



A Novel Legal Approach for Justifying Economic Sanctions and Tariffs: A Semiotic Analysis of the Second Trump Administration Position

Mehmet Onder¹ · Malek Abduljaber²

Accepted: 18 July 2025

© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature B.V. 2025

Abstract

The Trump administration has rapidly and exponentially deployed economic sanctions and tariffs at unprecedented rates. The administration proposed new legal justifications such as the executive authorities under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977 declaring national emergency prompting such imminent large-scale actions. The present analysis utilized a linguistic semiotics qualitative design to examine the characteristics of the Trump administration's novel legal reasoning for the use of economic sanctions and tariffs. The analysis particularly assessed the ethos, logos, and pathos of 14 documents discussing the administration's legal justifications. The Trump administration's new legal approach to sanctions begins with the removal of all administrative protection measures against capricious executive powers use. Then, the administration finds unheralded powers in legislative acts extending its authority such as the use of the IEEPA, the Expanded Trade Act of 1962, and the Trade Act of 1974. Subsequently, the administration sheds its decisions under longstanding Supreme Courts' doctrines like the intelligible principle, as well as the delegated Congressional authority to the executive. The new legal arguments of the Trump administration threaten the legitimacy and authority of international law. The administration has sanctioned the International Criminal Court based on the national emergency argument signaling to other actors around the globe the opportunity to utilize a similar logic, which by definition weakens international institutions. Likewise, the new arguments provide seemingly legitimate avenues for authoritarian governments to take unilateral actions affecting commerce and peace around the world claiming national emergency provision.

Keywords Economic sanctions · Tariffs · Semiotics · Rhetorical analysis · American government

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

Published online: 05 August 2025

Springer

1 Introduction

Economic sanctions are constraining actions launched by a single or group of states unilaterally or within multilateral arrangements against one or more countries to effectuate policy changes or punish perceived or actual transgressions of international norms or procedures [1]. The legality of economic sanctions in reference to international law is controversial [2–4]. Unilateral sanctions oftentimes are legislated and enforced outside of the purview of international institutions [2, 5]. Sanctions may lead to collective punishment of populations, death of children, and economic stagnation of individuals, firms, and governments generating legal challenges in international courts [5–7].

The frequency and intensity of economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool have dramatically increased in the past two decades. According to the most recent estimate of the Global Sanctions Database (GSDB) third release, 1547 economic sanctions regimes were imposed between 1950 and 2023 [8]. Between 2022 and 2023, the GSDB added 223 new cases signaling the global increase of the economic weapon across the globe [8]. The American Treasury Department expanded its Special Designated National and Blocked Persons (SDN) list by adding 3135 newly sanctioned individuals and institutions [9]. The addition marks a 25% increase on the list from 2023 [9].

The prevailing scholarly belief on economic sanctions legality points to the international agreement on the legitimacy of cases arising from the United Nations (UN) institutions and primarily the Security Council [1–4, 7]. Furthermore, under strict conditions of proportionality and security defense, economic sanctions could be considered legal as long as they conform to the UN-based international Law Commission (ILC) limits on states' countermeasures [2, 10]. Other unilateral sanctions leading to atrocious humanitarian conditions or states are deemed illegal by most scholars, as well as international law organizations [10]. Despite such clear demarcation, governments constantly carve legal avenues to justify unilateral economic sanctions using international law [2, 11–13].

The United States is the primary driver of economic sanctions around the world. For example, considering the Global Sanctions Database results, out of the total 1547 episodes, the US is responsible for 541, roughly 35% of all cases [8]. Given the high rates of sanctions, American Presidents and Congress have utilized a variety of legal arguments justifying such foreign policy actions [13–16]. Typically, Congress delegates its constitutional power to impose restrictions on commerce globally to the President using a specific Act like the Iran Sanctions Act after a government body such as the Commerce or Treasury departments identify a need based on an investigation [17]. Since President Trump took power leading his second administration, the White House appeared to depart from the longstanding legal tradition on sanctions.

The Trump administration has proactively removed administrative protections against arbitrary executive action. For instance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio declared commercial activities with foreign nations as matters of foreign affairs escaping the Administrative Procedures Act requirements of due diligence [18]. More importantly, the administration cited national emergency powers justifying actions against Canada to impose new restrictive economic measures like tariffs [19].

Further, the administration used Sect. 232 under the Expanded Trade Act of 1962, Sects. 201 and 301 under the Trade Act of 1974 in justifying sanctions against countries and entities [20]. Negotiation teams also threatened to use unheralded powers such as the 1930 Tariffs Act and other sections on the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 in an attempt to legitimize international sanctions or tariffs [21].

Findings suggest that the Trump administration's novel legal approach heavily relies on agenda-driven framing, political maneuvering, and ideologically driven reasoning. While the legal arguments furnished by the administration exhibit high degrees of confidence and professionalism (parts of ethos), some of them lacked specific facts, data, and quantitative measures linking proposed causes to actions (logos). The approach also deployed high levels of emotional appeals referencing American supremacy or subservience calling for action (parts of pathos). In sum, The Trump administration sought to ease certain accountability measures prior to invoking executive actions grounded in rarely cited congressional authorities, often in the absence of clear precedent and under expedited timelines.

2 International Law and Economic Sanctions

2.1 Arguments for the Legality of Economic Sanctions

The United Nations authorized the Security Council to launch, maintain, and regulate economic sanctions (i.e., U.N. Charter, Article 41). Nevertheless, the U.N. stipulated that economic sanctions must occur within an international framework highlighting the multilateral aspect of the measures [22]. Relatedly, sanctions are in line with Security Council resolutions already passed to effectuate specific changes in the policy or behaviors of one or more member states undesirable in the view of other member states prompting action by the Council [2, 5, 16, 22, 23].

Article 41 of Chapter VII states: that "The Security Council may decide what measures not involving the use of armed force are to be employed to give effect to its decisions, and it may call upon the Members of the United Nations to apply such measures. These may include complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations." Note that the article failed to specify the conditions under which economic sanctions may arise.

Increasingly, international and regional organizations such as the European Union and the African Union have employed economic sanctions as foreign policy tools. While multilateral in nature and taken within institutional and regional arrangements, such sanctions are only legal when the Security Council approves them [2, 22]. Article 53 of the UN Charter states "The Security Council shall, where appropriate, utilize such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority. But no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council." Therefore, if regional organizations receive the approval of the UN Security Council, the sanctions they launch become legal [2, 22, 23].

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade GATT (1947) prohibits economic restrictions among contracting parties (i.e., states) under Article I General Most-Favored-Nation Treatment and Article XI General Elimination of Quantitative Restrictions, restrictions on trade, imports, and exports amount to illegality [24–26]. Throughout the GATT, member states are urged to exercise regular trade with no restrictions let alone embargoes or blockages. The GATT, however, awards participating members the power to exercise any action to protect security and survival. Article XXI Security Exceptions states “Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed (b) to prevent any contracting party from taking any action which it considers necessary for the protection of its essential security interests.” The World Trade Organization has largely remained neutral with respect to the use of economic sanctions by its member states offering little to no legal feedback on the interpretation of the GATT articles in real-world cases [27].

Economic sanctions could be considered countermeasures under international law when fulfilling a narrow set of conditions [28–31]. In rare circumstances, countermeasures, which are forms of reprisals, taken by one or more countries in response to perceived or actual wrongful acts by another or more countries [32]. The International Law Commission (ILC) defines countermeasures as “measures that would otherwise be contrary to the international obligations of an injured State vis-à-vis the responsible State, if they were not taken by the former in response to an internationally wrongful act by the latter in order to procure cessation and reparation” [33]. One of the legal conditions of countermeasures is the satisfaction of Article 49 of the ILC ARSIWA requiring states to take countermeasures in ways that eventually would permit the resumption of the obligation in question between member states [34]. More importantly, countermeasures must meet the proportionality requirement to become legal [4, 35].

Noteworthy of mention is the illegal manifestations of countermeasures in light of the increasing use of economic sanctions. Countermeasures shall only target the state inflicting the injury on the target [4]. Thus, the target of the wrongful act may not launch countermeasures on a third or more states that have not targeted them with wrongful acts [13, 36]. Further, a third state without a direct involvement in the injury could launch countermeasures, and the ILC has not offered much feedback on the legality of such measures [36, 37]. Nevertheless, since the third party has no relation to the injury, it arises that such countermeasures shall be illegal [27].

Table 1 presents the international and domestic legal instruments allowing the President of the United States to impose economic sanctions or tariffs. In his first 100 days at the Oval Office, President Trump and his aids referenced several instruments in justifying their actions disrupting international commerce [38, 39]. Likewise, legal experts have discussed such instruments in defending or critiquing the administrations’ behaviors.

2.2 Arguments for the Illegality of Economic Sanctions

Unilateral economic sanctions challenge state sovereignty principles enshrined in international law [1, 3, 40, 41]. When a powerful sender state like the United States sanctions a weak country in the Middle East, Asia, or Africa, it violates the Security

Table 1 Laws on economic sanctions and tariffs

Order	Domestic Law Information	Order	International Law Information
1	Section 338 Tariffs Act 1930	1	Charter of the United Nations, Article 53, Security Council, General Most-Favored-Nation Treatment
2	Section 232 Expanded Trade Act 1962	2	The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade Article I, Security Exception
3	Section 122 Trade Act 1974	3	The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade Article XXI, Security Exception
4	Section 201 Trade Act of 1974		
5	Section 301 Trade Act of 1974		
6	International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977		

Council requirement for economic sanctions legality under international law [25, 27]. Legal scholars have largely argued that unilateral sanctions are necessarily extra-territorial infringing upon the sacred principle of sovereignty [29, 42]. Such a case is stronger when the target state's behavior does not truly alter international peace. Thus, to a large extent, unilateral sanctions are largely illegal in the view of international law experts and practitioners [29].

Human rights advocates further render unilateral economic sanctions illegal citing a plethora of threats to peoples' lives, world peace, self-determination, and dignity [4, 7, 30]. The Global Economic Sanctions Database reported 1325 sanctions episodes between 1949 and 2022 [8] affecting more than one third of all humans living on earth since the establishment of the Bretton-Woods system [42]. Economic sanctions indeed led to the death of some children in more than a single episode around the world [43, 44]. Sanctions denied access to exercise international trade for many humans, firms, and governments stripping such entities from achieving economic fulfillment [45, 46]. Many countries' economic progress stalled affecting human and political development interfering with self-determination [47]. Unilateral sanctions, thus on human rights grounds under international law, are illegal in the view of most scholars and organizations [2–4, 30].

3 Methodology

The present study follows the qualitative research design deploying semiotic analysis as a guiding framework. Linguistic semiotic analysis of texts has been widely used in understanding, interpreting, and deciphering explicit and implicit meanings within a variety of political texts [48, 49]. In the current analysis, the objective of the semiotic approach is to uncover the system of meanings embedded within the Trump's administration documents underlying the Presidents' arguments purported in justifying economic sanctions and tariffs against the many targets around the world. In performing linguistic semiotic analyses, authors may consider a variety of factors such as the tone of the presenter, framing of the text, communication style, logical reasoning and many others [50, 51]. In our analysis, we structured the interpretation of our findings

on a longstanding validated model in linguistics and communication analysis namely rhetorical analysis.

Rhetorical analysts examine a plethora of factors within a text [52]. We chose the triangular model of ethos, logos, and pathos to structure our analysis. Ethos represents the credibility, character, trustworthiness, and authority of the speaker. Logos refer to the factual evidence and critical reasoning of a text. Pathos manifests to the extent to which the text presents emotional appeals to readers [53]. In this analysis, we considered three elements of each construct to be analyzed in the administration's texts to reach the system of meanings interpreting the Trump's administration legal arguments justifying sanctions. Each element of the analysis was carefully selected to represent a distinct pillar of the message embedded in the text. All features have been extensively examined in linguistic and rhetorical research on political texts [54–56].

3.1 Sampling

The corpus of texts representing the universe of documents guiding this research included primary and secondary resources featuring legal arguments on the Trump administration's economic sanctions or tariffs legitimacy under domestic and international law. Primary documents included White House Executive Orders (EOs), press releases, facts sheets, and the like. Additionally, administration documents such as departmental findings, investigations, clarifications or reports comprise a source of primary documents. Secondary sources featured in-depth legal analysis of the administration approach to economic sanctions and tariffs.

The present analysis used linguistic semiotic analysis to capture the essence of the new Trump administration's legal arguments justifying sanctions and tariffs. The investigation relies on the rhetorical approach of ethos, logos, and pathos to construct the narrative underlying the administration reasoning. A total of 14 documents including primary and secondary sources provided the corpus for the study. Each document was analyzed in a single session by the two authors using a rubric consisting of nine measures (see Table 2 for the rubric). The first three measures assessed

Table 2 Semiotic and rhetorical analysis evaluation rubric

Appeal	Criterion	Definition
Ethos	Professionalism	Presentation is coherent, focused, and well-prepared
	Manipulation	Tone is unscrupulous, skewed, inconsistent and unfair; applies to manipulative or partial communication.
	Confidence	Persistent tone with credible presentation throughout the text
Logos	Logical Reasoning	Arguments present consistency, coherence, and organization
	The Use of Data	The incorporation of factual or historical data or numerical statements in support of arguments.
	Factual Evidence	The consistent use of facts, numbers, and qualitative arguments in support of arguments.
Pathos	Emotional Influence	The incorporation of relevant emotional appeals resonates with target audiences and readers.
	Imagery	The deployment of imagined scenarios or actual stories depicting states or situations to move readers and audiences.
	Cultural Competency	The recognition of other cultures' relevance and importance demonstrating respect and acknowledgment of other belief systems

ethos, measured between fourth and sixth assessed logos, and measures from seventh to nine represented pathos. The authors rated each element on the rubric per document, then summarized the findings in a narrative format.

A total of 14 documents furnished the input for the semiotic analysis in this research. Table 3 presents the name, date and the direct link for each of the texts. Note that all the texts were published between January 20th and May 5th, 2025, representing the new Trump's administration approach to economic sanctions and

Table 3 Documents analyzed in this research

	Document Name	Institution	Date	Source
1	Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court	White House	February 6, 2025	The White House [57]
2	Regulating Imports with a Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices that Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits	White House	April 2, 2025	The White House [58]
3	Imposing Tariffs on Countries Importing Venezuelan Oil	White House	March 24, 2025	The White House, [59]
4	Adjusting Imports of Automobiles and Automobile Parts Into the United States	White House	March 26, 2025	The White House [60]
5	Modifying Reciprocal Tariff Rates in Response to Retaliation	White House	April 8, 2025	The White House [61]
6	Guidance for Shipping and Maritime Stakeholders on Detecting and Mitigating Iranian Oil Sanctions Evasion	Office of Foreign Assets Control–U.S. Department of Treasury	April 30, 2025	OFAC [62]
7	FinCEN Advisory on the Financing of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its Global Affiliates	Office of Foreign Assets Control–U.S. Department of Treasury	April 1, 2025	FinCEN [63]
8	International Cartels Designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists	Office of Foreign Assets Control–U.S. Department of Treasury	March 18, 2025	OFAC [64]
9	U.S. Trade Representative Announces 2025 Trade Policy Agenda	Office of the United States Trade Representative	March 3, 2025	USTR [65]
10	U.S. Department of Commerce Announces Final Determinations in the Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Investigations	International Trade Administration–Department of Commerce	April 21, 2025	ITA [66]
11	Trump's Use of Emergency Powers to Impose Tariffs Is an Abuse of Power	Lawfare	March 24, 2025	Hillman [38]
12	A better legal argument against Trump's tariffs	Peterson Institute for International Economics	March 11, 2025	Hufbauer [67]
13	Congressional and Presidential Authority to Impose Tariffs	Report	February 27, 2025	Zirpoli [68]
14	Trump's Tariffs Are a Major Legal Question	The Wall Street Journal	April 6, 2025	Sracic [69]

tariffs. Among the documents, there were five White House generated texts (1–5 in Table 3) and five administration’s findings or reports (6–10 in Table 3). On the other hand, there were four secondary legal analyses of the arguments used by the administration to justify their measures (11–14 in Table 3).

3.2 Data Collection

To obtain texts for the semiotic analysis, the authors performed extensive searches via the web on multiple days. Using a variety of keywords such as “economic sanctions and Trump administration”, “tariffs legal justifications and Trump administration”, “executive orders and legality of tariffs”, and “Trump and legal economic sanctions”, the authors searched for relevant documents on various web search engines (i.e., Google, Microsoft Bing, Yandex, and Yahoo). To supplement the initial search strategy, the authors also visited the official sites for The White House, Commerce Department, State Department, United States Trade Representative, International Trade Commission, and Treasury Department. Within each of the department’s websites, the authors performed a similar search to the initial approach.

The authors recorded all documents appearing to contain relevant information at first. A total of 97 documents were initially identified. To be included, each document needed to cover the legality of economic sanctions or tariffs as a core subject. Once the entire initial corpus was carefully read by the authors, 14 documents directly addressed at least one argument referencing at least a single domestic or international legal instrument.

3.3 Analysis of Texts

Each of the 14 documents underwent comprehensive evaluation to extract the ethos, logos, and pathos elements. To guide the analysis, a rubric featuring the nine elements and a summary of the semiotic analysis guided the investigation. Table 4 presents one sample of how the authors completed a rubric based on one of the documents. Note how all the elements paint a meanings making argument serving as the legal justification for the Trump’s administration tariffs or sanctions.

The authors convened to analyze each document together in a separate session. Every session lasted between two to four hours of in-depth analysis of the document. To increase confirmability, the authors followed the same approach throughout all sessions. They followed the rubric and completed each element at a time providing sufficient illustrations justifying their arguments. To improve credibility of results, the authors included more than a single illustration in support of the elements’ description. In an attempt to enhance dependability of findings, the authors compared all completed rubric summaries to verify the consistency of results. Overall, the summaries painted a similar picture throughout the documents noting an acceptable amount of dependability.

Table 4 Imposing sanctions on the international criminal court

Document: Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court [70].

		Criterion Explanation of the Text	Scripts from the Text
Ethos	Professionalism	The text is organized, coherent and authoritative. There is a legal argument made supported by a number of regulatory and legislative frameworks such as International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), National Emergencies Act (NEA), and American Servicemembers' Protection Act. Overall, the text and presentation are professional	Example: "By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America..."
	Manipulation	The argument is full of framing. On the one hand, the text strips the ICC from any authority by calling it <i>illegitimate</i> and its authority <i>baseless</i> . Also, it depicts the ICC as hostile to international peace. Overall, the text and argument are full of manipulative gestures.	Example: "The ICC has, without a legitimate basis, asserted jurisdiction..."
	Confidence	The tone of the text is decisive. Action verbs appear throughout the corpus. The overall style is declarative rendering the argument confident. For instance, the use of will signals firm affirmation. Overall, the text and argument are confident.	Example: "The United States will impose tangible and significant consequences on those responsible..."
Logos	Logical Reasoning	The text and arguments are logically organized. The ICC is declared as an overreaching illegitimate institution attempting to impose undesirable policy on the US. Legal references are made to justify the administration's disapproval of the ICC action. Overall, the argument is logical	Example 1: "Neither country has ever recognized the ICC's jurisdiction..." Example 2: "The ICC's recent actions...directly endangering...personnel."
	The Use of Data	No data or statistics or quantitative evidence were provided to support the arguments presented in the text.	N/A
	Factual Evidence	The text references a number of legal frameworks but contained false claims such as the illegitimate nature of the ICC.	Example 1 (factual): "The ICC has no jurisdiction over the United States or Israel, as neither country is party to the Rome Statute or a member of the ICC." Example 2 (non-factual): "...the International Criminal Court (ICC)...has engaged in illegitimate and baseless actions..."

Table 4 (continued)

Document: Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court [70].		Criterion	Explanation of the Text	Scripts from the Text
Pathos	Emotional Influence		Numerous references to hyperbolic statements like threatening U.S. sovereignty and security. Appeals for immediate action were also made frequently. Overall, the text and argument rate high at emotional influence on the audience.	Example: "...exposing them to harassment, abuse, and possible arrest."
	Imagery		No direct references to artistic illustrations or esthetic imagery were made throughout the text. The text and the argument rate are low on imagery criteria.	Example: "...constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States."
	Cultural Competency		References to American legal frameworks were frequent in the document. Many arguments minimize the role of the ICC, and international institutions. Limited respect for global views on legal matters. The text and arguments rank low on cultural competency.	N/A
Summary			The Trump administration presented a clear, concise, well-organized and professionally written argument signaling credibility. On the contrary, the arguments' reasoning lacks factual or evidence-based basis such as data. The text is full of framing, manipulation and signaling, noting to a clear attempt of swaying readers threatening objectivity. The text is full of emotional appeals and almost bereft of consistent argumentation or vivid illustrations in support of an idea. In sum, the administration cited sheer executive powers under a variety of laws justifying the legality of actions without providing clear links between causes and effects.	

4 Results

4.1 Novel Arguments Justifying the Legality of Economic Sanctions by the Trump Administration

President Donald J. Trump has furnished novel legal frontiers for imposing sanctions on individuals and governments around the globe [67, 70, 71]. The various legal arguments proposed by the White House justifying the authority of the President and the legality of sanctions share a set of common ethos, logos, and pathos. Ethos represents the signals of credibility a speaker communicates to an audience [54]. Pathos encompasses emotional appeals and meanings in a communicative artifact [49, 72]. Logos refer to the logic, facts, evidence, and reasoning a text or an artifact possesses [54]. Taken all together, the three components comprise a system of meanings guiding audiences in interpreting information [49, 54, 73].

The unprecedented approach for justifying the legality of economic sanctions and tariffs under the new Trump's administration rests on a triadic meanings system. Figure 1 represents the nine dimensions defining the three pillars constituting the semiot-

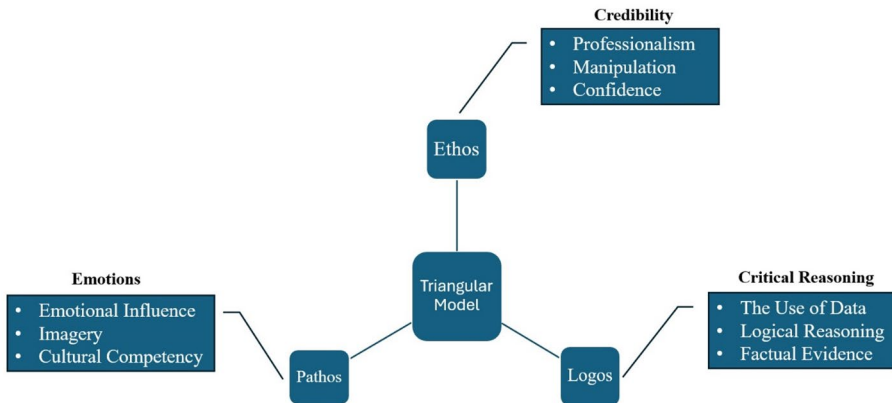


Fig. 1 Dimensions of the semiotics paradigm used in this study

ics paradigm. On the one hand, President Trump portrays his reasoning and logic as credible as possible using various authoritative references. On the other hand, President Trump frames sanctions as protective measures salivating the American way. In so doing, an emotional appeal is made for putting America first presenting little to no cultural sensitivity to other nations around the globe. Within emotional appeals and confident reaffirmations, data and facts are scarce if existent at all. While the tone and presentation of the legal arguments are professional, some of them may lack concrete data-driven evidence backing such claims. The product of the nine dimensions is an aesthetically pleasing legal argument full of emotional calls and confident language while bereft of data, evidence, facts, and cultural competence.

4.2 Procedural Protections of Sanctions Legality

The Trump administration has orchestrated a holistic procedural infrastructure protecting the variety of legal sanctions arguments justifying the executive trade actions [71]. On March 14th, Secretary of State, Marco Rubio labeled all actions involving trade as *foreign affairs* activities. Such a move exempts the administration from going through tedious Administrative Procedural Act (i.e., APA) rules [71]. Typically, APA requires agencies publishing actions allowing the public and courts sufficient time to examine the intent and potential impact of actions [74]. Certain exemptions are awarded such as national security, military, or foreign affairs actions. Usually, if an action is too *capricious* or *arbitrary*, courts would step in correcting the course of action restricting the agency’s discretion [74, 75]. Rubio’s move marks a proactive attempt escaping courts’ evaluation of agency actions, which captures due process violations or Procedural mistakes thwarting the efforts of agencies [71].

Representing Trump’s administration, Secretary Marco Rubio presented high levels of confidence and professionalism throughout the memo and ethos of credibility. By the same token, the short memorandum highlights the apex of manipulative persuasion. Secretary Rubio determined that any *effort* engaged in the transfer of *people* or *data* is a foreign affair function. Thus, if the Environmental Protection Agency

published publicly available data on anaerobic digestion facilities processing animal manures around the globe, such an action is a foreign affairs function. Consistent with Trump's legality approach logos, the memorandum and its similar communication counterparts lack any reference to hard data or quantitative evidence making the arguments weak even if they are organized and coherent. The memorandum also makes emotional appeals to Americans by arguing that such an action makes citizens safer and restores America's respect around the world.

4.3 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)

4.3.1 Major Questions Doctrine

Professor Jennifer Hillman at Georgetown University Institute of International Economic Law and some other legal scholars have questioned the extent to which President Trump's authority under the IEEPA encompasses the imposition of sweeping tariffs or duties on foreign nations. According to Hillman, for instance, President Trump lacks authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose sweeping Tariffs or duties on other nations [38]. The declared action (tariffs in this case) is arguably related to emergencies (undesirable influx of immigrants and fentanyl from the southern borders). Hillman believes that the tariffs against Mexico, Canada, and China, as well as the rest of the world (the action) are unrelated to the emergencies specified by the administration.

President Trump's executive orders citing his powers under the IEEPA unequivocally cite a high level of confidence. For instance, in a White House Fact Sheet [76], the President pointed out "Tariffs are a powerful, proven source of leverage for protecting the national interest. President Trump is using the tools at hand and taking decisive action that puts Americans' safety and our national security first..." In the same Fact Sheet, it was also mentioned that "...when voters overwhelmingly elected Donald J. Trump as President, they gave him a mandate to seal the border. That is exactly what he is doing" [76]. Further, to reflect professionalism, the President executive orders are written in coherent, well-organized, and structured fashion. Concerning framing, the IEEAP arguments contain a plethora of illustrations indicative of explicit framing. For example, in the aforementioned Fact Sheet, it was pointed out that "As President Trump said in the Presidential Memorandum on American First Trade Policy, trade policy is a critical component in national security" [76] and "During his first term as President of the United States, President Trump established the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis and declared the Opioid Crisis a public health emergency" [76].

4.3.2 Intelligible Principal Concerns

President Trump has at times utilized selective framing and contested data to support the regulatory actions of his administration [67]. In *Hampton, Jr. & Co. v. United States* (1928), The Congress provided the executive branch with national emergency powers under the *intelligible principle* doctrine [77]. The causes of the national security threats must be partly or wholly generated outside of the United States and affects

the policy, interests, and security of the country in a significant manner are the conditions Congress outlined in the IEEPA for the President to exercise emergency powers. Trump repeatedly stated that “300,000” people are lose because of fentanyl and Canada., as well as Mexico are to blame [67]. Numerous verifications showed that the number of fentanyl direct related deaths is much smaller and over 90% of arrests related to fentanyl concern American citizens [67]. Trump utilizes emotional appeals to voters to elicit public support for his wrongful use of imaginary data. Canada has little to do with the fentanyl crisis [67]. Thus, the arguments purported by the White House had less emphasis on *intelligible principles* and could be challenged in courts making the sweeping tariffs measures questionable according to Hufbauer [67].

4.3.3 Section 232 of the Expanded Trade Act of 1962

The Trump’s administration has furnished numerous references to the executive branch’s power to impose sanctions under Sect. 232 of the Expanded Trade Act of 1962 [78]. The provision requires the President to request the Secretary of Commerce’s recommendations on whether the imports of some goods threaten the national security of the United States. Regardless of the department’s view, however, the President could still implement tariffs even if such an action contradicted the investigative findings of the Commerce Department [79].

In February 2025, the White House cited Sect. 232 of the 1962 Act justifying decisions on tariffs imposition on steel and aluminum [78]. Likewise, in late March, the Trump administration declared the current conditions governing the imports of automobiles and their parts as threatening to the national security of the country prompting new tariffs [60]. In both documents, the White House communicated a series of statements displaying close coordination with the Commerce Department, which signals high levels of professionalism. Likewise, the two documents clearly frame the imports circumstances as national security threats without clearly outlining how or why [60, 78]. Such a framing using statements like “based on the facts” or relying on “investigations” notes high levels of manipulation signaling. While the language of the documents is coherent, concise, and organized, the logical reasoning and factual or data-driven evidence are lacking. Nowhere throughout the documents, the White House provides clear data in support of the national security argument. On the contrary, the White House asserted the power of the President to impose tariffs without the need for serious data-informed investigation [60, 78].

4.3.4 Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974

Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974 provides the President with the power to impose sanctions under strict conditions [79]. First, the International Trade Commission (ITC) needs to investigate an issue of interest. The president may ask the ITC to conduct the investigation prior to the imposition of sanctions. The law states that if an imports surge of a product negatively impacts American domestic industry, and the ITC verifies such a case, the President may impose tariffs. Tariffs under such a section are not permanent and have four- or eight-years terms. Section 301 from the same Act authorizes the United States Trade Representative to impose tariffs on foreign

countries [79]. If the representative's office finds that the US Commerce is restricted in unreasonable or discriminatory fashion, the office may solicit Presidential support in imposing tariffs.

In a number of White House documents, President Trump asserted the powers awarded to the Oval Office to impose tariffs under the Trade Act of 1974. In the executive order published on April 29th, 2025, titled as Addressing Certain Tariffs on Imported Articles, President Trump referenced Sects. 201 and 301 in justifying the legality of tariffs [80]. The Executive Order (EO) lists numerous legal references providing apparent credibility, confidence, and professionalism [80]. Notwithstanding the coherence and organization of the documents, little substance or data was provided in support of the arguments. Framing was commonplace in an attempt to manipulate the narrative making current imports and their conditions inimical to US security and prosperity. Consistent with the Trump's administration new legal approach, the EO touted the President as the ultimate authority on tariffs who coordinated carefully with government offices that conducted due diligent investigations justifying tariffs, which save the nation from imminent national security threats [81]. While such an argument was made referring to the Trade Act of 1974, little data, facts or evidence was furnished to support the logic purported.

5 Discussion

Legal experts have questioned the logic, reasoning, and impetus of Trump administration's use of the IEEPA. On the one hand, according to them, the White House fact sheets or executive orders provided limited direct evidence linking sanctioned countries with declared emergencies. On the other hand, the White House appears to challenge a longstanding Supreme Court doctrine known as *The Major Questions Doctrine*. The Supreme Court cautioned the executive branch about the use of *unheralded* powers in statutes to regulate a significant economic or political activity. For instance, *West Virginia v EPA and Utility Air Regulatory Group v. EPA*, Justices reprimanded Federal agencies for overstepping their powers unauthorized explicitly by Congress [82]. Referencing American legal doctrines, Tariffs is a power delegated to Congress, and without authorization, the White House, being an executive branch, may not utilize the *unheralded* power in the IEEPA for imposing sanctions.

A collective of former judges, law professors and Federal counsels signed an amicus brief questioning about the new legality of Trump's sanctions. The Trump administration unilaterally exercised tariffs imposition powers without Congressional delegation [70]. Congress has not passed any statutes indicative of permitting the President the power to impose sanctions in 2025 [70]. Historically, when Congress allowed the President the power to impose sanctions, for instance in *J.W. Hampton, Jr. & Co. v. United States* (1928) [77] did with the limitations. Congress requires factual evidence, empirical findings and specific procedures under the *intelligible principle* doctrine. In other words, the President must furnish detailed evidence and reasoning in support of the Congressional delegated power of sanctions imposition [70].

For the past 135 years, the Supreme Court of United States (i.e., the SCOTUS) has largely allowed the President of the United States exercise Congressionally delegated powers to impose tariffs. In *Marshall Field & Co. v. Clark* (1982) [83], *J.W. Hampton, Jr., & Co. v. United States* (1928) [77] and *Federal Energy Administration v. Algonquin SNG, Inc* (1976) [84], the SCOTUS has rejected constitutional challenges on the basis of impermissible delegation of powers from Congress to the President [79]. Despite the longstanding *intelligible principle* doctrine allowing Presidents to impose tariffs, recent Supreme Court Justices' views suggest a potential shift in the court behavior. Such tensions may invoke the use of Presidential powers under other statutory authorities such as Sect. 122 of the Trade Act of 1974 allowing the President to impose tariffs to address balance of payments serious and fundamental problems facing the United States or the international system.

In case of Court's reversal on Congressional delegation or intelligible principle under the Trade Act or IEEPA, the Trump's administration new legal recourse could be Sect. 338 of the 1930 Tariff Act. The law allows the President to impose tariffs based on discriminatory commercial prejudice targeting the United States. The Trump administration may argue that the present trade system surrounding a class of articles or commerce disadvantages the United States in systematic ways surmounting to discrimination. Courts have not examined arguments against such conduct; however, they may likely face it in case of activating the law by the administration.

Trump's administration sanctions on the ICC prosecutor and personnel prompted domestic legal challenges to the executive branch. The executive order bars Americans from providing services to the ICC. American attorneys like Akila Radhakrishman and human rights advocates such as Mathew Smith the co-founder of Fortify Rights partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union bringing a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the ban. On a fundamental level, the plaintiffs argued that the administration's action restricted their First Amendment right of Free Speech. More cases are likely to arise in American courts challenging Trump's White House aggressive use of sanctions and tariffs.

President Donald. J. Trump has drastically moved away from the institutionalist and global oriented foreign policy approach his predecessors followed since the end of the Cold War. Trump's White House sidelined allies by imposing tariffs on them. The Oval Office withdrew from many international agreements and attacked others like the World Health Organization and Paris Accords. The Trump administration sanctioned international human rights advocates like ICC's staff. The unilateral approach to world affairs diminishes the legitimacy of international institutions. To the contrary, the United States has clearly communicated to world leaders that they could do the same. Such behavior is dangerous for achieving peace around the world. More conflict is likely to arise based on unilateral decisions threatening the stability of international institutions and order.

The increasing use of economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool signifies an active attempt by the Trump administration to disrupt economic dependencies in the international market. Evidently, the administration relied on Tariffs to compel China to sit at the negotiations table realizing that the status quo of the international economic system has tilted toward China's advantage in the past three decades. The administration is willing to craft any legal argument or bypass domestic red tape to

achieve its goal: the disruption of Chinese economic dominance. Arguably, international relations experts believe that tariffs or economic sanctions are more suitable compared to all-out war or direct confrontations. Economic sanctions are meant to bring parties to the diplomatic table to create new agreements. As of the writing of this analysis, the Trump administration and the Chinese government have engaged in bilateral talks to resolve the high tariffs rates on each other [85, 86]. Such communications lead to the belief that sanctions are used as soft weapons, bringing parties to the negotiations table.

6 Conclusion

The Trump administration has departed from American institutionalist hegemony embracing a more unilateral and assertive foreign policy paradigm that diverted from previous liberal norms. The Trump White House has increasingly used economic sanctions and tariffs as powerful foreign policy tools to change the *status quo* of the international order. The use of sanctions and economic restrictive measures affect allies and perceived enemies and is indiscriminate. The unprecedented frequency and intensity of the imposition of economic sanctions and tariffs under the Trump administration created a plethora of legal challenges to the White House domestically and abroad.

The Trump White House offered a novel legal argument justifying the plentiful deployment of sanctions and tariffs. The administration compiled a list of powers delegated by Congress in a series of Acts over the past century authorizing the President to impose levies, taxes, excises, and tariffs on foreign nations for a variety of reasons. The administration used such powers as legal bases for action arguing that they allow the President to declare national emergencies and, therefore, impose economic sanctions or tariffs to redress perceived imbalances. Some of the Acts' powers are unheralded at best while others are more salient. The behavior of the administration amounts to a capricious utilization of executive powers because the logical arguments provided linking national emergency declarations and imposition of sanctions are questionable.

One of the most cited legislations justifying sanctions and tariffs by the Trump administration is the IEEPA. On the one hand, the White House argued that the intelligible principle legal doctrine provides an avenue legitimizing the declaration of national emergencies based on the influx of immigrants and fentanyl. On the other hand, the administration argued that Congress delegated powers under the major questions doctrines to the executive branch to address issues of significant economic and political might. The White House engaged in a colossal campaign advertising the unlimited powers of the President justifying sanctioning decisions. Throughout the first 90 days of Trump's administration, Federal agencies generated a wealth of professionally credible documents filled with many manipulated facts in support of the executive sanctions. A semiotic analysis demonstrated that all such documents utilized strong emotional appeals to voters without the use of any data in an attempt to justify the unchecked powers of the President under the IEEPA.

The current investigation relied on semiotics to showcase the novelty of White House's claims in support of sanctions and tariffs. Considering the ethos of Trump's administration arguments, one finds that the administration generated professionally prepared documents with credible authorship appearing to be believable and factual. Notwithstanding the confident tone of the arguments, they offered limited empirical backing or factual evidence. The arguments utilized rich emotional appeals with little cultural sensitivity. The semiotic analysis demonstrated the weakness of the new legal arguments used by the Trump administration in justifying the sanctions.

The new legal approach has exposed the Trump administration to numerous legal challenges in American courts. While the Supreme Court has historically allowed the White House to impose sanctions and tariffs arguing that the President is an agent of Congress, the large extent of Trump's tariffs and economic sanctions may prompt a change in the courts' precedent. The barrage of lawsuits challenges the President on numerous grounds such as violating American's First Amendment free speech rights, impermissible use of Congressional powers, and lacking intelligible principles in performing executive actions. While courts are still in session attempting to sift through many of the challenges raised by the Trump administration's new legal arguments justifying sanctions and tariffs, world peace is likely to suffer further blows as other leaders are adopting similar strategies to the present White House.

Litigation on the Trump's administration unheralded powers to impose sanctions against foreign nations continue as the writing of the present manuscript. On May 28th, 2025, a three-judge panel alongside the Court of International Trade determined that President Trump's incorporation of the IEEPA raised some constitutional concerns [87]. The unanimous decision stated that the authority of the President to impose tariffs under the IEEPA is restricted at best [87]. Furthermore, the ruling indicated that Congress enjoyed the expressive power of tariffs imposition by the Constitution. The White House appealed the Court's decision and litigation has progressed looming for another Supreme Court's potential intervention in the near future.

The current investigation demonstrates the power of semiotics in analyzing legal questions. More importantly, the analysis offers researchers the opportunity to consider rhetorical frameworks as repertoire of signs. For instance, the present study used ethos, pathos, and logos as symbolic and semiotic inputs for conducting a qualitative legal analysis. Locating signs in legal texts is a creative endeavor that informs rich analysis through recovering important trends and patterns given any phenomenon of interest such as sanctions and legal arguments under the present Trump administration.

References

1. Kaempfer, William H., and Anton D. Lowenberg. 1999. Unilateral versus multilateral international sanctions: A public choice perspective. *International Studies Quarterly* 43:37–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0020-8833.00110>
2. Bogdanova, Iryna. 2021. Targeted economic sanctions and WTO law: Examining the adequacy of the National security exception. *Legal Issues of Economic Integration* 48:171–200. <https://doi.org/10.54648/leie2021010>

3. Marossi, A., and M. Bassett. 2015. *Economic sanctions under international law. Unilateralism, multilateralism, legitimacy, and consequences*. Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-94-6265-051-0>.
4. Steinbach, Armin, Jerg Gutmann, Matthias Neuenkirch, and Florian Neumeier. 2023. Economic sanctions and human rights: Quantifying the legal proportionality principle. *Harv Hum Rts J* 36:1. https://journals.law.harvard.edu/hrj/wp-content/uploads/sites/83/2023/06/HLH104_crop.pdf
5. Hufbauer, Gary, Clyde, and Euijin Jung. 2021. Economic sanctions in the twenty-first century. In *Research handbook on economic sanctions*, Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839102721.00008>
6. Abduljaber, Malek F., and Mehmet Onder. 2024. When we can't see the wood for the trees: The lurking effect of sustainability on corruption. *Cogent Social Sciences* 10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2318859>
7. Onder, Mehmet. 2022. Consequences of economic sanctions on minority groups in the sanctioned States. *Digest of Middle East Studies* 31:201–227. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dome.12268>
8. Syropoulos, Constantinos, Gabriel Felbermayr, Aleksandra Kirilakha, Erdal Yalcin, and Yoto V. Yotov. 2024. The global sanctions data base—Release 3: COVID-19, russia, and multilateral sanctions. *Review of International Economics* 32:12–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/roie.12691>
9. Hume, Eleanor, and Kyle Rutter. 2025. Sanctions by the numbers: 2024 In review. Center for a new american security. <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/sanctions-by-the-numbers-2024-year-in-review>
10. Akande, Dapo, Payam Akhavan, and Eirik Bjorge. 2021. Economic sanctions, international law, and crimes against humanity: venezuela's ICC referral. *American Journal of International Law* 115:493–512. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ajil.2021.20>
11. Meissner, Katharina. 2023. How to sanction international wrongdoing? The design of EU restrictive measures. *The Review of International Organizations* 18:61–85. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-022-09458-0>
12. Onder, Mehmet. 2019. Regime type, issue type and economic sanctions: The role of domestic players. *Economies* 8:2–18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies8010002>
13. Onder, Mehmet. 2023. Overview of secondary sanctions: Turkey under the ghost of western economic sanctions. In *The Routledge handbook of the political economy of sanctions*, Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003327448-26/overview-secondary-sanction-s-mehmet-onder>
14. Alexander, Kern. 2009. Economic sanctions. *Law and Public Policy*. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230227286>
15. Drezner, Daniel W. 2021. The United States of sanctions: The use and abuse of economic coercion. *Foreign Affairs* 100:142. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-08-24/united-states-sanctions>
16. Onder, Mehmet. 2019. *International economic sanctions outcome: the influence of political agreement*. Wayne State University, ProQuest. https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/oa_dissertations/2367/
17. OFAC. (n.d.). Iran Sanctions. Office of foreign assets control. <https://ofac.treasury.gov/sanctions-programs-and-country-information/iran-sanctions>
18. Laross, David. 2025. Rubio moves to shield cross-border commerce issues from litigation. *Inside US Trade* <https://insidetrade.com/daily-news/rubio-moves-shield-cross-border-commerce-issues-litigation>
19. Monicken, Hannah. 2025. Senate approves resolution to end trump's tariffs on Canadian. Amy Klobuchar United States senator. <https://www.klobuchar.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2025/4/senate-approves-resolution-to-end-trump-s-tariffs-on-canadian>
20. Lawder, David. 2025. Trump stretches trade law boundaries with Canada, Mexico, China tariffs. reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/trump-stretches-trade-law-boundaries-with-canada-mexico-china-tariffs-2025-02-02/>
21. Masters, Jonathan. 2024. What are economic sanctions? council on foreign relations. <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-are-economic-sanctions>
22. Biersteker, Thomas J., Zuzana, and Hudáková. 2021. UN targeted sanctions: Historical development and current challenges. In *Research handbook on economic sanctions*, Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839102721.00011>
23. Özdamar, Özgür and Evgenia Shahin. 2021. Consequences of economic sanctions: The state of the art and paths forward. *International Studies Review* 23:1646–1671. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab029>

24. Cartwright, Thomas. 2023. Legal uncertainties of unilateral sanctions in global politics. *Humanities and Social Sciences Research Journal* 11:1–9. <https://aydenjournals.com/index.php/HSSRJ/article/view/492>
25. Liu, Jia, and Wei, Chen Ming Li. 2023. Decision dilemmas: The legal and ethical quandaries of unilateral sanctions in global affairs. *International Research Journal of Arts and Communication* 11:24–33. <https://aydenjournals.com/index.php/IRJAC/article/view/358>
26. Xinyue, Tan. 2023. Analysis of the legality of unilateral sanctions. *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 6:101–107. <https://doi.org/10.25236/AJHSS.2023.061718>
27. Holst, Johan. 2023. *The legality of unilateral economic Sanctions-An analysis of international law on the lawfulness of unilateral economic restrictive measures*. Lund University. <https://doi.org/10.25236/AJHSS.2023.061718>
28. Abduljaber, Malek, Mehmet Onder, and Retaj Aljadaan. 2025. Perceptions of democracy within the middle East and North Africa. *Journal of International Studies* 18:60–80. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-8330.2025/18-1/4>
29. Hofer, Alexandra. 2021. Unilateral sanctions as a challenge to the law of state responsibility. In *Research handbook on unilateral and extraterritorial sanctions*, Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781839107856.00019>
30. Šturma, Pavel. 2024. The notion of sanctions and countermeasures in international law. In *International sanctions and human rights*, Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-69019-8_2
31. Ventouratou, Anna. 2022. Litigating Economic Sanctions. *The Law & Practice of International Courts and Tribunals* 21: 593–640. https://brill.com/view/journals/lape/21/3/article-p593_5.xml?language=en&srsltid=AfmBOoqfYQNCRvpCWGbUO5RPuwQYoZ1c4SJBh2x2mOq95EeQk-UE3g-l
32. Bilková, Veronika. 2024. Reciprocity and countermeasures. In *Reciprocity in International Law*, 125–146. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-66746-6_6
33. ILC. 2001. Article 1 countermeasures commentary. Responsibility of states for internationally wrongful Acts. https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/commentaries/9_6_2001.pdf
34. ILC. 2001. Article 49 object and limits of countermeasures. Responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts. https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/commentaries/9_6_2001.pdf
35. Jackson, Miles, and Federica I. Paddeu. 2024. The countermeasures of others: When can States collaborate in the taking of countermeasures? *American Journal of International Law* 118:231–274. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ajil.2024.8>
36. Azaria, Danae. 2022. Trade countermeasures for breaches of international law outside the WTO. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly* 71:389–423. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020589322000057>
37. Kamminga, Menno T. 2023. Confiscating russia’s frozen central bank assets: A permissible Third-Party countermeasure? *Netherlands International Law Review* 70:1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40802-023-00231-7>
38. Hillman, Jennifer. 2025. Trump’s Use of Emergency Powers to Impose Tariffs Is an Abuse of Power. *Lawfare*. <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/trump-s-use-of-emergency-powers-to-impose-tariff-s-is-an-abuse-of-power>
39. Vlachou, Marita. (2025, April 29). Trump Marks 100 Days in Office with a Tanking Economy and Approval Rating. *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-100-days-in-office_n_6810a6cde4b075cd646d2bc7
40. Kalin, Ilker, and Malek Abduljaber. 2020. The determinants of negotiation commencement in civil conflicts. *Journal of Conflict Transformation and Security* 8:86–112. <https://cesran.org/the-determinants-of-negotiation-commencement-in-civil-conflicts.html>
41. Abduljaber, Malek. 2018. Effects of modernization and globalization on values change in the Arab world. *Changing Societies & Personalities* 2:161–182. <https://doi.org/10.15826/csp.2018.2.2.035>
42. Suwanachariya, Shinasak. 2025. The size of Bretton woods’ GDP is not the victor on the battlefield. *National Interest* 5:1–21. <https://sc01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/NIT/article/view/241377>
43. Simonen, Katariina. 2015. Economic sanctions leading to human rights violations: Constructing legal argument. In *Economic sanctions under international law: Unilateralism, multilateralism, legitimacy, and consequences*, 179–195. The Hague: TMC Asser. <https://researchportal.helsinki.fi/en/publications/economic-sanctions-leading-to-human-rights-violations-constructin>
44. Morgan, T. Clifton, Constantinos, Syropoulos, and Yoto V. Yotov. 2023. Economic sanctions: Evolution, consequences, and challenges. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 37:3–29. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.37.1.3>

45. De Waart, Paul. 2015. Economic sanctions infringing human rights: Is there a limit? In *Economic sanctions under international law: Unilateralism, multilateralism, legitimacy, and consequences*, 125–144. The Hague: TMC Asser. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6265-051-0_7
46. Jazairy, Idriss. Unilateral economic sanctions, international law, and human rights. *Ethics & International Affairs* 33: 291–302. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0892679419000339>
47. Schmidt, Julia. 2022. The legality of unilateral extra-territorial sanctions under international law. *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 27:53–81. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/krac005>
48. Jessop, B. O. B. 2004. Critical semiotic analysis and cultural political economy. *Critical Discourse Studies* 1:159–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900410001674506>
49. Miles, Chris. 2023. Visual rhetoric and the analysis of persuasive political communication. In *Research handbook on visual politics*, 2–14. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800376939.00007>
50. Manrique-Losada, Bell, Carlos Mario, Zapata-Jaramillo, René, and Venegas-Velásquez. 2019. Applying rhetorical analysis to processing technical documents. *Acta Scientiarum Language and Culture* 41. <https://www.redalyc.org/journal/3074/307460649013/307460649013.pdf>
51. Matus, Pablo. 2018. Discursive representation: Semiotics, theory, and method. *Semiotica* 225:103–127. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2017-0019>
52. Higgins, Colin, and Robyn Walker. 2012. Ethos, logos, pathos: Strategies of persuasion in social/environmental reports. *Accounting Forum* 36:194–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.accfor.2012.02.003>
53. Braet, Antoine C. 1992. Ethos, pathos and logos in aristotle's rhetoric: A re-examination. *Argumentation* 6:307–320. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00154696>
54. Gagich, Melanie, Emilie Zickel, and Terri Pantuso. 2023. Rhetorical appeals: Logos, pathos, and ethos defined. *Writing Arguments in Stem* 34. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/533929521.pdf#page=44>
55. Pinho, Fabiana. 2018. On logos, pathos and ethos in judicial argumentation. *Aristotle on Emotions in Law and Politics* 133–153. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-66703-4_7
56. Stucki, Iris, and Fritz Sager. 2018. Aristotelian framing: Logos, ethos, pathos and the use of evidence in policy frames. *Policy Sciences* 51:373–385. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11077-018-9322-8>
57. The White House. 2025. Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/>
58. The White House. 2025. Regulating Imports with a Reciprocal Tariff to Rectify Trade Practices that Contribute to Large and Persistent Annual United States Goods Trade Deficits. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/regulating-imports-with-a-reciprocal-tariff-to-rectify-trade-practices-that-contribute-to-large-and-persistent-annual-united-states-goods-trade-deficits/>
59. The White House. 2025. Imposing Tariffs on Countries Importing Venezuelan Oil. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/imposing-tariffs-on-countries-importing-venezuelan-oil/>
60. The White House. 2025. Adjusting Imports of Automobiles and Automobile parts into the United States. Presidential Actions. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/adjusting-imports-of-automobiles-and-automobile-parts-into-the-united-states/>
61. The White House. 2025. Modifying Reciprocal Tariff Rates to Reflect Trading Partner Retaliation and Alignment. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/modifying-reciprocal-tariff-rates-to-reflect-trading-partner-retaliation-and-alignment/>
62. OFAC. 2025. Guidance for shipping and maritime stakeholders on detecting and mitigating Iranian oil sanctions evasion. *Sanctions Advisory* <https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/934236/download?inline>
63. FinCEN. 2025. FinCEN advisory on the financing of the Islamic state of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its global affiliates. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. <https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/advisory/2025-04-01/FinCEN-Advisory-ISIS-508C.pdf>
64. OFAC. 2025. International cartels designated as foreign terrorist. Organizations and specially designated global terrorist. OFAC Alert. <https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/934236/download?inline>
65. USTR. 2025. U.S. Trade Representative Announces 2025 Trade Policy Agenda. Office of the United States Trade Representative. <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2025/march/us-trade-representative-announces-2025-trade-policy-agenda>
66. ITA. 2025. U.S. Department of commerce announces final determinations in the antidumping and countervailing duty investigations of solar panels from multiple countries. International Trade Administration– Department of Commerce. <https://www.trade.gov/press-release/us-department-commerce-announces-final-determinations-antidumping-and-countervailing>

67. Hufbauer, Gary Clyde. 2025. A better legal argument against Trump's tariffs. *Peterson Institute for International Economics* <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economics/2025/better-legal-argument-against-trumps-tariffs>
68. Zirpoli, Christopher. 2025. Congressional and presidential authority to impose import tariffs. United States Congress Report. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48435>
69. Sracic, Paul. 2025. Trump's Tariffs are a major legal question. *The wall street journal*. <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/trumps-tariffs-are-a-major-question-supreme-court-congress-authority-trade-policy-law-d9baf772>
70. Calabresi, Steven. 2025. The Tariffs Imposed by President Trump Are Unconstitutional. Reason. <https://reason.com/volokh/2025/04/30/the-tariffs-imposed-by-president-trump-are-unconstitutional/>
71. Maruyama, Warren, and Meghan Anand. 2025. and William Alan Reinsch. Are President Trump's Trade Actions Exempt from the Administrative Procedure Act? Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/are-president-trumps-trade-actions-exempt-administrative-procedure-act>
72. Konat, Barbara, Ewelina Gajewska, and Wiktoria Rossa. 2024. Pathos in natural Language argumentation: Emotional appeals and reactions. *Argumentation* 38:369–403. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-024-09631-2>
73. Prafitri, Wilma, and Muhammad Alim Akbar Nasir. 2023. Persuasive strategies in Donald Trump's political speeches. *EBONY: Journal of English Language Teaching Linguistics and Literature* 3:33–44. <https://doi.org/10.37304/ebony.v3i1.7780>
74. Walker, Christopher J., and Scott T. MacGuidwin. 2022. Interpreting the Administrative Procedure Act: A Literature Review. *Notre Dame Law Review* 98: 1963. <https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndlr/vol98/iss5/4>
75. Schneider, Kyle. 2021. Judicial review of good cause determinations under the administrative procedure act. *Stan L Rev* 73:237. <https://www.stanfordlawreview.org/print/article/judicial-review-of-good-cause-determinations-under-the-administrative-procedure-act/>
76. The White House. 2025. Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Imposes Tariffs on Imports from Canada, Mexico and China. Presidential Actions. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-imposes-tariffs-on-imports-from-canada-mexico-and-china/>
77. J. W. Hampton, Jr. & Co. v. United States, 276 U.S. 394 (1928). <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/276/394/>
78. The White House. 2025. Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Restores Section 232 Tariffs. Fact Sheets. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-restores-section-232-tariffs/>
79. Christopher, Zirpoli. 2025. Congressional and Presidential Authority to Impose Import Tariffs. Report. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48435>
80. The White House. 2025. Addressing certain tariffs on imported articles. *Executive Orders* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/addressing-certain-tariffs-on-imported-articles/>
81. Bomboy, Scott. 2025. How Congress delegates its tariff powers to the president. National Constitution Center. <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/how-congress-delegates-its-tariff-powers-to-the-president>
82. Wallach, Philip A. 2022. Will West Virginia v. EPA cripple regulators? Not if Congress steps up. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/will-west-virginia-v-epa-cripple-regulators-not-if-congress-steps-up/>
83. Marshall, Field. & Co. V. Clark, 143 U.S. 649 (1892). <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/143/649/>
84. Federal Energy Administration v. Algonquin SNG, Inc., 426 U.S. 548 (1976). <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/426/548/>
85. Garrison, Joey. 2025. Trump officials say trade deal reached with china, but details remain unclear. *USA Today* <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/05/11/trump-china-trade-deal-tariffs/83570296007/>
86. Liu, Juliana, Catherine Nicholls, and Kit Maher. 2025. Trump says 'great progress made' between US and China following first day of trade talks. *CNN Business* <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/05/10/business/china-us-trade-talks-geneva-hnk-intl>
87. Froman, Michael. 2025. All rise for trade court. *Council on Foreign Relations* <https://www.cfr.org/article/all-rise-trade-court>

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Springer Nature or its licensor (e.g. a society or other partner) holds exclusive rights to this article under a publishing agreement with the author(s) or other rightsholder(s); author self-archiving of the accepted manuscript version of this article is solely governed by the terms of such publishing agreement and applicable law.

Authors and Affiliations

Mehmet Onder¹  · Malek Abduljaber² 

✉ Mehmet Onder
monder@wayne.edu
Malek Abduljaber
dv2517@wayne.edu

- ¹ Political Science and International Relations Department, Hasan Kalyoncu University, Gaziantep, Türkiye
- ² Management and Program Analyst, Naval Service Training Command (NSTC), United States Navy, Great Lakes, IL, USA