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Manifestoes and Political Preferences in Pakistan

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Abstract

As Pakistan heads towards another general election on 11 May 2013, the obvious question to ask is whether the new leadership groups will be able to pull the country back from the abyss at which it stands and set it on a course that would bring political and social stability and with it economic progress. The country faces many problems. It still has a political system that is not fully defined in terms of the locus of policymaking. In this context, the role of the military remains unclear as does the relationship between the president and the parliament. How the recently-empowered provinces will conduct their affairs remains to be clarified in the light of the 18th Amendment that was enacted in April 2010. The country has to tackle the problem posed by the rise of Islamic extremism. It must not only bring the dissidents into the political fold but also ensure that all minorities are granted full constitutional and human rights. The economy is in a state of serious stress. What can be done to put it on a higher growth trajectory that can be sustained over time? How should the country refashion its relations with the outside world so as to reduce its isolation from international community? How should it take advantage of the rapidly changing global economy and political order? At this time, Pakistan is essentially a bystander as enormous change is taking place all around its borders.

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The May elections will contribute to the reshaping of the political order in Pakistan. This will matter not only for the country but also have consequences for the western part of the Muslim world. Most countries in this area are engaged in deep political and economic transformation. Some, like Egypt and Tunisia, are attempting to fashion political systems that can accommodate Islamic groups that have been, for decades, attempting to create legitimate political presence for themselves. They would also like to wean their economies from Western financial support. Some, like Turkey, are engaged in establishing civilian primacy in governance, narrowing the space available to their militaries. The political order in Iran is attempting to find space for the non-religious elements in a system that has been dominated since the 1979 Islamic revolution by the clerics. And Afghanistan will need to figure out how an exceptionally militant Islamic group can live in political harmony and within a constitutional framework that is acceptable to the entire citizenry. Pakistan is involved in finding workable solutions to all these unresolved issues. It is moving simultaneously in a process of transition and transformation in all these areas. This paper looks at one aspect of the on-going Pakistani experiment: how the three main political parties will address these various issues.

Introduction

Will those who take over the reins of government, following the elections in May 2013, be able – or willing – to address these problems? One way of answering this question is to analyse the manifestoes of three mainstream parties – the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP); the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) PML(N) and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) – in the context of the problems the new administrations, federal and provincial, will need to address.

Some of the major changes in the structure of Pakistani politics have been widely noted. Two of these are of considerable significance. The first relates to the evolution of a representative political order that is likely to be durable. In it, an elected parliament will finally be at the centre of the process of policymaking. The prime minister chosen by an elected parliament will be responsible to it, not to the president. The latter, by virtue of the passage of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, has mostly ceremonial powers². The fact that President Asif Ali Zardari continued to be the main policymaker, after the passage of 18th Amendment, was in part due to political inertia but also because he defied the established tradition that the president, once elected, will cease to associate himself with any political organisation. Zardari continued to function as the co-Chairman of the Pakistan People’s Party and from that position exercised total executive authority. This concentration of power in one pair of hands will not be the case, no matter which party or combination of parties assumes power after the May elections.

² For an analysis of the impact of the 18th Amendment on the Pakistani political system, see Shahid Javed Burki, “The 18th Amendment: Pakistan’s Constitution Redesigned”, Working Paper No. 112, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, 3 September 2010.

Once a new prime minister takes office after the elections, his residence and his secretariat – rather than the presidency – will be at the centre of policymaking. This will represent a sea change in Pakistan’s traditional political system. Strong men and one strong woman have ruled Pakistan for most of its 66 years as an independent state. That is about to change: to governance by a collective – a cabinet – in which many voices will be raised and heard. This will be especially so if the cabinet represents a coalition of political parties. If we count 1947-54 and 1958-2008 as the periods dominated by strong leaders, it is clear that it was the will of one strong individual that dominated policymaking for most of Pakistan’s history – for almost 57 years. That is about to change for the better. The prime minister’s authority will be constrained not just by the assembly he will lead. He will also be held in check by various other institutions that have gained power and prestige in recent years. The most important of these are the judiciary, the Election Commission and a reformed Accountability Bureau/Commission. Also what can be called the “political street” has shown its strength not only in the Middle East during the Arab Spring of 2011. It was also a powerful element in pushing President Pervez Musharraf out – the country’s fourth and possibly last military ruler – and sending the military back to the barracks. The streets’ power will serve as a constraint on the exercise of authority by the various branches of government.

The second, but less noticed change is in the thinking of the various political parties that will be engaged in the process of governance after the May elections. This applies to both the parties that will rule as well as those that will operate from the opposition benches. These parties, as they prepared for the elections, were forced to think about economics and not just about politics. Such focus on economics was evident only once before in Pakistan’s history. This was during the late-1960s and the early-1970s. At that time, widespread dissatisfaction with the process of economic growth that featured the long rule by the military regime headed by Field Marshal Ayub Khan, produced two revolutionary and reactionary economic programmes from the opposition. Both sought a fundamental change in the structure of the economy. The first was the “six-point program” put forward by Mujibur Rahman’s Awami League. The party had come to the correct conclusion that the Pakistani political system was arranged in such a way that the country’s eastern wing – today’s Bangladesh – would continue to suffer from serious economic deprivation. For almost a quarter century, East Pakistan’s abundant export earnings had provided the much-needed foreign exchange for the development of the western wing – today’s Pakistan. This understandably was not acceptable to the Bengali population. The Awami League proposed a devolution programme in which authority over most economic policymaking would be handed over to the provinces. This was the only way the citizens of East Pakistan would remain with the country they had worked hard to create. The political establishment from West Pakistan was not prepared to travel that route. Its strong opposition to the six-point programme left East Pakistanis with only one choice: to exit the Pakistani state founded in 1947 and create a country of their own – Bangladesh.

The other revolutionary programme was put forward by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the PPP, the party he had founded in 1967 on leaving the administration of President Ayub Khan. While

Mujibur Rehman's six-point programme was concerned with the problem of regional disparity, Bhutto's programme for taking Pakistan towards "Islamic socialism" was concerned with inter-personal distribution of income and wealth. Mahbubul Haq, in his famous 22-families speech, had given Bhutto the slogan he needed. In that speech delivered in Karachi in October 1968, Haq suggested (wrongly, as several analysts, including this author, pointed out³) that the much-touted "decade of development" over which President Ayub Khan had presided, had delivered most of the rewards of growth to a handful of families with large asset-holdings in industry and finance. Haq put a number on the number of families that, in his judgment, had benefitted – twenty-two. Bhutto built upon that claim and produced a programme that would provide "*roti, kapra, and makan*" (the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter) to the common man and woman. Bhutto's economic programme was to permanently alter Pakistani politics and its economy.

Evolution of Pakistan's Political Parties

Could something similar to Bhutto's revolution materialise now in 2013, more than four decades after he shook Pakistan? Can we possibly see such a change happening by reading the manifestoes of the three mainstream political parties? What is the value of the manifestoes issued by the political parties before the elections in which they are proposing to contest? Do the manifestoes really reveal the preferences of the people who may be placed in positions of power following the polls? Would the electorate be able to hold the people they choose accountable for the promises they have made? We can search the country's torrid history to answer these questions. Or we can analyse the organisational strength of the entities that have issued the manifestoes since these represent the promises made by the parties and not by the individuals who are likely to exercise power. A strong political organisation should be able to discipline its leaders and constrain their behaviour once they hold the reins of power. In looking at the manifestoes, we should also weigh them against the situation that exists when they are issued. Very often political parties make promises with little intention of carrying them out. Some of the promises made are just not practical and cannot be implemented.

A brief look at Pakistan's history, from the perspective of political parties and the promises they had made to the people whose attention they were courting, reveals a great deal about the country's political situation in the spring of 2013, on the eve of the May elections. The Pakistan Muslim League, following the Lahore Resolution of 1940 that demanded the creation of an independent state for the Muslim community of British India, went on to incorporate that demand in its manifesto. For seven years it did not waver from this demand. It fought a number of elections on the basis of this demand, and it was its electoral success in Bengal and Punjab, British India's two largest Muslim-dominant provinces, that convinced the British rulers of the need to partition their Indian colony along communal lines. However,

³ Shahid Javed Burki, *Pakistan Under Bhutto, 1971-77*, London, Macmillan, 1980.

once the country it sought was created, the Pakistan Muslim League (the name it gave itself following Pakistan's creation, replacing the name of All-India Muslim League under which it had campaigned for the creation of an independent Muslim state) failed to redefine its mission. It reinvented itself on many occasions; most of these times it reflected the need of the moment or the ambition of a particular individual. Ayub Khan recreated the moribund Muslim League to provide his rule with some legitimacy. Those who opposed the rule by the military formed a Muslim League of their own. The one that Ayub Khan controlled came to be called the Convention Muslim League; the one the opposition organised was named the Council League. The former did not issue a detailed statement on how it would govern: that was left to the all-powerful president to decide. The Council Muslim League had only one stated purpose: to return Pakistan to a parliamentary form of government. It did not indicate what it would do if it managed to gain power.

The belief that party manifestoes can move public opinion was the basis of some serious analytical work done by the PPP in its formative years. It issued a series of "foundation papers" that provided the party with two powerful slogans – "*roti, kapra and makan*" and "Islamic socialism". The party's founding fathers – not only Zulfikar Ali Bhutto but also a number of his close associates – had correctly gauged the public mood during the waning days of the Ayub Khan's administration. The citizens were not happy with the economic model on which the military leader had based his right to govern. They believed that if they had a voice in affairs of the government the economic system would be more "inclusive" rather than "extractive".⁴ They wanted the government to work for common good and not for the good of a small elite. Bhutto promised such a government and such an economic model. But once the party had gained power, it and its founding father behaved very differently. The PPP's electoral promises, which won it a prominent place in the political order created after the collapse of the Bhutto/Yahya military-dominated governments and the break-up of Pakistan, were embedded in the Constitution of 1973.⁵ The party did not govern within the framework of the constitution it was instrumental in writing and promulgating. Bhutto as prime minister wielded much more power than was provided for in the constitution. He also compromised the federal character of the system he had helped to create. He dismissed the governments in the two provinces – Baluchistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (formerly North West Frontier Province) – in which the PPP was a minor political player.

During President Zia-ul-Haq's eleven-year rule (1977-88), political parties were essentially dormant. He took every conceivable step to ensure that the PPP did not re-emerge as a political force. He knew that if it did, it would seriously threaten his hold on power, possibly his life. Two years after deposing Bhutto, Zia had executed the former prime minister by using a murder case that had been filed against him by one of his opponents. The PPP was

⁴ The terms "inclusive" and "extractive" are from the powerful book by Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. New York. Crown Business, 2012.

⁵ For a detailed analysis of the founding of the Pakistan People's Party, see Philip E. Jones, *The Pakistan People's Party: Rise to Power*, Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2003.

determined to avenge what it called an assassination of its founder. Zia followed a two-pronged approach to reduce PPP's popularity with the masses. He encouraged the formation of an ethnic-based party in Karachi, the *Mutahida Qaumi Mahaz* (MQM), which drew support from the community of refugees that had migrated to the city after the partition of British India and the creation of Pakistan. This Urdu-speaking group settled mostly in Karachi and some other cities in southern Sindh province. Karachi's large working class was a strong PPP supporter. Many of the industrial workers were from the refugee (*muhajir*) community. The MQM could erode PPP's hold over this class. This it did.

At the same time the military leader, a devout Muslim, promoted religious parties in the belief that Islam could work as a strong counterpoint to the PPP's socialism and liberalism. He was drawn in particular to the Jamaat-e-Islami, JI. This party favoured the creation of a Muslim *ummah* – a confederation of Muslim states around the world. Since it was ideologically opposed to Muslim nationalism and instead favouring pan-Islamism, it had opposed the creation of Pakistan. As such, it had only a limited influence in the country. Zia's approach was to broaden the JI's political base by encouraging the creation of a coalition of Islamic parties which included the PML. This led to the formation of the *Islamic Jamhuri Itehad (IJI)*, the Islamic Democratic Alliance, which collapsed after Zia's death.

Even before Zia was killed in an air crash, the PPP had begun to flex its political muscle. Benazir Bhutto, who had succeeded her father after his execution in 1979 as the party's chairperson, returned from exile in 1986. She was received by a large and enthusiastic crowd in Lahore, the city that Zia considered to be the centre of his political base. Following the military leader's death, the political scene was dominated by the PPP and PML(N), with the latter whose leader was Nawaz Sharif, having opted out of IJI. In Karachi the MQM became a formidable political force.

In the troubled 1990s, the PPP and PML(N) came to dominate the political landscape, alternating as the governing parties. Benazir Bhutto was twice prime minister in this period as was Nawaz Sharif. Their tenures were cut short by the president of the day. Each dismissal was followed by a general election in which the party that was in opposition won handily.

The Pakistan Muslim League split again into two factions during the rule of President Pervez Musharraf (1999-2008). Under the new military ruler, the two factions came to be identified by two different parentheses. The *Quaid League* – or just the “Q” League – sought to provide a political cover to the rule by the new military president. The opposition – the Nawaz League – gathered around Nawaz Sharif, the man Musharraf had deposed in order to bring back military rule. The “Q” League, following the example of the Convention League, did not provide any guidance concerning the principles of governance. Once again, that was left to the discretion of the president. And as was the case with the Council League, the Nawaz League also concentrated most of its attention on bringing parliamentary democracy back to the country. It formed an alliance with the Pakistan People's Party to pursue that goal. The two parties issued the Charter of Democracy from London in 2006, signed by their chairpersons – Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto.

A chain of events, which began in March 2007, brought to an end the military rule in a year's time. The PPP and PML(N) joined a "grand coalition" that lasted for two months. In May 2008, the PML(N) moved from the treasury to the opposition benches where it remained for nearly five years. On the eve of the May 2013 elections, the main political parties will need to depart from the old system – of winning elections on the basis of ethnicity and *baradari* preferences. In an important book, Antaole Lieven has argued that it is this kind of support system that had brought strength to the Pakistani society even when the country was confronted with a number of existential problems.⁶ That may have been the case up to 2007, sixty years after the country's creation. Since then, the people's expectations have changed. They are likely to cross ethnic and *baradari* lines and cast their votes for the parties that they believe will deliver the much-needed goods and services to the people. It is for this reason – even if that realisation has not fully come to the leaders of the various parties – that what is said and promised in their manifestoes will be read and remembered. The political street and the lively media will test the performance of the parties from the perspective of the many promises they have made in the 2013 election manifestoes.

With the dust having settled a bit, and with the Election Commission having chosen a caretaker prime minister to guide the country towards another general election in May, the more informed part of the electorate has turned its attention to examining what is on offer from the main political parties in terms of rescuing the country from its many ills. What follows is a discussion of the manifestoes issued by the three mainstream parties. Left out of this discussion are the platforms of the MQM, JI, the Awami National Party (ANP) and some other groups. The MQM may capture most of the seats in Karachi, and the other parties may pick up a few seats but their influence in the post-election Pakistan will be localised. As such for the next several years, the country's future will be determined by the way the PPP, the PML, and the PTI play in the political field.

The Pakistan People's Party

The discussion of the manifestoes begins with the one issued by the Pakistan Peoples' Party since it is the one that led the coalition which has governed for the last five years.⁷ The PPP, as also the PML(N), will have to make their case in terms of how they performed when they held the reins of power – the former as the leader of the coalition that governed from Islamabad and the second as the main ruling party in Lahore.

PPP was in office four times, once in the 1970s, twice in the 1990s and once again in the early 2000s. Bhutto, the founding father, was first the country's president and once the constitution he had authored was promulgated, he became the prime minister. He was a strong leader, impatient with those who differed with him or challenged his authority. In the 1990s, his daughter Benazir Bhutto served twice as Prime Minister. She was also a strong

⁶ Lieven, Antaol, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. New York. Public Affairs, 2011.

⁷ Pakistan People's Party, *Manifesto 2013: Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians*, Islamabad, 2013.

leader but was constrained by the way the president and the chief of army staff worked as overseers of her performance. This had come to be called the “troika” arrangement in which the president, the army chief and the prime minister governed as a group. Any effort to exercise the powers vested in the prime minister independent of the policy preferences of the other members led to her or his dismissal. Benazir Bhutto’s first dismissal in 1990 was largely because of her expressed unease with the *troika* arrangement, particularly its influence over foreign policy. She considered foreign affairs as the area in which she had considerable expertise. This was the main theme of her book, *Daughter of the East*.⁸ She was disposed towards ending the long-enduring conflict with India by reaching some accommodation on all outstanding issues, including the one concerning the disputed territory of Kashmir. The second time around in 1996, she was removed from office as the president was generally troubled by the way she was managing the economy. In the 2000s, in spite of the constitutional amendment that restricted the role of the president, leaving him with mostly ceremonial authority, the PPP-led coalition was effectively managed by Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of the assassinated Benazir Bhutto.

The PPP governed for a total of 15 years. The longest period was under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the party’s founder; for an almost equal period of time the party was in power under Zardari, the founder’s son-in-law. The way the party minded the government store in 1971-77 was very different from the role that was envisaged in the “foundation documents” prepared over a period of two years, from 1968 to 1970. What was said in the founding documents and what was included in the manifesto for the elections of 1970 indicated a strong preference for an inclusive economic system. Such a system was to be structured to benefit the urban working class and the peasantry. The state was to be main agent of change and distribution. The large-scale nationalisation of private economic assets, carried out in two phases, vastly expanded the role of the government. Since expropriation, without adequate compensation to the owners of the acquired assets, was the instrument used for expanding the states’ presence in the economy, it discouraged private enterprise. Private investment declined precipitously, while there was a significant increase in investment by the government. The result was a sharp slowdown in the rate of economic growth. The lot of the poor did not improve.

In its most recent stay in policymaking positions, the PPP did a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn in its economic philosophy. It put the private sector at the commanding heights of the economy by reducing the role of the regulatory authorities, and looked the other way while the party’s senior leaders went after the rent they could charge from those who needed the government’s support. Such public perceptions of poor governance and widespread corruption during 2008-13 are likely to present the PPP with its most serious challenge in the May 2013 elections. Several high-profile cases – most of them are pending before various courts at the time of these elections – will be fresh in the minds of the people as they head for the voting booth. The charge that President Zardari, along with his late wife, had received a large kick-back from a Swiss company continued to haunt him and caused a prolonged fight

⁸ Benazir Bhutto, *Daughter of the East: An Autobiography*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1988.

with the Supreme Court that has remained unresolved as the country heads towards this general election. The two prime ministers he appointed to lead the PPP-dominated government were brought before the Supreme Court on charges of corruption. There were a variety of charges filed in various courts against Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani (2008-12) and some members of his family. His successor, Raja Pervez Ashraf, was accused of receiving large kickbacks from the investors who installed “rental” power units to relieve the country of serious power shortage. The government agreed to purchase power at a price that could not be justified.

Will the reiteration of the populist policy promises made in the 1970 manifesto still work for the PPP as it faces the people in the latest elections? “Our manifesto is based on the bedrock of ground realities”, says the document issued by the party’s secretariat. Unlike the manifesto of the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) which identified the authors that wrote it, the PPP is silent about the identity of the people who drafted its pledges for winning the electorate’s favour. The manifesto is mostly silent about the party’s record in office other than taking much credit – and deservedly so – for setting the stage for the inauguration of a new political order. The first chapter in the long 2013 manifesto is a throwback to history, and some of this reminder may still work. In its campaign, the party will lean heavily on the only programme that was developed during its recent five years in office that benefitted the poor. This is the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) that replaced general subsidies with direct income support to the very poor. Poor rural women were the main beneficiaries of the programme. By naming it after the assassinated Benazir Bhutto, the party created the impression that the help was coming from the party, not from the state. This was claimed, in spite of the fact that the programme received significant financial support from such foreign donors as the World Bank and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID).

The preamble to the document also mentions the Benazir Income Support Programme as one of its great achievements. As is the case with many such programmes around the world, efforts aimed at supporting the poorest of the poor have generally resulted in a great deal of corruption. Even though Pakistan is now ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, the BISP has avoided egregious waste and has mostly succeeded in reaching the intended beneficiaries. If the PPP does well in the May elections, it will be largely because of the success of this programme. One of its main features was the empowerment of very poor women.

“We make no promises for which we cannot find resources, nor do we plan to rebuild Pakistan from the top down through trickle down profits. Anyone governing Pakistan in the next ten years of global recession and regional security upheavals will also have to make tough fiscal, economic security and governance decisions”. One part of this statement is puzzling since the global economy in the next five years will not be in recession but will be recovering from the one that hit it in 2007-09. Pakistan should be preparing to take advantage of the enormous structural changes that have occurred as a consequence of what the economists call the “Great Recession”. The second part of the statement is correct since the

promised withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan and the Sunni-Shia conflict in the Middle East will indeed create “regional security upheavals”, against which Pakistan must guard itself. The killing of Shias, earlier this year, in the sensitive cities of Quetta and Karachi, has already alerted the country to what could happen if extremism is not handled with the needed firmness.

What follows this statement by PPP is its promise to work for the poorer segments of the society, which at the time the party was founded, was the main constituency to which it appealed. “A nation that is economically insecure at the bottom of the pyramid, capitally uncompetitive and infrastructurally unprepared stands a poor chance of survival in a world that is shifting political and economic gears rapidly”. Expecting a rapidly changing world, the party goes on to promise “key programs” which it will announce in the first 100 days after assuming office at the federal and provincial levels. Keeping its focus on the poor, the manifesto promises action in seven areas. It will work to meet the “basic needs of the economically and socially disadvantaged”. This will be done by providing food security, shelter, healthcare, education, jobs, worker protection and equal opportunity for all. The second plank in the promised programme is what is called “empowerment of all”, followed by the promise to direct the economy towards “equitable and inclusive growth”. The hope is that the growing personal and regional income and wealth disparities that marked the way the economy was managed for the last five years would be handled through the launch of a series of programmes called “*waseelas*”, an Urdu word that roughly translates as the source of support. These will cover the areas of education, health, and youth employment. The manifesto promises to provide 4.5 per cent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) for education and attain universal literacy by 2018. This will be three years later than the target year set by Pakistan, then governed by President Musharraf, as part of the country’s Millennium Development Goals. The PPP manifesto makes no mention of the use of fiscal policy to redress inequality. This was one of the major shortcomings of its performance in office.

The manifesto promises to build “infrastructure for the future”; put in place a “new social contract”; protect the people against abuse by both the organs of the state as well as those who refuse to respect the various laws of the land; and to end Pakistan’s increasing isolation by “engaging with the world”. The main approach adopted by the authors of the document is to invoke not the immediate past but the distant past – the days of the founding of the party in the late-1960s. The manifesto’s publication cover displays in bold letters the slogan “*roti, kapra, and makan*” that carried Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to electoral triumph in 1970. The approach adopted is to hope that in going to the voting booth, people will forget how poorly the party performed while it was in office these past five years but remember the promises made almost half a century ago.

The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)

Like the PPP, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) also has a record to defend as it seeks support from the electorate. While the party can trace its lineage to the one headed by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the country's founding father, there is only one thing in common between it and Jinnah's League. Both had strong appeal among the urban middle and lower-middle classes. In both cases, the parties promised to protect the economic interests of these two groups. Jinnah's party chose to fight against the perceived domination of what it saw as the Hindu-dominated state once India achieved independence from British rule. The Nawaz League's main constituency is in the urban parts of Punjab. Its effort to create a presence in other provinces has not been very successful. In that respect, the PPP has a larger national footprint than can be claimed by the PML(N).

The PPP and PML(N) have very different origins. The former was created as a reaction to rule by the military. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had concluded that the army-dominated government led by President Ayub Khan was not serving Pakistan's strategic interests. It was too closely aligned with the United States which was not necessarily in Pakistan's long-term interest. The PPP's initial focus was foreign affairs. The founding of the PML(N), on the other hand, was the result of encouragement from General Zia-ul-Haq, Pakistan's third military president. He wished to create a political party that could challenge the PPP, whose founder he had sent to the gallows. Zia was responsible for the appointment of Nawaz Sharif first as the Punjab's Finance Minister and later as the province's Chief Minister. It was only after Zia was killed that Nawaz tried to position himself as the leader who could step into the general's boots but without the need for support from the military. This brought him into repeated conflict with a series of army chiefs, two of whom – Generals Aslam Beg and Pervez Musharraf – were instrumental in his removal from office twice – in 1993 and 1999. It was this experience that turned the PML(N) chief into a firm believer in democratic rule in which the military being under the firm control of the civilian authority.

The PML's 104-page long manifesto for this 2013 general election has correctly read what ails the Pakistani economy and society.⁹ What it would do if it gains power in Islamabad after the elections on 11 May also makes sense. What the party is less clear about is its plan to find the money to finance the effort it wants to launch. The PML(N)'s programme is ambitious. That said, the most puzzling statement in the document is that Pakistan will, in the 21st century, "emerge as one of the top 10 economies of the world" – something which would be quite an achievement! At this time, in this author's reckoning, based on data in the World Bank's *World Development Indicators, 2012*, Pakistan is the 42nd largest economy in the world – behind Iran, Israel, and Egypt.¹⁰ Promises such as these reduce the credibility of a manifesto. That apart, the manifesto has many worthwhile suggestions.

⁹ Pakistan Muslim League, *Manifesto, 2013: Strong Economy – Strong Pakistan*, Lahore, March 7, 2013.

¹⁰ The World Bank, *World Development Indicators, 2012*, Washington DC, 2012, Table 1.1.

The PML(N) has a correct diagnosis of the problems the country faces – high and unsustainable fiscal and balance of payments deficits; high and rapidly increasing burdens of domestic and external debts which have resulted in large debt servicing; poorly performing public sector enterprises; no controls on non-development public sector expenditure; declining government outlays in such critical areas as education, health, and skill development; very serious energy shortages and very little investment in improving the economy's technological base. The party has promised major improvements in all these areas.

The manifesto is strong on the need for improving the physical and human resource base of the country. It promises that the state will work closely with the private sector to build roads, bridges, ports and (presumably) improve the railway system. It also promises to increase the amount of electric power that is generated, especially by using the country's enormous coal reserves – Thar coal, it is said, has 175 billion tons of reserves, enough to generate 100,000 MW of power for 100 years. Exploiting such coal reserves, along with recourse to renewable sources of energy, will help close the inequality in people's access to electricity that currently exists. The manifesto indicates that power shortage is causing a loss of US\$ 5 billion a year and the loss of a million jobs. This has also reduced export earnings by US\$ 2.5 billion a year.

As much as 40 per cent of the population does not have access to electricity. Recognising that the provinces under the 18th Amendment now have a lot of authority in economic matters, the party makes two interesting proposals. It will set up a wholesale market for energy, presumably one in which the energy-surplus provinces could sell to those in deficit. It also addresses the shortage of public funds for the building of infrastructure by promising to allow the cities to raise capital from the market. Credit-worthy cities could sell infrastructure bonds to raise the amount needed for specific projects. However, allowing cities to access the markets would be done under the watchful eyes of the central bank.

One can only assume that the job of financing the programme, to deliver a number of basic goods and services to the people, would be worked out by the economists who will aid the party's leaders if and when they take office. The PML(N)'s manifesto team has had help from plenty of experienced people in drafting the document. Two former finance ministers and one former planning minister were called upon to develop the proposals in the manifesto. It would have helped, if the cost of the entire programme had been worked out and the way for finding resources was more clearly spelt out.

The promise to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio by more than one percentage point a year and reach 15 per cent by 2018 and also increase the Public Sector Development Programme, so that more gets invested in education and health, will need a flow of more money into the state's coffers. But how will that happen? The party promises full documentation of all transactions that take place. It should have promised that in achieving this objective it will not succumb to the political pressure of small shopkeepers who are part of the party's constituency. It has promised not to raise the incidence of taxation, which it believes is

onerous for those who are willing to pay. A rate reduction would not result in revenue loss since the manifesto promises not to spare any sector from being taxed. Does this mean that the tax rates on incomes from agriculture will be the same as those on incomes from other parts of the economy? It would have helped, if such a promise had been made explicitly in the manifesto. What about a value-added tax? The manifesto promises that a uniform sales tax will be levied. Is that a veiled reference to a value-added tax? To rephrase an old dictum: the intentions may be good but the proof will be in their implementation.

One of the intriguing promises in the manifesto concerns the administrative reorganisation of the country. It suggests the creation of new provinces and upgrading of two administrative units to the status of provinces. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) will be divided into two with a new province created. To be called Hazara, it will accommodate the non-Pakhtun speaking part of K-P. The large province of Punjab would be sliced into three parts: Punjab, Bahawalpur and South Punjab. The latter two will be made up of the poorer parts of the present province. The current administrative units of Baltistan-Gilgit and Azad Kashmir will be given full provincial status. With these proposed changes, Pakistan will have nine rather than four provinces.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)

The PTI is a relative new comer on the Pakistani political scene. It was founded in 1996 by Imran Khan, a cricketer of immense fame and charisma who had won the hearts of the cricket-crazed nation by winning the World Cup in 1992. This was the only time Pakistan was to claim that distinction. Khan was brought out of retirement to head the team, and he was able to bring his side from behind and march it to victory. He expects to perform the same feat in the political field. Judging from the large crowds he has attracted at his public meetings in Lahore and Karachi, it appears that he has mobilised the support of two groups – urban youth and women. Both have turned up in large numbers at his meetings, giving him and some of his seasoned associates the hope that the Tahreek may be able to upset the political applecart by winning a fairly large presence in the national and some of the provincial assemblies to be elected in May. If he and his party do well and are able to influence the making of public policy, what can be expected from them? To answer this question, we turn to the party's manifesto.¹¹ Notwithstanding that, Imran Khan has revealed much more in his many public statements than what has been put out in the PTI's brief manifesto.

The party's manifesto is the shortest of the three put forward by the mainstream political parties. Its focus is on the development of the country's large human resource through heavy investments in education and health. This is the only area where the party is more explicit by

¹¹ Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, *An Agenda for Resurgence: The Manifesto of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf*, Lahore, 2013.

providing numbers: it would increase the proportion of investment on education from 1.5 per cent of GDP to five per cent. However, it is not clear as to the period required for this increase to materialise and as to what will be the source of such an increase in the government's financial support. Given the PTI leader's interest in healthcare – he is the spirit behind the establishment of the Shaukat Khanum Cancer Hospital and Research Center in Lahore – it is not surprising that institutional healthcare receives prominence in the manifesto. To pay for this care, the party promises to “introduce low-cost health insurance schemes and concessional healthcare schemes for the elderly and the poor”.

The PTI manifesto is the only one among the three issued by the major parties that has a detailed programme for developing the country's well-endowed agricultural sector. It will address the main problems that have kept both land- and labour-productivity much lower than the sector's potential. “Investment in agriculture is the quickest and surest way for rapid economic recovery and reducing poverty as its accounts for 25 per cent of the GDP and employs 45 per cent of the country's labour force”, says the manifesto. However, the manifesto maintains that “agriculture cannot just be viewed as a source of food. Gross agricultural production in Pakistan can be increased two- to three-fold by an efficient, scientifically planned use of the existing resources. It requires relatively simple innovations and would depend mainly on more efficient management of the complex agriculture enterprise”. This is defined as improved crop modelling, strengthening of agricultural institutions, introduction of urban agriculture, harnessing of additional resources and “developing of agriculture climatology”. The last item is not explained.

It is not clear over what period of time the promised doubling and tripling of output of agriculture could take place. If we suppose this were to happen over a period of 10 years, it implies a rate of growth of almost 12 per cent a year. But if this rate of increase in agricultural output were to be realised and if the output of the service sector was to increase at the rate of five per cent and that of industry by seven per cent a year, Pakistan's GDP could grow at the rate of eight per cent a year. If these rates of increase do occur, they will result in a fundamental change in the structure of the Pakistani economy. The share of agriculture will increase to 35 per cent while that of the service sector will decline to 47 per cent and of industry to 18 per cent. This restructuring would reposition Pakistan as a major agricultural economy, once again becoming the source of food and industrial raw materials for all of South Asia. This was the case before the Indian trade embargo of 1949.

The party places much greater emphasis on the creation of a structure of local government that would bring government closer to the people. It favours the introduction of what the Indians call “*panchayati raj*” which presumably would become the lowest tier of a multi-tiered system. The party is critical of the system of local government introduced by the administration of Pervez Musharraf. It believes that too much power was placed in the hands of the Nazims, without building a system of accountability that would provide a check on the way these functionaries exercised the authority bestowed on them. There is one curious suggestion, which is to make the local government leaders responsible to the provincial

assemblies rather than to the elected local councils. Such a move would work against the party's aim of bringing government closer to the local communities.

Considerable amount of attention is given in the manifesto to improving the quality of the people serving in various parts of government. It wants to have the members of various services chosen on the basis of competitive examinations, give fixed tenures when they reach senior levels in the structure of government, and provide them with constitutional protection from political influence. These reforms will also help in addressing the problem of poor governance and corruption. According to the manifesto, "corruption is endemic in our society because it flows from the top. A major reason for this is the centralisation of authority in the hands of the top administration officials". The PTI promises a number of institutional changes in the system of accountability that is in place. It will revise the National Accountability Bureau Ordinance of the Musharraf period by making Bureau totally autonomous and by appointing at its helm a "person of unquestioned integrity" who will be provided constitutional protection.

Conclusion

If one is looking for well-thought-out strategies for addressing the problems identified in the opening paragraph of this paper, there will indeed be disappointment over what these parties have promised. What was expected were not just strategies covering a number of areas that require quick action from the policy makers who will take office after the voters have had their say in May 2013. There was also the expectation that, in order to hit the ground running, the parties would come prepared with plans and programmes on which action could begin almost immediately after the swearing-in ceremonies. The urgency for action was dictated by a number of factors, most importantly the country's worsening external payments situation. Whichever party or combination of parties assumes office, it will have to go to the International Monetary Fund in the hope of receiving emergency assistance. The Fund, given its past experience with Pakistan, will require "prior actions" in a number of areas. These will be focused on improving the state of government finances. No party has addressed this important issue in detail or in a way that can instil confidence that, with the elections over, some of the political obstacles that stood in the way of action will not obstruct progress in this important area.

The three manifestoes discussed above cover a considerable amount of common ground in both politics and economics. That suggests that there is consensus among the more important political players on a number of issues. It is recognised in all three documents that more work needs to be done in developing further the still-evolving political order. It is also fully appreciated that the economy will need much greater attention than it did in the last five years.

There is considerable satisfaction among the parties that the country has succeeded in establishing a political order that will ultimately lead to the development of parliamentary

democracy. Two of the three manifestoes promise that policymaking will be the responsibility of a cabinet headed by a prime minister who would be responsible to the National Assembly. The same system will operate in the provinces. If that occurs – there is a strong probability that this will indeed happen – Pakistan will be reverting to the system that was in place when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto governed the country as prime minister. However, this time round, the prime minister’s authority will be constrained by a number of institutions over which he will not have any control. The superior judiciary, the Election Commission, the National Accountability Bureau, possibly even the Federal Board of Revenue will be headed by people appointed in a way designed to eliminate their need to serve the political masters of the day. These institutions will also be protected by the constitution so that their work is free from political interference. There is, in other words, some additional work to be done to develop a durable and fully representative political order.

There is also consensus among the mainstream parties that Pakistan must climb out of the low growth groove in which its economy has got stuck for the last five years. But none of the three manifestoes has put forward a detailed plan for taking steps needed to revive the economy. The parties would like the economy to grow at between six to eight per cent a year – what amounts to more than a doubling of the current rate of growth – but it is not clear how this will be achieved. There are promises in a number of areas but they are not cast in the form of a grand strategy.

What is missing from these statements is the thinking about the kind of space the country will need to occupy in the changing global system. There are no references to the impact of the Arab Spring on Pakistan. It is likely that one consequence of the political change in the Arab world will be the way the majority Sunni populations will deal with the members of other sects and other religions. If the ‘collapse’ of the Syrian regime adds to the Sunni-Shia divide, there will be consequences for Pakistan. It is not always appreciated in Pakistan that it has, after Iran, the second largest Shia community in the Muslim world. It is important to ensure that this sect enjoys the same rights and state protection as do the majority Sunnis.

US President Barack Obama’s “Asia pivot” approach will also affect Pakistan and place its relations with Washington in a different context. China’s continuing economic and military rise and India’s increasing global influence must be factored into policymaking by Islamabad. The manifestoes are silent on this subject as well.

In sum, read together or read separately, there are no “grand strategies” in any of the manifestoes that can address the many difficult issues that will have to be addressed in the first few months after a new post-poll government is formed. Strategies and detailed plans are required to revive a failing economy; to overcome a series of dissident movements that are gaining ground and are using violence for pursuing their many causes; to improve the quality of governance; and to reduce the incidence of poverty and narrow the widening income gap. Pakistan will also need to prepare itself for the chaos that may result in Afghanistan once the Americans fully withdraw their combat forces from that war-torn land.

It is simultaneous progress on all these fronts that would save Pakistan from failing as an economy and as a state. Considerable amount of energy has been spent by the parties that have entered the electoral battleground. The leaders of these parties should also have attempted to develop a set of serious strategies for Pakistan's revival.

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