

Framing Social Policy through Jobs and Investment: An Analysis of the Biden Administration's Socioeconomic Policy Discourse

Seol A Jang*

Seoul National University

Abstract

This study examines how the Biden administration articulated its social policy agenda within official discourse, rather than how that agenda fared as legislation. Existing scholarship reads the administration's domestic program as an ambitious welfare-state expansion later checked by retrenchment, yet leaves underexamined how social provisions were defined, framed, and linked to broader policy goals in the first place. Because a policy's meaning depends on the problem it is presented as addressing and the policy language through which it is explained, this study asks with which policy languages the administration associated its social agenda, and how those linkages structured its official discourse. Drawing on official White House texts published between January 2021 and January 2025, the analysis combines keyword frequency, N-gram, and sentence- and category-level co-occurrence analysis. Social policy vocabulary retained a visible presence throughout the term, yet 'jobs' and 'investment' operated as the central terms linking otherwise distinct agendas. At the level of four analytical categories, welfare/protection (the traditional safety-net language of income support, health, and housing) and social investment (education, training, and human-capital formation) repeatedly co-occurred with industrial policy. Fiscal responsibility, by contrast, attached chiefly to these two social categories rather than to industrial policy. These patterns indicate that social policy was not articulated primarily through the traditional welfare idiom of social rights, decommodification, and protection against social risk. Instead, it was repeatedly situated within the logics of labor-market participation, productive capacity,

* Teaching Assistant Professor, SNU college, Seoul National University, E-mail: poljisa@gmail.com

cost reduction, and fiscal soundness. The study conceptualizes this configuration as the economization of social policy.

Keywords

Biden administration; social policy discourse; economization of social policy; industrial policy; social investment

일자리와 투자를 통한 사회정책 프레이밍: 바이든 행정부 사회경제정책 담론 분석

장슬아*

서울대학교 학부대학

요약

이 연구는 바이든 행정부의 사회정책 의제가 공식 담론 안에서 어떤 방식으로 제시되고 설명되었는지를 분석한다. 기존 논의는 바이든 행정부의 국내정책 의제를 미국 복지국가 확대의 적극적 시도와 그 이후의 정치적 축소로 이해해 왔다. 이러한 설명은 바이든 행정부의 사회정책 의제가 입법 과정에서 축소·조정된 배경을 설명하는 데 유용하지만, 사회정책 의제가 공식 담론 안에서 애초에 어떤 문제의식 속에서 제시되었고 어떤 정책 언어와 결합되었는지는 충분히 검토하지 못했다. 그러나 정책 의제의 의미는 고정된 것이 아니라, 그것이 어떤 문제의 해결책으로 제시되고 어떤 정책 언어와 결합되는가에 따라 구성된다. 이에 본 연구는 바이든 행정부가 사회정책 의제를 어떤 정책 언어와 결합하여 제시했으며, 그러한 결합이 공식 담론의 구조를 어떻게 형성했는지를 묻는다. 이를 위해 본 연구는 2021년 1월부터 2025년 1월까지 발표된 백악관 공식 텍스트를 대상으로 키워드 빈도 분석, N-gram 분석, 문장 및 범주 수준의 공출현 분석을 결합한다. 분석 결과, 사회정책 관련 표현은 바이든 행정부의 공식 담론에서 적지 않게 등장했다. 다만 이 표현들은 독립적인 복지 의제로 제시되기보다, 일자리 창출·투자 확대·산업 전환 비용 절감·재정책임의 언어와 반복적으로 결합하는 방식으로 나타났다. 특히 '일자리'와 '투자'가 다양한 정책 의제를 연결하는 중심어로 기능했다. 네 가지 분석 범주 수준에서 보면, 복지·보호(소득 보장, 보건의료, 주거 등 전통적 안전망 언어) 범주와 사회투자(교육, 훈련, 인적자본 형성) 범주는 산업정책 범주와 반복적으로 공출현했다. 재정책임 범주의 키워드는 산업정책보다 복지·보호, 사회투자 범주에 주로 결합했다. 이러한 패턴은 사회정책이 사회권, 탈상품화, 사회적 위험으로부터의 보호라는 전통적 복지 담론보다, 노동시장 참여, 생산 능력, 재정 건전성의 논리를 통해 정당화되었음을 보여준다. 본 연구는 이를 사회정책의 경제정책화로 개념화한다.

주제어

바이든 행정부, 사회정책 담론, 사회정책의 경제정책화, 산업정책, 사회투자

* 서울대학교 학부대학, 강의조교수, 이메일: polijsa@gmail.com

I. Introduction

The Biden administration's socioeconomic policy agenda has often been interpreted as an ambitious expansion of the American welfare state. Through a sequence of landmark initiatives—the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)—the administration foregrounded policy domains where U.S. social policy has historically rested on thin institutional foundations: child care, paid family leave, the expanded Child Tax Credit, health-cost relief, and educational support. The projected scale of federal outlays was widely cast as the most significant expansion of state capacity since the Great Society (“Biden’s 100-Days Bet,” 2021). Against a backdrop of rising inequality and pandemic-driven cost-of-living pressures, these measures appeared to signal a robust federal turn toward family, care, income security, and health, prompting some observers to describe the moment as a departure from the market-centered neoliberal paradigm (“The Era of Small Government Is Over,” 2021).

Over the course of the administration's first two years, however, this ambitious social policy agenda underwent significant retrenchment. The trajectory from the comprehensive Build Back Better (BBB) framework to the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) illustrates this pattern. As BBB was heavily compromised and ultimately repackaged into the IRA, foundational social provisions—including universal childcare, paid family leave, and a permanent expansion of the Child Tax Credit—were either entirely excised or reduced to sunset provisions (“The House Just Passed Biden’s Build Back Better Bill,” 2021). In contrast, provisions dedicated to the clean energy transition, industrial revitalization, supply chain resilience, infrastructural expansion, and national economic security emerged largely intact and robustly funded (Reynolds, 2024).

Prevailing assessments accordingly frame the agenda as a thwarted bid for welfare-state expansion, attributing the outcome to a constellation of political and economic conditions: intra-party friction among Democrats, the mechanics of Senate consensus-building, the hurdles of the filibuster and budget reconciliation, inflation

and resistance to fiscal expansion, the electoral pressures of an approaching midterm, and the geopolitics of intensifying U.S.–China competition and the war in Ukraine ("Joe Manchin Kills the Build Back Better Act," 2021; "How the Ukraine War Has Shaped Biden's Presidency," 2023). These accounts are valuable for understanding the conditions under which the legislative outcome took shape. Yet if attention remains fixed on the formulation and eventual dilution of these provisions, the administration's trajectory is too readily dismissed as one more instance of welfare capitalism checked by systemic constraints.

The political significance of a social policy initiative, however, is not settled by its mere presence on the legislative agenda. The meaning of an identical policy item can shift fundamentally with how the underlying problem is constructed, which populations and outcomes are prioritized, and how the item is tied to broader strategic goals. Evaluations centered solely on the introduction and subsequent retrenchment of social provisions therefore miss the discursive logic through which those provisions were legitimized in official rhetoric, yielding only a partial account of the systemic significance of the administration's socioeconomic framework.

To address this gap, this study analyzes how social policy provisions were articulated within the administration's official discourse. It examines the policy language with which social initiatives were associated in executive documents and presidential addresses, tracing how these configurations positioned social policy within the broader socioeconomic agenda. Rather than confining social policy to the traditional welfare-regime framework, this study analyzes the linkages and contextual relations these provisions formed with other policy objectives.

This approach rests on the premise that the meaning of social policy is not fixed in advance but acquired within a particular matrix of problem definitions, constructions of target populations, and rationales of justification. As Schneider and Ingram (1993) show, the same instrument can take on divergent political meanings depending on the groups it targets, the mechanisms it highlights, and the goals to which it is tied. Analyzing social policy thus requires more than registering whether an institution was adopted or gauging the scale of expenditure; it requires interrogating the societal

problem a policy is framed as addressing and the normative grounds on which it is justified.

This consideration underscores the value of assessing the administration's socioeconomic rhetoric from the vantage of 2026. With the term now complete, the official discourse produced between January 2021 and January 2025 forms a consolidated body of evidence. From this vantage, the federal agenda across ARPA, IIJA, BBB, and the IRA can be read as a continuous process rather than a series of isolated statutory episodes, allowing closer inquiry into how social policy priorities were articulated and synthesized within the logic of Bidenomics.

This study therefore addresses the following research question: How were social policy provisions associated with and articulated alongside other policy languages in the Biden administration's official socioeconomic discourse? The dataset comprises official executive documents and presidential addresses retrieved from the White House repository, covering the period from January 2021 to January 2025. The methodological toolkit combines keyword frequency and N-gram analysis, sentence-level co-occurrence network analysis, and category-based co-occurrence analysis mapped onto theoretical dimensions, identifying how social policy vocabulary was coupled with the idioms of welfare/protection, social investment, industrial policy, and fiscal responsibility. The analysis treats these co-occurrence patterns as a map of recurring discursive associations and reads representative passages to identify the policy goals, problem definitions, and expected effects through which social policy references were positioned within the administration's broader socioeconomic framework. In doing so, it shifts the focus from the binary of welfare-state expansion or failure toward the question of how social provisions were combined with economically oriented forms of state intervention.

This reframing matters beyond the Biden administration. The Biden case illustrates how social, industrial, climate, and economic-security agendas can be recombined in contemporary advanced capitalist states. It also shows how, in a liberal, residual welfare regime marked by a strong language of fiscal responsibility, social policy may be articulated more readily through the idioms of jobs, productive capacity,

middle-class cost relief, and industrial competitiveness than through universal social rights. The case thus suggests that the renewed legitimacy of state intervention does not necessarily entail welfare-state expansion; it may instead coincide with the economization of social policy.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section II reviews the relevant literature and sets out the conceptual framework. Section III details the data and text-mining procedures. Section IV presents the empirical findings. Section V discusses the implications, contributions, and limitations of the analysis.

II. Existing Literature and Theoretical Framework

1. Existing Explanations for the Retrenchment of the Social Policy Agenda

Prevailing assessments of the administration's socioeconomic policy have largely focused on the gap between its initial agenda and its legislative outcomes. The dilution of BBB and its repackaging into the IRA, in particular, have been read as a case in which core social provisions—childcare, paid family leave, the expanded Child Tax Credit—failed to consolidate into durable institutions.

This literature has coalesced around three sets of factors. The first concerns the veto-point structure of American politics and the dynamics of congressional bargaining: the filibuster, the constraints of budget reconciliation, and the 50–50 split in the 117th Senate gave a handful of centrist senators decisive leverage over the social provisions of the bill ("Biden's Agenda Faces Early Hurdles in a Divided Congress," 2021; "Manchin's Opposition to Child Tax Credit Is a Major Blow to Biden," 2021). The second emphasizes the political burden of post-pandemic inflation and resistance to fiscal expansion; as consumer prices reached a four-decade high in 2022, large-scale social spending was readily reframed as a driver of inflation and fiscal strain ("Consumer Prices Up 9.1 Percent over the Year Ended June 2022, Largest

Increase in 40 Years," 2022). The third points to a shifting geopolitical environment—U.S.–China competition and the war in Ukraine—in which supply-chain realignment, technological self-sufficiency, energy security, and industrial competitiveness came to appear more urgent than social policy expansion, helping to explain the pivot toward industrial policy and economic security ("Biden's \$5.8 Trillion Budget Pivots toward Economic and Security Concerns," 2022; "How the Ukraine War Has Shaped Biden's Presidency," 2023).

These accounts provide important insights into the conditions under which the legislative outcome took shape. Because they concentrate on how the agenda was weakened, however, they leave the prior question—what that agenda meant in the first place—as a separate analytical problem. The mere presence of a social policy item in a legislative package does not by itself mark the underlying orientation as welfare-state expansion. The same childcare provision may be presented as a guarantee of the social rights of children and families, justified as an investment in parental labor-market participation and human-capital formation, or framed as relief from middle-class cost pressures; health and housing support, likewise, can be cast not only as social protection but also as mechanisms of cost containment, labor-market stability, and fiscal efficiency.

The character of the administration's agenda therefore cannot be inferred from the conditions of its retrenchment alone. In the existing literature, industrial policy, economic security, and fiscal responsibility have largely treated as external conditions that constrained or displaced welfare expansion. If, however, social initiatives such as childcare, education, health, and housing were justified from the outset in tandem with economic objectives, then the movement from BBB to the IRA should not be read simply as the displacement of welfare by economic policy. For the purposes of this study, it also provides a setting in which to examine the discursive conditions that made some social-policy elements more compatible than others with an agenda already articulated through economic-policy language.

This is where the economization of social policy becomes a useful analytical lens. The term denotes neither the simple retrenchment of welfare provision nor its outright

subordination to economic policy. It refers, rather, to the process by which a social policy agenda is redefined and articulated beyond the language of social rights and livelihood security—through the idioms of labor–market participation, human–capital formation, job creation, industrial competitiveness, cost–of–living relief, and fiscal responsibility. From this vantage, the pertinent question concerns less the degree of social policy institutionalization than the specific economic logic with which that policy was combined and articulated in official discourse. The next subsection sets out the three pathways through which this economization proceeds.

2. Three Pathways of Economizing Social Policy: Social Investment, Industrial Policy, and Fiscal Responsibility

The economization of social policy takes more than one form. Social policy may still be voiced in the language of livelihood security and protection, yet simultaneously acquire a new logic of articulation as it is aligned with distinct economic objectives. What matters is not whether an item is classed as welfare or economic policy, but how it is presented as a means of solving a particular problem and which objectives it is linked to in official discourse. This study conceptualizes the economization of social policy as proceeding along three pathways—*social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*. These are not independent theoretical debates so much as distinct modes of articulation through which social policy acquires economic meaning. They are also languages of selection: in translating social policy into economic terms, they confer greater legitimacy on some items while marginalizing others. Economization is thus better understood not as a wholesale retreat from welfare but as a selective reordering of priorities within social policy—with the three pathways differing in the economic axis along which that ordering is structured.

The social investment perspective recasts social spending not as compensatory consumption but as investment in human–capital formation, labor–market participation, and long–term productivity (Giddens, 1998; Morel, Palier, & Palme, 2012; Hemerijck, 2017). This perspective belongs to a broader historical shift away

from the decommodifying logic of the postwar welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990) toward activation and a Schumpeterian workfare order (Jessop, 1994; Gilbert, 2002)—a transition in which the measure of a policy shifts from the rights it secures to the returns it promises. Education, training, childcare, and family support are accordingly framed as productive expenditures that enhance the economic capacities of individuals and families. By contrast, income maintenance and cash transfers, which are less readily translated into investment language, tend to be assigned lower priority. In the American context, this selectivity is sharper still: within a liberal, residual welfare regime, policies such as child care, education, training, and family support command greater political traction when framed as labor-market participation, skill formation, productivity, and middle-class cost relief than when advanced solely as extensions of universal social rights.

The second pathway joins social policy to *industrial policy*. Where social investment centers on the employability and economic capacities of the individual, the recent resurgence of industrial policy shifts attention to the state's construction of productive capacity and the restructuring of the economy. In these debates the state figures not as a passive corrector of market failures but as an architect of industrial transformation—promoting manufacturing renewal, technological innovation, supply-chain realignment, the clean-energy transition, and the cultivation of strategic sectors (Rodrik, 2004; Mazzucato, 2015). Along this pathway, social policy gains meaning not merely as individual capacity-building but as a social foundation for industrial transformation and economic security: education and training become a means of forming the workforce required in clean energy, semiconductors, manufacturing, and infrastructure; childcare, a condition enabling labor-market participation; and family support, an element sustaining middle-class renewal. The industrial-policy pathway is thus connected to, yet distinct from, social investment—situating social policy within a state strategy organized around the productive base, supply chains, strategic industries, and economic security.

The third pathway frames social policy through *fiscal responsibility*. This discourse ties expanded public expenditure to revenue financing, tax fairness, deficit reduction,

debt management, and fiscal sustainability (Blyth, 2013; Streeck, 2014). Here, fiscal responsibility operates as a criterion that shapes the other two pathways: even spending recognized as “investment” acquires greater legitimacy when it is affordable, paired with credible financing, and reconcilable with tax fairness or deficit reduction. Fiscal responsibility is therefore not merely an external ceiling on the scale of social policy but a discursive standard for determining which items count as responsible public spending, and at what level—reinforcing the selectivity already inherent in the other two pathways.

Although analytically distinct, the three pathways often overlap in actual discourse. A single item can be constituted at once through the languages of *welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*. Childcare, for example, may be framed simultaneously as a protection measure securing family livelihoods, as a social investment raising parental labor-market participation, as a condition for the workforce needed in industrial transformation, or as expenditure justified against standards of financing and affordability. The analytical interest of this study, then, lies not in whether a given item was present or can be fixed within a single category, but in whether social policy language is foregrounded on its own, relocated within the objectives of social investment and industrial policy, or justified under the conditions of fiscal responsibility. The following subsection establishes the four categories accordingly and previews the discursive patterns the analysis anticipates.

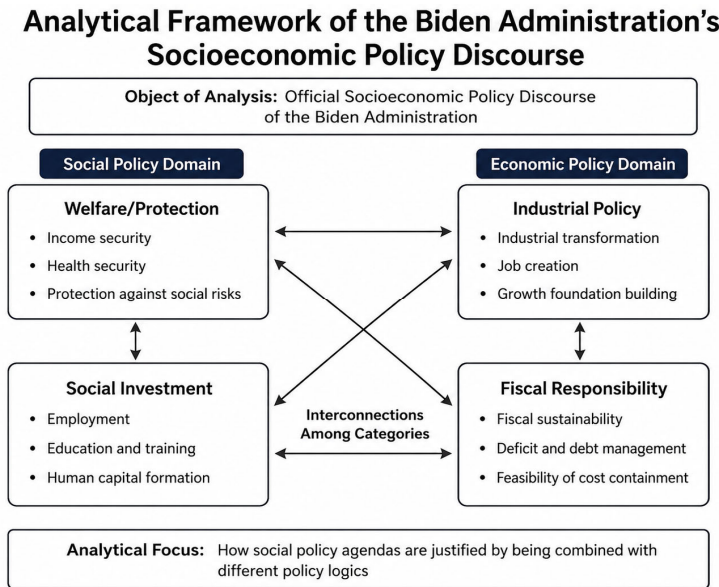
3. Analytical Categories

To bring the three pathways to bear empirically, the study reads the administration’s discourse through four analytical categories: *welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*. In this framework, justification is understood in a limited discursive sense. It does not refer to the administration’s internal intentions, nor does it explain the legislative fate of particular provisions. Rather, it refers to the public terms through which social policy references were connected to stated policy goals, problem definitions, and expected effects. The categories developed below

are therefore not treated as fixed policy domains, but as analytical vocabularies for examining how social policy language was associated with *welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*.

Welfare/protection serves as an analytical baseline for cases in which social policy is presented in the language of rights, livelihood security, and protection against social risks. *Social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility* capture three ways in which social policy may be articulated alongside economic objectives: human-capital formation and labor-market participation; productive-capacity building and industrial transformation; and fiscal conditionality, revenue provision, and affordability. A single policy agenda may draw on several of these vocabularies at once, and it is this pattern of combination that forms the central object of analysis. The framework as a whole is summarized in Figure 1.

<Figure 1> Analytical Framework for Analyzing the Biden Administration's Socioeconomic Policy Discourse



Source: Author.

Welfare/protection captures social policy language centered on income support, health coverage, housing assistance, social safety nets, and protection for vulnerable groups. It includes references to risks such as poverty, illness, unemployment, old age, and housing insecurity. In this register, social policy is presented as an institutional means of securing livelihood stability and social rights, rather than as a tool tied directly to market participation or economic performance. The category thus functions as an analytical benchmark for identifying whether social policy appears in a relatively autonomous welfare idiom or is articulated in relation to other policy vocabularies.

Social investment captures the articulation of social policy through human-capital formation, labor-market participation, skill formation, and productivity. It encompasses discourse in which education, training, childcare, early-childhood support, and family support are presented not only as protection or compensation but also as investments in future economic capacity. This category identifies where social policy is linked to employability, labor supply, and the productive capacities of individuals and families.

Industrial policy captures the positioning of social policy in relation to industrial transformation and the rebuilding of productive capacity. It encompasses language tied to manufacturing revival, supply-chain resilience, technological innovation, infrastructure, the clean-energy transition, and strategic industries. In this register, social policy appears less as a stand-alone welfare provision than as part of the social foundation for workforce development, middle-class renewal, and economic security.

Fiscal responsibility captures the articulation of social spending under the terms of revenue financing, tax fairness, deficit reduction, debt management, affordability, and fiscal sustainability. Rather than treating fiscal responsibility only as an external constraint on social policy, this category identifies the discursive criteria through which public spending is presented as affordable, responsible, or compatible with fiscal soundness. It therefore helps assess whether social policy references are linked to standards of financing and fiscal credibility.

Because these categories are not mutually exclusive, the analysis focuses on how their respective vocabularies overlap. Where *welfare/protection* appears in isolation,

social policy can be read as presented primarily in the idiom of livelihood security and protection against social risks. Where *social investment* recurs alongside *industrial policy*, social policy appears not only as human-capital formation but also in relation to industrial transformation and productive-capacity building. Where social policy language appears with *fiscal responsibility*, it is connected to revenue financing, affordability, and fiscal sustainability. The framework therefore asks not simply whether social and economic policy were combined, but which policy vocabularies structured that combination and what relative standing each of the four categories acquired. On this basis, Section III operationalizes the categories through a keyword dictionary and examines their sentence-level co-occurrence in the official texts.

III. Research Method

1. Data and Preprocessing

To examine how the administration presented and explained its social policy agenda, this study draws on the official texts released through the Briefing Room of the White House Archives, limited to the “Speeches and Remarks” and “Statements and Releases” categories. These materials—presidential addresses, policy announcements, budget messages, fact sheets, and statements on major legislation—make it possible to observe, on a consistent basis, which problems the administration presented its agenda as addressing, which goals it associated with that agenda, and what justificatory language it used. Because the materials were gathered from the public records of a single institution according to a consistent set of criteria, they also permit period-by-period comparison and replication.

Data collection covered the full administrative term, from January 2021 to January 2025, yielding 9,354 documents. For each document, the title, date, category, URL, and body text were stored, and the publication date was converted into year- and month-level variables to support sorting and the examination of temporal distribution.

The data were then cleaned through the removal of boilerplate content, duplicate entries, and non-textual elements. Items with empty body text or incomplete dates were dropped; to limit duplication, body text was lowercased and its whitespace standardized before duplicates were identified, and documents with high content similarity were removed. Short texts of fewer than 150 words—brief schedule notices, ceremonial messages, and simple announcements, which offer too little context to discern a policy’s problem definition or justificatory language—were also excluded. After screening, the analytical corpus comprised 7,318 documents and 2,638,009 tokens.

Preprocessing was carried out in a Python text-analysis environment. With the source texts preserved, a separate analytical text was generated through lowercasing, removal of extraneous whitespace, punctuation, numerals, and non-semantic symbols, tokenization, and lemmatization. General stopwords were removed, and high-frequency terms with low discriminatory value—presidents’ and country names, common verbs—were pruned incrementally while the N-gram distribution was monitored, so that compound expressions carrying policy meaning would survive. Phrases such as ‘middle class’, ‘clean energy’, ‘supply chain’, ‘child care’, and ‘private investment’, though unremarkable as single words, can function as meaningful policy expressions when read as compounds.

The cleaned data were then divided by analytical purpose into document- and sentence-level units. Keyword frequency and N-gram analysis were performed on the document-level data to identify the principal vocabulary and compound expressions recurring across the discourse; the full set of documents was re-segmented into sentences for the keyword co-occurrence network analysis and the category-based co-occurrence analysis, which require a narrower context for judging how social-policy vocabulary combines with the languages of *welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*. The following section sets out each procedure in turn.

2. Analytical Procedure

1) Keyword Frequency and N-gram Analysis

In the first stage, keyword frequency and N-gram analyses identified the policy terms and compound expressions recurring in the official texts. The frequency analysis, performed on the full preprocessed corpus, recorded for each term both total occurrences and frequencies per 10,000 words for each term, with the latter used to offset differences in document volume and to compare the relative prominence of terms across the discourse.

Single-word frequencies, however, give only a partial sense of the contexts in which terms were used: terms such as 'energy', 'care', and 'supply' acquire more specific policy meanings within compounds such as 'clean energy', 'health care', 'child care', and 'supply chain'. The analysis therefore also extracted 2-grams and 3-grams and calculated, for each N-gram, total frequency, frequency per 10,000 words, document count, and document share. This made it possible to gauge whether an expression was concentrated in a few documents or circulated broadly. This stage is exploratory: its aim was not to infer the character of the discourse from individual expressions but to establish the basic lexical composition of the texts and to identify the terms to be carried into the subsequent network and category analyses.

2) Keyword Co-occurrence Network Analysis

In the second stage, a sentence-level co-occurrence network examined how major keywords were used together. The unit of analysis was set at the sentence rather than the document: because a single document may present several agendas in parallel, document-level co-occurrence risks treating terms from different contexts as related, whereas sentence-level analysis registers only those terms placed within a single statement.

The preprocessed documents were divided into sentences, in which preselected

keywords and compound expressions—clean energy, supply chain, health care, child care, middle class, private investment, and the like—were detected as single units; a keyword recurring within a sentence was counted once. Co-occurrence was defined as the appearance of two or more keywords in the same sentence, and every keyword pair was extracted, with the number of shared sentences taken as the pair's co-occurrence frequency. From these relations the study built a network in which nodes are keywords and edges are sentence-level co-occurrences weighted by frequency. To characterize the structure, the analysis examined degree—the number of other keywords to which a term connects—and weighted degree—how often it co-occurs with them—thereby distinguishing not only frequent terms but central ones that link multiple strands of policy language.

3) Category Dictionaries and Category-based Co-occurrence Analysis

In the third stage, the keyword-level findings were aggregated into the four analytical categories. Because individual keywords cannot by themselves show how policy vocabularies were combined, the study built a category dictionary covering *welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility* and applied it to the sentence-level data.

The dictionary was constructed in three steps. First, core terms for each category were selected from the theoretical discussion in Section II. Second, these concepts were matched to the administration's actual language, with specific terms and phrases added where a concept did not map directly onto policy usage. Human-capital and labor-market participation under social investment, for instance, were operationalized through 'education', 'training', 'skills', 'workforce development', 'child care', 'pre-k', and 'paid leave'. The rebuilding of productive capacity under *industrial policy* was captured through 'manufacturing', 'supply chain', 'clean energy', 'semiconductors', 'chips', 'infrastructure', 'industrial base', and 'made in America'. The *fiscal responsibility* category drew on terms of revenue, tax fairness, and deficit management such as 'deficit', 'debt', 'fiscal responsibility', 'paid for', 'revenue', 'fair share', and

‘corporate tax’.

Third, the dictionary was designed to identify distinct policy vocabularies rather than mutually exclusive policy domains. Individual keywords were therefore assigned to a single category rather than coded across multiple categories. Terms that could plausibly be read in more than one way were placed according to the primary policy logic they invoke. ‘Education’, ‘training’, and ‘skills’, for example, may appear beside ‘manufacturing’, ‘clean energy’, or ‘supply chain terms’, yet the logic they directly invoke is human–capital formation and labor–market participation; they were therefore assigned to *social investment*. Expressions referring directly to industrial sectors, productive capacity, supply chains, technological innovation, or strategic industries were assigned to *industrial policy*. Inter–category linkage was thus captured not through duplicate coding at the dictionary stage but through sentence–level co–occurrence, when keywords from different categories appear together in one statement. The categories and representative keywords are reported in Table 1.

<Table 1> Construction of Analytical Categories and the Keyword Dictionary

Analytical Category	Operational Definition and Assignment Criteria	Representative Keywords and Phrases
Social Investment	Social policy language linked to human–capital formation, labor–market participation, skill development, employability, and productivity gains; terms such as education, training, and skills are assigned here because they directly refer to human capital and labor–market participation, even when they appear alongside industrial–policy terms.	education, training, skills, workforce development, child care, pre–k, paid leave, care economy
Welfare/ Protection	Social policy language centered on protection against social risks such as poverty, illness, unemployment, old age, and housing insecurity; includes expressions directly referring to income support, health coverage, housing assistance, social safety nets, and the protection for vulnerable groups.	poverty, low–income, social security, medicare, medicaid, health care, housing, unemployment, safety net, SNAP

Industrial Policy	Policy vocabulary linked to industrial transformation, productive capacity, supply-chain resilience, technological innovation, strategic industries, and domestic production capabilities; limited to expressions directly referring to industrial sectors, production bases, supply chains, and technological or energy transitions.	manufacturing, supply chain, clean energy, semiconductors, chips, infrastructure, industrial base, made in America, electric vehicles, critical minerals
Fiscal Responsibility	Public spending language linked to revenue mobilization, tax fairness, deficit reduction, debt management, affordability, and fiscal sustainability; includes only expressions tied to fiscal management, taxation, deficits, or debt, rather than general references to costs.	deficit, debt, fiscal responsibility, pay for, paid for, reduce the deficit, revenue, fair share, tax loopholes, corporate tax

Source: Author.

Category-based co-occurrence is used here as a mapping device rather than as direct evidence that one policy language justified another. Because sentence-level co-occurrence captures textual proximity rather than argumentative direction, it identifies where policy vocabularies were repeatedly placed together in official discourse. Claims about discursive linkage therefore rest both on the combination of these recurrent associations and the reading of representative passages in which social policy references are connected to policy goals, problem definitions, or expected effects.

The category-based analysis was conducted at the sentence level. Keywords detected in each sentence were mapped onto their categories, and a sentence containing two or more categories was coded as a case of inter-category co-occurrence. A sentence pairing ‘education’ or ‘training’ with industrial-policy terms such as ‘manufacturing’, ‘clean energy’, ‘semiconductors’, ‘supply chain’, or ‘infrastructure’, for instance, was counted as a *social investment-industrial policy* co-occurrence—not because education was recoded as *industrial policy*, but because *social-investment* language was articulated in conjunction with *industrial-policy* language within the same statement. Where three or more categories appeared together, all possible category pairs were counted. Results were examined both as

raw co-occurrence frequencies and as each pair's share of total co-occurrences. In addition, the analysis computed, for each category, the proportion of its sentences that also contained a second category, a conditional measure that limits the overrepresentation of categories appearing more frequently in the corpus. Through this procedure, the study assessed whether social policy language appeared chiefly as a stand-alone idiom of *welfare/protection*, was articulated alongside *social investment* and *industrial-policy* language, or appeared in conjunction with *fiscal-responsibility* language.

As a supplementary robustness check, the analysis tested an alternative classification of four care-related keyword strings. In the baseline dictionary, 'child care', 'pre-k', 'paid leave', and 'care economy' were assigned to social investment because, in this study's coding scheme, they primarily invoke labor-market participation, human-capital formation, and the treatment of care as productive investment. These terms can nevertheless be read through the language of *welfare/protection* when they are framed as support for family livelihood security or as protection against care-related social risks. To assess whether the category-level results depended on assigning these care-related terms to *social investment*, the four keyword strings were recoded as *welfare/protection*, while all other keyword assignments were held constant, and the sentence-level category counts and pairwise category co-occurrences were recalculated. The recoding increased *welfare/protection* sentences from 11,240 to 12,432 and reduced *social investment* sentences from 8,412 to 7,165, while industrial policy remained unchanged at 18,164 and continued to be the most widely distributed category. The main co-occurrence pattern also remained stable: *welfare/protection-industrial policy* co-occurrence increased from 1,204 to 1,321, while *social investment-industrial policy* co-occurrence decreased from 1,178 to 1,065. This supplementary check suggests that the category-level finding—that social policy language was repeatedly articulated alongside *industrial-policy* language—does not depend on the baseline classification of these care-related terms.

IV. Findings

The empirical analysis proceeds in three steps. The first section identifies the basic lexical composition of the corpus by examining keyword frequencies and recurring 2-gram and 3-gram expressions. The second section moves to sentence-level co-occurrence networks in order to map semantic proximity among major policy keywords. The third section reconstructs these patterns at the level of the four analytical categories—*welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*—and then reads representative passages to examine how selected co-occurrences connected social policy references to policy goals, problem definitions, and expected effects. This sequence is important: the first two stages identify recurring vocabulary and semantic linkages, while the final stage moves from co-occurrence patterns to an interpretive account of discursive linkages.

1. Keywords and Recurring Expressions

The first stage identifies the policy terms and expressions that appeared most often in the official texts. At the unigram level, the most frequent term was ‘community’ (17,217 occurrences; 65.85 per 10,000 words), followed by ‘health’(13,877; 53.07) and ‘family’(12,214; 46.71). Other high-frequency terms included ‘security’(11,425), ‘job’(10,113), ‘right’(9,838), ‘energy’(9,818), ‘investment’(9,459), ‘woman’(9,329), and ‘climate’(8,695).

The discourse thus drew repeatedly on a broad vocabulary of community, health, family, security, jobs, rights, energy, investment, gender, and climate. The prominence of ‘health’ and ‘family’ signals a visible presence of social policy vocabulary, while the frequency of ‘job’, ‘energy’, ‘investment’, and ‘climate’ points to the salience of employment, energy transition, and investment language. Broad terms such as ‘community’, ‘right’, and ‘woman’, however, do not by themselves mark a determinate orientation; the unigram results are better read as an initial map of the corpus’s basic

vocabulary than as evidence of discursive structure.

To situate these terms in more specific contexts, the analysis turned to bigrams, since terms such as ‘energy’, ‘care’, and ‘supply’ gain clearer meaning within compounds. Table 2 reports the ten most widely distributed bigrams ranked by document share.

<Table 2> Ten Most Widely Distributed Policy–Related Bigrams by Document Share

Rank	Expression	Frequency	Frequency per 10,000 Words	Number of Documents	Share of Documents (%)
1	clean energy	3,587	13.72	1,107	15.13
2	private sector	2,063	7.89	1,095	14.96
3	supply chain	2,941	11.25	961	13.13
4	climate change	1,937	7.41	919	12.56
5	health care	2,358	9.02	861	11.77
6	small business	3,103	11.87	829	11.33
7	climate crisis	1,212	4.64	784	10.71
8	bipartisan infrastructure	1,834	7.01	730	9.98
9	middle class	1,553	5.94	676	9.24
10	human right	1,410	5.39	676	9.24

Source: Author’s calculation.

The most widely distributed bigram was ‘clean energy’(15.13 percent of documents), followed by ‘private sector’(14.96), ‘supply chain’(13.13), ‘climate change’(12.56), ‘health care’(11.77), and ‘small business’(11.33). These expressions circulated broadly rather than clustering in a few documents. The clearest pattern is the wide distribution of climate, energy–transition, and industrial–economic vocabulary. ‘Clean energy’, ‘climate change’, and ‘climate crisis’ mark climate as a recurring theme, while ‘private sector’, ‘supply chain’, ‘small business’, ‘bipartisan infrastructure’, and ‘middle class’ indicate that this theme was repeatedly associated with ‘private–sector activity’, ‘supply–chain resilience’, ‘infrastructure’, ‘small business’, and ‘middle–class recovery’. Social policy expressions figured more

selectively: ‘health care’ appears among the ten most widely distributed bigrams, but expressions more closely tied to traditional welfare expansion—such as ‘child care’, ‘paid leave’, ‘housing support’, ‘income security’—do not. Social policy vocabulary was thus present, yet the most widely recurring compounds were organized more strongly around climate and energy transition, private-sector activity, supply chains, infrastructure, and middle-class recovery.

The trigram analysis specifies these patterns further. Table 3 reports the ten most widely distributed trigrams, computed from the lemmatized texts after excluding institutional names and formulaic phrases with limited policy relevance.

<Table 3> Ten Most Widely Distributed Policy-Related Trigrams by Document Share

Rank	Expression	Frequency	Freq. per 10,000 Words	No. of Documents	Documents Share (%)
1	tackle climate crisis	271	1.04	224	3.06
2	pay union job	294	1.12	216	2.95
3	private sector investment	265	1.01	209	2.86
4	prescription drug cost	297	1.14	208	2.84
5	middle class family	268	1.02	205	2.80
6	child tax credit	353	1.35	204	2.79
7	greenhouse gas emission	293	1.12	195	2.66
8	social security medicare	352	1.35	194	2.65
9	small business owner	375	1.43	190	2.60
10	clean energy economy	267	1.02	184	2.51

Source: Author’s calculation.

The trigrams reinforce the bigram pattern. ‘Tackle climate crisis’, ‘greenhouse gas emission’, and ‘the clean energy economy’ register climate action and clean-energy transition as recurring phrases, while ‘private sector investment’, ‘pay union job’, ‘small business owner’, and ‘middle class family’ mark investment, jobs, small business, and the middle class as recurrent. Even at the trigram level, climate and energy expressions appear alongside the language of economic transition, employment,

private investment, and middle-class recovery. The trigrams also surface more specific social policy phrases—‘prescription drug cost’, ‘child tax credit’, ‘social security medicare’—pointing to health-care costs, family support, and old-age security. Yet N-gram analysis alone cannot show how these expressions were articulated or which policy vocabularies they were tied to, since ‘prescription drug cost’ or ‘child tax credit’ can be read either as part of the vocabulary of health coverage and family support, or through the language of cost reduction, tax policy, and income security.

Taken together, the frequency and N-gram analyses show that social policy vocabulary was clearly present in the official discourse, but embedded in a lexical environment in which *clean energy*, the private sector, supply chains, infrastructure, the middle class, investment, jobs, and cost reduction were highly salient. These descriptive patterns establish the lexical background of the discourse. The next section therefore moves from recurring expressions to sentence-level co-occurrence analysis in order to examine how major keywords were placed in relation to one another.

2. Semantic Linkages among Policy Keywords

Frequency and N-gram analyses show how often and how widely expressions appeared, but not which keywords were placed together within sentences. This section therefore builds a sentence-level co-occurrence network to examine semantic linkages among major keywords. Co-occurrence is treated here as repeated proximity within official discourse—a measure of association, not of causal relationship, policy effect or argumentative direction.

The network comprised 21 nodes and 77 edges; of the 210 possible ties, 77 were observed, for a density of roughly 0.37, with a total edge weight of 42,933. The most frequent pair was ‘jobs–investment’, which co-occurred 2,709 times (6.31 percent of all co-occurrences), followed by ‘jobs–education’ (1,871; 4.36 percent), ‘jobs–manufacturing’ (1,449; 3.38 percent), ‘jobs–families’ (1,419; 3.31 percent), and ‘families–costs’ (1,339; 3.12 percent). The ten leading pairs together accounted for 14,573 co-occurrences, or 33.94 percent of the total, indicating that linkages were

concentrated around a small number of central associations rather than spread evenly across the network. Table 4 reports these ten pairs.

<Table 4> Ten Most Frequent Policy Keyword Pairs by Sentence-Level Co-occurrence Frequency

Rank	First Keyword	Second Keyword	Co-occurrence Frequency	Share of Total Co-occurrences (%)
1	jobs	investment	2,709	6.31%
2	jobs	education	1,871	4.36%
3	jobs	manufacturing	1,449	3.38%
4	jobs	families	1,419	3.31%
5	families	costs	1,339	3.12%
6	investment	clean_energy	1,255	2.92%
7	education	investment	1,236	2.88%
8	investment	manufacturing	1,131	2.63%
9	health_care	costs	1,129	2.63%
10	education	families	1,035	2.41%

Source: Author's calculation.

Note: Percentages are calculated based on the total co-occurrence frequency across the 77 observed ties (42,933).

The defining feature of the leading pairs is the connectivity of 'jobs' and 'investment'. The two not only formed the most frequent pair but recurred with other major keywords—'education', 'manufacturing', 'families', 'clean energy'—suggesting that, in the official discourse, the language of investment was tightly bound to that of job creation. Investment functioned less as a term confined to one policy area than as a bridging term linking manufacturing, clean energy, education and training, and infrastructure to employment. This is consistent with the N-gram results: where 'clean energy', 'private sector', 'supply chain', 'bipartisan infrastructure', and 'middle class' were broadly distributed across the corpus, the network shows them connected at the sentence level through 'jobs' and 'investment'. The recurrent ties of 'jobs-manufacturing', 'investment-manufacturing', and 'investment-clean energy' indicate that manufacturing revival and the clean-energy transition were frequently placed near employment and investment, while 'jobs-education' and 'education-investment' situate

education within the language of labor-market participation, skill formation, and investment strategy.

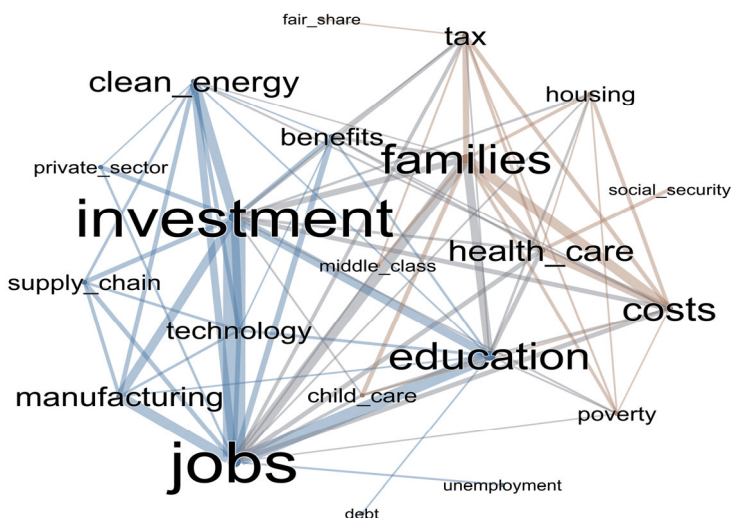
Social policy keywords also showed meaningful connectivity: ‘jobs-families’ (1,419), ‘families-costs’ (1,339), ‘health care-costs’ (1,129), and ‘education-families’ (1,035). ‘Family’, ‘health care’, ‘cost burdens’, and ‘education’ thus recurred in the discourse, but more often in relation to ‘jobs’, ‘education’, and ‘cost reduction’ than as an autonomous language of social rights, income security, or poverty relief; the strong ties of families to jobs, costs, and education in particular show family-related concerns being articulated through employment, household costs, and educational opportunity.

Figure 2 visualizes the network for pairs with co-occurrence frequencies of 200 or higher, with node size reflecting weighted degree and edge thickness reflecting co-occurrence frequency. *Jobs* and *investment* occupy central positions linked to multiple keywords, functioning less as terms within specific domains than as discursive connectors across policy issues. *Families* and *education*, though large nodes, are positioned mainly through their ties to *jobs* and *investment* rather than as independent centers—suggesting that social policy vocabulary was visible yet repeatedly associated with the language of job creation and investment. The network, however, records keyword proximity, not causal hierarchy, policy outcome, or substantive subordination. It should therefore be read as an intermediate layer of evidence for how social policy issues were situated within broader policy vocabularies.

Several keywords associated with traditional welfare/protection discourse—‘housing’, ‘poverty’, ‘child care’, ‘social security’, ‘unemployment’, ‘debt’, and ‘fair share’—sat closer to the periphery. Their position does not signal absence but indicates that, at the network level, they did not serve as central connectors in the way jobs and investment did. Taken together, the network shows ‘jobs’ and ‘investment’ operating as the central linking terms of the discourse, joining education, families, manufacturing, clean energy, and cost burdens. Socioeconomic issues were therefore frequently placed near employment and investment, while welfare/protection terms appeared without becoming central connectors. Keyword proximity, however, cannot by itself identify the theoretical logics in which these terms were embedded. The next

section therefore reconstructs these linkages at the level of the four analytical categories and examines representative passages in which these category-level associations acquired clearer discursive meaning.

<Figure 2> Policy Keyword Network, Co-occurrence Threshold ≥ 200



Source: Author's calculation.

3. Discursive Linkages among Theoretical Categories

The keyword network identified 'jobs' and 'investment' as the central connectors of the administration's official discourse, with social policy terms such as 'families', 'education', and 'health care' appearing in close proximity to employment, investment, and cost-burden language rather than forming an autonomous welfare-expansion vocabulary. This section reconstructs those keyword-level patterns at the level of the four analytical categories—*welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*—to examine not only how prominently each category appeared but how the categories combined within official texts. As in the preceding analysis,

co-occurrence is interpreted as repeated proximity within official discourse rather than as direct evidence of causal relationships, policy intentions, or legislative outcomes. The interpretive question is whether, in representative passages, these recurrent associations connected social policy references to broader policy goals, problem definitions, and expected effects.

Applying the category dictionaries to the sentence-level corpus identified 37,487 sentences containing at least one category keyword, or 12.63 percent of the 296,732 sentences in the corpus. Their distribution was markedly uneven (Table 5). *Industrial policy* was by far the most widely circulated category, appearing in 18,164 of these sentences (48.45 percent), followed by *welfare/protection* at 29.98 percent (11,240) and *social investment* at 22.44 percent (8,412), with *fiscal responsibility* the smallest at 11.01 percent (4,128).

Nearly half of all policy-keyword sentences thus invoked the language of ‘infrastructure’, ‘manufacturing’, ‘clean energy’, ‘supply chains’, and ‘semiconductors’. This distribution indicates that *industrial-policy* vocabulary circulated more widely than the other three category vocabularies in the administration’s socioeconomic discourse. Yet category frequencies alone show the visibility of each vocabulary, not the relations among them. The analysis therefore turns to inter-category co-occurrence, focusing on whether sentences containing welfare/protection or social-investment language also contained industrial-policy or fiscal-responsibility language.

<Table 5> Sentence-Level Occurrences by Theoretical Category

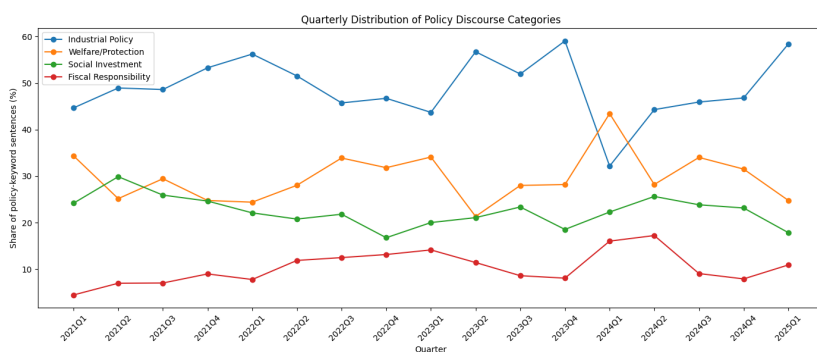
category	Number of Sentences	Share of Total Category Occurrences (%)	Share of All Sentences (%)	Share of Policy-Keyword Sentences (%)
<i>Industrial Policy</i>	18,164	43.31%	6.12%	48.45%
<i>Welfare/Protection</i>	11,240	26.80%	3.79%	29.98%
<i>Social Investment</i>	8,412	20.06%	2.83%	22.44%
<i>Fiscal Responsibility</i>	4,128	9.84%	1.39%	11.01%

Source: Author’s calculation
Note: Because more than one category may appear in the same sentence, the category shares may sum to more than 100 percent.

The internal composition of each category specifies the vocabulary through which it was assembled. Industrial policy rested mainly on ‘infrastructure’ (6,232 sentences) and ‘clean energy’ (6,161), followed by ‘manufacturing’, ‘supply chain’, and ‘chips’—a language of infrastructure renewal and energy transition that extended into manufacturing revival and advanced productive capacity. *Welfare/protection* drew on ‘health care’, ‘housing’, ‘medicare’, ‘lower costs’, and ‘social security’, articulating livelihood security, health and housing access, and cost burdens. *Social investment* centered on ‘education’, ‘training’, ‘child care’, ‘skills’, and ‘community college’, foregrounding skill formation, care, and labor-market participation.

This ordering held broadly stable over time (Figure 3). *Industrial policy* ranked first from the opening quarter of 2021 and remained within the mid-40 to high-50 percent range across the term, suggesting that its prominence was not confined to the later legislative phase but characterized the discourse from the outset. *Welfare/protection* moved mostly between 20 and 30 percent, with a brief rise in early 2024; *social investment* held near 20 percent; and *fiscal responsibility*, consistently the smallest category, edged upward in some later quarters.

<Figure 3> Quarterly Distribution of Theoretical Categories



Source: Author's calculation.

How these categories appeared together is the more pertinent question. Inter-category co-occurrence—the presence of two or more categories in a single

sentence—was concentrated in the pairings that joined social policy to industrial policy (Table 6). *Welfare/protection–industrial policy* was the most frequent pair (1,204 sentences, 24.91 percent), closely followed by *social investment–industrial policy* (1,178, 24.37 percent) and *welfare/protection–social investment* (1,082, 22.39 percent), while *industrial policy–fiscal responsibility* was the rarest (277, 5.73 percent). The frequent co–presence of ‘health care’, ‘housing’, ‘education’, ‘training’, and ‘child care’ with ‘infrastructure’, ‘manufacturing’, ‘clean energy’, and ‘supply–chain’ terms indicates that social policy language was repeatedly articulated alongside industrial–policy language within the same sentences.

<Table 6> Co-occurrence Frequency and Conditional Shares among Theoretical Categories

Category 1	Category 2	Number of Co-occurring Sentences	Share of Total Co-occurrences (%)	Share within Category 1 (%)	Share within Category 2 (%)
Welfare/ protection	industrial policy	1,204	24.91%	10.71%	6.63%
social investment	industrial policy	1,178	24.37%	14.00%	6.49%
Welfare/ protection	social investment	1,082	22.39%	9.63%	12.86%
Welfare/ protection	Fiscal responsibility	565	11.69%	5.03%	13.69%
social investment	Fiscal responsibility	526	10.88%	6.25%	12.74%
industrial policy	Fiscal responsibility	277	5.73%	1.52%	6.71%

Source: Author’s calculation.

Note: “Share within Category 1” and “Share within Category 2” refer to the proportion of sentences containing the relevant category that also contain the other category. When three or more categories appeared in the same sentence, co-occurrences were calculated separately for each possible category pair.

The conditional shares, rather than the raw category frequencies, provide the more

important evidence for the argument. They reveal an asymmetry within these linkages. Only 6.63 percent of *industrial policy* sentences also contained *welfare/protection* terms and 6.49 percent contained *social investment* terms, whereas 14.00 percent of *social investment* sentences and 12.86 percent of *welfare/protection* sentences contained *industrial policy* terms. *Industrial-policy* language thus circulated widely and frequently stood on its own, while social-policy-related language appeared more often in combination with broader economic policy vocabularies. This asymmetry is central to the interpretation: the argument is not simply that *industrial-policy* terms were more frequent, but that *welfare/protection* and *social-investment* language were repeatedly situated in proximity to *industrial-policy* language. *Fiscal responsibility* displayed its own selectivity: though it was the smallest category overall, it co-occurred with *welfare/protection* at 13.69 percent and *social investment* at 12.74 percent, far more than with *industrial policy* at 6.71 percent. This pattern identifies fiscal responsibility as a vocabulary more consistently attached to social-policy language than to industrial-policy language in general.

The co-occurrence results identify where different policy languages converged, while representative textual passages clarify how some of these convergences operated as discursive linkages. In its May 6, 2022 presentation of AM Forward, for instance, the administration tied manufacturing competitiveness and supply-chain resilience to “lower costs for American families,” casting domestic production as a means of easing household cost pressures (The White House, 2022a). Here, a *welfare/protection* concern—family cost burdens—is articulated through an *industrial-policy* vocabulary of domestic production, manufacturing capacity, and supply-chain resilience. The passage does not merely place family costs and manufacturing in the same policy environment; it connects household cost relief to the expected effects of rebuilding domestic production.

The linkage between *social investment* and *industrial policy* appears more directly in the administration’s CHIPS and Science Act discourse. The August 2022 fact sheet presented the Act as a measure to lower costs, create jobs, strengthen supply chains, and counter China, while defining its core instruments as investments in semiconductor

research, development, manufacturing, and workforce development (The White House, 2022b). A later White House fact sheet marking the first year of the Act similarly connected semiconductor supply-chain reshoring to workforce hubs, community-college programs, and pathways into good-paying jobs in the semiconductor industry (The White House, 2023). In these passages, education, training, and workforce development are not framed only as general social opportunity. They are presented as conditions for rebuilding strategic industrial capacity. This provides a qualitative basis for interpreting the social investment-industrial policy pairing as more than mere lexical proximity in selected texts.

The *fiscal-responsibility* pairings point to a different but related mode of discursive articulation. In the White House's "By the Numbers" presentation of the Inflation Reduction Act, health-care and prescription-drug cost reductions were presented alongside the Act's provisions to make the tax code fairer and reduce the deficit (The White House, 2022c). The same document linked lower prescription-drug costs, lower health-insurance premiums, corporate minimum taxation, tax enforcement, and deficit reduction within a single justificatory frame. In this case, health care and drug-cost relief remain recognizable *welfare/protection* concerns, but their public rationale is connected to the fiscal language of affordability, tax fairness, and deficit reduction.

These examples clarify the interpretive step from proximity to discursive linkage. The category-level co-occurrences do not, by themselves, prove that every paired sentence expresses economization. They instead identify recurrent discursive sites at which social-policy language was joined to economic-policy language. The representative passages show that, in selected texts, these linkages connected social-policy concerns to labor-market participation, productive capacity, household cost reduction, and fiscal responsibility. On this basis, the category-level findings can be read not as direct proof of discursive justification, but as evidence of recurring associations that, in representative passages, operated as public rationales for situating social policy within a broader economic agenda.

Having clarified how the major category pairings could operate as discursive linkages in representative texts, Figure 4 turns back to the corpus-level pattern and traces how

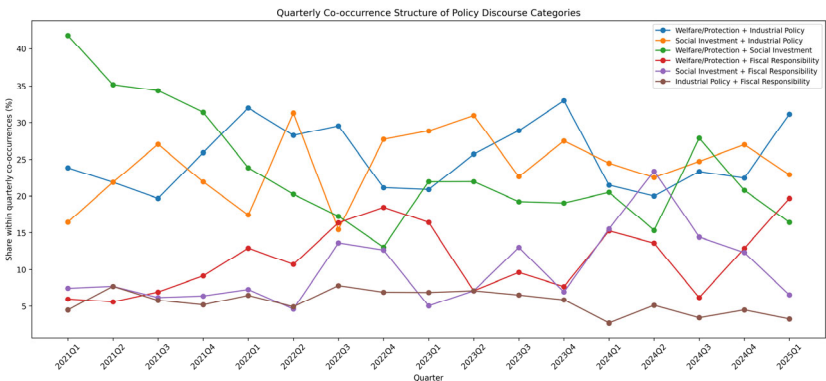
these combinations changed over time. In the first quarter of 2021, *welfare/protection-social investment* accounted for 41.79 percent of inter-category co-occurrences and remained high through mid-2021. This early pattern, however, should be read in light of the pandemic emergency and the ARPA-centered relief agenda, which foregrounded health care, family and income support, education, and child care. Rather than indicating a stable orientation toward *welfare/protection* and *social investment* across the administration's discourse, it primarily reflects the emergency-relief context of the administration's first year.

After 2022, a different pattern becomes more visible. As the comprehensive Build Back Better package lost momentum, social policy terms continued to appear in official discourse, but they were more visibly articulated alongside *industrial-policy* and *fiscal-responsibility* language: *social investment-industrial policy* reached 31.29 percent in the second quarter of 2022, while *welfare/protection-industrial policy* reached 31.98 percent in the first quarter and 29.53 percent in the third. 'Education', 'training', 'child care', 'health care', 'housing', and 'cost' terms, in other words, were voiced in proximity to 'infrastructure investment', 'semiconductors', 'manufacturing policy', 'clean energy', and 'supply-chain resilience'. These patterns should be read as evidence of discursive association, not as evidence that this language caused some provisions to be selected over others in the legislative process.

A parallel movement linked social policy to fiscal responsibility. As *welfare/protection-social investment* fell to 17.23 and 13.08 percent in the third and fourth quarters of 2022, *welfare/protection-fiscal responsibility* rose to 16.33 and 18.46 percent—a shift that tracks the Inflation Reduction Act debate, which the White House framed around lowering health, drug, and energy costs, advancing tax fairness, and reducing the deficit. *Industrial policy-fiscal responsibility*, by contrast, stayed low, indicating that industrial policy was more often paired with investment, growth, and competitiveness than with fiscal conditions. The 2024 election period was more mixed: the major social-policy pairings clustered near 20 percent in early 2024 while the fiscal-responsibility pairings rose, with social investment-fiscal responsibility reaching 23.40 percent in the second quarter, the highest in the series. Social policy terms

thus regained visibility, but they appeared more often alongside the language of cost reduction, revenue, and deficit management than through the language of welfare expansion alone.

<Figure 4> Quarterly Patterns of Co-occurrence across Theoretical Categories



Source: Author's calculation.

Taken together, the category-level analysis shows that *welfare/protection* and *social investment* language did not appear primarily as self-contained vocabularies of welfare expansion. Rather, they were repeatedly articulated in relation to *industrial-policy* language and, in certain periods, *fiscal-responsibility* language. *Industrial-policy* language, by contrast, circulated most widely and more often stood on its own. This pattern suggests that social policy concerns in the administration's official discourse were frequently positioned within a broader economic agenda organized around jobs, investment, cost reduction, industrial transition, and fiscal responsibility. The representative passages further indicate how some of these associations operated as public rationales: social policy references were connected to the goals of expanding productive capacity, easing household costs, supporting workforce formation, and maintaining fiscal credibility. The findings therefore support a bounded interpretation of economization: social policy remained visible, but its discursive meaning was repeatedly shaped through its association with economically oriented policy

vocabularies.

V. Conclusion

This study asked how social policy agendas were associated with and articulated through other policy languages in the Biden administration's official socioeconomic discourse. Drawing on official White House texts from January 2021 to January 2025, it constructed four analytical categories—*welfare/protection*, *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*—and combined keyword frequency and N-gram analyses, sentence-level co-occurrence network analysis, and category-based co-occurrence analysis. The aim was less to measure how often social policy terms appeared than to examine how they were positioned within broader policy vocabularies and how selected textual passages connected them to policy goals, problem definitions, and expected effects.

The findings can be summarized in three points. First, social policy vocabulary retained a visible presence, but the most widely distributed compounds were strongly associated with clean energy, the private sector, supply chains, infrastructure, the middle class, investment, jobs, and cost reduction. Second, the co-occurrence network shows *jobs* and *investment* operating as central linking terms across policy issues, with social policy keywords such as *families*, *education*, *health care*, and *costs* repeatedly placed alongside the language of jobs, investment, education, and cost reduction. Third, the category analysis shows *industrial policy* as the most widely distributed category, *welfare/protection* and *social investment* recurrently co-occurring with industrial-policy language, and *fiscal responsibility*, though smaller overall, more selectively tied to the two social categories than to industrial policy. The high *welfare/protection-social investment* co-occurrence of early 2021 should be read with caution, reflecting the pandemic emergency and the ARPA-centered relief agenda; the more telling pattern is that, after 2022, social policy terms more visibly appeared alongside industrial-policy and fiscal-responsibility language.

These patterns suggest that social policy expressions in the official discourse were not voiced solely through the traditional logic of *welfare/protection* but were frequently situated alongside *social investment*, *industrial policy*, and *fiscal responsibility*. This makes it difficult to read the administration's socioeconomic discourse simply as an attempt at welfare-state expansion followed by political defeat. In official rhetoric, social agendas were not foregrounded only as an autonomous project of welfare expansion but were repeatedly tied to job creation, investment, industrial transition, cost reduction, and fiscal responsibility. The findings are in this sense consistent with the study's concept of the economization of social policy—the process through which social policy agendas acquire public meaning not only through the language of rights and livelihood security, but also through their association with economic performance, productive capacity, affordability, and fiscal conditions.

The scope of this interpretation is limited to official discourse. Co-occurrence identifies repeated proximity among keywords and categories, not policy strategy, argumentative direction, or causation. Political and institutional factors—inflation, fiscal pressure, Senate veto points, and opposition from moderate legislators—remain essential to explaining the reduction and reconfiguration of the agenda. The contribution here is therefore not to explain why BBB was reduced or why specific provisions survived in the IRA. It is to identify a more limited condition of discursive compatibility: social policy was able to be publicly articulated as part of an economic-policy frame organized around productive-capacity building, household cost relief, workforce formation, and fiscal credibility.

This carries a broader implication for the study of the welfare state. The return of state intervention does not necessarily take the form of universal welfare-state expansion; it may instead appear as a selective reconfiguration of social policy around industrial policy, labor-market participation, investment, and fiscal responsibility. In the Biden case, social policy was recurrently articulated in relation to jobs, investment, industrial transition, cost reduction, and fiscal responsibility, rather than presented only as an autonomous expansion of social rights. This suggests that, at least in liberal welfare regimes such as the United States, the renewed legitimacy of the state may

coexist with, and even reinforce, the economization of social policy. Contemporary welfare-state analysis might therefore attend not only to whether social policy expands or contracts, but also to the policy languages with which it is associated, the goals to which it is connected, and the way its internal priorities are reordered within broader strategies of economic governance.

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