

Astrid Fritz:

Negotiating Environmental Issues in Free Trade Agreements. The Case of New Zealand

Negotiating environmental issues in multilateral, regional or bilateral free trade agreements always requires a comprehensive approach because particularly in this area, negotiations are influenced both by external factors such as global crises, MEAs (Multilateral Environmental Agreements) or WTO provisions and internal aspects such as domestic law or pressure exerted by interest groups. Governments negotiating FTAs (Free Trade Agreements) have to pursue a double-edged diplomacy in order to serve interests both on the international and domestic level. This is especially challenging in asymmetric negotiations, which is always the case for a small country like New Zealand. It could be assumed that the smaller nation's bargaining power is generally very low. But as research in this area has already shown, there are other ways to achieve national interests in negotiations such as having issue power instead of mere structural power. The fact that New Zealand negotiates most of the time with developing countries changes the scenario, particularly in terms of environmental issues included in FTAs. Developing nations are often very suspicious about these issues because they think that this could be a hidden mechanism for protectoral measures. Domestic pressure, consumer demands in New Zealand's major exporting destinations (EU and U.S.) and the government's own priorities necessitate a maintenance of high environmental standards, particularly in terms of biosecurity. It is thus crucial to safeguard these interests in other FTA negotiations and to set environmental issues on the agenda as well. In addition, FTAs should be in accordance not only with WTO provisions but also with obligations under MEAs.

The interaction of external and internal aspects in international negotiations can lead to different outcomes concerning the actual agreements. Both the degree of domestic influences and external developments can change a government's policy strategy and negotiating tactics and can finally affect the extent to which environmental issues will have to be dealt with in FTAs.

Case studies will include negotiations between New Zealand and Thailand, China, Chile/Singapore (P3), AFTA-CER and the South Pacific (all depending on the progress of negotiations).

Negotiations on the WTO level concerning environmental issues will be taken into account, too.

The theoretical framework for the analysis will be based on a synthesis of Foreign Policy Analysis (two-level games approach) and Negotiation Analysis (asymmetric negotiations).