

Seeing the forest for the trees: An examination of the Canadian/ United States softwood lumber dispute and the impact of trade dispute settlement mechanisms.

Abstract:

The paper focuses on the trade relationship between the United States and Canada by concentrating on the softwood lumber dispute between the two neighbors. This is an examination of how powerful domestic interests can curb international free trade between two friends in close proximity to one another.

By employing a case study, I hope to focus attention of three key areas: 1. what motives the choice of dispute resolution mechanisms; 2. the limitations of these mechanisms; and 3. how disputes can be resolved after settlement mechanisms have failed.

The outline for the paper is as follows: I begin with a study of the softwood lumber dispute as part of the broader effort to understand the impact of the dispute within the context of the FTA, NAFTA and the GATT/WTO. Second, I place the dispute in the context of the current literature. Third, I show how this particular dispute exposes a weakness in the current academic debate on the subject. And finally, I offer conclusions on next steps to the study.