Political Commitments to Policy Reflection in Nepal:

An Analysis of Party Manifestos, Periodic Plans and Budget

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for

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ABSTRACT

Political parties make manifestos pre-elections, expressing their commitment towards various policy concerns in order to gather the support of the electorate or voters. A successful representation and performance of the political parties in the government can be measured in terms of the policy issues addressed in the country's plans and its annual budget, against the backdrop of the political manifestos. However, in Nepal, parties are often accused of failing to fulfil their pledges and there is a lack of a proper mechanism for evaluating the parties' pledge fulfilment.

This paper, therefore, has analysed the manifestos of political parties in Nepal from the past two major elections (2008 and 2013) and their reflection in the periodic plans and budget. By categorizing the pledges according to specificity and policy areas the paper aims to present an analysis of the extent to which the pledges have been fulfilled when the parties have been in the government. This analysis will help us to understand the priorities of political parties and how they might shift once they are in power.

Background

In a representative democracy, the political parties act as the drivers of democracy and the envoy of people's aspirations. In such a system, elections are the key to selecting the representatives who people believe will enact on behalf of their will 'through the actions of political parties in government'.[1] An election is the only process through which the electorate can make informed policy decisions based on pledges made by the political parties and choose their representatives accordingly. In the past, the different ideological stances of the political parties were the only deciding factor for the voters when it came to choosing their representatives but with time policy positions have become an integral part of the decision making of voters. Though ideological factors have dominated the people's choice of party during the initial phase of the democracy, the Nepali Congress (NC) and the United Marxist Leninist (UML) have provided separate party platforms or manifestos in order to sustain and expand their support base in the society.[2] Nowadays, political parties formulate election manifestos elucidating their policy position and party's vision on the basis of their ideological stand.

Manifestos, also known as party platforms, are the expressions of the political parties' intentions and commitments and a means of engagement between the electorate and the political parties. In Nepal, political parties also resort to sloganeering to attract the populace and inform them of their party's policy positions. Political parties are often seen chanting slogans pre-elections to garner public support. Slogans are the terse form of the manifestos through which the political parties succinctly express the parties' ideology and their stand on various policies. CPN-UML's slogan in 2013 was 'Education, Health and Employment for All, Base for Equity, Happiness & Prosperous Nepal', whilst, UCPN- Maoist in 2013 used 'Full employment & Self-employment of youth is the main concern of UCPN- Maoist' as a way to attract voters. If the party's policy stand meets the voters' preferences or is closest to meeting them then the voters are more likely to vote for that party. Subsequently, the public hand over their hopes and aspirations to their newly elected representatives who are then bound to fulfill their election commitments after coming into power. The winning political parties and representatives are not only mandated to govern the country but to enact on the committed policies as well. However, to what extent are these pledges acted upon by the political parties after coming into power is a pertinent question.

In modern democracies, politicians are accountable and responsible to fulfil the commitments they have made. In order to assess the responsiveness and pledge fulfilment of the political parties, different studies have been commissioned. Consequently, different theories and approaches have been developed and used over the course of time by different scholars within different contexts. The concept that political parties are mandated to fulfil the pledges made by them during the election is guided by the principle of Mandate Theory. This theory is 'a kind of ex-ante authorization for politicians to follow a policy agenda, the content of which was decided by the voters when preferring one party platform to the others'.[3] Based on this theory, different research approaches have been developed to test the fulfilment of pledges. Pledge approach is one of the empirical methods to test the mandate theory which is 'based on a simple theoretical scheme: parties (or candidates) make promises about their future policies, voters authorize them to carry out these promises, and later the politicians

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[1] Schermann and Ennser-Jedenastik 2012
[2] Hachhethu 2002
[3] Szucs and Pal 2012

keep or break their promises.'[4] Terry J. Royed and Stephen A. Borelli are strong advocates of pledge approach, as it does not sacrifice the substance of policy.[5]

According to this approach, the manifestos are divided into quasi-sentences which in this case are treated as pledges to make the process of evaluation of their reflection easier. Another kind of empirical method is the Saliency approach which was conceived by an international cooperation called Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and dates back to the late 1970's.[6] CMP has dealt with different aspects of party performance as well as the structure and development of party systems and is based on the quantitative content analyses of parties' election programmes from more than 50 countries covering all free, democratic elections since 1945. The Saliency approach 'examines the congruence between the emphasis the parties place on different policy themes and subsequent government spending patterns on related policy area'.[7] According to this approach, the emphasis on a certain policy theme or area is measured by the number of pledges made in the same theme or area.

Nepal's recent history has been marked by periods of transition that have been a direct outcome of popular movements by the citizenry, whether it be the establishment of democracy in 1951, restoration of democracy in 1990 or the downfall of the monarchy and the creation of a republic in 2008. These incidences manifest the ability of the public to bring about revolutionary changes. All of these movements, however, have been led by political parties to a large extent where they have appealed to the sentiments of the public by promising change. When the same parties participate in electoral politics, they use their manifestos to respond to the policy concerns of the public and subsequently make promises of change if elected into government. However, once the parties are in power, there is a lack of evidence-based discourse on how well they have delivered on the promises made to the general public. With the political parties making different sets of promises before each election, the exercise of evaluating their performance against the pledges would be a good way to keep the political parties accountable to their constituencies. Some of the previous research done in this area has either focused on evaluating the link between the pledges in the manifesto and their reflection in the budget or the link between the manifesto and the national plan. Little attention has been given to evaluating the manifestation of the pledges from the manifesto to the plan and subsequently to the budget.. Michael Laver and John Garry along with Robert Klemmensen, Sara Binzer Hobolt and Marin Ejnar Hansen have focused more on analyzing political manifestos for estimating policy position from political texts[8] while Dunu Roy has focused on political manifestos and budget.[9]

With the motive of studying the manifestos of political parties in Nepal and their coherence with the periodic plans and the annual budgets, this research analyzes the nature of pledges made by the political parties and further sees if the pledges are addressed in through policies and plans or through the budget, thereby analysing manifesto-to-policy-to-budget linkage.

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Petry and Collette 2009
[6] Ibid.
[7] Thomson 2001
[8] Laver and Garry 2014 and Klemmensen et. al 2007
[9] Roy 2014

Problem Description

Political parties make their pledges to the people during elections by addressing policy concerns through their manifestos in order to appeal to the electorate. The electorally successful parties are thus accountable and are enabled to address these pledges through periodic plans, budget, policies, circulars and other relevant mediums. In Nepal, periodic plans, which have been made every three years since 2006, provide a platform for prioritizing these concerns and the annual budgets made on the basis of such plans, are a medium to translate the commitments into action. However, in Nepal, political parties are accused of failing to address their pledges and there often exists a lack of coherence between the pledges made by the political parties, priorities of periodic plans and annual budgetary concerns. Nepali citizens are politically conscious citizens who not only judge the political parties on the basis of current policy platforms but on their past policy platforms too. This can be made evident by the performance of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist (UCPN- Maoist) in the last two constituent assembly elections. After the first Constituent Assembly (CA) elections in April 10, 2008, UCPN- Maoist emerged as a clear winner despite entering electoral politics for the first time. The UCPN- Maoist along with the Madhesi parties had been the proponents of ethnic based federalism and inclusion. Some of their pledges for the elections in 2008, such as the formation of identity-based states and autonomous Madhes states as well as a proportional representation of the marginalized groups in the state machineries resonated with the public's sentiments after the Madhes movement and the peace agreement, but having failed in fulfilling the major commitment of delivery of a new constitution, the first CA dissolved on May 27, 2012 leading to second CA elections in November 19, 2013 where the UCPN- Maoist finished third followed by the other Madhesi parties after facing a severe electoral rout. Consequently, NC and CPN-UML regained their positions as the first and second leading parties respectively. This goes to show that the electorate can easily punish political parties that fall short on their promises.

Questions are often raised about whether pledges are made by the political parties to merely attract the voters to be in power or whether they are made with the intention to serve the larger public. The Downsian model suggests that 'the political parties are assumed to be office seekers, motivated solely by the material benefits of holding office'.[10] Furthermore, scholars such as Shemrez Nauman Afzal and Zoya Sameen have stated that, 'True to the South Asian political tradition, manifestos employ political rhetoric as well as sloganeering to attract voters'[11] and this very much holds true in the context of Nepal, where it is assumed that voters are attracted through window-dressed pledges.

As mentioned earlier, little attention has been given to analyzing political parties' pledges in Nepal and their manifestations in periodic plans and budget. That is not to say that research has not been conducted in this area. Krishna Hachhethu, a leading academic has conducted a research on political parties' pledges and how they are addressed in government's annual program between 1990 and 1999 after the rise of multiparty democracy in Nepal.[12] Furthermore, Kapil Shrestha has studied election manifestos of political parties in general elections of 1959 which focuses only on the manifestos and not on plans and budget.[13] Hira

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[10] Mansergh and Thomson 2014
[11] Afzal and Sameen 2013
[12] Hachhethu 2002
[13] Shrestha 1959

Biswokarma and Sarojdilu Biswokarma have also studied the manifestos of the political parties with focus on *Dalit* issues only but this study is yet to be published.[14]

This research, however, aims to fulfill the existing void in regards to a complete analysis of the reflection of manifestos in plans and budgets and also aims to evaluate political manifestos as well as accountability and responsibility of political parties as such an analysis is pertinent in the Nepali political arena. This research will also help us in identifying possible loopholes (if any) in addressing policy concerns.

Research Questions

1. What kinds of pledges are made by the political parties on public policy concerns through their manifestos?

2. Are the periodic plans and budget a reflection of the pledges made in the manifestos?

Approach and Methods

This research uses a combination of both the Pledge approach and the Saliency approach as a method to test the mandate theory. The manifestos are divided into quasi- sentences, also now known as pledges, as per the pledge approach and are later categorised as per their specificity and as per certain policy areas which are discussed later in the paper. This research has developed its own kind of approach with the amalgamation of both the existing approaches, thereby comparing the pledges with the plans made by the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the budgets passed by the Ministry of Finance instead of measuring it with the total amount of government expenditure on a certain policy area as done in the Saliency approach.

This research uses the content analysis method to analyze the pledges and their reflection in periodic plans and budgets. The **secondary data** sources have which have been used include party manifestos, periodic plans and annual budgets. The data is retrieved and analyzed using the methods of content analysis, categorization and coding.

Content Analysis:

Analysis of documents and its content is a major part of data collection and analysis of this research. Election Manifestos of major political parties, periodic plans and annual budgets have been analyzed to draw data on the pledges made and are then validated by measuring their reflection in the periodic plans and the budgets. Periodic plans and budgets are the country's national documents formulated by the NPC and the Ministry of Finance respectively. While periodic plans represent the long-term vision (three yearly), budgets are the means to fulfill these long term vision through yearly development plans and allocation of expenditure.

The election manifestos of four major and supporting ruling political parties from Constituent Assembly Elections in 2008 (CA-I) and three major parties from second CA elections in 2013 (CA-II) are the samples used for this study. The 2013 manifesto of UCPN- Maoist was only used to compare specificity of pledges and not for the study of the reflection as the party was

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[14] Bishwokarma and Bishwokarma, n.d.

not part of the government when this research was conducted. The twelfth periodic plan 2009-2012 and the budget of the fiscal years 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2013-14 have been used as samples for the study.

Data Analysis:

Categorization of Manifesto Pledges on the basis of policy areas and specificity

For the purpose of data analysis, the method of categorization and coding is used. The categorization of the manifestos is based on the policy areas as defined by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) a standing research group of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECRP). The CMP has defined 54 detailed categories which are grouped under 7 broad themes and each statement of the platform is coded into one of these 54 categories.[15] Despite basing the categorization of the pledges on CMP's method, this research has further developed its own categories as identified in budget speeches. In this research, the data and information drawn from the manifestos are categorized into eleven major policy areas: Economy, Infrastructure, Civic Amenities, Development & Governance, Social Development, Social Welfare & Social Security, Rights, Gender, Inclusion & Rehabilitation, Science, Technology, Communication & Arts, Environment & Natural Resources, National Security and International Affairs, Security and International Affairs, along with 50 sub-categories (*See Table 1*). Issues that concern constitution making and restructuring have not been included.

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[15] This data is thoroughly described in Budge and Hofferbert 2014

Table 1 Categorization of Pledges as per Policy Areas

Economy	Infrastructure	Civic Amenities	Development and Governance	Social Development	Science, Technology, Communication and Arts	Social Welfare	Gender, Inclusion and Rehabilitation	Environment, Natural Resource and Energy	National Security	International Affairs
Private Sector	Roadways	Drinking Water	Local Development	Health	Information Communication & Technology	Children	Women	Water Resource Conservation	National Security	International Relations
Banking, Finance & Cooperatives	Airways	Sanitation	Urban Development	Education	Science and Technology	Disabled	Dalits	Energy		Foreign Aid
Agriculture, Irrigation	Waterways	Secure Housing	Corruption	Sports	Media and Journalism	Senior Citizens	Indigenous	Natural Resource Management		Non Resident Nepalis
Land Use & Reform	Railways	Food & Nutrition Security	Good Governance	Youth	Arts, Culture and Films	Social Security	Madhesi	Environment		
Revenue, Tax and Internal Resource Mobilization							Minorities			
Industry & Trade							Conflict Victims			
Employment & Labour							Homeless & Landless			
Tourism							Consumer Rights & Regulations			
							Human Rights			
							Geographically Marginalized Region			

The categorized pledges are then classified on the basis of specificity; Vague, General or Specific, coded as 'V', 'G' and 'S' respectively. The categorization based on specificity is guided by the method used by Judith Bara and Terry J. Royed in their research. Royed has put the pledges into three categories 'hard or soft judgemental/rhetorical', 'hard or soft/difficult definitive' and 'hard or soft/definitive'[16], while Bara has classified the pledges into four categories-'Vague, General, Specific and Detailed'[17]. In the context of this research, the specificity of the pledges is defined as below:

'*Vague*' pledges are rhetorical statements which are not measurable and are difficult to verify in regards to their reflection in a plan or a budget.

'*General*' pledges can be validated with their reflection in policy but are weakly defined in terms of actors, targets and actions.

'*Specific*' pledges are pellucid statements, well defined in terms of actors, targets, and actions and their reflections can be easily validated in plans or budgets.

To get a clear picture of the definition of the categories, this research has defined the 'Actor', 'Action' and 'Target' as follows:

An '*Actor*' is a person or an organization that is responsible and performs/executes an activity for the fulfilment of the pledges.

An '*Action*' is an activity or a course taken towards the fulfilment of the pledges.

A '*Target*' refers to the individual/group to which the activity is focused on as well as the outcomes of the activity.

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[16] Royed 1996
[17] Bara 2005

Categorization of Pledges Addressed

To see the reflection of pledges, the categorized and coded pledges of 2008 are matched with the Twelfth Three Year Interim Plan (TYIP) 2009-12 and the budgets of the Fiscal Years (FY) 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12. The budget for FY 2012-13 has not been considered as it was released by the interim government led by the Chief Justice Khil Raj Regmi. Similarly, the categorized and coded pledges of the 2013 election are matched with the budget of FY 2014-15. As there was no respective periodic plan to check the pledge reflection, only the annual budget has been considered for pledges of 2013. This research has not taken into consideration a large array of state activities and outputs including laws, circulars from the ministries and speeches but has focused entirely on the periodic plans and the budget. The pledges that are redeemed in the periodic plan and the budget are categorized into three categories: **Fully Addressed (FA)**, **Partially Addressed (PA) and Not Addressed (NA).**

This categorization is guided by Robert Thompson who has used 'not fulfilled', 'partially fulfilled' and 'fully fulfilled' to define the varied fulfilment of pledges. According to Thompson, if a pledge made by the political parties does not follow a concrete government action in the governing period of the parties, then the pledge is categorized as 'not fulfilled'[18]. Similarly, if some policy action is taken as mentioned in the pledge but falls short of full realization then it is categorized as 'partially fulfilled'. Finally if a pledge is fully realized with a congruent government action then it is categorized as 'fully fulfilled'.

This research does not use the term 'fulfilled' but instead uses the term 'addressed' to categorize the pledges as this research focuses on the reflection of the pledges in the plan and the budget and not on the subsequent action. A pledge is only considered to be fulfilled when the plans are executed and the budget allocated is spent therefore the mere reflection in plans and budgets can only be considered as the pledges being 'addressed' hence; this research has developed its own definition to measure the extent of reflection of the pledges as per the Thompson's categorization. The pledges are categorized as per the context.

Fully Addressed (FA): Pledges which are completely addressed in periodic plan and/or budget in terms of actors, actions, targets and outcomes as stated in the manifestos are classified as Fully Addressed.

Partially Addressed (PA): If only some of the aspects of the pledges; target, action, actor or outcomes are addressed in the periodic plan and/or budget, then it is categorized as partially addressed.

Not Addressed (NA): If none of the aspects of the pledges are reflected in the periodic plan and/or budget, then it is categorized as Not Addressed.

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[18] Thomson 2001

Findings and Analysis

Nature of Pledges as per specificity

The examination of the pledges made by different parties in their manifestos elucidate that parties have made different nature of pledges. The results indicate that in the first CA elections held in 2008, UCPN Maoist made a total of 170 pledges, NC made a total of 130, CPN-UML made a total of 152 and MJF made 18 pledges. Similarly, in 2013, UCPN Maoist, CPN-UML and NC made 218, 274, and 418 pledges respectively. It is clearly apparent that the number of pledges made by the parties have significantly increased from 2008 to 2013, and when it comes to the specificity, the parties usually tend to keep their pledges 'general' and are vague in defining the actors, targets and actions. In 2008, of the total pledges made by UCPN Maoist 76.5% were general while the general pledges made by NC and CPN-UML and MJF were 70.8%, 70.4% AND 61.1% respectively. Whilst in 2013, the general pledges of UCPN Maoist, NC and CPN-UML were 65.6%, 61.2% and 51.5% respectively. The statement below is an example of a 'general' pledge made by NC in 2008.

'National consensus on scientific land reform and land use for intensified use and increased productivity of land' (NC 2008)

This pledge has mentioned the action and the outcome but lacks proper details on the actors and the targets, and thus falls under the 'general' category. It can be assumed that parties make such general pledges as they do not require much research and study on the existing scenario regarding the specific policy concern. Moreover, such pledges can be validated through numerous statements in budget and/or plan and the parties can easily claim that they have been fulfilled.

Similarly, the 'vague' pledges made by UCPN-Maoist, NC, CPN-UML and MJF were 10.6%, 20.8%, 21.1% and 16.7 % respectively in 2008, whereas in 2013, the percentage of vague pledges made by UCPN-Maoist, NC and CPN-UML were 7.8%, 23.4% and 31.4% respectively. The percentage of specific pledges made in 2008 by UCPN-Maoist, NC, CPN-UML and MJF were 12.9%, 8.5%, 8.6% and 22.2% respectively and those made by UCPN-Maoist, NC and CPN-UML in 2013 were 26.6%, 15.3% and 9.1% respectively. It can be observed that the 'general' pledges of all three parties significantly decreased in 2013, consequently resulting in the change in numbers of vague and specific pledges. It is clearly evident that the vague pledges of NC and CPN-UML have drastically increased while UCPN-Maoist decreased the number of vague pledges. Also, the number of specific pledges of UCPN-Maoist, NC increased significantly and that of CPN-UML increased only slightly.

An example of the 'vague' pledge statement is shown below.

'Local bodies will be made resourceful' (CPN-UML 2013)

This is a rhetorical statement which is arduous to measure and is tricky to verify in terms of its reflection in a plan and/or budget. Vague pledges are usually included as part of a populist strategy to make the voters believe that they are being promised something positive by the political parties.

In contrast, an example of specific pledge would be similar to a pledge shown below.

'The Rural Self-Dependency Programme initiated by NC government for access of road, electricity, water, education, health institution, and other infrastructures in 4000 VDCs will

be given continuity. The existing grant of Rs. 50,000 will be gradually increased to 1 crore along with continuation to women awareness and income generation activities.' (NC 2013).

This statement has clearly defined the target, actions and programmes so it is easier to see it's reflection in the budget and/or plan. As opposed to general or vague pledges, specific pledges are more detailed and often can be validated through one or two statements in the plan or budget. It can be assumed that parties tend to remain on the safe side by making more general pledges or vague pledges as opposed to specific pledges as the level of accountability is minimal. The more number of general pledges and less number of specific ones is also an indication that manifestos are made without much attention to detail and are more of a populist tool used to attract a larger electorate. Figure 1 shows the detail of pledges as per the specificity.
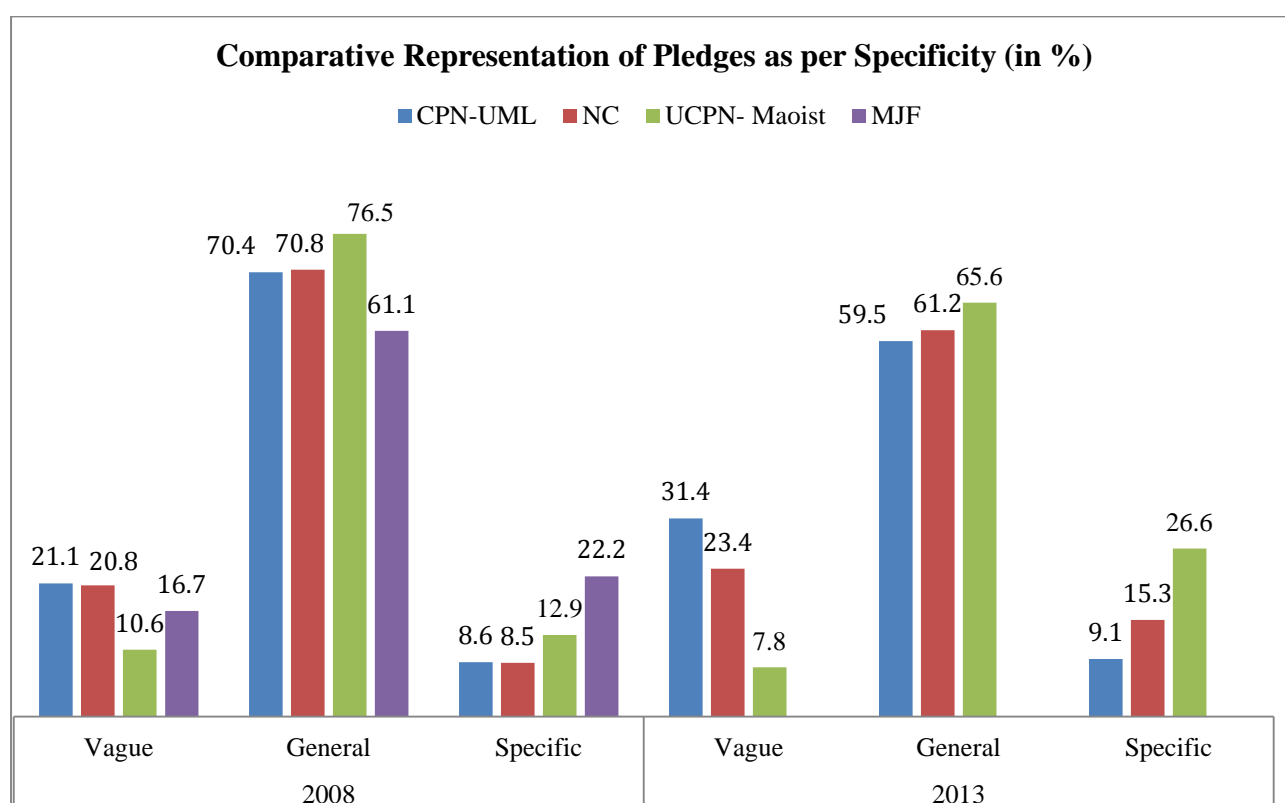

Comparative Representation of Pledges as per Specificity (in %)

CPN-UML ■ NC ■ UCPN- Maoist ■ MJF

2008: Vague — 21.1, 20.8, 10.6, 16.7; General — 70.4, 70.8, 76.5, 61.1; Specific — 8.6, 8.5, 12.9, 22.2

2013: Vague — 31.4, 23.4, 7.8; General — 59.5, 61.2, 65.6; Specific — 9.1, 15.3, 26.6

Figure 1 Comparative Representation of Pledges as per Specificity (in %)

Pledge Reflection as per the Specificity

The pledges made by the political parties are of different nature as per their specificity. It can be inferred from Fig. 1 that the pledges made by the political parties both in 2008 and 2013 elections are sometimes '*vague*', mostly '*general*' and seldom '*specific*'. This section of paper looks at the extent to which these categorised pledges have been addressed.

In the case of 'vague' pledges, it can be deduced from the Fig. 4 that in 2008 less than 45% of the vague pledges made by the political parties were addressed on average. The reflection rate in 2013 is less than 10% on average. The NC redeemed 40.5% of its vague pledges in 2008 whereas it redeemed 9.2% in 2013. Talking about CPN-UML, 35.4 % of the vague pledges were redeemed in 2008 whereas only 8.1% were redeemed in 2013. The reflection rate of the vague pledges of the UCPN- Maoist on the other hand is the least with 33.3% of vague pledges redeemed. The highest reflection rate is that of the MJF, which is as high as

66.7%. The MJF had only made 3 vague pledges out of which 2 have been redeemed. The low number of pledges made by MJF in comparison to other political parties makes its percentage reflection higher.
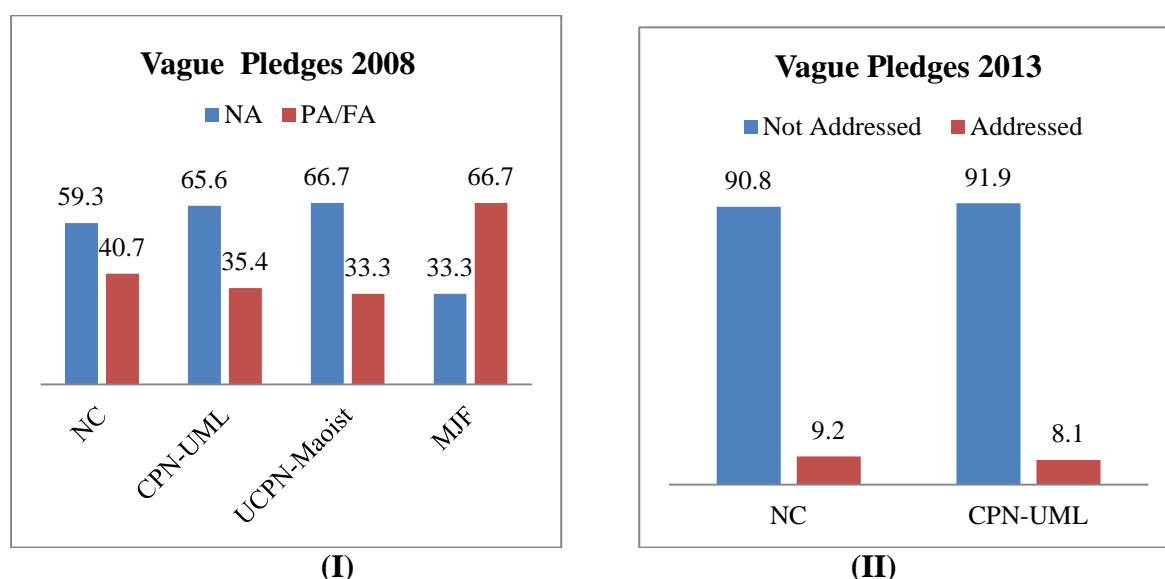

Figure 2 (I and II) Reflection of Vague Pledges in 2008 and 2013

The first type of vague pledge, which is mostly focused on rhetoric, is often just used as a crowd pleaser where political parties use populist notions to appeal to the public without promising anything tangible. Some examples of such pledges can be seen below:
'Hydroelectricity and water resources will be major foundation for formation of New Nepal. (UCPN- Maoist 2008)'

'New campaign of industrialization in the country to create ample of job opportunities and transform the agriculture based economy. (NC 2008)'

These types of pledges are usually difficult to validate in terms of both policy action through plans and any action through the budget. These types of vague pledges are usually the ones that have been left unaddressed by the political parties.

The second type of vague pledges are the equivocal pledges made by the political parties and are ambiguous and are seen to be reflected in the plan and the budget in numerous ways. Some of the examples of these kinds of pledges are-
'Opportunities for foreign employment will be sought further. (CPN-UML 2008)'

'Telemedicine facility will be promoted. (CPN-UML 2013)'

These types of pledges can be corroborated easily as there is ample number of ways to seek foreign employment opportunities and to promote telemedicine.

In regards to general pledges, the reflection rate is relatively higher compared to that of vague pledges. From Fig. 5, it can be inferred that parties addressed around 49% of general pledges on average in 2008 and around 20% of general pledges in 2013.
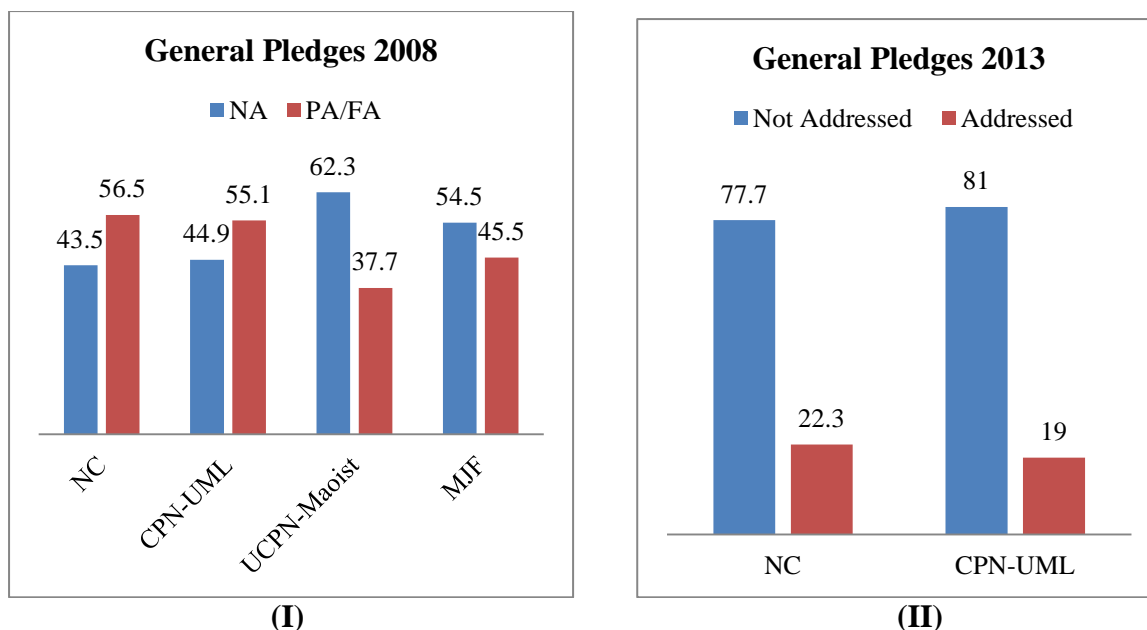
Figure 3 (I and II) Reflection of General Pledges in 2008 and 2013

The NC has the highest reflection rate of general pledges in 2008 with 56.5% of its general pledges redeemed. The NC continues to have a high reflection rate even in 2013 with 22.3% of its general pledges redeemed. The CPN-UML follows NC closely with a reflection rate of 55.1% in 2008 and 19% in 2013. In contrast, the UCPN- Maoist and the MJF have a low reflection rate of 37.7% and 45.5% respectively.

General pledges are general statements demonstrating a certain level of commitment to a particular area, even though they still lack a definite actor, target or an action.

Some of the examples of general pledges are-

'Cooperatives will be encouraged in the management of agriculture related services. (CPN-UML 2008)'

'Focus on afforestation programmes to conserve natural environment and biodiversity. (MJF 2008)'

In the first example the actor can be identified as the 'cooperatives' and the target is 'the management of agriculture related services' but since a proper action is missing it falls within the general category. This statement can be fulfilled in numerous ways as there are many ways to encourage cooperatives. If the cooperatives which deal with agriculture related services are provided with certain subsidies then they will certainly be encouraged to manage the agriculture related services.

Specific pledges are the most addressed ones and have the highest reflection rate, with all the parties having a reflection rate of 50% or above in 2008 except for MJF which had a reflection rate of only 25% of its pledges. According to Fig. 6, NC had the highest reflection rate of 81.8% among other parties in 2008 and also in 2013 having redeemed more pledges than CPN-UML. In 2008, CPN-UML redeemed 69.2% of its pledges as compared to 64% in 2013. In case of UCPN-Maoist, addressed pledges equal the not addressed ones. MJF had the reflection rate of 75% in 2008.
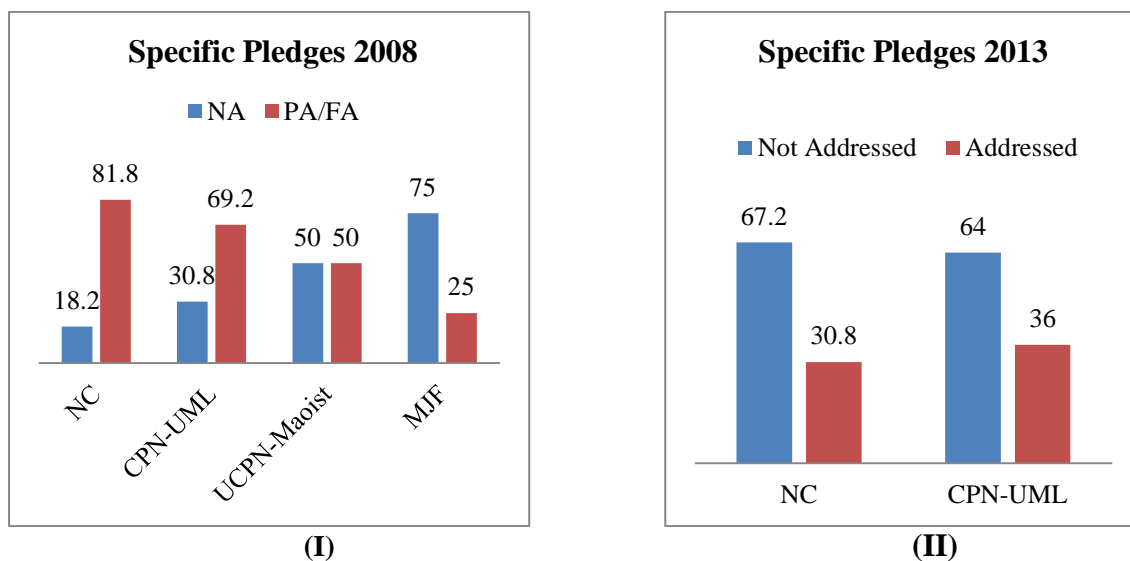
Figure 4 (I and II) Reflection of Specific Pledges in 2008 and 2013

Specific pledges are precise statements committing to a particular area with actors, target and an action. Some of the examples of such pledges are:

'Establish Orphan and Street Children Care Centres, 4 in Metropolitan city and 2 in Sub metropolitan cities, for orphan and street children. These centres will provide free education up to primary level. This programme will be implemented by the municipal office' (NC 2013)

'Establishment of Senior Citizens Centre in every district headquarter and religious sites in private and community partnership which will provide free shelter, food, medical treatment to the elderly people of 80 years or above' (NC 2013)

In both of these examples, the action, targets and actors are clearly mentioned. The statements are detailed and hence can be categorized as 'specific'. The first pledge is addressed partially in the budget stating 'Support the orphan, helpless and differently-abled children in child centres'. As the action and target are mentioned, it is indicated as 'Partially Addressed'. Likewise, the second pledge is also partially redeemed as it states in the budget that 'Assistance will be provided to establish and operate Senior Citizen Shelters in private and community partnership as per the criteria in various districts'. Therefore, as in the case of 'general' pledges, reflection of 'specific' pledges can be ensured if action or actor or target is mentioned in the budget. As this research is validating the reflection of a pledge with partially addressed and fully addressed categorization, even if one facet of the pledge is addressed through the periodic plans and the budget then the pledge is categorized as partially addressed which increases the possibility of high number of specific pledges being addressed. This can be the reason for high reflection rate of specific pledges. Moreover, counting both fully reflected and partially reflected under the "Reflected" category of the pledges has increased the reflection rate of the specific pledges.

Nature of Pledges as per Policy areas

By observing pledges made according to policy areas in 2008 (Table 3), it can be said that all the political parties (NC, CPN-UML and UCPN- Maoist) except for MJF have emphasized heavily on economics compared to the other policy areas.

Even though there is little difference in the level of emphasis on economy by the political parties, UCPN-Maoist has made the most number of pledges in this policy area. In contrast, MJF has not expressed any commitment towards the economic sector and has focused their entire attention Rights, Gender, Inequality and Rehabilitation with a total of 66.7% of pledges made that related to these policy concerns. RGIR (Rights, Gender, Inequality and Rehabilitation) stands second in terms of priority of the pledges of the remaining parties. Despite UCPN- Maoist advocating for inclusion and minority rights pre-elections, their commitments on the issue was not reflected to the same extent in their manifesto and surprisingly, CPN-UML was seen as committing a total of 18.4 % pledges to this area as compared to the UCPN- Maoist's 11.8% and NC's 16.9%. Moreover, in post-conflict context and aftermath of the Madhesi movement, although the parties were seen endorsing rights of the minorities and women and various other inclusion and rehabilitation issues through their manifestos to gather public support, the economic issues managed to be the top most priority of most of the parties. The highest emphasis of the parties on the economic sector may also be due to the fact that economy sector is huge and covers many sub-categories like agriculture and irrigation, tourism, industry and trade and so on.

Table 2 Distribution of Pledges by Policy Areas (2008 and 2013)

	NC				CPN- UML				UCPN- Maoist				MJF	
	2008		2013		2008		2013		2008		2013		2008	
POLICY AREAS	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Economy	29	22.3	88	21.1	35	23.0	70	25.5	53	31.2	65	29.8	0	0
Infrastructure	9	6.9	27	6.5	10	6.6	9	3.3	14	8.2	9	4.1	0	0
Civic Amenities	4	3.1	14	3.3	3	2.0	4	1.5	6	3.5	5	2.3	0	0
Development and Governance	6	4.6	24	5.7	4	2.6	17	6.2	6	3.5	6	2.8	0	0
Social Development	21	16.2	81	19.4	19	12.5	48	17.5	20	11.8	35	16.1	0	0
Science, Technology, Communication & Arts	5	3.8	35	8.4	15	9.9	23	8.4	15	8.8	22	10.1	0	0
Rights, Gender, Inclusion & Rehabilitation	22	16.9	64	15.3	28	18.4	44	16.1	20	11.8	35	16.1	12	66.7
Social Welfare & Social Security	8	6.2	23	5.5	6	3.9	16	5.8	4	2.4	10	4.6	2	11.1
Environment & Natural Resources	11	8.5	36	8.6	13	8.6	30	10.9	11	6.5	28	12.8	2	11.1
National Security	3	2.3	9	2.2	6	3.9	5	1.8	9	5.3	3	1.4	2	11.1
International Affairs	12	9.2	17	4.1	13	8.6	8	2.9	12	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	130	100.0	418	100.0	152	100.0	274	100.0	170	100.0	218	100.0	18	100

The analysis of the pledges in 2013 depict that either the parties have increased or reduced their emphasis on a particular policy area. A shift can be seen in policy emphasis from policy areas like Infrastructure, National Security and International Affairs to areas like Social Development and Environment and Natural Resources of all the three parties (NC, CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist).

Although economy was a prioritized policy area in 2013, compared to 2008, there was a slight decrease in the number of pledges made by NC and the UCPN- Maoist in this area. Alternatively, the CPN-UML increased their policy emphasis on the economy. Similarly, RGIR which is still a crucial policy concern of the country experienced a decrease in the number of pledges made by NC and CPN-UML from 16.9% to 15.3% and 18.4% to 16.1% respectively. In contrast, the UCPN- Maoist renewed its vows with additional pledges in RGIR by increasing its pledges from 11.8% to 16.9%. Similarly, the social development sector which covers issues related to the youth, education and sports saw a significant increment in the number of pledges made in 2013 as compared to 2008.

Pledge Reflection as per the Political Parties

The pledges made by the political parties during the first CA election in 2008 were checked against the periodic plans and budget to authenticate their reflection and it has been found that on average only about 48% of the pledges made by the political parties have been addressed. Despite the fact that UCPN-Maoist received the largest support from the public in terms of votes and stood out as the largest party in the 2008 elections, it can be observed from Fig. 2 that only 38.8% of the total pledges made by the party in its manifesto were addressed.
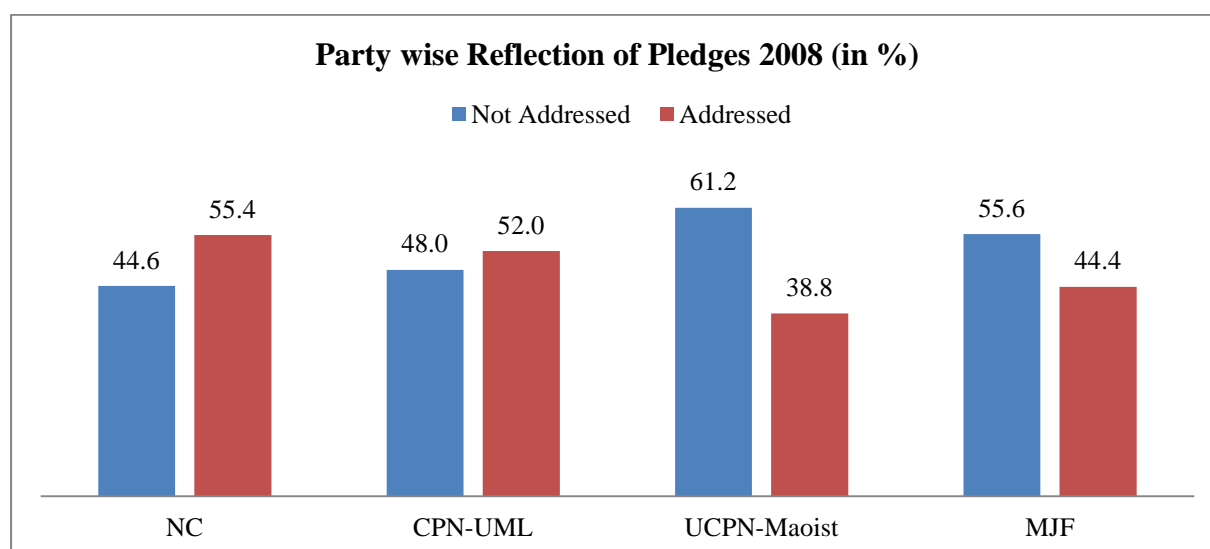

Figure 5 Party wise Reflection of Pledges 2008 (in %)

Although the party led the government twice in a span of 4 years, it is startling to observe that UCPN-Maoist's pledges are the least addressed ones compared to the other political parties. However, it should be noted that UCPN-Maoist did not emerge as the single largest party and therefore formed coalition government with CPN-UML and Madhes based parties. The NC and the CPN-UML, the second and the third largest party respectively addressed 55.4% and 52% pledges respectively during their time in the government. The CPN-UML led the government twice and stayed in the coalition government once whereas the NC largely remained as the opposition party joining the government only once. The MJF, one of the new powers that had emerged alongside UCPN-Maoist has a relatively higher percentage

reflection compared to UCPN-Maoist. The MJF had made only 18 pledges out of which 8 pledges have been addressed which might be the reason for its high percentage reflection.

The pledges made by the political parties in the second CA elections were scrutinized in the budget of 2014 to corroborate its reflection. The Fig. 3 demonstrates that less than one fifth of the total pledges made by the political parties have been reflected on average. The NC and CPN-UML have fulfilled 20.8% and 17.2% pledges respectively which is a good indication of the reflection of pledges as the government (comprising NC which emerged as the largest party followed by the CPN-UML) commenced their office responsibilities not long ago and they still have time as per the CA tenure to fulfil the rest of the unaddressed pledges.
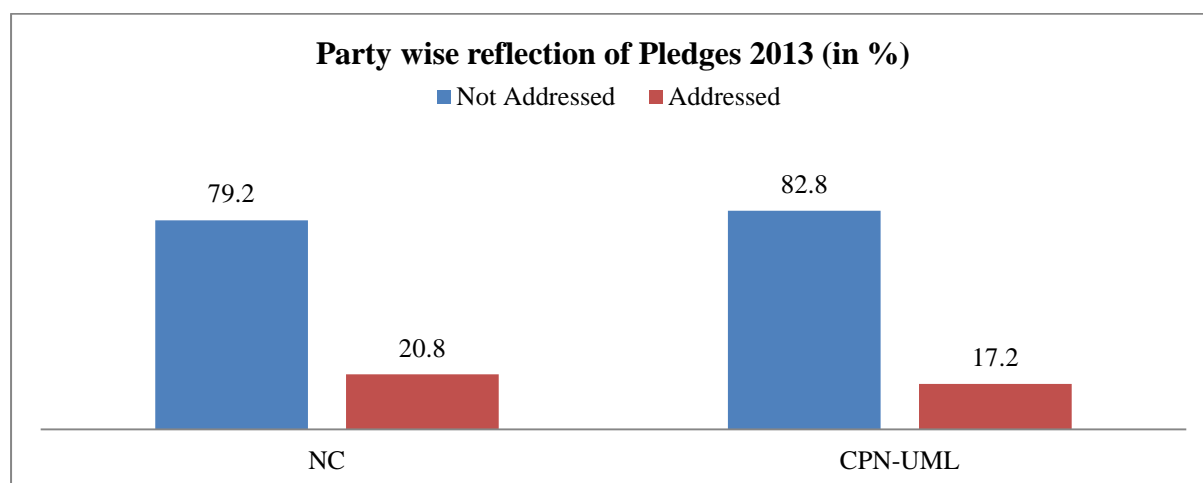

Party wise reflection of Pledges 2013 (in %)

■ Not Addressed   ■ Addressed

Figure 6 Party wise reflection of Pledges 2013 (in %)

Pledge Reflection as per the policy areas

The pledges made by the political parties have been divided into different policy areas and this section explores the pledge reflection in the plan and the budget as per the policy areas. It can be inferred from Table 3 that in the case of NC, all pledges made related to Infrastructure were fulfilled in 2008 with a 100% reflection rate, while Social Welfare and Social Security has been the second policy area in terms of pledge fulfilment with a reflection rate of 87.5%. Alternatively, the economic sector which is the most prioritized sector of NC in terms of the number of pledges made had a reflection rate of only 44.8%. CPN-UML's pledge reflection rate is also high for Infrastructure as that of NC with 90% of the pledges redeemed but in the case of UCPN-Maoist, this sector falls second in terms of pledge reflection after Civic Amenities. This clearly shows that all major partied focused their attention on development of infrastructures like airways, roadways, and railways.

Table 3 Distribution of Pledge Reflection by Policy Areas (2008 and 2013)

	NC				CPN- UML				UCPN- Maoist		MJF	
	2008		2013		2008		2013		2008		2008	
POLICY AREAS	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Economy	13	44.8	21	23.9	22	62.9	16	22.9	18	34.0	0	0
Infrastructure	9	100.0	6	22.2	9	90.0	4	44.4	9	64.3	0	0
Civic Amenities	3	75.0	5	35.7	0	0.0	2	50.0	4	66.7	0	0
Development and Governance	4	66.7	2	8.3	2	50.0	2	11.8	2	33.3	0	0
Social Development	13	61.9	26	32.1	11	57.9	12	25.0	10	50.0	1	50
Science, Technology, Communication & Arts	2	40.0	4	11.4	6	40.0	1	4.3	5	33.3	0	0
Rights, Gender, Inclusion & Rehabilitation	14	63.6	13	20.3	18	64.3	3	6.8	11	55	6	50
Social Welfare & Social Security	7	87.5	6	26.1	3	50.0	2	12.5	2	50	0	0
Environment & Natural Resources	7	63.6	3	8.3	8	61.5	5	16.7	5	45.5	1	50
National Security	0	0	1	11.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
International Affairs	0	0	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Total	72	55.4	87	20.8	79	52.0	47	17.2	66	38.8	8	44.4

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When it comes to the RGIR sector, it is the second most prioritized area in terms of number of pledges made by UCPN-Maoist, NC and CPN-UML in 2008. However, when it comes to fulfilment, UCPN-Maoist addressed only 55% of the pledges, NC 63.6%, and CPN-UML 64.3%, which is comparatively lower to other areas that were less of a priority in terms of the number of pledges. Moreover, Science, Technology, Communication and Arts appear to be the policy area with the least reflection rate for NC, CPN-UML and UCPN Maoist.

As UCPN-Maoist and MJF were not part of the government in 2013, we can only scrutinize the pledge reflection of NC and CPN-UML. The results indicate that both NC and CPN-UML have the highest rate of pledge reflection in the sector of Civic Amenities. This implies that the focus was directed to fulfilment of basic needs like food, water, and sanitation for the citizens. Similar to 2008, even in 2013, the two parties made the most number of pledges in the economic sector but when it comes to redeeming these pledges, the rates are comparatively lower: 21.1% for NC and 25.5% for CPN-UML.

Linkage of pledge reflection

Political parties present their manifestos and pledges prior to elections. The political parties who win the elections and represent the government have a major stake in fulfilling their pledges. As stated earlier, the assumption is that the pledges should display a certain linkage: they should first be included in the periodic plans and then in the annual budget. Periodic plans are prepared by the NPC while the budget is made by the Ministry of Finance on the basis of periodic plan. However, the question is whether such a linkage exists. When scrutinizing the pledges and their reflection in the plan and the budget, three kinds of linkages have been derived-

    i)   Manifesto-to-Plan-to-Budget (M-P-B);
    ii)   Manifesto-to-Plan (M-P); and
    iii)   Manifesto-to-Budget (M-B)

Analyzing the pledges of the UCPN-Maoist in 2008, it can be deduced that 61% of the total pledges were not reflected in a plan and/or budget. Of the total pledges that were addressed 17% of the pledges followed the M-P-B linkage, meaning that they were reflected in the plan and then in the budget; 10% of the pledges were addressed only in the plan and not in the budget following the M-P linkage while 12% of the pledges were addressed directly in the budget without being addressed in the plan. Similarly, in the case of NC, 23% of the pledges addressed followed the M-P-B linkage, 18% followed the M-P linkage and 15% followed the M-B linkage. While, in the case of CPN-UML, 22% of the pledges addressed followed the M-P-B linkage, 23% followed the M-B linkage and 7% followed the M-P linkage. In the case of MJF, 11% pledges addressed followed the M-P-B linkage, 22% followed the M-P linkage and 11% followed the M-B linkage.
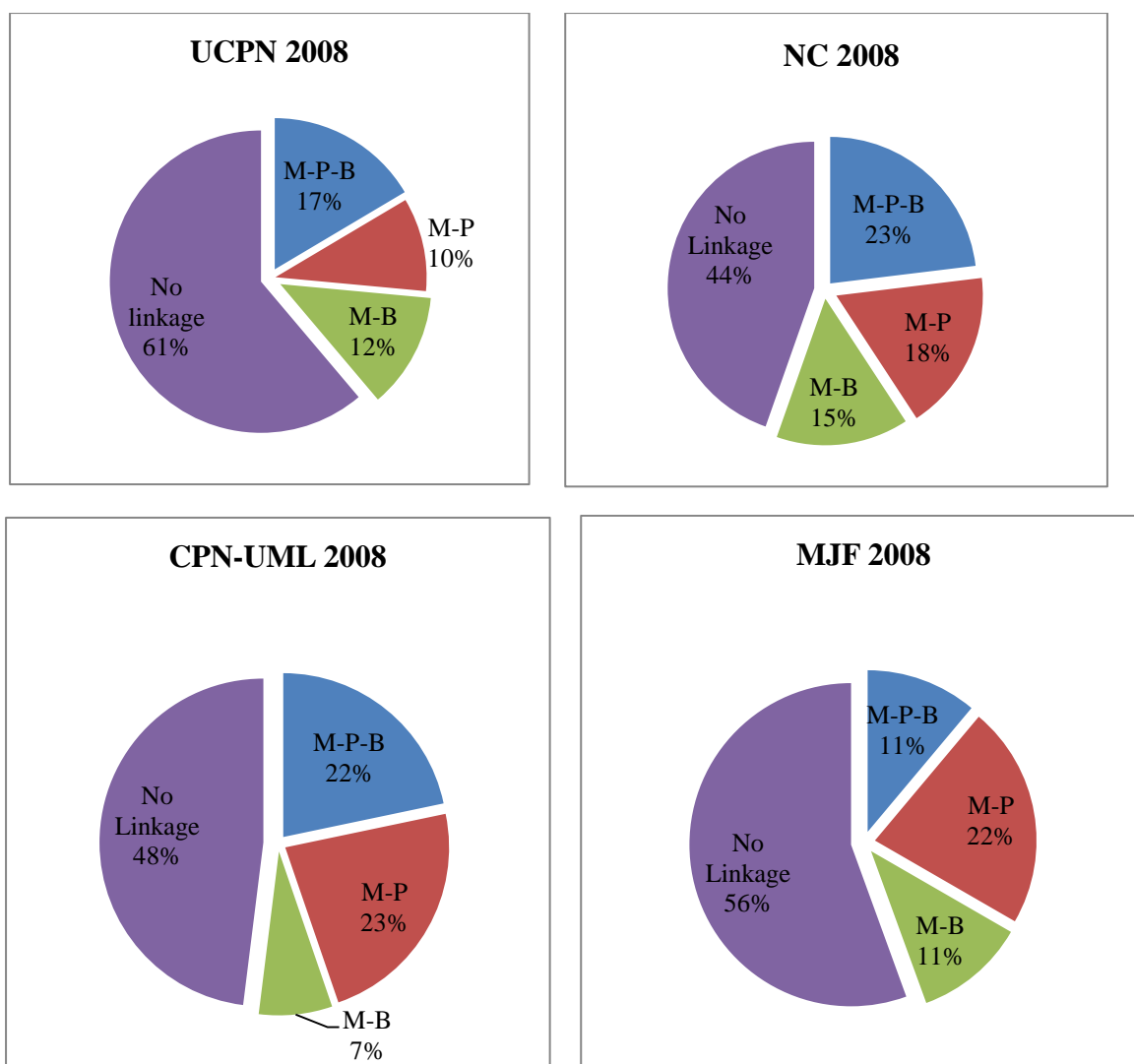
Figure 7 Charts demonstrating the linkages in reflection of pledges in 2008

It can be observed that parties mostly follow the M-P-B order while some of the pledges merely go through the M-P linkage and some are directly reflected in the budget following the M-B order. Some pledges are addressed in the plan but not in the budget because they don't get prioritized while preparing the budget. Some pledges are addressed through other mediums like ministry programmes, circulars or policies and do not need to be necessarily included in the budget. For example, the pledge made by CPN-UML regarding the *'end of impunity and creation of reconciliatory environment in the society by providing justice to the victims' (CPN-UML 2008)* has been addressed in the plan which commits to '*adopting a policy to end impunity and to ensure the idea of a lawful state'* but since this pledge is related to the judiciary and is an actionable pledge without the need for it to be included in the budget. Similarly, pledges related to abolishing social evils can be addressed through legislative actions such as acts or directives and thus do not need to be reflected in the budget. For example, CPN-UML pledged in 2008 to lawfully abolish the practice of *Kamlari, Deuki* and *Jhuma.* This pledge has been addressed in a plan which states *'abolish practice of Kamlari'.* Similarly, there are some pledges which are directly addressed in the budget as the pledges might require an urgent action that cannot wait for the next three-year plan.

In the case of the ruling parties after the 2013 elections, the pledges made in their manifestos could only be checked against the annual budget as the three yearly plans had been

announced in July 2013, prior to the elections. Therefore, only M-B linkages can be studied. As seen in Fig. 8, NC has addressed 21% of the pledges in the budget while 79% of the pledges have not been addressed, and in the case of CPN-UML, 17% of the pledges have been addressed in the budget thereby demonstrating the M-B linkage, while 83% of the pledges remain unaddressed.
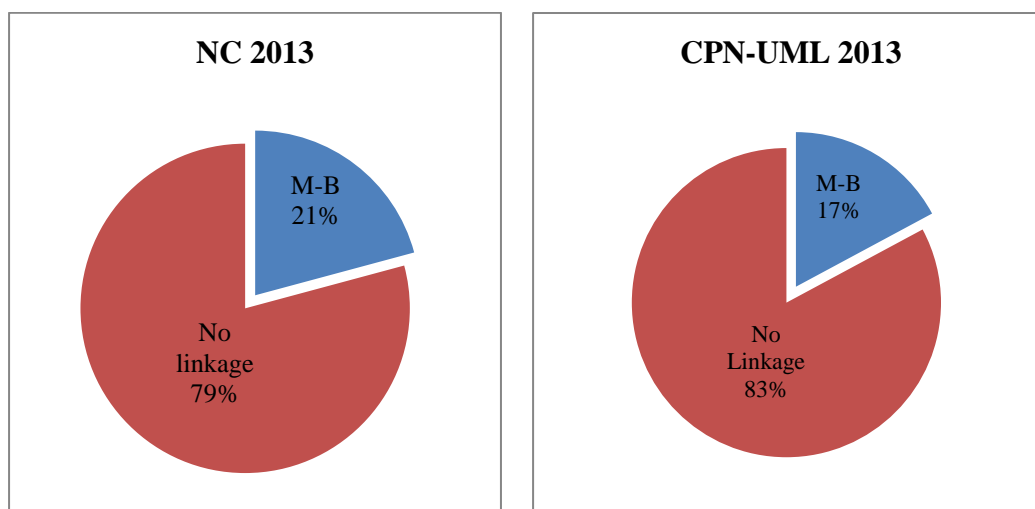

Figure 8 Chart demonstrating the linkage in reflection of pledges in 2013

Overall Performance of the Political Parties

The parties' overall performance has been analysed on the basis of the number of pledges made and addressed, both in terms of specificity, policy areas and the linkages demonstrated in pledge fulfilment.
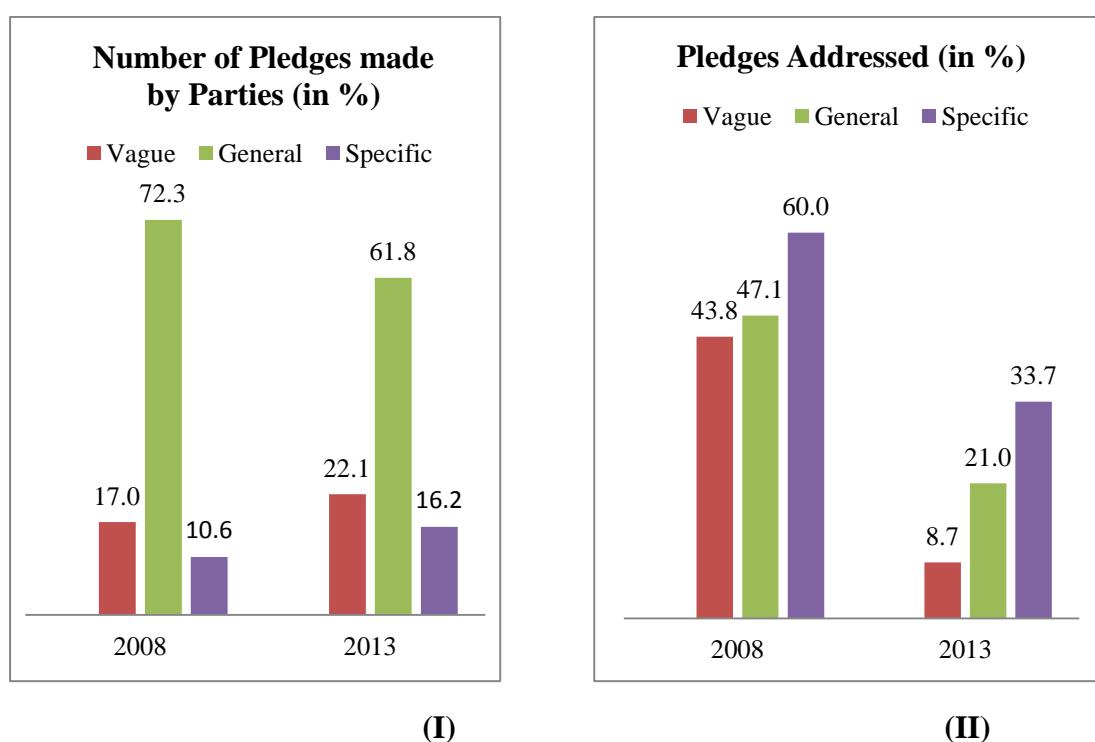

(I)

(II)

Figure 9 (I and II) Charts demonstrating the number of pledges made by the political parties and the pledges addressed in terms of specificity

The political parties have made a total of 470 pledges in 2008 and have significantly increased the number of pledges in 2013 to a total of 910 pledges. According to Fig. 9(I), of the 470 pledges made by the parties in 2008, 72.5% were general pledges, 17% were vague and 10.6% were specific pledges. Likewise in 2013 of the 910 pledges made by the political parties, 61.8% were general pledges, 22.1% were vague and 16.2% were specific pledges. The overall pledging trend seems to be common with all the political parties with each party making the highest number of general pledges, a few vague pledges and even fewer specific pledges.

The political parties made a total of 340 general pledges, 80 vague pledges and 50 specific pledges in 2008. According to the figure 9(II), the reflection rate of specific pledges is the highest at 60% whereas despite the parties making the highest number of general pledges the reflection rate is only 47.1%. Similarly the reflection rate of the vague pledges is 43.8%.

The parties made 562 general, 201 vague and 147 specific pledges in 2013. The reflection rate shows a similar trend, with 33.7% of specific pledges, 21% of general pledges and 8.7% of vague pledges being reflected.
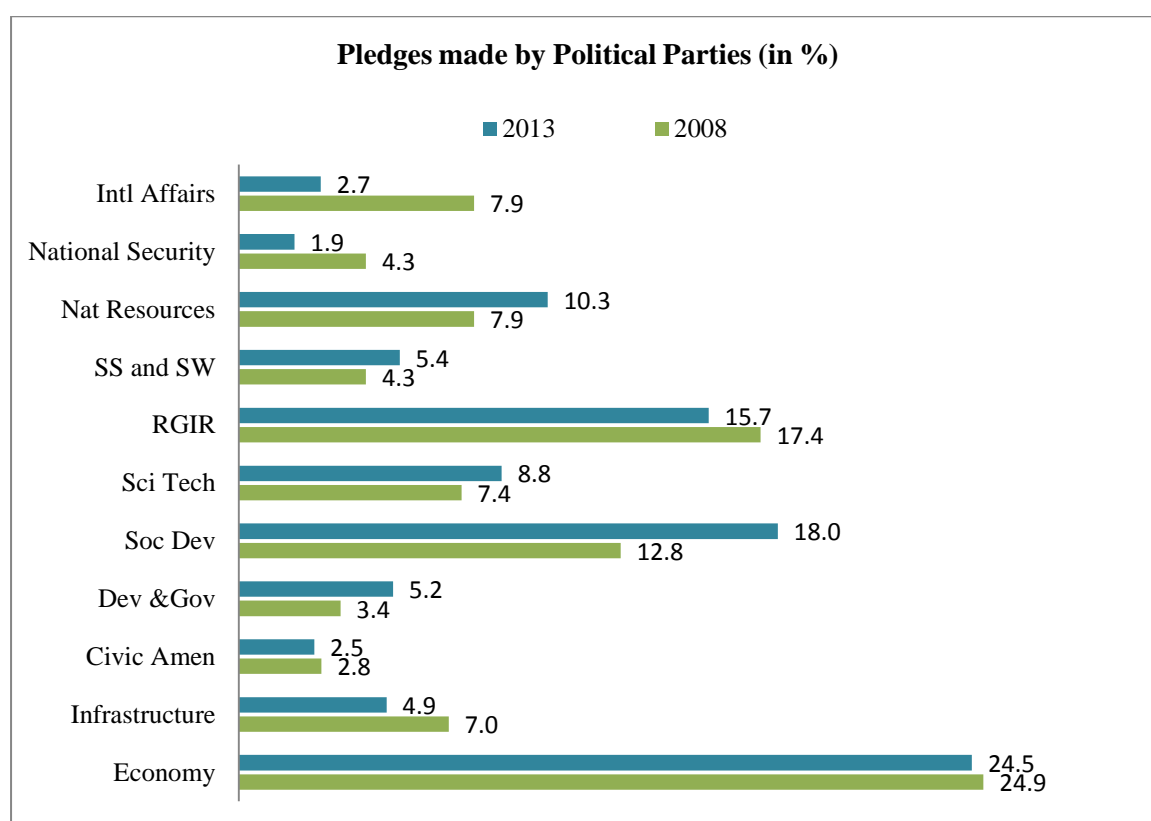

Figure 10 Number of pledges made by political parties in terms of policy areas

The figure 10 indicates that the political parties as a whole have made the maximum number of pledges in the economy sector both in 2008 and 2013. National security is the least prioritized area in 2008 whereas the Civic amenities sector is the least prioritized in 2013. RGIR and Social Development is the second most prioritized areas in 2008 and 2013 respectively.

In contrast to the high number of pledges made in the economy sector, the reflection rate depicts a different picture. The parties' priority in addressing the pledges has been in the Infrastructure sector (81.8%) in 2008 and Civic Amenities sector (30.4%) in 2013 as

observed in fig 11. The highly prioritized economic sector in terms of number of pledges has a low reflection rate of 45.3% in 2008 and 16.6% in 2013. Science and technology is the sector with the least reflection rate both in 2008 and 2013.
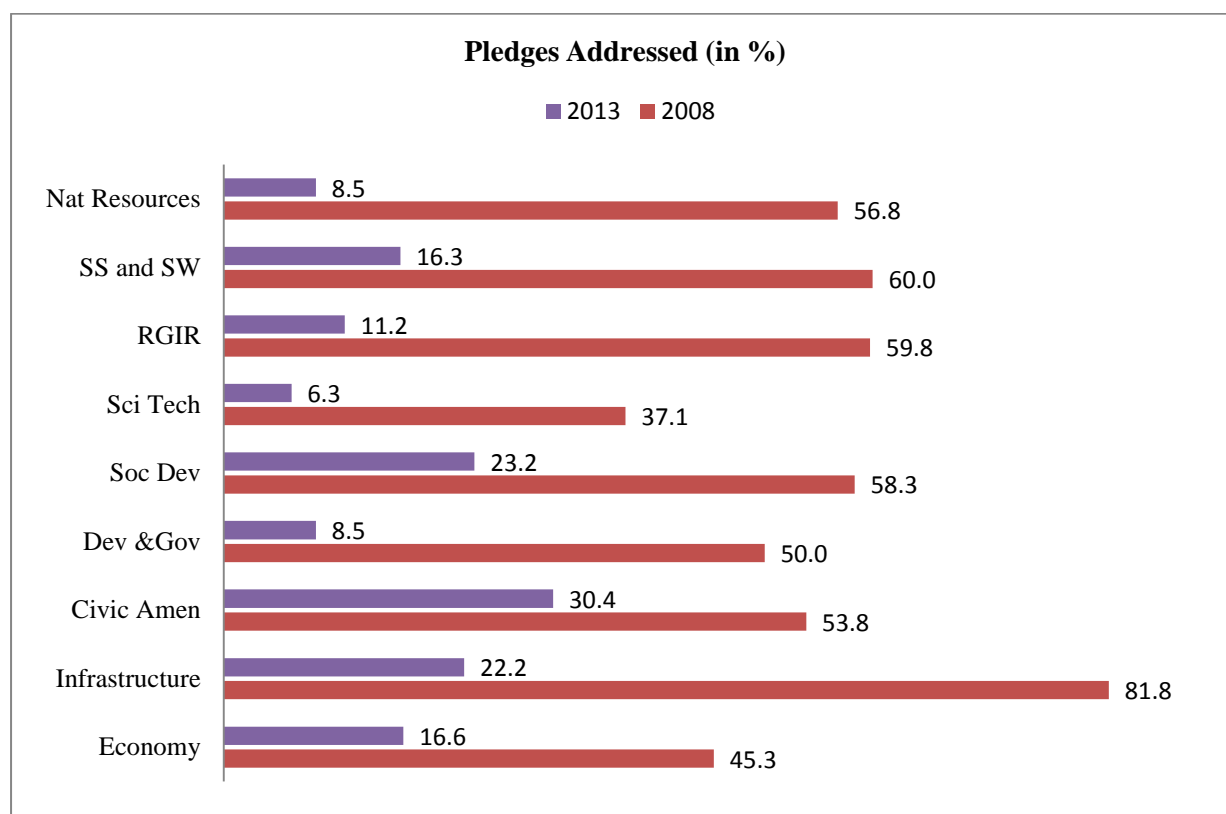

Pledges Addressed (in %)

■ 2013 ■ 2008

Policy Area	2013	2008
Nat Resources	8.5	56.8
SS and SW	16.3	60.0
RGIR	11.2	59.8
Sci Tech	6.3	37.1
Soc Dev	23.2	58.3
Dev &Gov	8.5	50.0
Civic Amen	30.4	53.8
Infrastructure	22.2	81.8
Economy	16.6	45.3

Figure 11 Pledges addressed by the political parties in terms of policy areas

The fig. 12 suggests that less than 50% of the pledges made were addressed by the political parties while a large number of pledges remained unaddressed in 2008. Moreover in 2013, only 15% of the pledges were addressed.
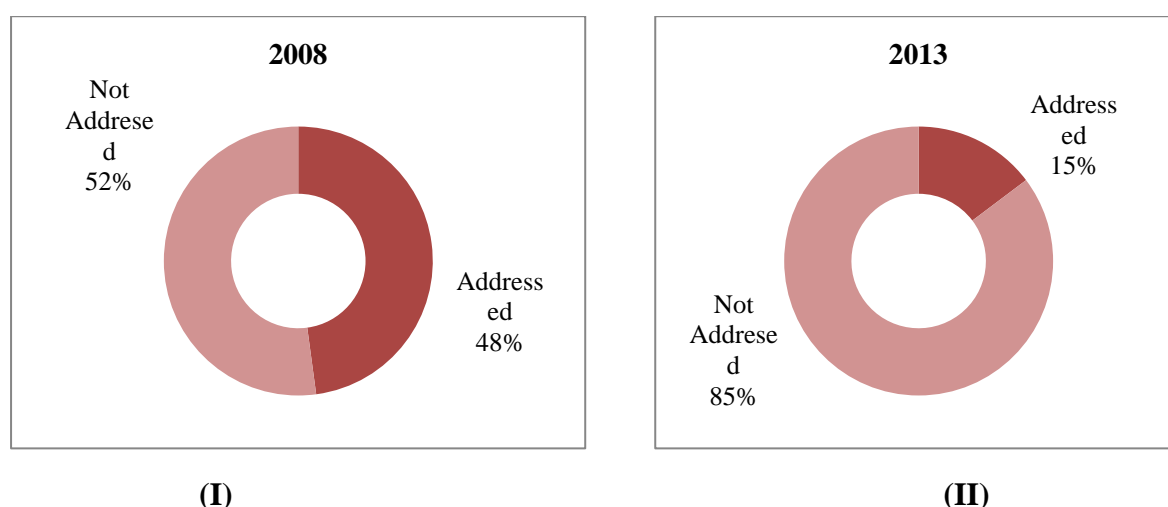

2008

Not Addressed 52%

Addressed 48%

2013

Addressed 15%

Not Addressed 85%

(I)   **(II)**

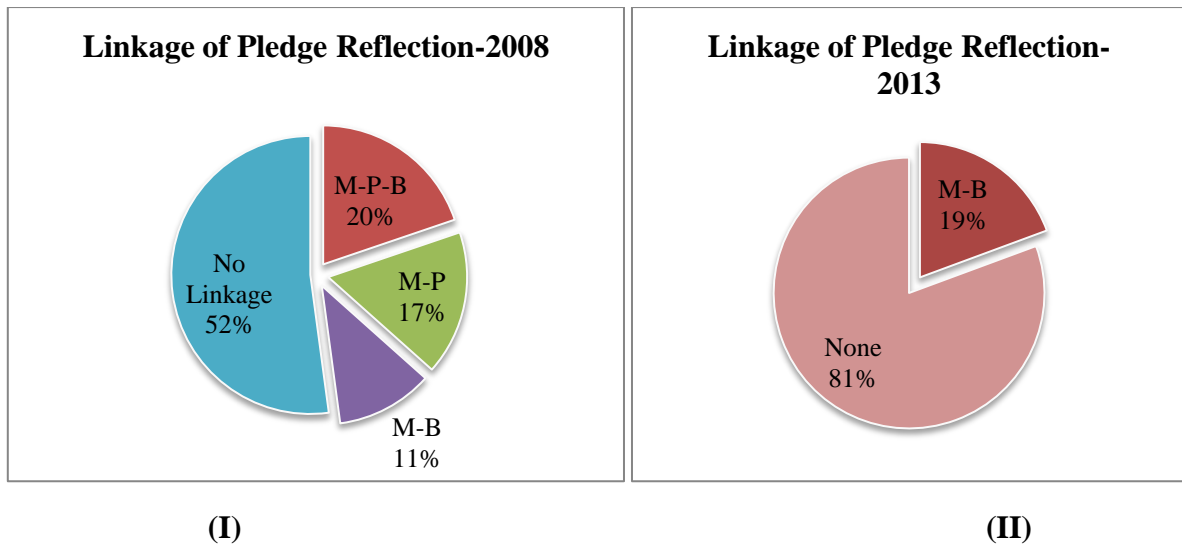**Figure 12 (I and I) Overall pledge reflection in 2008 and 2013**

Figure 13 (I and II) Linkage of pledge reflection 2008 and 2013

According to fig. 13, in 2008, it can be deduced that most of the pledges addressed followed the M-P-B linkage. A total of 20% of the pledges followed the M-P-B linkage, followed by 17% of M-P linkage and 11% M-B linkage. While in 2013, as stated earlier, only M-B linkage is studied and 19% of the pledges followed this linkage.

Conclusion

This research was commissioned to study the pledges made by the political parties in Nepal and is aimed at answering the pertinent question of the nature of the pledges made by the political parties and whether the pledges made by the parties are reflected in national plans or budgets. Based on pledges made by political parties, the voters elect their representatives and the winning political parties and representatives are not only given the mandate to govern the country but are obliged to enact on the pledges as well. In the context of Nepal, significant numbers of studies have been devoted to electoral studies but limited research has been conducted on the reflection of pledges. Therefore, this research has analyzed the nature of pledges made by the political parties and has further seen if the pledges are addressed in the plan and/or budget.

The study of the party manifestos of UCPN-Maoist, NC, CPN-UML and MJF for the 2008 elections and that of NC, CPN-UML and UCPN-Maoist for the 2013 elections indicate that the parties mostly make pledges that are 'general' in nature with fewer number of 'vague' and 'specific' pledges. Likewise, in case of pledges made as per the policy areas, it is clearly evident that parties have prioritized the economy sector both in 2008 and 2013. In order to validate the reflection of pledges they were checked against the content in the periodic plan and the budget in 2008 and just the budget in 2013. It can be observed from the data that on an average 48% of the pledges made by the political parties in 2008 were addressed. While in 2013, less than 20% of the pledges on average were redeemed. The research has also analysed the reflection of the pledges as per specificity and the policy areas. Specific pledges are the ones with the highest reflection rate, with all the parties having a reflection rate of 50% or above in 2008 except for MJF. When it comes to the reflection of pledges as per the policy areas, it can be seen that the pledges on infrastructures were mostly addressed in 2008 and in 2013 the pledges made for civic amenities were prioritized. Pledge reflection in the economy and RGIR sectors are not satisfactory considering the number of pledges made.. Science and Technology is the least prioritized sector in terms of pledge reflection.

Another important aspect of the research was to study the linkage shown in pledge reflection. As the results indicate, the parties mostly follow the M-P-B order while some of the pledges go through M-P linkage and some directly jump straight to the budget following M-B order.

Furthermore, the parties mostly tend to make their pledges general that do not provide enough detailed information to the voters and this also stands true for the vague pledges. Specific pledges which usually need detailed information are often lacking. This imposes questions on the motive of the manifestos and if they are simply to lure the public or are documents that reflect a vision for the country's development. The high number of general pledges made by the parties also makes it difficult to analyse the real priorities of the parties. Furthermore, the focus of the political parties is heavily on the economy and RGIR sector in terms of number of pledges made but there is a significant shift in priority during the fulfilment of the pledges considering the lower pledge fulfilment in these areas compared to infrastructure or civic amenities. This implies that the parties' vision of economic growth and prosperity is not consistent with their behaviour when in power.

There are other factors that may impact the reflection rate of the pledges which should be taken into consideration. This research is entirely focused on the periodic plans and the budget and does not take into account a large array of state activities and outputs including laws, circulars from the ministries that may address the pledges made in various capacities. Moreover, the formation of coalition governments and the inability of a single party to attain

majority and form a single party government may be one of the reasons of lower pledge reflection as well. Similarly, the reflection of pledges also depends highly on the Common Minimum Program (CMP) decided by the parties while forming a coalition government. Hence, pledges that coincide with the focus policy areas of the CMP are reflected as the formulation of budget is guided by the CMP along with the approach paper of the current national plan and the pre-budget consultations of the Legislative parliament.

Overall, the research has made an attempt on a rarely discussed arena in political research by classifying and analyzing the pledges based on their content and their reflection. The findings imply the pertinent need of wider discussion on manifesto-making as well as pledge fulfilment.

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