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DAOMAS IMSOMERANRACH : BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS IN THAI FOREIGN RELATIONS : A CASE STUDY OF THE THAI-LAO DISPUTE OVER THE "THREE VILLAGES". THESIS ADVISOR : PROF.DR.KHIEN THEERAVIT, Ed.D.
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This thesis aims at studying the roles of Thai Government agencies in implementing the foreign policy and analysing the bureaucratic politics prevailing in such implementation. The Thai-Lao dispute over the three villages is chosen as a case study. The government agencies in this study are the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Security Council.

The study reveals that, firstly, as the main policy formulating and implementing agencies in this case study, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a leading role in settling the dispute. Being a coordinator, The National Security Council played only a secondary role. Secondly, it is found that despite the same ultimate goal to serve the national interest, the two ministries perceived the dispute from different standpoints and had their own approaches to the dispute according to their natures of power and responsibilities as well as priorities given to the national interest. While the defence Ministry attached importance more to the military action in protecting the national security, the Foreign Affairs Ministry placed greater emphasis on diplomatic means to dealing with foreign countries. It is noted that the dispute, which occurred during the time Thailand was being nominated a member to the United Nation Security Council, tended to obstruct the opportunity for Thailand to be elected. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who had been campaigning heavily to win in this international election therefore made all its efforts to solve the dispute in order to achieve its ultimate goal.

This thesis concludes that the Western style of bureaucratic politics, in which government agencies bargain and negotiate to protect their own interest, cannot always be applied in Thai politics. There are, in fact, distinct elements of personal influence and charisma involved in the decision-making and policy formulation process. From this study, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs succeeded in pushing ahead its approach to the dispute.