

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation : Domestic Influences Affecting Thailand's Foreign
Economic Cooperation Policy: a Case Study on AFTA
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This research is to study about Thailand's AFTA policy-making process as a political activity where various ideas and interests may be in contention. The research focuses on three research questions: (1) who are actors contributing to the dynamic process of Thailand's AFTA policy? (2) how and why were various domestic actors and their interests crucial to Thailand's AFTA policy-making process? (3) did interest groups from industry and business play an important role in the process of Thailand's foreign economic cooperation and policy-making?

The research argues that ideas, interests and positions of political leaders and/or policy-makers are domestic influences affecting Thailand's AFTA policy-making. Those policy-makers' ideas, interests and positions related to Thailand's AFTA policy will determine their decisions and actions on the policy. In order to explain and analyse the way in which those domestic policy-makers' ideas, interests, and positions influenced the policy, a combined use of the elite model, group theory and bureaucratic politics model help to analyse relevant information in this research.

The research makes use of qualitative methods as its research methodology. The research begins with documentary research to gain a clear general picture about the process of Thailand's AFTA policy-making, and to identify key players of the policy-making process. Then the research employs the method of in-depth interviewing. A total of sixteen key informants gave formal interviews for this research. In order to answer all of those three research questions, four brief explanations are:

- (1) Actors who contributed to the dynamic process of Thailand's AFTA policy were: (1) political leaders of the government; (2) cabinet members, particularly the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Commerce and deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic policy-making and administering; (3) bureaucrats including those policy advocates such as Minister's or the Prime Minister's advisors; (4) private interest groups, including Federation of Thai Industry.
- (2) Those actors were crucial to Thailand's AFTA policy-making process because their ideas, interests and positions related to the policy and determined their decisions and action on the policy. This included policy-makers' interactions with each other to influence the policy.
- (3) Thailand's AFTA policy was made based on: (1) the top-down policy-making process; (2) interest groups' influences; and (3) bureaucratic politics among policy-makers.
- (4) Interest groups from industry and business played an important role in the process of Thailand's AFTA policy-making by both supporting and working against the policy. Their roles were based on their ideas, and interests relevant to the policy.