enters into the country by Dinajpur, Bogra, Brahmanbaria and Rajshahi border. The highest amount of cannabis (31.99%) is seized in Chittagong and Buprenorphine (69.08%) in Dhaka. Besides some drugs also seized by Chapai Nawabganj, Mymensingh, Joypurhat, Rangpur, Pabna, Narayanganj, Khulna, Barishal, Satkhira and Jessor area. The vulnerability of drug abuse is increasing due to more and more people are involved in drug business in the recent decade which has increased the threat. (Annual Drug Report Bangladesh, 2016)

The policy makers have been taken various strategies and tactics from the threatening of drug business. But political patronage strengthens the business which originates as a great danger for the country. In 2014 the intelligent agency made a list which included the name of 87 leaders of AL and its front organizations Jubo League, Chattra League and Sramik League who backed the yaba traders in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi divisions but no action were taken against them. (“Godfathers Remain Untouched”, 2018) In earlier 2017, the DMP drew another list of 100 godfathers who were linked with the ruling AL, its front organizations, two from BNP, and Jatiyo Party. Of the godfathers of capital, 16 were ward councilor, 15 from AL, ward level President of Bastuhara League, a ward Secretary of Tanti (weaver) League both pro AL organizations were on the list. (“DMP lists 56 Drug Dealers, Patron”, 2018).

Teknaf is the gateway of yaba and many political leaders are involved here with this yaba business. Abdur Rahman Badi, the Awami League MP from Cox’s Bazar-4 (Teknaf and Ukhiya). His name has prominently figured in multiple intelligence agency reports including narcotic dept. report, BGB and intelligent bodies. He is the top godfather of yaba trade set up a powerful network that includes his brothers, personal assistant, uncle, cousin, nephew, in-laws and close relatives are mapping out in this list. Bodi, being a lawmaker of ruling party controls yaba trade from behind the scene freely along with a significant number of followers (“Yaba ‘Godfathers’: Out of Teknaf, into Safety”). Not only Bodi but also many other political leaders, public representatives, their family members or closed friends are involved in drug business. The councilor of Teknaf Municipality 3 and former president of the municipal Jubo League was killed in a gunfight with Rapid Action Battalion. RAB referred him as a drug businessman. (“200 Killed in ‘Gunfights’ in 84 days, 2018). Teknaf Upazila Parishad chairman and his four sons including Teknaf Sadar UP chairperson have been also involved in this business. (200 Killed in ‘Gunfights’ in 84 days”, 2018) The son of Dhaka North City Corporation’s Mayor arrested with yaba. There have been

many other evidences which prove that illegal drug business has a strong connection with politics and political patronization strengthens this business in Bangladesh.

Literary Framework

Political Patronage

Patronage and political patronage is used as a synonym in politics which emerged as a folk devil. (Bearfield, 2009). It is based on a negative or partisan connotation which refers the reciprocal relation between patron and client. Patron is a person who uses his influence to assist and protect some other person who then becomes his client and in return provides certain services to his patron. (Jeremy, 1966) Patron is an idea of sponsorship of someone who is benefactor of one who supports by his influence and a client who stand need of help or protection. (Kenny, 1960) Here, political patronage is an exchange service which is founded on a sense of inducement and loyalty is beneficial for both parties (patron and client). (Jeremy, 1966) Basically patronage is an incentive system—a political currency with which one purchases political activities and political responses. (Frankle, 1960)

Illegal Drugs Business

Drugs had been taken as a painkiller medicine at the middle of the nineteenth century. It is such type of chemical substance that taken to prevent disease but sometimes it ameliorates mental and physical performance, escape from dealing with reality, alters normal metabolism in any part of the body because of containing much alcohol. Drug includes alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, solvents, over the counter drugs, prescribed drugs etc.

On the other hand illegal business is such types of business whose production, sale and consumption are forbidden or strictly regulated by the majority of national states and or by international legislation. (Ariacchi, 1998). Illegal business is such types of business which violates the terms and policies of business provided by the govt.

In Bangladesh, Article 10 (c) of Narcotic Control Act 1990 says about illegal drug business. It says that using any kinds of alcohol to produce medicine is illegal. Article 9 (1) says all types of production, processing, importing, exporting, buying, selling, or use of any kind of drugs is also illegal. Article 9(3) says the producer has to take license under drug policy act only for scientific experiment or produce essential medicine otherwise it will be illegal. If anyone violates this act he/she will be punished under the article 19 (1) (2) and (3) of constitution. (Narcotic Control Act, 1990)

Objectives

The primary objectives of this paper are:

1. To figure out the ferocious level of illegal drug business in Bangladesh during this decade.
2. To map out political patronization as instigation behind framing the epidemic form of illegal drug business throughout the country.
3. To find out major potential factors for political leaders to patronize illegal drug business in Bangladesh.
4. To evaluate how political patronage enhances the potency of illegal drug business.

Methodology

Methodologically, the paper has followed a qualitative approach by applying content analysis method. Desk research has been done based on secondary data sources due to the nature of the topic under questions and also for time constraints. It studies the data of the previous drug business report by Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh focusing on the tremendous drug business throughout the country and prevalence drug trafficking areas. It also focuses on the data of anti-narcotic operations of Bangladesh from May to November, 2018 which include a much updated and in-depth collection of illegal drug business condition for Bangladesh. Other data sources include newspapers, books, reports, websites and research articles.

Limitations

Though the scope of the subject under question is wide, the paper offers a condense examination due to resources and time constraints. A thorough and comprehensive examination of more rigorous data could present a better understanding of the potency of illegal drug business in Bangladesh at the present period.

Political Patronage and the Potency of Illegal Drug Business

Political leaders and political representatives patronize illegal drug business mainly for two contentions or two factors. These two factors have influenced the decisions of political leaders to patronize illegal drug business and adopt with market and law enforcement pressure. These are:

- Push Factors
- Pull Factors

Push factors have been conceptualized as motivational factors or tensions in the system (Kim, Lee, Klenosky, 2003) which induce anyone to do something and pull factors have been typically taken decisions to involve in any activity. In illegal drug business push factors are more dominant

than pull factors. Pull factors is relating to the features, attractions or attributes of the designation itself and push factors have been related with two separate questions that why they involve in the system and how they sustain. In illegal drug business push and pull factors should not be considered independent but fundamentally related to each other and logically push factors precede pull factors.

Push Factor

Risk factors

In illegal business organized criminal invest money and other resources so as to achieve power at a political level and to intervene in the political level. (Symeonidou: Kastanidou, 2007) Drug dealers are the main focus of law enforcers of any country which makes four risk factors for the dealers. (Decary, Masarah, Aldridge, 2016) Illegal drug business abounds in uncertain situations where outcomes are difficult to predict. So they try to find out political patronage which can save them from any kind of threat from the state. The four risk factors of the drug dealers include:

- Risk of arrest
- Risk of the violence
- Risk to profit
- Risk of reputation

The drug dealers mainly seek political patronage to avoid these four types of risk. Country level perceived effective law enforcement to arrest drug dealers and recovered drugs from them. In Bangladesh law enforcement bodies have taken various strategies and tactics to arrest the drug traffickers to stop drug business. These types of initiatives affect on the profit of drug markets. Sometimes they confess gunfights with law enforcement bodies. For all these pretenses and to secure their secrecy which affect on their reputation. So drug traffickers consider political patronage may be an alternative opportunity which can save them from the repression of govt. Political leaders also take risk and use their power in a negative connotation in our country to save drug traffickers through maintaining various processes based on the scale of profits and difficulties according to the situations. (Decary, Masarah, Aldridge, 2016)

Supreme Secrecy

To protect the reputation of fairness in illegal drugs market high secrecy is inevitable. This market follows the secret model where the main entrepreneur is not credited or discredited for their activities but they may earn profit. As a result the main godfathers or most powerful and influential people may be remained out of touch because a high secrecy is

maintained. But the fact is secrets do not remain guarded forever is the weakness of the secret society. (George Simmel, 1950) From this understanding they follow the model of organized crime where traffickers acquired great power that they would capable of threatening to destabilize the nation's fragile security institutions. These pretences induce a political leader to involve in drug business.

Pull Factors

Access to Resources

Main duty of any political personnel is to do something good for the people. But this quality is probably curtailed among most of the representatives in our country. There are very less number of representatives in our country which actual goal is to serve people. They are highly dissatisfied with their jobs due to lack of opportunities and facilities from the jobs, sense of uncertainty about their works and lower level of depression about their financial status etc. The financial status of drug businessmen is very high which made them inferior. An individual would prefer to do anything alternative to earn financial status and more facilities in life. Political representatives are not free from this aspiration. So they involve with illegal drug business because it is an easy way to become millionaire over night. (Jalaluddin, 2007)

Rational Choices

There have many risks in illegal drug business as to seize the drug or arrest the traffickers, gunfights with law enforcer bodies etc. In Bangladesh many traffickers have been arrested and many drugs have been seized. A lot of cases filed. Some evidences help to realize the situations.

Table 2: Number of Cases and arrest

Year	Cases	Arrest
2011	37245	47309
2012	43717	54100
2013	40250	47531
2014	51801	62080
2015	57134	70159
2016	69739	87014

Source: Annual Drug Report, 2016

The statistics indicates an epidemic form of drug business in our country. From 2011 to 2018 many drug dealers have been killed. From 4 May 2018 to 1st February 2019 296 suspected drugs dealers or traffickers have

been killed. Most of them were killed in gunfight with RAB and police and some of them were killed due to their intra group conflicts. (“3 more ‘drug dealers’ killed in ‘shootouts’, 2019). Moreover the political leaders have taken the decision to take risk because they think that profit of this business is comparatively higher than the loss. In Bangladesh a number of clandestine are active in drug trafficking and it is profitable and they are becoming millionaire over night because the price of illegal drugs is so high. Many of the slum poor women became millionaire and owner of multi-storeyed building. They can earn million dollars from one package. Because illegal drug price is comparatively higher than any other normal goods, this price is mainly depended on place, market level and types of drug. In the recent decade the demand for drugs has raised as a result the price of drugs also grown up highly.

All the top drug dealers have earned thousands of crores and built worth of plots, flats, luxurious building and bought new model of cars to their names in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Cox’s Bazar. They have earned 100 crore from drug trade. (Where have Teknaf’s Drug Traders Gone? 2018) They are mainly involved in drug business for gaining millions of dollars because they believe if they lose one package in every two they send they will be rich in no time. There is so much profit to be made here. So rationally they have taken the decision to be involved in drug business.

Potential Arrangements to Patronage in Illegal Drug Business

Illicit drug is deeply embedded with some characteristics of the most societies. It effects as a form of violence, crime, death, police actions, repression, imprisonment etc. (Illicit drug, Richard) for these country level may perceive effective law enforcement according to the experts. Like all other countries Bangladesh govt. has also taken some initiative to strengthen the capacity of drug laws and remove drugs from the societies but alternative arrangements have been taken by the political leaders to patronage illegal drug business which works as another factors or causes of increasing drugs business (except push and pull factors) throughout the country. These include:

- Misapplication of Political Power
- Money Transaction in Jurisdiction Procedure
- Game of Chance

Misapplication of Political Power

The complexity or tenderness of power mainly depends on how power is used. (Graham Richard, 1990). Political power of many countries is applied to strengthen illegal drug business by its patronization. In Bangladesh political power is also used as one of the collaborators of illegal drug business. Here political power is working as an important

fuel for the tremendous condition of drug business. Most of the godfathers of drug business are political representatives and nobody can do anything against them. The list has been sent to the home Ministry but no steps have been taken. Abdur Rahman Badi is accused to one of the godfather of yaba business. Nothing happened without his nod. He is also accused for illegal income by Anti Corruption Commission. But he moves within the country freely. No action could be taken against Body due to lack of evidence. He still remains out of net.

The prosecution against him failed to prove any charges, could not present witnesses, excluding the plaintiff of the case before the court and will not be punished anyone based on FIR. Most accused move free because of lack of evidence against them and the negligence of prosecution law.

Money Transaction in Jurisdiction Procedures

Drug is a criminal justice issue. Policies and penalties should be based on the danger of drugs. (Gaines and Miller, 2012) Article 19 (1) (2) and (3) of the Narcotic Control Act says about the punishment under law if anyone violates it. Narcotic Control Act 2018 recognized the new draft of drug policy which says if any personnel or institutions or organizations patronize to drug business, supply it or demand for it, involve with its processing or transporting or any kind of drug related activities he or she will get lifetime imprisonment or the capital punishment. (“Capital Punishment for Yaba Business”, 2018). But the court is failed to implement the law. Most of the godfathers of the drug business are out of touch. They use money to get bail and when the arrested drug dealers free from the jail they again joined with this drug business. (“22 Women Control 25 Drugs Trafficking Spot, 2018)

The court is characterized with pending cases. Most of the drug dealers who have been filed with many cases but these are not taken into account by the court. 62.23% of the total number of people accused in drug related offences have been acquitted in the past five years owing to prosecution’s failure to prove the charges against them. Poor conviction rate on faulty charge sheets, a lack of witnesses and poor performance of prosecutors and the police is the main reason a large number of acquittals to delays in the trial process, manpower shortages and procedural flaws in lodging cases.

Table 3: Percentage of Acquittal

Year	Filed Cases	Disposed Cases	Convicted	Acquitted	Percentage of Acquittal
2013	2,066	2,066	1,218	1,057	51.16

2014	2,287	2,689	1175	1,112	41.35
2015	2,013	1,873	921	1,042	55.63
2016	7,133	5,348	2,927	4,206	78.65
2017	2,680	2,539	1,065	1,615	63.61

Source: Dhaka Tribune Newspaper

According to the statistics, 14515 cases were disposed of against 16,388 accuse by different courts in the last five years. (2013-2017). A total 7,356 people were convicted and 9,032 suspects were acquitted of charges. Court pronounces a judgment on the basis of evidence but they are absent. Weak FIR, poor investigation and incomplete charges sheets are contributing to the majority of acquittal of the suspects. The culprits are using this loophole to move freely and there is nothing to do. Investigators are taking bribe to prepare false charge sheets on purpose (“Illegal Drugs: 62.23% of Accused Acquitted in Past 5 Year”, 2018)

Game of Chance

State is the only legitimate user of force. But in Bangladesh govt. impassivity and frigidity to remove drug business from the society lead it at the highest peak day by day. The drug dealers have taken the advantage of govt. impassivity toward drug policies.

Level of Law Enforcement

Though the home Minister said that the anti drug operations would be stronger and no one would be spared. BGB, Coast Guard, RAB, Police and DNC officials have taken some short-term, mid-term and long-term mission to stop entering drugs by the border. From May to November 2018 many drug dealers have been arrested and many of them were killed. Government is showing zero tolerance policy against drugs and declared war on drugs. Govt. said the anti-narcotic operations will continue till the situation come down to a tolerant level. But this commitment is limited within their speech. The law enforcers have failed to control drug business in border areas. At present we see government’s impassivity and frigidity towards drugs policy enforcement and anti-drug operations, because there are many important issues to think about than drug business. But to remove the drug business completely from the society it is essential to conduct this operation until it is uprooted. Drug dealers are aware about the level of law enforcement. For that reasons they had got covered during the operations. Some of them fled their houses for some days or left the areas during the anti-narcotic operations to protect themselves. (Yaba ‘Godfathers’: out of Teknaf into Safety, 2018) This low level of law enforcement is worked as a patronization of drugs.

The war on drug policy has been failed to fulfill its goals because there is a strong political patronization behind framing, sustaining and consolidating this drug business. They applied their power to link up with law enforcer bodies and influence them to keep silence in return the law enforcers have earned profit. Some Officer-in-charge of some police stations, some Sub-Inspectors of police and members of Detective Branch are involved in drug trafficking. (“7 police officers back drug racket in Mugda, 2018) Many allegations have been drawn up that hundreds of police from top to bottom have been involved in the drug business. By involving them the yaba godfathers have been ensured their protection.

Lack of Proper Investigation

Pre-investigation is an essential step to ensure who are actually involved with drug business. But this is comparatively not enough for the country. After declaration of war on drug police, Coast Guard, Ansar, BGB, RAB, took many steps and participate in anti drug operations. But there have limited number of investment have taken actually. The main causes behind this fact are inadequate manpower and lacking of proper facilities. DNC has their own 12 prosecutors, 37 assistant prosecutors and 25 regional Headquarters to cover to the 500 Judicial Magistrate Court or Judge Courts in 64 districts but it is insufficient to manage the anti drugs operations. Government failed to appoint adequate number of law enforcers in this sector to manage this problem. Proper investigation would not be taken due to worse communication system. Low facilities of vehicles which make them disinterested to visit any place and investigation. Government failed to manage sufficient facilities for them. (Annual Drug Report Bangladesh, 2016)

Most of the drugs entered into the country through the coastal and impassable areas where communication network is not adequate. But the apathetical attitude of govt. toward drug business makes the drug dealers more audacious and dogmatic. They are too much injudicious because they believe that no one will be able to keep off them for the sake of law.

Concluding Remarks

In the recent year illegal drug business in Bangladesh has reached at the highest peak due to its availability throughout the country. Drug business increases more sharply in our country because of political support, engagement and in short because of political patronage. Home Ministry has lists of people including political leaders, people representatives, their family members and close relatives and some police officers who are involved with illegal drug business throughout the country. This patronage works as instigation behind framing epidemic form of drug business in our country. Push factors and pull factors mainly persuade

them to involve in drug business. Besides, they are aware about the low level of law enforcement, good will of govt. and judicial drawbacks. So they abuse their political power and money to loophole from the repression of govt. Though the law enforcers become desperate to catch them but at the end of the day govt. failed to uproot drug business from the society due to the political connectivity with this illegal business. When lawmakers break the laws it cannot expect that these laws have been followed by anyone else.

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