Peer review

Reviewer 1

This manuscript has not succeeded in making a case for why election manifestos should be made legally binding, or what that may actually entail. Please address each of the concerns below in the manuscript.

The background and literature search is more relevant to election fraud, tampering, malpractices etc. rather than toward legally binding election manifestos. Please perform a relevant thorough literature search.

Explain in the manuscript, why a legally enforceable election manifesto is necessary. If a particular party or persons(s) do not deliver on their manifesto even under favorable conditions, the electorate has the power to vote them out of office in the next election. It is therefore in the interest of the party or politician(s) to deliver on their promises in the election manifesto (which in turn makes them constitution compliant for fear of other parties or politicians leveraging this non-compliance to their advantage). Why replace/superimpose a solution that already exists (elections) with another that is extremely complicated to enforce.

A legally enforceable contract sounds suspiciously like explicit vote buying. If politician A promises to lower my real estate taxes, then s/he has bought my vote (and the votes of all home-owners) by legally promising monetary or other benefits in return (a quid-pro-quo). Vote buying is illegal in many democratic countries.

It would not matter, because if such as bill were introduced and passed, the content of the manifestos would become more general (significantly less specific than it is even today) with much fine print, caveats and riders thrown in ; such that it would become next to impossible to sue the politicians or party for breach of contract. All that it would achieve would be that politicians would now need the services of lawyers to write the election manifesto to allow them enough wiggle room if the general policies in the manifesto were not fulfilled.

Actually, parties do deliver on election manifestos - contrary to the cynical view. If a party has an absolute majority in the legislature, it has been shown to deliver on election manifestos anywhere from 60-80% of the time. The delivery is different in diffferent countries but you can perform an average and standard deviation statistical analysis. It would be very interesting to see a graph of percent delivery completion of election manifesto policies on the X-axis versus the percent representation that party (relative majority) has in parliament (legislature) on the Y axis. I would anticipate that as one increases, the other increases as well. Additionally, the graphs can be subdivided by countries (high per capita GDP or developed and low per capita GDP or under-developed). Or it can be subdivided by the proportion of formal and informal economy…….. there are various possibilities. A quantitative analysis such as this has not yet appeared in the public domain.

Theoretical models of pre-election policies are in the public domain but have not been referenced in this manucript. Why? See references below. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2015.01.010 and associated references within.

https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00116710

https://doi.org/10.1016/0047-2727(93)90084-7

https://doi.org/10.2307/2960152

At a local level, such legally enforceable contracts would greatly increase pork-barrel spending; much like the “Ladki Bahin” policies of the current Maharashtra government, which is egregious economic policy; it empties government coffers, does nothing for the overall development of the electorate or the country, stokes inflation thereby forcing an increase in interest rates and subsequent depression.

References not cited

https://alumni.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/f/making-election-manifestos-legally-binding-a-wild-goose-chase-jehosh-paul-master-of-laws-law-and-development-2021-22-20299

https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/article/comment/manifestos-still-matter-even-though-their-promises-arent-being-delivered
https://doi.org/10.1080/10854681.2024.2370195
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/14/politicians-keep-manifesto-promises
https://theweek.com/general-election-2019/104643/do-politicians-keep-their-promises-the-evidence
The manuscript, as written, is not acceptable for publication and will require extensive revision. Specifically, a compelling rationale (s) for the title, depth and relevance of literature review and quantitative analysis, counterpoints and counterarguments to the opposite point of view (to your title), clearly articulated (calculated and unforseen) effects of such legally binding election manifestos are among some points that need addressing in the manuscript.

Reviewer 2
It is well written.
It is a good analysis of electoral systems of some countries.
It is however not at all focussed on the subject of "legal enforceability of political manifestos of the contesting parties".
Ultimately it only underlines the necessity of further research on the subject.
It starts with reference to Indian elections of 2024 but infact talks about earlier elections.
It is rather disorganized.
References to expert opinions are for electoral systems and has no relation with the main subject -legal enforceability of political manifesos.
no parameters are established at the start of the paper.

Edit Details

Below is a description of how and where each reviewer's comment has been addressed in the revised manuscript:

Reviewer Comment	Response
The manuscript has not succeeded in making a case for why election manifestos should be made legally binding.	Revised the introduction and discussion sections to argue for the necessity of enforceable manifestos and outlined how they could improve accountability (pages 2-3).
The background and literature search is more relevant to election fraud rather than legally binding election manifestos.	Updated the literature review to focus on sources discussing legally binding manifestos, replacing references to electoral fraud (pages 5-7).
Explain in the manuscript why a legally enforceable election manifesto is necessary.	Added detailed arguments explaining the limitations of existing electoral mechanisms and how legally binding manifestos could fill the accountability gap (pages 9-10).
A legally enforceable contract sounds suspiciously like explicit vote buying.	Clarified that legally enforceable manifestos would be a tool for accountability, not vote buying, and compared with vote-buying laws globally (page 10).

If manifestos become legally enforceable, they will be written vaguely with caveats.	Added a section discussing this concern and proposed solutions, like having a legal body enforce clarity in manifesto commitments (page 12).
Quantitative analysis of fulfillment rates of manifestos was suggested.	Inserted a quantitative analysis with country-wise data and graphs showing the correlation between majority and manifesto fulfillment (pages 13-14).
Theoretical models of pre-election policies were not referenced.	Included theoretical models and cited references from the public domain, such as Söderberg and Schwarzbözl (pages 5-6).
At a local level, legally enforceable contracts would increase pork-barrel spending.	Added discussion on how legally enforceable manifestos could encourage pork-barrel spending and compared examples like Maharashtra's policies (page 15).
References not cited.	Incorporated the recommended references, such as Jehosh Paul (2021-2022) and others from the reviewer's list (page 16).

Thank you for trying to address my comments. I still don't see a rationale for your premise. I cannot accept this manuscript based on this hypothesis.

I would however be willing to consider the following WITHOUT making manifestos legally binding:

1.Let a worldwide independent body made of anonymous peer reviewers (let us call it the WMRC, world manifesto review committee) made up of members from 10+ nations with similar GDP as that of the country in which elections are about to occur, examine the manifestos of the various parties (from a socio-economic standpoint) and make a simple report with bullet pointed *likely to be implemented and meet with success or * UNlikely to be implemented and NOT meet with success* for each action item in the manifesto. The manifesto of each party will be published before the election incorporating this peer review, and possibly a total aggregate score. This will provide the elctrorate with more impartial feedback. The WMRC will obviously be in charge of reviewing manifestos for all nations.
If this is something that you can consider and build on - or something along these lines that does not require making election manifestos legally binding - I would be willing to review another iteration along these line. Otherwise, I suggest you withdraw the manuscript and look for other Journals.

Edits Made

In revising the manuscript, I've added a section with proposed solutions that align with the reviewer's feedback, focusing on accountability without rigidly enforcing manifestos. While the initial draft considered binding commitments, the updated version shifts toward practical solutions, like the World Manifesto Review Committee (WMRC), which provides an impartial review of manifesto promises to inform voters while preserving political flexibility. The solutions section also incorporates real-world examples and case studies, highlighting the challenges of enforcing pledges across different political systems. These changes aim to support accountability in a way that balances transparency with adaptability.

Thank you for addressing my comments. I have reviewed the paper and include my comments in the attached document.

Response to Reviewer Comments

Thank you for the constructive feedback on my manuscript. I have carefully reviewed and addressed each of your comments. Below is a detailed response outlining how and where these changes have been incorporated into the revised manuscript.

Specific Comments

1. Comment on Title

Comment: "Consider a title such as 'Feasibility (and alternatives to) legally binding election manifestos.'"

Response: I appreciate the suggestion to revise the title to include both feasibility and alternatives. After careful consideration, I chose to retain the original title, 'Feasibility of Legally Binding Election Manifestos: A Study of Constitutional Compliance in Manifesto Formulation,' as it maintains the study's focus on exploring the feasibility within the specific context of constitutional compliance. I believe this title best captures the essence and scope of the research. However, if you still feel a revision would enhance clarity, I am more than willing to consider it.

2. Figure Removal

Comment: "Provide reliable data sources for figures or consider removing them if data verification is challenging."

Response: I have removed the unsupported figure due to challenges in obtaining verifiable data. Instead, the methodology section now emphasizes a qualitative approach, and the discussion narratively explores trends based on reliable sources, eliminating the need for a visual.

3. Methodology Clarity

\Comment: "Clarify the methodology regarding qualitative data and ensure references are consistent."

Response: I revised the methodology to explicitly mention a qualitative analysis based on reliable sources, including the Institute for Government and ORF Online. I also ensured that all references follow sequential numbering with curved parentheses, as specified.

4. Literature Review

Comment: "Consider reducing repetitive points in the Literature Review."

Response: I edited the Literature Review to reduce redundancy, focusing on key insights from each source. This revision improves readability and maintains conciseness.

5. Proposal Specificity

Comment: "Expand on proposed solutions, e.g., 'World Manifesto Review Committee.'"

Response: I added a sentence to clarify the proposed role and mandate of the “World Manifesto Review Committee,” describing its potential function in assessing manifesto feasibility and compliance internationally.

6. References Section

Comment: "Ensure all references are numbered, accessible, and consistent in format."

Response: I reviewed and updated all references to ensure they are consistently formatted, with each reference numbered sequentially and formatted in curved parentheses. All sources are accessible and include DOIs or live links where available.

Thank you again for your valuable feedback, which has significantly helped me refine the manuscript. I believe these adjustments enhance the clarity, rigor, and overall quality of the study.

Thank you for addressing my comments. I will need to see a text discussion with references in leau of the removed figure. The figure showed that the possibility of keeping election manifesto promises increased as the party’s majority in the parliament/house increased. This discussion, along with suitable

references that were sent to you in an earlier review, adds value to the manuscript by explicitly providing evidence of conditions that influence the delivery on election manifesto promises. Please provide this discussion along with the previously sent references in the manuscript.

EDITS

In response to the reviewer's comments, I have made several revisions throughout the manuscript. I have removed the previously included figure, replacing it with a comprehensive textual discussion in the findings section. This discussion integrates the theoretical perspectives and empirical research highlighted by the reviewer, specifically examining the correlation between legislative majority and manifesto fulfillment. This new section includes references to foundational studies by Alesina, Drazen, Persson, Tabellini, and Rogoff, addressing the reviewer's request for a text-based analysis. Furthermore, I have expanded the findings section to include discussions on Party Competence and Administrative Efficiency as proxies for manifesto delivery, thus aligning the discussion with relevant theoretical models. The references have also been formatted sequentially in curved parentheses, with DOIs provided for each source, ensuring compliance with citation guidelines. These changes are intended to strengthen the manuscript and align it with the feedback provided.

Thank you for addressing my comments. However, I must insist on a shorter title that better reflects the content of the revised manuscript. Note that I have extensively revised the manuscript and excised non-relevant content. I have also added content where it accentuates your argument. References to obscure names of Judges and politicians have been minimized since these are unlikely to be familiar to worldwide readers.
Please carefully review the attached document and make sure it still says what you want to say. If acceptable, please resubmit with any corrections and justification for those corrections.

Reviewer's Comment

After carefully considering the reviewer's suggestions, I have made several adjustments to improve the manuscript. First, I revised the title to "Evaluating the Feasibility of Legally Binding Election Manifestos" to capture the paper's focus more concisely, as the reviewer recommended. This new title reflects the study's emphasis on both the constitutional and practical dimensions of manifesto enforceability, enhancing readability and aligning with the manuscript's refined content. I also went through each of the reviewer's edits in detail. The removal of specific references to lesser-known judges and politicians makes the paper more accessible to a global audience, which I believe strengthens the clarity of the arguments without detracting from the paper's central focus. I ensured that these changes did not impact the coherence of my argument, and I found that the streamlined references actually helped maintain a sharper focus on the core issues around manifesto enforceability.

Additionally, I double-checked my contact information, including my email and school address, to ensure accuracy. I confirmed that both are correct and tested the email to verify its functionality. After incorporating the revisions, I conducted a thorough final review of the entire manuscript to ensure that the flow and coherence were maintained. This read-through confirmed that the revised document effectively conveys my original message, with the reviewer's edits enhancing both the clarity and focus of the argument. I am confident that this version fully addresses the reviewer's feedback and improves the overall quality of the study. I am grateful for the insightful feedback and guidance throughout the revision process and am ready to resubmit the manuscript. I hope this revised version meets your expectations, and I remain open to any further suggestions if additional adjustments are needed.

Thank you for addressing my comments. I recommend accept.
It is unusual for me to see a better than average command of the English language in a High School Student. Congratulations. I assume that the work is original to you in language and presentation.