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Legitimation Manipulation in Political Argumentation: A Cognitive Critical Comparative Analysis on Energy Policy Discourse of the Democratic Party and the Republicn Party

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LEGITIMATION MANIPULATION IN POLITICAL ARGUMENTATION: A COGNITIVE CRITICAL COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ON ENERGY POLICY DISCOURSE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE REPUBLICN PARTY

Abstract: Energy has become a global issue and the U.S.' energy policy remains volatile as the Democratic party and the Republican have different stances on energy. This article constructs a three-dimensional theoretical framework: strategy-argumentation-critique, which combines representation, action and critique together. The proximization and distanciation are integrated together into symbolic distance strategies which are used to adjust the distance between outside-deictic center and inside-deictic center. And the symbolic distance strategies are used to manipulate the public's construal mechanism in the process of argumentation or deliberation leading to decision and action. Finally the critique of argumentation can disclose the rightfulness and wrongness which can contribute to the social development. Therefore, this article, taking the energy part of Economic Report of the President as data, analyzes how the two parties deliberate their own energy action in the practical argumentation, explores how they use symbolic distance strategies in the argumentation to achieve their rhetorical effects, and offers a critical analysis of the argumentation to reveal the ideologies and stances of the two party reflected in their discourse.

Keywords: Energy discourse; symbolic distance strategies; proximization; distanciation; a cognitive critical analysis; legitimization

1.Introduction

Upon Donald Trump's taking office for a second time in 2025, his administration has withdrawn the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement and unleashed American energy to entrench his Energy Dominance Agenda which focuses on the utilization of conventional fossil fuels (Deberdt et al., 2025; Kling et al., 2025). This is opposed to the Clean Energy Transition Agenda of the prior Joe Biden's administration, who returned the U.S. to the Paris Climate Agreement and concentrated on the utilization of renewable energy to address climate change (Gazmararian et al., 2026; Quinn & Stokes, 2026). In the context of global energy crisis and climate crisis, more and more countries choose to adopt a clean energy path (Candemir et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). However, the U.S. energy policies remain conflicting and volatile for decades as the Democratic Party and the Republican Party engage in a repeating cycle of

policy cancellation whenever partisan power changes (Byrne et al., 2022). As the U.S. is the world's largest energy producer, consumer and exporter, the shifts in U.S. energy policies not only make the U.S. fail to sustain a long-standing, reliable and unified energy policy but also have significant impacts on the global energy security and the realization of carbon neutrality goal (Xia & Zhang, 2024).

The "discursive turn" in the 20th century make discourse become an important epistemological and methodological perspective in humanities and social sciences (Liu, 2024). Discourse can be defined from different points of view. For example, Brown & Yule (1983) regard discourse as language in use in a broad sense while Resigl & Wodak (2009) regard discourse as statements centering on a macro topic in a narrow sense. Zhao (2018) adopts the narrow perspective and refers energy discourse as discourse generated around a wide range of issues including energy production, transportation, consumption, policy formulation and strategic planning and other issues, and it is inherently social and political as it embodies inherent stances, viewpoints and attitudes. From this definition, we can see that energy discourse can be classified as political discourse because it connotes ideologies and stances. Therefore, researches on the U.S. energy discourse can not only clarify its policy logic but also discover the stances and ideologies reflected in language, which provide linguistic support for other countries to formulate energy planning and cope with potential energy crises.

Previous studies on the U.S. energy is mainly on a macro lens, politics which focuses on the interpretation of policy texts including: energy and other disciplines such as economics, environment, analysis of energy policy, energy and relations, and comparative studies of energy policies (Ma & Xie, 2025; Dunham & Schlosser, 2016; Nam et al., 2026; Guo et al., 2025; Mayer, 2019). Discourse means to study energy from a discursive view: such as emotion analysis, frame analysis and so on (Corbett & Savarimuthu, 2022;). It can be concluded that the previous studies on U.S. energy have two limitations: 1) studies from discursive view are more on discursive representation and lack an argumentative angle; comparative studies of the U.S. two parties' energy discourse is limited.

In this study, I try to explore how the two U.S. parties use report to argument their own energy policies and justify their energy actions, and what ideologies are reflected in the discourse analysis, which align with practical argumentation and cognitive discursive strategies. Fairclough & Fairclough (2012) argue that political

discourse is a form of practical argumentation as politics is most fundamentally about making choices or choosing policies on how to act in response to certain circumstances and goals. And either party's energy policy discourse involves the deliberation of different actions or propositions to finally put forward its own actions or propositions, so practical argumentation is suitable for the theoretical guidance of this study. Besides, the critique of the argumentation can reveal the ideologies and stances of the two parties since practical argumentation is the combination of argumentation and CDS. During the practical argumentation, the agent is always uses symbolic discursive strategies to manipulate the public's mind and achieve desired persuasive effects. And proximization and distanciation are two cognitive discursive strategies which can manipulate the public's construal mechanism by adjusting the perceived distance between internal and external entities to legitimatize their own party's energy policies and delegitimatize the other party's energy policies in their argumentation (Cap, 2014; Gao & Sun, 2024). Therefore in this study, I am to answer the following three questions:

(1) How do Trump's administration and Biden's administration deploy practical argumentation to argue their own energy policy propositions?

(2) How do Trump and Biden adopt symbolic distance strategies in their practical argumentation to legitimize their own actions or decisions?

(3) What ideologies and social values can be revealed?

To answer the three questions, I construct a strategy-argumentation-critique three dimensions theoretical framework to analyze the energy chapter of economic report of President Donald Trump (2026) and that of President Joe Biden (2024). And this theoretical framework is the first one for energy discourse, which can provide a new paradigm for political discourse analysis and help readers to identify the manipulation.

This article is divided into 6 sections and the remainder of this study is as follows: Section 2 presents a brief literature review including energy discourse, practical argumentation and symbolic discursive strategies. Section 3 provides the theoretical framework for this study. Section 4 introduces the research data and methodology. Section 5 provides a comprehensive analysis of practical argumentation and the symbolic distance strategies and discusses the ideologies and social values revealed in the two parties' energy policy discourse. Section 6 summarizes this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Energy Discourse

As energy has become increasingly recognized as the core strategic resource, a large body of studies has emerged. The research perspectives of energy discourse include discourse coalition, framing analysis, face theory, emotion analysis and critical discourse analysis. Firstly, Hajer (1997) has put forward argumentative discourse analysis (ADA) containing storylines, discourse coalition and discursive hegemony and it has been greatly used to explain the process of energy policy formation. For example, Spaeth (2012) analyzes how local government and people construct unified storylines, form discourse coalition and finally develop policy planning through structurization and institutionalization; Cotton & Van (2014) examines the national debate about shale gas by ADA to discover the influence of discourse on policy; Selbmann & Ide (2015) analyzes the the coalition of transnational energy discourse. Secondly, Entman (1993) proposes that framing means the selection and salience of message and it is widely used in media and communication to affect audiences' perceptions, attitudes and behaviors (Scheufele 1999). Selfa et al (2015) explores how local promoters framed the development of ethanol industry to highlight the advantages and avoid the disadvantages, which is harmful to rural long-term economic and environmental development. Thirdly, face theory is widely used in communication to save positive face and avoid negative face. Thatcher et al (2015) uses face threat theory, affective load theory and and escalation theory to analyze Fukushima disaster reports and find that the industry's persistent commitment to the "myth of nuclear safety" triggers widespread information-avoiding behaviours and severe information failure. Fourthly, emotions play a vital part about how citizens accept public policies. Corbett & Savarimuthu (2022) analyze different actors' emotions on sustainable energy. Fifthly, CDS's aim is to disclose how discourse shape social structure and how social structure in turn shape the production of discourse. Rasti & Sahragard (2012) adopts discursive strategies and presentational resources to have a critical discourse analysis of Iran's nuclear in The Economist; Zhao & Song (2023) applies spatial-temporal-axiological proximization model to offer a comparative analysis of American two party's energy speeches to reveal their respective values and ideologies. In a word, energy discourse from the discursive angle mostly focuses on the representation and cognitive proximization strategies, and few studies are analyzed from an argumentative angle.

2.2 *Practical Argumentation*

Practical argumentation is first introduced by Fairclough & Fairclough (2010) who make an integration of argumentation theory with critical discourse analysis, which is a new paradigm for CDS . Fairclough is one representative of CDS and his theory has undergone three periods. At first, Fairclough (1989) centered on the connections between language, power and ideology and pointed out that discourse can be analyzed through three dimensions: text, interaction and context. Then Fairclough (1992) paid attention to neoliberalism in discourse and has consistently developed and refined his three-dimension-analysis theory. Since 2012, in response to argumentative turn in political discourse and the limitations of conventional CDS, practical argumentation is introduced systematically in Political Discourse Analysis: A Method for Advanced Students (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). Then this theory has been adopted into empirical research and is being refined. For instance, the practical argumentation has been used in the public debate of the first UK austerity budget, in environment conflict and in reaching a consensus of Paris Agreement Conference, and it has been combined with framing and metaphor (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2011; Fairclough 2016; Fairclough & Mădroane 2020; Lewiński & Mohammed, 2019). Practical argumentation includes two types of argument schemes: premise-based argumentation and consequence-based argumentation. The premises contain four categories: Circumstance, Goal, Value, and Mean-Goal. Circumstance premise refers to the existing state of affairs and prevailing problems that a agent must take into account when undertaking an action; Goal premise denotes the future state that the agent wants to achieve. Value premise stands for the values and concerns that underpin the agent's conduct, ranging from personal desires to moral obligations and public concerns embedded within social norms. Mean-Goal premise posits that the action is the means that will take the agent from their present circumstance toward the goal in accordance with value. Notably, circumstance, goal and mean-Goal premises are all shaped by the values held by the agent. In short, the premise-based argumentation is that in response to the present circumstance the agent wants to realize his goal in accordance with certain values, and the agent should take the action. Consequences are split into positive and negative consequences. Positive consequences equal to the goals the action is meant to realize, whereas negative consequences means doing the action will have negative benefits that will make the goal impossible to achieve. Therefore the agent need to balance the potential action before reaching a decision, which embodies the deliberative nature of political

discourse (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013).

CDS contains normative critique and explanatory critique (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Normative critique evaluates the truthfulness, rightness and wrongness of social beliefs and practices according to standards of value, with the aim of uncovering internal contradictions within social reality (Habermas, 1984). Explanatory critique seeks to reveal the influence of ideology on discourse and accounts for why society comes as it is now. For practical argumentation, procedural ethics, discourse ethics by Habermas (1996) and argumentative approach are combined into a ethical critique which can be used for practical argumentation, and here we only focus on the deontological, consequentialist and virtue ethics (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2018). In summary, practical argumentation is a new paradigm focusing on what we should do rather than what is true and it aligns well with political discourse involving action or proposition deliberation.

2.3 *Symbolic Distance strategies*

Symbolic distance is regarded as a type of symbolic representation used to construct both physical distance or mental distance in the real world (Cap, 2013; Cap, 2020; Gao & Sun 2024). The distance between various entities within discourse can be dynamically adjusted by two kinds of discursive strategies: proximization and distanciation, which can influence audiences' cognition and achieve desired discursive effects. Proximization is first found by Chilton (2004) but was formally proposed by Cap (2005). Levinson (2003) argues that spatial cognition is important in our thinking and spatial cognition offers us tools for understanding other domains. Based on this, Chilton (2005) put forward the Discourse Space Theory (DST) containing space, time and value three dimensions, which can be used for analysis of entities' relations (Chilton 2005, 2010, 2011). But DST is a static description which cannot display the dynamic relations, so Cap put forward proximization on the foundation of DST. Proximization refers to the presenting of physically and temporally remote events and states of affairs which exerting adverse impacts directly and increasingly on speakers and hearers (Cap, 2013: 3). Proximization has limitations as it can only presenting the process from periphery to center, and the process from center to periphery is overlooked. Wieczorek (2009, 2013) propose distanciation which refers to the representing of entities in as communicative situation either as placed far away from self and the deictic center. So distanciation strategies are used to increase symbolic distance while proximization strategies are used to reduce symbolic distance while.

Although the two discursive strategies represent reverse directions, they are both operated through spatial-temporal-value three dimensions to adjust the symbolic distance to legitimate or delegitimate the action (Chovanec, 2019; Wieczorec, 2009: 125).

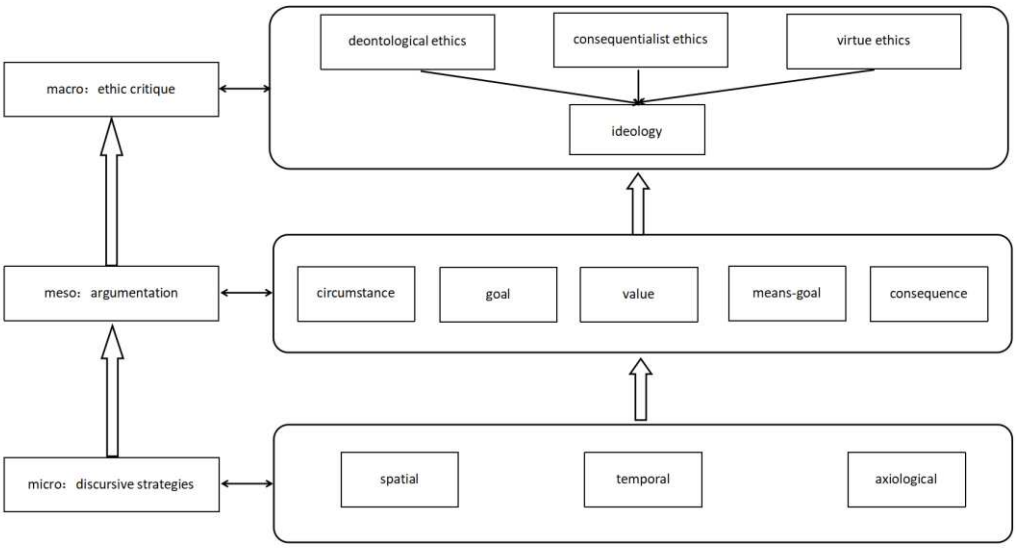
Through a systematic review of the previous studies, it is found that energy discourse confines its scope to discourse coalition, discourse analysis or cognitive construal, and no studies has been studied by integrating discursive strategies with the argumentation theory. To fill this research gap, this study combines practical argumentation and symbolic distance strategies together which can provide a suitable framework for this study. On the one hand, political discourse is argumentative in nature, so energy discourse is also argumentative (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). On the other hand, practical argumentation is to justify which action should be taken from meso-level and symbolic distance strategies are used to legitimize one's actions from micro-level, therefore the two theories can be incorporated together for energy policy discourse.

3 Theoretical Framework

This article constructs a research framework for energy policy discourse on the basis of practical argumentation and cognitive discursive strategies (Table 1). This framework consists of three dimensions: discursive strategies at the micro level; practical argumentative at the meso level; ethic critique at the macro level. This article firstly reconstructs the practical argumentative processes embedded in Donald Trump administration's and Joe Biden administration's energy discourse, and then compares the usage of proximization and disntanciation through spatial, temporal and axiological three dimensions. Finally, through the ethic critique of practical argumentative procedures, this research unveils the ideologies reflected in the discourse.

Table 1 Energy Policy Discourse Theoretical Framework

(Table 1 introduces the whole framework for this paper)



4 Data and Methodology

4.1 Data Collection

The Economic Report of the President is issued annually and it includes the whole situation of the year, policy proposal and future planning. As this article focuses on energy discourse, only the energy part is included. This paper selects the sixth chapter Accelerating the Clean Energy Transition from Economic Report of President Biden (2024) and the fourth chapter Achieving Energy Dominance to Power American Prosperity from Economic Report of President Trump (2026) as two corpora. The number of total word of the corpus is 19,510, in which the number of Biden's energy discourse is 12,323 words and the number of Trump's energy discourse is 7,187.

4.2 Data Analysis

Based on the premises and consequences of practical argumentation, I will annotate the circumstance, value, means-goal and goal and consequence and reconstruct it. Then according to the STA model, the proximization strategies are annotated as SC-, TC- and AC- and distanciation strategies are annotated as SC+, TC+ and AC+. The two corpora are identified sentence by sentence and annotated by manual. As for this article, I analyze the six dimensions as follows:

I. SC- (lexical-grammatical categories representing the spatial proximization: NP, VP)

II. TC- (lexical-grammatical categories representing the temporal proximization: contrastive use of tense, modal auxiliary, NP)

III. AC- (lexical-grammatical categories representing the axiological proximization:

NP)

IV. SC+ (lexical-grammatical categories representing the spatial distanciation: NP, VP, Adv., Prep., Negative Words)

V. TC+ (lexical-grammatical categories representing the temporal distanciation: contrastive use of tense, modal auxiliary)

VI. AC+ (lexical-grammatical categories representing the axiological distanciation: NP, Adv., VP)

5 Analysis and Discussion

This section first reconstructs the practical argumentation embedded in the two parties' energy discourses to elaborate their respective energy policy propositions. It then analyzes the deployment of proximization and distanciation strategies within such discourses, and finally unveils the underlying ideologies and values.

5.1 Reconstructing Practical Argumentation of Energy Policy Discourse

5.1.1 Reconstructing practical argumentation of Trump administration's discourse

The Trump administration's policy is to adopt administrative and legislative measures to bring the energy policy back to conventional energy resources, which can reduce national security risks and provide reliable, sufficient and affordable energy for America. Circumstance premise covers two aspects of the current situation: problems of prior energy policies, energy demand and supply. Prior energy policies has overemphasized climate agenda and over-relied on renewable energy but neglected the reality of the abundance of conventional fossil fuels, which may lead to national security and higher energy costs. Besides U.S. electricity demand has surged greatly with the expansion of the artificial intelligence industry and the power generated by the renewables cannot meet this demand. Goal premise can be divided into domestic and foreign goals. The domestic one is to make the country to provide affordable and secure energy at the scale and reliability the U.S. economy needs and the foreign one is to eliminate reliance on imported energy equipment to achieve energy dominance. Value premise is national security, economic growth and America first. Means-goal premise encompasses streamlining approval procedures, reforming nuclear power regulations, prioritizing dispatchable energy and related energy infrastructure, and repealing subsidies for renewable energy. From premise-based model, we can see that according to advantages of prior energy policies and current electricity demand, the Donald administration should adopt various legislative and regulative measures to

adopt conventional fossil fuels so as to achieve affordable, sufficient energy supply and national security under the value of national security, economic growth and America first. The consequence-based model includes the positive outcomes of implementing the proposed actions and adverse consequences of inaction. For example, without such measures, the U.S. will lack adequate, stable and reliable energy supply which will prevent the U.S. economy from fully benefiting from AI-induced productivity gains and the US. Meanwhile implementing the proposed action will deliver energy supply with the scale and reliability required for U.S. economic development. Therefore Both premise-based model and consequence-based model are used for the argumentation that these actions should be done.

5.1.2 Reconstructing practical argumentation of Biden administration's discourse

The Biden administration's policy is to accelerate the clean energy transition and mitigate climate change through government intervention and structural transformation. Circumstances premise describes the nation' past energy policies and challenges of clean energy transition. For one thing, the U.S. has relied too much on fossil fuels and the carbon dioxide emission has caused climate change; For another thing, there are challenges and obstacles to energy transitions such as economic frictions and market failures. Goal premise includes climate goal and energy goal. The climate goal is to fulfill the commitment of Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C and this is achieved through period goal such as midway term, and the energy goal is to build an innovative, cutting-edge U.S. economy powered by low-cost, reliable, secure clean energy and technologies. Value premise includes climate governance responsibility, balance between economy and environment protection, and coordinated market-government governance. Means-goal premise specifies supply-side policies, demand-side policies, government intervention to achieve the goal. From premise-based model, it is inferred that given the current situation of worsening climate change and obstacles to green energy transition, America should take government intervention and implement various measures to accelerate the clean energy transition in accordance with the value of climate governance responsibility, balance between economy and environment protection, and coordinated market-government governance. In addition, the contrastive description of positive outcomes of policy implementation and negative outcomes of inaction are also discussed. For instance, the clean energy transition will put the U.S. economy

toward a future powered by clean, low-cost, reliable and secure energy and create employment, economic growth and prosperity. And inaction will trigger severe climate crises, which will in turn harm human health, depress production efficiency, lower living standards, undermine food security, cause diverse socioeconomic problems. Therefore either premise-based model or consequence model advocates that the government should take the action to accelerate green energy transition.

5.1.3 A comparative analysis of practical argumentation of Trump's and Biden's energy discourse

Table 2 practical argumentation of the two party's energy discourse

Practical argumentation	Trump administration	Biden administration
Circumstance	a. problems of prior energy policies: focus on climate agenda and renewables, under-utilization of conventional fossil fuels; b. energy supply and demand;	a. problems of prior energy policies: climate threats from utilization of conventional fossil fuels; b. obstacles and challenges of green energy transition;
Goal	a. to offer secure, affordable and reliable energy; b. to achieve energy dominance;	a. climate goal: to limit global warming to 1.5°C b. energy goal: create economy powered by low-cost, reliable, secure clean energy and technologies；
Value	national security, economic growth and America first；	climate governance responsibility, economy-environment balance, and market-government governance；
Means-goal	streamlining approval procedures, reforming nuclear power regulations, prioritizing dispatchable energy and related energy infrastructure, and repealing subsidies;	supply-side policies, demand-side policies, government intervention;
Consequence	action: positive outcomes inaction: negative outcomes	action: positive outcomes inaction: negative outcomes

Since the the Trump administration and Biden administration have different energy plannings, the content of argumentation are also different as shown in Table 2. we can see that the the Trump administration and Biden administration are different even contrary in premises. For example, in terms of circumstance, the Trump administration criticizes the problems caused by clean energy while the Biden administration criticizes the crises by burning fossil fuels. As for value, the Trump

administration obeys America first and economy first but the Biden administration highlight climate governance responsibility and economy-climate balance. As for consequential reasoning, each administration validates its proposed policy actions by highlighting prospective benefits of implementation and negative outcomes of inaction. Although both administrations advance policy actions through premise-based model and consequence-based model, the negative effects of each administration's energy policy action and other policy actions are never discussed or mentioned in their energy discourse, which undermines the deliberation of their argumentation. And how the two administrations legitimatize their polities and win public's trust will be discussed in the next part.

5.2 Symbolic Discursive strategies in the Practical Argumentation in the Bipartisan Energy Discourse

Though practical argumentation includes five parts: circumstance, goal, value, means-goal and consequence, not all parts concern symbolic discursive strategies. Goal as the aim of the whole argumentation which often present with other parts and value permeates all the parts, therefore there is no need to analyze the proximization and distanciation in value and goal. Thus this article only explores the symbolic discursive strategies in circumstance, means-goal and consequence.

Table 3 IDC and ODC in bipartisan discourse

(IDC refers to Inside-the-Deictic-Center while ODC refers to Outside-the-Deictic-Center)

Categories	Trump	Biden
IDC	1) the United States/the country, the Trump Administration, Americans, consumers,households 2) economy, businesses, industry, AI , chips, 3) fossil fuels, petroleum, natural gas, coal,conventional energy sources	1) The United States/America, Bidern-Harris Administration, workers 2) economy, health, productivity, living standards, food security 3) clean energy sources/clean energy/renewable energy/renewable energy sources/non-carbon-emitting sources/renewables, solar, wind, clean energy thechnologies, decarbonization 4) other countries
ODC	1) prior policies 2) less-carbon-intensive energy	1) climate change, warming, disaster/emissions/air pollution

	sources, renewables, solar, wind 3) Paris Agreement,environmental regulations/laws, energy policy, NEPA review, IRA 4) adversarial suppliers	2) fossil fuels/fossil fuel, coal, oil, coal-fired/fossil-based 3) market failures, economic frictions

Drawing on Cap's (2013) definitions of IDC and ODC, IDC and ODC in the two partisan discourse are summarized in Table 3. The IDC of Trump's discourse contain three categories: 1) the country, Americans and the Trump administration, 2) national development domains, 3) conventional energy resources; The ODC of Trump's discourse means the entities that bring threats to IDC and thus it includes four categories: 1) prior energy policies, 2) green energy resources, laws or regulations related to climate governance and green energy development, adversarial suppliers. The IDC of Biden's discourse contain four categories: 1) the country, Americans and the Biden-Harris administration, 2) fundamental necessities for human survival and social development, 3) green energy resources, 4) other countries; And the ODC of Biden's discourse includes three categories: 1) conventional energy resources, 2) climate crises, 3) market failure and economic frictions.

There exist convergence and divergences about the IDC and ODC categorizations in the two Partisan discourse. The convergence show that both parties conceptualize the U.S. nation, incumbent administration, its people, and its economy as core IDC members, which demonstrates that Trump and Biden, as national leaders, both prioritize national and public interests as well as economic growth. Despite convergence, three divergences are identified. Firstly, Trump frames clean energy, related participants, and international climate accords and regulations as threats so as to bring focus back to fossil fuels While Biden regards fossil fuels, associated climate changes, economic obstacles as perils to guarantee the clean energy transition. Secondly, Trump hardly mentions climate change and human living standards while Biden sees climate change as important external factors influencing humans' life, which demonstrates Trump's ignorance on climate and Biden's focus on climate. Thirdly, Trump and Biden have different attitudes to other countries in which Trump shows a hostile attitude to other countries who will offer equipment for America but Biden show an inclusive attitude to put America and other countries as community to combat climate crisis, which indicates Trump's America first and Biden's multilateral cooperation. Overall, the divergences show that the two administrations have different priorities in energy discourse, climate change and foreign relations.

5.2.1 Symbolic discursive strategies in circumstance premise in bipartisan discourse

Table 4 symbolic discursive strategies in circumstance premise

strategies	Trump	Biden
distanciation	SC+: not, no, from, increase, reduction	SC+: fall, reduction, from, lower, not, far from, mitigate, reduce, slow TC+:did,
Proximization	SC-: (V1) jeopardize, make up, prevent (V2) drive, expose, create, increase, result in, exacerbate, raise, reduce, extend， lead to, (N) cost/costs, challenges, threats, volatility, fluctuations, proliferation TC- : have/has, did, the 1970s, the September, 2011; AC-: (A1)threats/threat, dependence (A2) independence, security	SC-: (V1): responsible for, damage, dominate, (V2): give rise to, drive, worsen, compound (N): costs, losses, migration, harmful health consequences TC-: have/ has, did AC-: (A1) instability, inequities (A2) benefits

Distanciation and proximization are both deployed in circumstance premise of bipartisan discourse to legitimize their respective actions, and the detailed uses are shown Table 4. (V_1 represents movement, V_2 represents effects, A_1 represents value of IDC, A_2 represents value of ODC)

According to proximization, Both Trump and Biden use spatial, temporal and axiological proximization to construct the proximity process of ODC on IDC to show the pressures. As for spatial proximization, both parties use VP and NP to display the effects and movement of ODC to IDC such as drive(VP), lead to(VP) and costs(NP), but VP shows the differences on the manners of proximization and NP shows differences about the the affected areas. From table 3, we can conclude that Trump tends to pay more attention to the effects of ODC as the lexical-grammar of V_2 is more complicated while Biden pays attention to both movement and effects of conventional resources.This is due to renewables is an emerging energy resource which hasn't taken the lead so its movement is confined but conventional fossil fuels have become the dominant energy so its movement and effects are both huge. NP demonstrates Trump gives priority to national strategic and energy-related issues while gives priority to social welfare and social governance affairs. For instance, in

example (1), Trump frames renewables as ODC which brings unsteadiness such as volatility and fluctuations to electricity industry. While in example (2) Biden's discourse show that ODC_1 fossil fuels causes ODC_2 air pollution which causes harm to the health of humans by ways of VP "compound" to show the degree. Therefore, Trump's discourse only focuses on economy and security ignores human's life but Biden's discourse have a wider focus covering economy and human's life. Besides the chain process shows the causal relationship between ODCs in Biden's discourse but this is not found in Trumps' discourse. All these show policies of the other party can bring threats and thus delegitimize the other party's actions.

As for temporal proximization, both parties deploy perfect tense and comparative tense to show the threats is spreading from past to present and likely to the future and NP can bring the event in the past into public's sight. Prefect tense in Example (3) and Example (4) demonstrate that ODC's negative impacts have begun from the past to the present and now will continue to the future. Example (5) , 1973 President Nixon put forward project independence to combat the crisis, so whenever 1973 is mentioned, it reminds the public the memory of the energy crisis and produces tensions and anxiety. Temporal proximation is deployed to show the continuity threats or awaken public's painful memory so that the public can be convinced.

As for axiological proximization, both parties present the negative values of ODC which is at conflict with the positive values of IDC. And example (3) and (6) all demonstrate the negative values of ODC are approaching to IDC. Since spatial proximization, temporal proximization and axiological proximization are complementary to each other, we find that axiological proximization is deployed less and it is compensated by spatial proximization, temporal proximization.

(1) **Renewables** (ODC) also increase supply **volatility** (SC-) (e.g., from changing wind patterns or cloud cover) and **fluctuations** (SC-) in frequency and voltage, making it more challenging to keep the grid balanced at all times(Trump).

(2) This is further **compounded** (SC-) by the **harmful health consequences** (IDC) of local **air pollution** (ODC_2) due to continued **burning of fossil fuels** (ODC_1) (Biden).

(3) This focus on renewables (ODC) **has** exposed Americans to higher energy costs and **has** created national security **threats** from adversarial suppliers of key energy commodities and equipment (Trump).

(4) The use of fossil fuels (ODC)—responsible for 68 percent of total historical

human-induced carbon dioxide emissions—**has** given rise to climate change (Biden).

(5) In **1973**, in response to the Arab oil embargo and the ensuing energy crisis, President Nixon launched Project Independence, vowing by 1980 to "meet America's energy needs from America's own energy resources" (Trump).

(6) **Additional warming**(ODC) is expected to further **damage** (SC-) human health (IDC), productivity (IDC) , living standards (IDC), and food security (IDC), driving mass migration and worsening social and political **instability**, among other social and economic outcomes, and **inequities** therein.

According to distanciation, they both apply negative words, adverbs, prepositions, VP and NP to increase the distance or cancel the connections between entities. As regards to spatial distanciation, in example (7), Trump uses negative adverbs "not" to show that renewables cannot satisfy the electricity demand so make renewables far away from electricity demand, and "not" in example (8) show that fossil fuels' status is changing from "only" to periphery in Biden's discourse and also the fossil fuels is moving away from center. Despite similarities, differences also exist in two aspects as follows. 1) Trump deploys distanciation to show the production ability of renewables is not enough just like in example (1) "not" means electricity by renewables is not sufficient as electricity by conventional resources to legitimize the utility of conventional resources. Biden deploys distanciation to show that renewables can distance ODC away from IDC just as in example (9) renewables can reduce the ODC's impacts on IDC and increase their distance. Therefore Trump is inclined to emphasize the negativity of ODC's deficiencies while Biden is inclined to highlight the advanteges of IDC to make ODC away from IDC.

As regards to temporal distanciation, Biden also uses past tense to show the event happened in the past which has little effects on the present. "fell" in example (10) show that greenhouse gas emissions has been declining from 2005 to 2021, but this tendency may not continue so we need green energy policy.

(7) First, a renewable generator does **not** (SC+) produce as much electricity as a dispatchable generator of the same capacity because, in addition to maintenance related downtime, solar and wind generators produce no energy when there is no sun or wind (Trump).

(8) Fossil fuels are **not** the only energy source, and they are far from the most abundant one (Biden).

(9) Aside from their critical role in **mitigating** (SC+) GHG emissions (ODC) and

air pollution (ODC), clean energy technologies (ODC) have many economic and national security benefits (Biden).

(10) Between 2005 and 2021, U.S. **greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** (ODC) **fell** (SC+,TC+) by 17 percent, as shown in Table 6-1 (UNFCCC 2023), a remarkable annualized rate for a major industrial economy during a period of economic growth (Biden)

5.2.2 Symbolic discursive strategies in means-goal premise in bipartisan discourse

Means-goal premise is discussing the various measures the administration adopt, so distanciation can be used to show the validity or benefits of the measures. Both parties deploy distanciation to show the legimitization of their actions and the distanciation strategies are shown as Table 5. For example (11) and (13), Trump point out the order his administration has issued can reduce the ODC's influences on IDC by "mitigating" and Biden also demonstrate that his government intervention can help remove barriers and make ODC away from IDC. In addition, auxiliary is used to support the distanciation effects. According to Halliday (1994), must is categorized into modulation and high value. And Biden uses must twice in the means-goal to highlight his strong willingness to take actions to achieve the goal.

Table 5 symbolic discursive strategies in means-goal premise

strategies	Trump	Biden
distanciation	SC+: reduce , mitigate	SC+: not, from, mitigate, lower, reduce, remove, reduction TC+: can, must

(11) **President Trump's Executive Order** (means) on State overreach put a spotlight on burdensome State-level policies with the intention of **mitigating** (SC+) their worst effects (Trump)

(12) It has further highlighted **specific government interventions** (means) that can **remove obstacles** (SC+) to the transition and create opportunities for the private sector to drive new sources of green growth

(13) To achieve the midway goal of a 50 percent **emissions reduction** (SC+) relative to 2005, the United States **must** (TC+) lower (SC+) its annual emissions by 6 percent on average between 2021 and 2030, and **must** (TC+) further accelerate emissions reductions (SC+) after 2030 (Biden).

5.2.3 Symbolic discursive strategies in consequence premise in bipartisan discourse

Table 6 symbolic discursive strategies in consequence premise

strategies	Trump	Biden
distanciation	SC+: not be able to, not	SC+: not
proximization	SC-: bills, lower income, drag	SC-: mount, damage

There exist positive consequences from action and negative consequences from inaction. As positive consequences equal to expected goals which have been discussed in the means-goal premise, here we only talk about negative consequences from inaction, which are illustrated in Table 6. In example (14), Trump mentions that if no actions are taken, there will be no enough energy supply which make Americans have far-distancing from benefits of society, and bad effects such as bills, lower income and drag will move near IDC. Though proximization and distanciation, if no actions are adopted, Americans will be affected by negative effects of ODC on the one hand and Americans can not enjoy the benefits of society on the other hand. Therefore the public will be convinced that the actions of Trump administration should be taken. Biden also uses proximization in example (15) to show inaction's negative influences and uses distanciation in example (16) to fail to achieve the climate goal. Also both proximization and distanciation are deployed to make the public believe that Biden's actions are right and should be adopted.

(14) Without a sufficient (and sufficiently reliable) energy supply , the U.S. economy will **not be able to** fully benefit from AI-induced productivity gains and other socially beneficial innovations that may follow (SC+). More importantly, if data centers become a burden on the energy grid, Americans will face higher electricity **bills** (SC-) and **lower disposable income** (SC-), resulting in a **drag** (SC-) on the economy (Trump).

(15) The cost of inaction is high, with **damage** (SC-) from **climate change** (ODC) already starting to **mount** (SC-) (Biden).

(16) Emissions in the absence of a policy intervention are shown as the dashed green line, declining—as in the case of recent U.S. GHG emissions—albeit **not fast enough to meet** (SC+) net zero goals (Biden).

From analysis of symbolic discursive strategies in bipartisan circumstance, means-goal and consequence premises, both party uses proximization and distanciation to control public's construal mechanism in order to make their own energy actions accepted and supported. But there are differences and divergences about the use of proximization and distanciation as the two parties have different political values and interests.

5.3 Critique of Practical Argumentation

According to deontological, consequentialist and virtue ethics and an analysis of the practical argumentation in bipartisan discourse, this study tries to unveil implicit ideologies and values behind both parties' energy discourse.

Trump administration's energy discourse reflects energy realism and unilateralism. Political realism frames nations as the primary actors in global politics and state actions are driven by self-interest. On one hand, Trump constructs clean energy threats and legitimizes fossil fuels to safeguard the interests of established fossil fuel industries; On the other hand, Trump ignores the finiteness of fossil fuel, carbon emissions from fossil fuel combustion, and climate change crisis for the sake of domestic fossil fuel development which manifest unilateralism. Trump's argumentation doesn't conform to deontological and consequentialist ethics as America didn't fulfill his obligation to global climate governance and his energy actions can bring severe climate problems. America also didn't align with virtue ethics as his intentions and actions are only for America's self-interest and are inconsistent with the global energy trends.

By contrast, Biden's energy discourse embodies climate idealism and multilateralism. First, Biden frames fossil fuels and climate change as ODC threats to delegitimize the utility of fossil fuels. In the meanwhile, Biden advances green energy transition to contribute to the global cooperation and secure U.S. competitive supremacy. Second, Biden's discourse neglects the abundance of domestic conventional energy resource and the insufficiency of electricity powered by green energy. Biden's argumentation aligns with the deontological and virtue ethics since America has taken its responsibility and role model in climate governance. But as for consequentialist ethics, the unsteadiness and insufficiency may be the outcomes which should be taken into consideration.

While Trump and Biden prioritize divergent energy actions, their underlying objectives converge that both seek to strengthen energy independence and maximize

national interests.

6 Conclusion

This article comparatively analyzes the argumentative process and symbolic discursive strategies in Trump administration's and Biden administration's energy reports. The paper finds that Trump's energy discourse is dominated by energy realism, unilteralism which prioritize short-term domestic conventional resources and energy dominance but ignores the responsibility on climate governance, whereas Biden's energy discourse manifests climate idealism and multilateralism meaning that multilateral cooperation, economy-environment balance are prioritized to combat climate crisis and keep national competitiveness. This study offers a perspective for understanding the volatility of U.S energy shifts and climate attitudes and it help understand how administration manipulate legitimization in discourse to convince the public. But the data for this study is limited to reports, so subsequent research can expand to other fields.

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