

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to analyze the domestic political rationale that underlies Japan's decision in initiating its WTO disputes. Since its entry into the organization in 1995, Japan has shown relative restraint in its direct use of WTO's Dispute Settlement Mechanisms, or DSM. The number of cases in which Japan has become a complainant in the WTO dispute settlement body only totaled to a mere 27. This figure is starkly different in comparison with other trading economies of Japan's caliber. The European Union, for example, had filed 104 complaints to the dispute settlement body whilst the United States had 124 cases as complainant. It is important to note that, Japan managed to maintain its position within the top five biggest exporters in the world. In addition, even though it has experienced a sustained period of stagnation, many still rank Japan as the third biggest economy in the world. Filing a complaint to the WTO in the event of another member State violating its obligations to the organization may seem to be the most rational action. Especially when the imposition of trade barrier of Japanese products would be at the expense of its economy, producers, and, to some extent, national pride. This thesis aims to explain why this might not be the case by referring to the institutions exist within Japan's political setting and WTO complaints submission process.

Keywords: Japan, WTO, Complaints, Rational Choice Institutionalism