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**DETERMINANTS OF THAILAND'S BILATERAL FREE TRADE
AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA, JAPAN AND
THE UNITED STATES**

Malinvisa Sakdiyakorn Thanomsat

**A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Development Administration)
School of Public Administration
National Institute of Development Administration
2008**

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The Examining Committee Approved This Dissertation Submitted in Partial
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(Development Administration).

Associate Professor *Suchitra Punyaratabandhu* Chairperson
(Suchitra Punyaratabandhu, Ph. D.)

Assistant Professor *D. Anantanasuwong* Committee
(Dararatt Anantanasuwong, Ph.D.)

..... *Daniel H. Unger* Committee
(Daniel H. Unger, Ph.D.)

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation	Determinants of Thailand's Bilateral Free Trade Agreement Negotiations with Australia, Japan and the United States
Author	Malinvisa Sakdiyakorn Thanomsat
Degree	Doctor of Philosophy (Development Administration)
Year	2008

By the beginning of the 21st century, Thailand had become known as one of the most active proponents of FTAs within the Asia-Pacific region alongside the United States and Singapore. From February 2001 to February 2005, during the first administrative term of the then Thai government led by Thaksin Shinawatra, eleven FTAs were placed under negotiation. While this trend continued upon his second successive term (February 2005-April 2006) as additional talks with new countries increasingly found themselves on the government's trade agenda, the ability of the government to initiate talks was, however, not accompanied by its competence to end them. In fact, only five out of fourteen FTAs were successfully ratified during the six-year Thaksin Administration.

In recognition of the Thai government's difficulties to conclude FTA negotiations, especially those conducted during the latter years, a scattering of information mainly taking the form of news, articles and factual booklets rather than academic research was released to provide both facts and opinionated views on Thailand's FTA negotiations. Despite these attempts, it seems clear that a comprehensive approach to understanding Thailand's FTA negotiation process, specifically the events leading up to Thailand's FTA negotiation outcomes, is still lacking.

In addressing this gap, the present study was undertaken with the aim to provide a synthesizing framework for analyzing Thailand's foreign trade policy negotiations that looks into the domestic and international determinants of foreign trade policy negotiations and how

they influence the bargaining process and lead to the final negotiation outcome. Given this context, the study has two objectives: (1) to provide a descriptive framework of Thai FTA negotiations and an analysis of interactions both between Thai and foreign players as well as among domestic players, and (2) to provide explanations about why certain Thai FTA negotiations ended as they did and whether they met the initial goals anticipated by the negotiators or not.

In particular, three FTAs are selected as case studies – the Thailand-Australia Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA), the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA) and the Thailand-United States Free Trade Agreement (TUSFTA). Using qualitative research methodology, the findings suggest that international level determinants consist of geographical characteristics, demographical characteristics, market conditions and international trade institution and arrangement linkages. Domestic level determinants consist of government strength, ratification actors and procedures, distribution of constituents' preferences and the participation of organized interests. The particular configurations of these determinants then influence (1) the mixed bargaining strategy in TAFTA negotiations and the hard-line bargaining strategy in JTEPA and TUSFTA negotiations that were adopted by the Thai negotiators; as well as (2) the final ratification of TAFTA and JTEPA and the impasse of TUSFTA. Ultimately, this study concludes that only TAFTA and JTEPA met the initial goal anticipated by the Thai negotiators which was to achieve a South-South kind of agreement that favored talks on traditional liberalization. In the TUSFTA case, differences in initial preferences between Thai and American negotiators, however, led to a non-negotiable outcome and hence to unsuccessful goal achievements for both sides' negotiators. The impasse of TUSFTA negotiations, nevertheless, constitutes a success for the Thai anti-FTA social movement group who preferred TUSFTA negotiations to be taken off the trade agenda. The success of the group was not only founded on their ability to obstruct negotiations, stimulate political uncertainty within the government coalition and finally oblige the negotiators to end talks, but also on their ability to have their participation institutionalized under the new 2007 Constitution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Upon completion of my Ph.D. degree, I find myself reflecting on both past and future events. Through the eight years spent studying, researching and writing for the degree, I strongly feel as if another chapter of my life has just ended while a new and promising one awaits me. The knowledge and experience that I received during my studies at NIDA I truly cherish and value, and for this, there are many key figures to whom I owe my deep gratitude.

My deepest appreciation goes to my dissertation committee. First of all, to my committee chairperson Associate Professor Dr. Suchitra Punyaratabandhu who I came to admire from my very first class with her in which she introduced us to the Philosophy of Social Science. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to Assistant Professor Dr. Dararat Anatanasuwong and Dr. Daniel H. Unger, the two other members of the committee for their kind guidance and endless support throughout the research and writing of this dissertation.

Further appreciation goes to all Faculty members at the School of Public Administration. To my teachers in the Ph.D. program that provided me with the in-depth knowledge of the field of development administration. And to the Ph.D. program staff members, especially Khun Orapin Kurnkaew and Acting Sub Lt. Laddawan Kanittanam who assisted me throughout my time at NIDA.

Special thanks to all key interviewees that have made it possible for me to conduct my qualitative research effectively and to my English proofreader, Mr. Stephen Lorrinan, and members of the NIDA library who have helped me in editing and formatting my dissertation.

The greatest support came from my family and closest friends. My deepest gratitude is extended to my father and mother. Of all the things that my parents believe in, education has always been the most important foundation in which they have supported their children to the fullest extent possible. Without their love and encouragement, I would never have come this far. I would also like to thank my sisters, Ploy and Kaimook, as well as my husband, Nick, for the moral support which they have extended to me over the long course of my studies. To my dearest mother-in-law, brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws as well as friends from Satit Kaset School, Chulalongkom University, the Department of Export Promotion and NIDA, I thank you all for always being by my side.

Malinvisa Sakdiyakom Thanomsat

July 2008