

Decoding Manifestoes: Financial and Economic Roadmaps

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Abstract:

Given Pakistan's recurrent dependence on IMF assistance for financial stability, the study underscores the importance of adhering to stringent IMF conditions. Assessing the Manifestoes against IMF criteria reveals a common emphasis among all parties on inclusive growth and inflation reduction. Notably, PML-N's manifesto distinguishes itself through a more thorough approach, particularly regarding program policies and governance reforms. As Pakistan approaches the 2024 general election, the alignment of party Manifestoes with IMF conditions emerges as crucial for the nation's sustainable growth and stability. Despite varying priorities, addressing macroeconomic vulnerabilities, and effectively managing economic challenges remain fundamental imperatives for Pakistan's future prosperity. All major parties have touched upon sectoral policies with promises of socioeconomic amelioration but the detailed analysis on political economy and implementation strategy was a miss.

Introduction

A political party's manifesto outlines the plans, programs, and general policy directions that the party commits to implementing to gain votes during general elections. These manifestos are released during the election year (2024) in Pakistan and serve as a benchmark document for evaluating the party's performance in government. In democratic politics, it is expected that a political party presents its manifesto to the people, providing insight into future programs and policies it plans to implement if elected. The manifesto serves as a formal plan and commitment, offering voters a tangible document to consider when making their decision. The way it is articulated by a manifesto committee and presented as a formal document grants it the status of a party document that represents its election pledges¹.

Manifestoes are a crucial aspect of the political landscape for several reasons. Firstly, they clearly define the party's ideological stance, offering insight into its beliefs and principles. Secondly, they educate the public about the party's plans for service delivery and its commitment to addressing critical societal issues. Thirdly, they provide a benchmark for evaluating the party's performance over time, allowing voters to hold them accountable. Additionally, manifestoes inform party members about the party's direction and objectives, promoting internal unity. Furthermore, they can attract individuals to the party by offering a glimpse into its vision and goals. Most importantly, manifestoes emphasise the party's aims and objectives, prioritising programs over personalities, thus fostering a more substantial connection between parties and their constituents.

The manifesto of a political party is significant as it shapes public opinion and informs voters about the party's platform. Voters use manifestoes to assess if a party's proposed policies align with their values and interests. A well-crafted manifesto can significantly impact an election campaign by rallying party supporters, attracting swing voters, and influencing undecided individuals. Furthermore, once a party is elected, its manifesto serves as a benchmark for measuring its performance and progress. It is important to acknowledge that practical challenges, changing circumstances, and

¹ <https://pakovoter.org/party-manifestos/>

compromises during coalition governments may lead to parties not strictly adhering to their manifesto once in power².

Everything in politics begins with a manifesto, much like the first stroke of paint on a canvas. It shapes the story a party tells and how it connects with voters. And it is not just words on paper—it is a promise. When a party puts its plans in a manifesto, it is committing the people. This holds them accountable for their promises and lets voters demand honesty and results. So, whether it is making new laws or shaping the future of a country, it all starts with the words in a manifesto. In Pakistan, political parties have different kinds of manifestoes. Some are well-written, laying out clear visions and plans for running the country³ but some of them are not well-defined and have a lot of loopholes in it. As of now the general election of 2024 is coming and all parties announced their manifestos. PTI, PPP and PML-N have finalised and announced their manifestos which will give a clear idea of what will be the focus of any of these parties if they will come into power.

Parties Manifestoes' key takeaways

A brief insight into all three main parties manifestoes and their focus on the stability and economic growth of Pakistan:

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI)⁴

PTI's agenda revolves around enhancing fiscal responsibility and efficiency in government operations. This includes rationalising civil service salaries and benefits, as well as implementing institutional reforms and streamlining administrative processes to optimise resource allocation and operational effectiveness. The party intends to monetise staff benefits and adjust benchmark pay to establish a more cost-effective compensation structure. Moreover, recognising the importance of targeted subsidies, particularly in the energy sector, PTI plans to link these subsidies with sector reforms, ensuring they are needs-based, time-bound, and budgeted.

In line with its vision, PTI proposes discontinuing Universal Pay Scales, allowing provinces to set their pay scales for greater flexibility and sustainability. To ensure a

² <https://pide.org.pk/research/manifestoes-without-substance/>

³ <https://pide.org.pk/research/manifestoes-without-substance/>

⁴ MANIFESTO: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) Empowering Pakistan for a Just, Progressive, and Inclusive Future

fair approach to pension benefits, the party plans to introduce claw-back mechanisms, building on successful provincial-level reforms. Additionally, PTI aims to reduce the government's reliance on bank-held debt for financial stability by reallocating a higher proportion of government debt outside of banks. Furthermore, PTI is committed to fostering self-reliance and independence in Pakistan, rooted in Islamic teachings, while prioritising justice, economic and social equity, employment, education, empowerment, and freedom

PTI's holistic approach to governance encompasses not only fiscal responsibility but also a commitment to social justice and empowerment. By reducing government spending and enhancing efficiency, PTI aims to free up resources that can be redirected towards crucial sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. This reallocation of funds is intended to address societal inequalities and provide greater access to essential services for all citizens.

In line with its vision for a self-reliant Pakistan, PTI advocates for the development of indigenous industries and the promotion of local manufacturing. This entails incentivising domestic production, reducing dependency on imports, and fostering innovation and technological advancement. By doing so, PTI aims to build a resilient economy that is less susceptible to external shocks and fluctuations in the global market.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP)⁵

Foreign policy goals prioritise prosperity, protection, and propagation, aligning with initiatives like dedicated solar parks, regional trade promotion, and leveraging international laws to safeguard local interests.

The manifesto suggests replicating Sindh's labour policy nationwide through collaboration with various political parties, aiming to protect workers' rights to form unions and linking minimum wage with a living wage. It advocates for the universalization of EOBI for pension plans and reducing offences punishable by the death penalty while focusing on the blue economy's sustainable development. The plan emphasises enhancing Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works' capacity, establishing a new shipyard in Ormara, and expanding cargo ship production in

⁵ <https://pppp.org.pk/website/manifesto/>

Pakistan. The manifesto underscores the diligent implementation of the 2012 bilateral trade roadmap, reflecting a commitment to prosperity, protection, and strategic interests. It proposes the expansion of cargo ship production within Pakistan, aiming to increase domestic manufacturing capacity and reduce reliance on imported vessels.

Furthermore, the foreign policy goals outlined in the manifest prioritise prosperity, protection, and propagation. This entails promoting trade within the region by separating trade issues from other geopolitical concerns and fostering economic cooperation to benefit all parties involved. It also underscores the importance of leveraging international laws to safeguard the interests of local producers and manufacturers, ensuring fair competition and protection against unfair trade practices.

Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N)⁶

The manifesto advocates the establishment of a National Regulatory Delivery Office within the Prime Minister's Office, modelled after the UK's system, to streamline regulatory processes and enhance efficiency. It also calls for comprehensive reforms across various sectors, including IT, agribusiness, Tourism, Pharmaceutical, and Electric Vehicles, aimed at driving economic growth and fostering innovation. Additionally, the manifesto emphasises the importance of promoting shared prosperity with neighbouring countries through initiatives focused on trade facilitation, infrastructure development, financial cooperation, and shared services, thereby unlocking economic potential and benefiting the less privileged. Moreover, it underscores the need to lower trade costs and barriers to harness the full potential of trade in alleviating poverty. Furthermore, the manifest highlights the significance of investing in human and physical capital, improving access to finance, strengthening governance and institutions, and maintaining macroeconomic stability to foster sustainable development. It also suggests the creation of a Ministry of Economy through a comprehensive reform-oriented approach that consolidates various divisions. Additionally, it outlines a 5-year taxation reform plan starting from the 2024-25 budget and continuing until 2029 to provide stability and predictability for businesses. Moreover, the manifesto stresses the importance of implementing reforms across all provinces, Islamabad Capital Territory, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit Baltistan to ensure inclusive and equitable development. Lastly, it proposes

⁶ <https://pmln2024.com/manifesto-in-english/>

the establishment of an autonomous Exploration and Production (E&P) unit within the Division of Petroleum and Natural Resources, along with formal liaison with provinces to safeguard the public interest in E&P activities.

By centralising regulatory processes and creating a dedicated office, the government can streamline procedures, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and improve the ease of doing business for both domestic and foreign investors. This initiative aligns with broader efforts to modernise governance structures and promote transparency and accountability across all sectors of the economy.

In addition to regulatory reforms, the manifesto emphasises the need for comprehensive sectoral transformations across key areas such as Information Technology, agribusiness, Tourism, pharmaceuticals, and Electric Vehicles. By implementing targeted reforms tailored to the specific needs and challenges of each sector, Pakistan can unlock new opportunities for economic growth, innovation, and job creation. This approach is essential for diversifying the economy, reducing dependency on traditional industries, and positioning Pakistan as a competitive player in the global market.

Additionally, the manifesto emphasises the importance of comprehensive taxation reforms and the establishment of a Ministry of Economy to oversee the implementation of reform initiatives. These measures are aimed at providing stability, predictability, and coherence to Pakistan's economic policies, thereby instilling confidence among investors and stakeholders. By ensuring consistency and continuity in economic policymaking, Pakistan can enhance its credibility as a reliable investment destination and spur growth across all sectors of the economy.

Similarities and Differences in all three Manifestoes

The table below shows the similarities and differences between all the three manifestoes of PTI, PML-N and PPP. All parties have a lot of different road maps to achieve progress and growth in several different sectors however there are also some similarities in their manifestoes.

Sr No.	Sectors	PML-N	PPP	PTI
1.	Education	An increase of 4 % in GDP for education expenditures, an increase in access to higher education from 13%-30%.	Allocation of 5% of GDP to education, Primary and higher secondary Schools within 30-60 Min distance.	Spending 4% of the GDP on Education, the target of 90 per cent literacy to be achieved,
2.	Health	Free medical treatment to the low-income segment of society The establishment of the Medical City in Provincial Capitals Introduction of the Centralised Stroke Management System.	Spending of the 6 % of the GDP on Health, Introduction of Wasella-e-Sehat Programme, Establish the Maternal and Child Hospitals.	Enhancing the scope of Health Cards, the establishment of Telemedicine, and the better provision of healthcare through Public and Private Partnerships.
3.	Economy	Achieve 4-6% inflation, create 10M jobs, cut current account deficit to 1.5% GDP, raise exports to \$60B, attain 6% GDP growth, reduce poverty by 25%, lower unemployment to 5%, increase per capita income to \$2000, adjust salaries for inflation, and eliminate circular debt.	Increase the tax ratio to 15% of GDP, introduce soft loans via the Waseela-e-Haq Programme, prioritise economic sovereignty, abolish elite subsidies, raise salaries by 8% annually, and attract foreign investment through new channels.	PTI aims to reduce inflation to 5-7%, create 10 million jobs, limit loans to 60% of GDP, undertake 60% of development projects through Public-Private Partnerships, and prioritise foreign investment.
4.	Power sector	Lower electricity tariffs by 20-30%, add 15,000 MW in power generation, produce 10,000 MW through solar energy, adopt a new power policy, localise IPP agreements, establish a Global Energy Trading Company, create Green Energy Funds, and shift power generation to LNG.	300-unit free electricity, Solar Parks in industrial zones, renewables focus, Waste to Energy, solar grid stations in villages, building solar conversions, and EV production incentives.	More focus on renewables, NEPRA and OGRA merger, DISCOs privatisation, Power Sector reforms, new oil and gas exploration, energy sector reforms, and Railway land solar parks
5.	Foreign Policy	Promote trade and energy cooperation, foster Muslim unity, enhance Gulf manpower export, ensure peace, and border management, and prioritise CPEC completion.	Strengthen regional ties, engage with neighbours, and enhance global diplomacy.	Focus on trade relations, prioritise regional peace, support Kashmir and Palestine, and enhance trade with China, Afghanistan, and Iran.
6.	Constitutional and judicial reforms	PML-N manifesto promises timely judicial decisions, merit-based appointments, live court proceedings, e-courts, commercial courts, and the disbanding of NAB.	Establish a Federal Constitutional Court, amend the mechanism for appointing Judges, and create a Judicial Complaint Commission for Constitutional and Judicial reforms.	Establish an Independent Judicial Commission, ensure transparent judiciary appointments, and implement a Nomination scrutiny Process ⁷
7.	Information Technology	targets \$20 billion in IT exports and aims to train 5 million students and freelancers. It plans to establish Wi-Fi cities in federal and provincial capitals.	The party promises tax exemptions and reforms in the IT sector, along with the abolition of bureaucratic hurdles through the Peoples Reform Programme.	\$30 billion IT export target and a 20 percent investment share in GDP to boost economic growth and technological advancement.
8.	Labour Policy	A new labour policy, issuing health and education cards, raising the minimum wage, and providing retirement plans through EOBI.	Implementing a labour card system, providing children's fees, health insurance, social security, and pensions, and enforcing the Sindh Labour Policy.	Enhancing existing labour laws for better protection and welfare of workers to promote fair employment practices.

⁷ PTI advocates for an independent scrutiny of judicial nominees to ensure the appointment of qualified, impartial, and ethical individuals to the judiciary. They propose a comprehensive scrutiny process to bolster public confidence in the integrity of judicial selection.

9.	Sports	Issue sports cards, provide health insurance for players, extend health insurance coverage, set up 250 stadiums and sports academies, and establish Pakistan's first sports university.	Upgrade playgrounds, establish new sports facilities, review old agreements, provide subsidies for local goods production, and invest in the blue economy.	Invest in sports-related programs and infrastructure development, including new grounds and sports centres in urban and rural areas.
9	Trade	Achieve annual exports of \$60 billion, exempt exports from domestic taxes, reduce raw material import duty, increase export duties, offer tax concessions for new export sectors, and promote green financing	Offer subsidies for local goods production, eliminate redundant subsidies, and prioritize investments in the blue economy.	Boost exports to constitute 15% of GDP, identify 4,000 export products and reduce international trade taxes.
10	Women Empowerment	Enforcing laws against dowry, providing insurance for every girl child, establishing women's police units, eliminating gender pay discrimination, and offering public transport concessions.	Increase women's reserved seats in the assembly, introduce a free nutrition programme for pregnant women, ensure gender equality in agriculture, and expand the Pink Bus Service.	Enforce a 25 percent quota for women in all political roles and establish support systems for non-traditional female earners.
11	Local Government	Elections within 90 days of government dissolution, a special LG service cadre, a minimum 30% revenue share for LGs, and the development of municipal bonds and land value capture systems.	Municipal bodies will be empowered to address local disputes and will have the jurisdiction to hire and promote officials up to grade 16.	Empower municipal bodies to resolve local disputes and handle recruitment up to grade 16.
12	Environment Policy	Combat smog, ban plastic bags, prohibit animal use at political events, implement carbon credit policies, control crop fires, and promote the adoption of zigzag stoves.	Ban plastic bags, enforce clean air policies, protect wildlife, establish a climate development fund, and launch a Green New Deal for environmental investment.	Expand the Billion Tree Programme nationwide, review environmental policies, and implement strategies to mitigate pollution effectively.
13	Tourism	Tourism finance corporation, promote a national centre for brand development and expand e-visa and on-arrival visas.	Tourism improvement and the establishment of old-age homes, allocating 0.6 to 1.2 percent of GDP for social rights protection, and forming a minorities commission.	Medical tourism and transforming the tourism sector into a multi-billion-dollar industry to boost economic growth and create jobs.
14	Social Welfare	Protect civil, social, and religious rights, introduce senior citizen cards, safeguard minority places of worship and assets, address violence against minorities, and rehabilitate abused children.	Implementing a labour card system, providing children's fees, health insurance, social security, and pensions, and enforcing the Sindh Labour Policy.	Introducing Ehsaas cards, continuing Ehsaas programs, implementing the Kamyab Pakistan initiative, and expanding the Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme to provide shelter for labourers and underprivileged citizens.

Textual Analysis

Starting with the text analysis of different manifestoes of all three parties, this section lays the groundwork for the finding. Here, the most frequent words along with the frequencies of each manifesto are presented. By doing this, the commonalities and differences of each manifesto will be shown in their recommendations and their vision for the future of Pakistan in the next five years.

Based on the **PTI** text analysis, the most common words used in their manifesto are Pakistan (N=570) along with development (N=276), progress (N=212), governance (N=296), education (N=165), women empowerment (N=232), Economy (N=165), inclusive growth (N=182), tax (N=137), Ensuring free credibility, accountability and fiscal reforms (N=175), growth (N=115). The rest of the terms that appear are transport, sustainability, reforms, policies, and public programmes.



Text analysis of **PPP** shows that the most frequent words used in their manifesto are Pakistan (N=108) along the water (N=95), women (N=95), PPP (Pakistan People Party), policies (N=73), rights (N=97), ensuring growth (N=75), climate (N=70), and economic growth (N=53). The rest of the terms that appear in text analysis have low frequencies (N<50) such as healthcare, education, constitution, social and development, etc.



Text analysis of the **PML-N** manifesto has Pakistan (N=211), establish (N=142) and nation (N=176) are the more frequent words along with development (N=139), policies (N=99), governance (N=95), increase (N=93), implement



(N=85), education (N=56), ensure (N=69), programme (N=79), improve (N=65), projects (N=75), sectors (N=74), reform (N=56) etc. Other terms that appear in this analysis have low frequency.

Inclusion of Defence Capability in Manifestoes

Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N)

- Promote defence self-reliance through robust indigenous arms production, bolster export potential, and cultivate a resilient domestic defence industry.
- Uphold a responsible and credible nuclear power status, prioritizing the preservation and protection of Pakistan's nuclear assets and missile capabilities.
- Commit to the highest international standards of nuclear security and safety to ensure responsible use of nuclear resources.
- Establish and fortify institutions dedicated to research and development in defence technology.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI)

- PTI aims to enforce rule-based contributions from all provinces towards national defence expenditure and interest payments on public debt.
- The party aims to foster collaboration with defence industries to commercialize technologies for the private sector and eliminate growth barriers in line with the digital economy model.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP)

- PPP aims to shift the focus of the security state towards a society centred on welfare, prioritizing citizen rights over the privileges of the civil-military bureaucratic complex.
- PPP will initiate the "Civilian Terrorism Victims Support Project" to aid in the rehabilitation of terrorism victims and their families, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).
- Efforts will be made to legislate the oversight and accountability of state intelligence agencies, ensuring they operate within defined boundaries. Additionally, steps will be taken to depoliticize and de-corporatize the national security apparatus.

IMF conditions aligned with parties' Manifestoes

Seeking assistance from the IMF to ensure a country's stability is a familiar path for Pakistan. Given the country's need for financial support from major institutions like the IMF to sustain its stability, fulfilling the stringent conditions attached to IMF loans becomes imperative. Pakistan's history of engaging with the IMF underscores the importance of meeting these conditions. By partially or fully meeting these requirements, Pakistan can continue to receive loans from the IMF, crucial for its stability and growth. Considering the upcoming general elections in 2024, where all major parties (PPP, PTI, and PML-N) have released their manifestos, it is essential to assess each party's willingness to adhere to IMF conditions and alleviate the burden of loans accrued from previous governments.

As per IMF conditions, Pakistan must carefully adhere to fiscal targets to maintain financial stability while ensuring the protection of social spending. A market-determined exchange rate is crucial for effectively absorbing external shocks. Progressing on structural reforms is vital for fostering robust and inclusive growth. Consistent and prompt implementation of program policies, without any deviations, is imperative. Despite stabilised economic activity, the challenging outlook hinges on the implementation of sound policies. Real GDP expected to rebound in FY24, albeit at a slower pace of 2 percent growth. Persistently high inflation rates and ongoing pressures on core inflation point to enduring macroeconomic vulnerabilities. While import compression is unwinding and gross reserves are growing, the external position's recovery will be gradual. The IMF's recent approval of an immediate disbursement of approximately \$700 million highlights the critical need to effectively manage economic challenges⁸

Based on the conditions set by the IMF for Pakistan, the PML-N manifesto appears to be better suited to meet these requirements compared to those of the PTI and PPP. While PTI's manifesto emphasises governance reforms and both PTI and PML-N include common reform agendas, PPP's manifesto lacks a focus on structural reforms. PML-N's manifesto incorporates program policies crucial for meeting IMF conditions,

⁸ <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2024/01/19/Pakistan-First-Review-Under-the-Stand-by-Arrangement-Requests-for-Waivers-of-Applicability-543909>

highlighting its alignment with the IMF's requirements. Inclusive growth is a common theme across all three manifestoes, with PML-N and PTI prioritising inflation reduction, while PPP aims to increase the tax ratio to 15 percent of GDP. Thus, PML-N's manifesto stands out as more conducive to stabilising the country given its comprehensive approach to addressing IMF conditions.

Critical Appraisal

Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N)

- PML-N claims to have presented a manifesto that can be fulfilled. The manifesto has not outlined an economic philosophy and the strategy to create fiscal space for promised reforms.
- The power sector reforms, and circular debt have been addressed promising an end to circular debt and privatization of DISCOs. Future IPP agreements in local currency and reliance on indigenous gas have been presented as remedies but without pointing out the exploration strategy for already depleting indigenous natural gas resources.
- A concrete proposal to promote exports and investment by merging industries, commerce, and investment to create a “Ministry of the Economy” has been given no strategy to contain inflation and avert the ubiquitous threat of default has been given.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP)

- PPP has presented a ten-point economic agenda promising a new social contract. The agenda is high on populist promises like a twofold increase in salaries in five years, the promise of up to 300 units of free electricity, a universal Education System and free Healthcare service throughout the country.
- The manifesto is high on promises but lacks the implementation strategy and a roadmap to generate the resources and fiscal space to achieve the promised objectives.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI)

- PTI like PML-N has some concrete proposals about exports and investment promotion but like PML-N falls short of an implementable strategy to achieve these objectives.
- PTI's focus on the “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” and reform like boarding the tax net, reinstalment of Ehsas Programme, Uniform Education System and free

Healthcare in the shape of Sehat cards is reminiscent of its earlier manifesto. A focus on political economy however is missing along with the strategy to achieve the economic and political welfare objectives.

- All parties have steered clear of a discussion on the causes and remedies of the terrorism threats, and how to deal with issues of religious extremism and ethnic particularism.

Unachievable Targets

PPP	PTI	PML-N
300 units of free electricity	Creation of 10 million new jobs	Reduce electricity bills by 20%-30%
3 million houses	Uniform system of education	Increase salaries to match inflation
Substantial funds to the government scheme	Self-reliance and less dependence on donors for economic stability	Bring inflation down to 6pc

Conclusion

Pakistan's reliance on the IMF for financial stability is a recurring theme, necessitating adherence to strict conditions imposed by the organisation. These conditions, although challenging, are crucial for Pakistan to prevent economic collapse and maintain stability. As the country approaches the 2024 general election, the Manifestoes of major political parties, including PPP, PTI, and PML-N, play a significant role in assessing their commitment to fulfilling IMF conditions and alleviating the burden of previous loans. Adhering to fiscal targets, implementing structural reforms, and ensuring prompt policy implementation are imperative steps highlighted by the IMF. While all parties aim for inclusive growth and inflation reduction, PML-N's manifesto appears more aligned with IMF conditions, particularly in terms of program policies and governance reforms. Despite differences in priorities, addressing macroeconomic vulnerabilities and managing economic challenges effectively remain paramount for Pakistan's sustainable growth and stability in the future.