

Abstract

The focus of this essay is on a political party that was founded in Sweden in 1904. Today, we know it as Moderata Samlingspartiet. Historically, this party has transitioned through multiple phases which have included a change of name and also a change of substance in the area of trade policy. The party that was cheering globalisation at the 2006 congress had its roots in protectionism and had been founded as a strict protectionist organisation. The question raised here is what has caused this dramatic change in the trade politic?

In addressing this important question, I have used both organization and party strategy theories to identify the main underlying reasons. I have also shown that the change in position was formalised in the reform strategy that took place in 1946.

Since 1904, the two dominating groups within the party, Industry and farmers, have continued to exert strong pressure on the party leadership to protect their own interests. After the second world war, the party leadership fulfilled the wishes of the influential industry group, who were the main financiers of the party, by endorsing free trade. However, due to the strong parliamentary power of the Farmers group at this time, the party also allowed for the policy towards them to be a regulated exception from the free trade model. In addition to serving the interests of these influential groups, there are also several other reasons which may help to account for the party's change in attitude towards trade barriers. These include the fact that the party had been steadily losing popularity with the electorate since 1928 and had in fact lost around one third of the vote since that time.

Therefore, in an attempt to re-gain popularity with the electorate, the party tried to appear as more compassionate by reaching its hand out to voters through tariff reductions. The party also focused on showing potential voters that high tariffs were now considered redundant in fighting unemployment, and that the right party could now be counted on to protect consumer interests going forward.

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