

**Oponentský posudek magisterské práce autora/ky Chalakorn Rattanaphan**  
**Assessment review of the M.A. thesis of Mr/Ms Chalakorn Rattanaphan**  
**"Thailand in Regional and Bilateral Free Trade Agreements"**

Praha, 30.1.009

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In the introductory chapter the author outlines the institutional changes that occurred in the last 25 years that opened the Thai economy and brought its entrepreneurial sector to perform. The objective of the study is to assess how the mentioned changes influenced the Thai economy and where the impacts favoured the rise of prosperity and where there were problems.

Chapter 2 discusses extensively the importance of ASEAN FTA on the economy of Thailand. The crucial role was assigned to tariff reduction and its impacts on the volumes of trade between AFTA member states. The abundant statistical evidence /concentrated first on some industries and later on major partner countries/ was quite revealing and well interpreted. Maybe here the author could have used graphs instead of tables, which would make the study more comparative (i.e. analyzing more the interdependences in country-commodity breakdown). Thus the reader would not be lost in the quantity of numbers without being aware about the dominant trends.

Chapter 3 applies a similar quantitative methodology to assessing economic interaction of Thailand with countries (and their integration) outside of AFTA – particularly Australia and Japan. Here I would recommend that all values of trade be recorded in US dollars and not, as it was in the case of Table 21, measured in Bahts (which repeats later quite often – see tables 27, 28, ... 34, etc. I would also appreciate if the author explained more clearly the institutional arrangements with TAFTA and made that part symmetric with the description of JTEPA. E.g. it would be good to see more deeply how such bilateral arrangements were compatible with multilateral AFTA. While describing the evolution of their trade, one could wonder how the fast growth was influenced by liberalization and how by other factors, such as exchange rate or aggregate demand.

The critical assessment of JTEPA's results and its combination in chapter 4 with TAFTA made these parts of the study most readable. Here the Czech reader was reminded that there were serious parallels between the economic development in Thailand with that in Czechia: the importance of openness, RTAs expansion or the specialization in cars, components, electrical products, electronics and plastics.

What concerns the **final assessment**, my review will be guided by the following criteria:

- a/ Clarity of the objectives and their structure.
- b/ Methodology used for assessing/evaluating the problem.
- c/ Credibility of conclusions derived from the analysis.

Even though the objectives were stated clearly, their structure could have been elaborated much wider – to reveal how the growing trade contributed to the GDP growth, employment, wages and the standard of living. Thus by avoiding such an approach, the methodology used could remain quite simple and concentrate of statistical data without the need to analyse their

interdependence. The study has illustrated well how the Thai trade expanded and how the integration dismantled its barriers.

In addition to the previous, the author added an extensive appendix (of 28 pages) to the study, which dealt with the EU-Ukraine FTA. Even though this addition was interesting by its topic, its integration with the previous text was a mystery for the first 26 pages. Only the last two pages offered a comparison between Thailand and Ukraine, and the lessons that could Ukraine learn from studying the Thai example. Unfortunately, this was all too short and superficial for such a grand conclusion. Thus the value added by this supplement was of marginal importance.

Credits: The M.A. thesis was written quite clearly and it offered a large portion of data about trade and specialization. It offered a lot of information about a country that is not so well known here. It was also interesting to read.

Debits: The data was not analysed further in its inter-dependence and its appendix even widened this schism.

**The recommended grade: B (in Czech: velmi dobrý).**

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