

In this Issue

Political parties have formed a consensus on the issues they need to address with their electorate

By Ahmer Naqvi



OPEN DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

Promises and Policies Reviewing Party Manifestos for the 2013 Elections

2013 promises to be a historic year for democracy in Pakistan, as the country marks its first democratic transition between civilian governments in its 66-year history. Unlike the previous elections in 2008, there is no protest movement in the backdrop or the shadow of a military ruler. Yet the level of violence in 2013 is worse than the unrest that marked the previous elections, with relentless, ruthless attacks on several political parties.

Almost all the major parties have had a chance to govern in the last five years. The Pakistan Peoples Party ruling the centre with the Muttahida Quami Movement and the Awami National Party, a PPP-led alliance governing Balochistan, a PPP-MQM alliance governing Sindh, and the ANP forming the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government. The main opposition party in the National Assembly, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, ruled the country's largest province, Punjab. The Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf and the Jamaat-e-Islami boycotted the 2008 elections and are now returning to electoral politics.

Much has changed in Pakistan since 2008. Events like the rise in oil prices, the global financial crisis, increased instability in Afghanistan, and a spate of domestic natural disasters meant that many mistakes by the governments – both at the federal and provincial levels – were compounded.

At the same time, however, “much headway was made by all political parties in vital areas such as education, constitutional reform, [and] legislation concerning women and minorities. On counterterrorism and the youth – two important spheres of contemporary Pakistan – the [political parties’] manifestos’ implementation was, at best, tenuous.”ⁱ

This brief will assess the plans and promises made by the political parties for the 2013 elections. It will begin by providing a general outlook of the various manifestos, before looking at how each party has focused on certain issues.

Which way does 2013 point to?

Almost inevitably, the hierarchy of subjects in a manifesto's index is the most reliable indicator of a party's intentions, promises, and priorities.

The **PML-N** begins its manifesto with 'economic revival'. The semantics are crucial here, as the party's narrative points to the claimed economic prosperity during its last stint in power (1997-99) and how it plans to repeat that. With traders and industrialists at the heart of the party's support base, there is much talk of increased revenues and recovered taxes. There is an equal concern with energy plans, and a lot of focus on employing new technologies and investment in governance, education and health.

The **PPP** begins its manifesto with the promise of 'ensuring basic needs' – in sync with the party's slogan of '*roti, kapra aur makaan*'. Like the PML-N manifesto, there is a conspicuous lack of data in many of the promises made in a rather extensive document. There is a lot of focus on strategies for poverty alleviation and the provision of healthcare and education, many of which suggest handouts and spin-offs from cash transfer mechanisms.

The **PTI**, after 17 years, has emerged as a major political force in Pakistan. The party is optimistic about the 2013 election, and that feeling is reflected in its manifesto. The party plan starts with a focus on external and internal security policy. It states an agenda establishing Pakistan as a regional force, with energy trade normalising relations with India, while a no-drones policy and extrication from the U.S.-led War on Terror. Internally, the party defines various threats as sub-nationalist, sectarian extremism, mafia terrorism and War on Terror-related militancy. The party also declares 'national emergencies' in the energy, governance, and human capital development sectors.

The **MQM** and the **ANP** were previously united in their mutual antagonism, with much of the previous five years marred by turf battles in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city and economic hub. In the run-up to the polls, however, the two largest regional parties have been united, along with the PPP, in being targeted by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

It is no surprise then that the **ANP** manifesto begins with 'Peace', and the party mentions that it has lost over 700 workers to terrorism and violence. The party's manifesto is among the most

progressive – its pledges on education and healthcare bigger than any other party. There is also a focus on the future of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, with a promise to settle the administrative status of the region.

In contrast, the **MQM**'s manifesto begins with education, a choice made to cement its position as the party of the urban, educated middle class. The MQM also promises increased spending on healthcare and education; promises to target feudalism and initiate land reforms. The party, often blamed for violent conduct in its strongholds, also trumpets its de-weaponisation bill in the National Assembly, which is yet to be passed. The party also proposes the creation of a mayoral system for all major cities.

The **Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)** and the **Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (Fazl)** are the two most significant religious parties in the mix. The JI had boycotted the previous elections, but returns with the familiar promise of an Islamic Welfare State in its 2013 manifesto, promising to turn Pakistani society into a modern version of 7th Century Medina, where all citizens had equal rights. Sovereignty – a code-word for freedom from American and other western interference – is a recurring theme, as are welfare initiatives such as housing for the poor, while stimulating economic reform through the removal of corruption – a pledge ubiquitous in all manifestos.

The **JUI-F** manifesto begins with a denunciation of Pakistan's participation in the War on Terror, and stresses a revamp of foreign policy so that it is in line with domestic interests. There is also much discussion on economic revival, which is often seen through the lens of previously stated political objectives. There is a promise of balancing exports and imports, and efforts to encourage overseas Pakistanis to send remittances through normal banking channels rather than the Hawala system. Like the JI, the JUIF also focuses on proposed amendments to the constitution to make it more compatible with its interpretations of the Quran and Hadith. Crucially, observers have pointed out that there were significant differences in the English and Urdu versions of the party's manifesto presented to the media. According to reports, "[a] chapter on Sharia was missing in the English version while a chapter on women rights was missing in the Urdu version."ⁱⁱ

Lastly, the **Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q)**, which had ruled the country in alliance with General Pervez Musharraf from 2002 to 2007, now appears to be a dwindling political force. Its manifesto is sparse, with the document beginning with several quotes from the country's founder – Mohammed Ali Jinnah – on issues related to peace. The party's manifesto is based on seven Es, namely: combating Extremism, providing universal Education, better management of Energy, Employment for youth, Empowerment of women, revival of the Economy, and the Elimination of

[T]he manifestos seem to belie a general agreement by the parties on the major problems facing Pakistan...they differ on the importance accorded to each issues, and to a lesser extent, the type of policies offered.

corruption. Despite many stated ambitions, the party largely shies away from committing any direct numbers to its promises.

Tackling the Major Issues

It is heartening to see that by and large, the manifestos seem to belie a general agreement by the parties on the major problems facing Pakistan, as many of the documents are divided into similar topics. They differ on the importance accorded to each issues, and to a lesser extent, the type of policies offered. This report will cover the parties' plans in five major areas, namely economy and energy, the social sector, women and minorities, extremism and terrorism, youth and foreign relations.

Economy and Energy

There is considerable alarm among most parties about the state of Pakistan's economy and the energy crisis. The PML-N, as mentioned, has set economic revival as its core message, promising to convert at least 50 per cent of the remittances by overseas Pakistanis into investments. Like other right-wing parties, it promises to improve the country's deplorable tax-to-GDP ratio with better collection and a wider base rather than higher taxes. The party also promises to privatise loss-making state enterprises like the Pakistan International Airlines.

The PML-N's energy policy is equally comprehensive, promising to create a Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources; investment in small-enterprises and alternative energy; banning new compressed natural gas stations; focusing resources on public transport; ensuring food for all citizens via granaries; and launching a major programme for aquifer recharge and water management.

The PTI's economic and energy proposals are similar, though more corporate in their outlook. The party proposes ending circular debt and load-shedding in the energy sector, without any clear explanation of its policies. It promises to apply the 'Malaysian model' for revolutionising state enterprises. It also seeks to corporatise the civil service, and initiate a trade-led economic recovery focusing on greater efficiency, modelled on China and India's growth. It promises computerised reforms to break the '*patwari*' system, with more power and autonomy for the National Accountability Bureau and the Federal Board of Revenue for the recovery of stolen assets. Like the PML-N, it pledges against a rise in taxes.

Both the JI and the JUI-F have similar agendas which are less detailed, but focus on removing corruption and reviving the economy through a retooling of the trade imbalance and improving tax returns. The PML-Q has a largely similar agenda, promising aggressive exploitation of

The ANP promises to increase healthcare and education spending to 6 per cent of GDP each, by far the largest promise. [T]he PPP provides the most details [on healthcare].

hydroelectric and coal resources for resolving the energy crisis, and focusing on efficiency and transparency by removing corruption, widening the tax base and breaking 'cartels'.

In contrast, the crux of the PPP's economic policy is poverty alleviation – a concern for other parties as well, but not as central to their manifestos as it is to the PPP's. It promises to expand its Benazir Income Support Programme, and to add five million new jobs. It also plans co-operatives in agriculture and livestock, and like everyone else, an increase in the tax-to-GDP ratio. On energy, the party promises to focus on encouraging foreign investment, and increasing the share of hydel and coal in the energy mix. There is little reference to alternative energy programmes.

Both the MQM and the ANP have economic plans that correspond to their status as regional parties, with little intention or option of drawing national-level agendas. The ANP's economic agenda focuses on greater provincial autonomy and increased trade with Afghanistan. It promises to tax progressively – a rare pledge – and demands provincial control and distribution of hydel profits as well as energy resources. The party, which has overseen significant foreign aid into Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa during its rule, promises to "encourage and protect foreign investment and offer special incentives in this regard."

The MQM also begins by promising to tax agriculture profits – an attack on rural opponents – and promises to revitalise state enterprises via greater efficiency and better management. It also promises a general reduction in the prices of basic items, and encouragement for cottage industries, as well as private investment. The party's demand of merit-based appointments to energy sector positions is possibly a dig at the previous government, and like many other parties it expounds on local governance as a tool of economic revival through more transparent management. The party also sticks to its traditional promise of ending the 'feudal' culture of the country via comprehensive land reforms.

Social Sector: Health and Education

The PPP focuses on the provision of basic needs, but its promises for change are slightly less in number than the other secular or liberal parties, namely the ANP and the MQM. The ANP promises to increase healthcare and education spending to 6 per cent of GDP each, by far the largest promise. The MQM promises 5 per cent of GDP and 20 per cent of provincial budget allocations to education. It also promises 5 per cent of GDP for health and focuses on organ transplant legislation. In contrast, the PPP promises 5 per cent of GDP to health and 4.5 per cent of GDP to education. In healthcare, the PPP provides the most details, promising to regulate private hospitals and drugs, reform medical education, ensure the eradication of polio and the provision of vaccinations, and

The JI pledges 5 per cent of GDP to education and 2 per cent of GDP to health. It seeks to provide 100 per cent literacy in five years and focuses on Urdu as a medium of instruction.

working on mother and child health. Like the other two parties, its education reforms include the promise of removing hate literature from state curricula.

Over on the center/right, the PTI promises just 2.6 per cent of the GDP to health, and like the PMLN and the PPP, projects that this ratio will be achieved in five years. It also speaks of modernising hospitals and health services in addition to improving their efficiency. Its budget for education is provisioned at 5 per cent of GDP and it promises a single education system for the entire country with the primary mode of instruction being in Urdu or regional languages.

The PML-N promises to battle illiteracy on 'war footing basis' and pledges to revamp the syllabi to make them more skill-centric. It pledges 4 per cent of GDP to education, and promises a reform and modernisation of religious seminaries (madrassas) as well. On healthcare, it aims to spend 2 per cent of GDP by 2018, and introduce a National Health Insurance scheme which would eventually support the poorest.

The PML-Q promises universal education and increase in health spending without detailing any figures for either. The JI pledges 5 per cent of GDP to education and 2 per cent of GDP to health. It seeks to provide 100 per cent literacy in five years and focuses on Urdu as a medium of instruction. The JUIF promises a 15 percent increase in the budget allocation for education, with free education until college, and compulsory education up to high school. It also promises an end to co-education, and making madrassa degrees equivalent to those from government institutions.

Women and Minorities

This is an area where all parties have shown varying levels of interest, with the PTI joining the PPP, the MQM and the ANP in presenting more comprehensive plans than the rest. The PTI promises one-stop help centres for women to deal with complaints of abuse, discrimination and violence. It also promises to restore the Ministry for Women as well as introducing quotas in government employment. The party's stance on minorities is much less developed, with a claim that the entire manifesto already covers protection of the discriminated. However, its proposals for the disabled are the most developed of any party, with promises of National Assembly seats, government employment and 10 per cent of welfare expenditure for the disabled. The only other party to mention disabled persons is the MQM, which also promises NA seats for them. Other than that, the MQM only offers quotas for women and promises to end 'medieval practices' via the implementation of laws. The ANP promises 33 per cent representation for women in political parties, the parliament, local government, the superior judiciary and other institutions. Its promises for child and minority rights are well-written but vague. The PPP has historically been the main recourse for minorities, but its manifesto is also shy of details. It promises, like almost all

The ANP provides the most robust policy against terrorism, with veiled warnings to those who commit violence in the manifesto.

other parties, to ban hate literature and prevent attacks on minorities. But apart from promising a reserved seat from Islamabad, the party promises little else. For women, the party promises laws against acid attacks and quotas in various employment areas. It also promises to revamp labour laws and build 500,000 homes for the poor.

The PML-N gives somewhat less attention to women's issues, promising to "ensure respect, dignity, and protection granted by Islam to women and protect their property rights." It also promises to enact or improve legislation on violence against women and child abuse. For minorities, all it offers is a national day for minorities. The JI also promises women rights in an Islamic setting but offers more details, including bans on dowries, honour killings and others. It is also the only manifesto to promise maternity leave for working women. For minorities, the party makes vague promises, but does have considerable focus on rights and perks for senior citizens – a core constituency for the party.

Extremism and Terrorism

Although all parties express general condemnation of violence and terrorism, their approaches are very different.

The ANP provides the most robust policy against terrorism, with veiled warnings to those who commit violence in the manifesto. The party also demands control of security and foreign policies for the government and promises to restore the State's writ in the tribal areas. In a telling move, it also calls for the rationalising of defence expenditure. The MQM is more vague, promising to curb extremism through public awareness. However, more pertinent is its proposal for setting up community policing and neighbourhood watch groups – interesting proposals given the situation in Karachi.

The PPP proposes a comprehensive National Security Plan, and promises to launch an active campaign to prevent Pakistan from being used as a base for terrorist activities. It also calls for regulating all madrassas through a Federal Madrassa Board and also calls for military budgets to be accountable to parliament, and institutionalise better oversight of defence expenditure.

The PTI splits terrorism into sub-nationalism, sectarian extremism, mafia terrorism and War on Terror-related militancy. The party suggests dialogue with militants, political solutions for Balochistan, and a neutral police to deal with violence in Karachi. The PMLN suggests more funds for the army, arguing, "Pakistan today is at war within, while isolated abroad". It promises to safeguard Pakistan's nuclear weapons, and suggests ending terrorism by integrating FATA with the rest of the country by providing jobs, health services as well as massive public education

With over 50 per cent of Pakistan's population below the age of 25, the youth have become a prominent aspect of the current campaigns, with many parties vying for their attention.

campaigns. The JI and the JUI-F both insist on Pakistan's withdrawal from the War on Terror. The JI promises strict action against terrorists, but also places emphasis on ensuring foreigners are under surveillance. It also brings up Dr. Aafia Siddiqui as part of its demand for recovering missing persons. The JUI-F calls for peace in Afghanistan and reconciliation with the Taliban there, as well as demanding more funds for the army. It has been accused of promoting Jihad as compulsory in some versions of its manifesto.

Youth

With over 50 per cent of Pakistan's population below the age of 25, the youth have become a prominent aspect of the current campaigns, with many parties vying for their attention. The PTI has been most popularly associated with young people, as evidenced by youth support at both the party's rallies as well as on social media. The Tehrik-e-Insaf had launched a youth policy last year, and their manifesto carries over several of those points. The party lived up to its promise of awarding over 30 per cent of all tickets to the youth. However, 'youth' is defined as under 30ⁱⁱⁱ. The outgoing National Assembly already had roughly a quarter of its members below the age of 30. Beyond that, the party's manifesto promises union council level seats for young people, as well as mentorship opportunities with elected MPs. It also proposes setting up a "*Jawan Markaz*", where young workers would serve as focal points for the party's local government plans. Like all other parties, it promises plenty of education and vocational opportunities and is one of the few that intends to revive student unions.

The PML-N also promises youth seats at the union council level, but beyond that its only distinctive policy – other than jobs and schools – is an anti-addiction campaign. The ANP similarly offers "youth development and creation of suitable employment opportunities" as well as setting up cadres of youth responsible for disaster management. The PPP offers setting up bodies that young people can get elected to, but these are all salutary in nature. The MQM promises education opportunities on merit – a claim relevant from its founding days, when it fought against quotas for Sindhis, but largely out of date today. The PML-Q's only distinctive feature is a service which brings back children of overseas Pakistanis to the country for short periods where they can learn the local language and culture. The JI promises special stadiums for women, and promoting 'positive cultural activities'.

Every party is eager to promise both jobs and education/vocational training opportunities. However, considering how crucial the youth would be to future politics – if not the upcoming elections – it is surprising to see the paucity of solutions on display in most manifestoes.

Foreign Relations

This is another area where the parties show clear splits, but that is not readily apparent from the language. It is nuances that define the differences.

The ANP ends up in rare conformity with the JUI-F in demanding peace in Afghanistan, as well as the pursuit of a relationship that affords 'special attention' to the country. The ANP also demands peace with India and better relations with Iran, China and the Central Asian Republics. Its U.S. policy is the most interesting, though, as it states its desire to "strive for normalcy in the relations with the United States based on mutual interests and respect as independent and sovereign states. [ANP] will avoid fluctuating policies that border on extreme reactions of either abject surrender or threats of armed conflict."

The PPP's demands are similar, asking for outreach to the Afghan government, peace with India, and a "balanced and clearly defined partnership with the US". Similarly, the MQM calls for "confidence building measures (CBMs) and dialogue process with India and desires peace and close cooperation between the countries of South Asia."

The PML-N and the PTI tread a tighter rope with their constituencies, particularly when it comes to India. Both parties advocate better relations with the country, but are careful to frame this demand purely within economic terms. The PML-N's policy is otherwise vague, with references to sovereignty and military assets – code words for drone strikes and nuclear weapons. The PTI is more strident, advocating a clear no-drones policy with the U.S. For the JI, there is a demand for greater cooperation with Muslim countries, ending foreign aid and peace with India conditional on the 'liberation of Kashmir'.

Each party mentions Pakistan's special relationship with China and the desire to pursue it further. The People's Republic remains perhaps the only foreign entity none of the parties are afraid of embracing openly.

Conclusions

The manifestos from the 2013 elections represent a general maturity emerging in Pakistani politics. The narratives of victimhood and the trading of allegations have been largely removed, and parties have managed to form a consensus on the sorts of issues they need to be addressing with their electorate.

That said, most parties have shied away from taking any particularly bold or unique stance. There is a general uniformity in most proposals, and a lot of policies are little more than idealised phrases that the parties promise to implement. Very few numbers and concrete plans are available – and

*The PML-N
and the PTI
tread a tighter
rope with
their
constituencies,
particularly
when it comes
to India.*

while such may be outside the scope of a manifesto, there is a suspicion that their absence is more to do with a fear against committing to realisable goals.

The most divergent areas remain approaches towards internal security and foreign affairs. As both these briefs are largely the purview of the military, officially or otherwise, the divergence here is as much about the parties' backers and alliances as it is about ideology. However, the ANP and the PPP display a clear commitment to fighting extremism.

The areas of health, education and to a lesser extent, the economy, are far more similar. The larger parties have committed to smaller budget spending for health and education than the smaller parties, but by and large there is an acknowledgment of the need for greater investment in these areas. The plans for the economy all include a desire to broaden and increase tax revenues, but several parties are clear about not wanting to increase taxes at any point.

Policies for women and minorities remain largely toothless, with the PPP offering little more than platitudes. The policies for the youth have become slightly more evolved than these, but beyond patronage the parties offer little to young Pakistanis.

Future manifestos could conceivably adopt bolder, more innovative stances. Pakistani democracy is tentatively moving out of a purely survivalist impulse, and with increased public accountability through elections and parliamentary oversight, the political parties would need to improve the manner in which they present their programmes. At present, there are many promises but on strategy, costing and feasibility, the party plans appear to be weak.

References

- ⁱ Jinnah Institute (2013), 'Delivering on Promises: Assessing Implementation of Political Party Manifestos', Islamabad. Pp. 4
- ⁱⁱ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/537505/jui-fs-election-plan-english-urdu-versions-of-manifesto-termed-incongruent/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ The population in the age bracket of 15-29 years is taken as the young population. This is consistent with the definition of youth taken by the Commonwealth. Retrieved from http://www.moya.gov.pk/national_youth_policy.html

The plans for the economy all include a desire to broaden and increase tax revenues, but several parties are clear about not wanting to increase taxes at any point.